SciencesPo
KUWAIT PROGRAM

"The Greater Beirut Water Supply Project: analysis of a territorial socioecological change process in the provision of water services"

By Juliette Falkehed

Under the supervision of Professor Eric Verdeil

Sciences Po

Spring 2019

This paper has received the *Kuwait Program at Sciences Po*

Student Paper Award

The Greater Beirut Water Supply Project: analysis of a territorial socioecological change process in the provision of water services

The intricacies of Greater Beirut Water Supply Project (GBWSP) manifest when considering the very nature of the given good, water. Under Lebanese law, water is ruled to be part of the public domain, thus appears as inherently public and non-excludable (decree 144/S,1925). However, its use is rivalrous, as its consumption depletes water supply. Subsequently, water characterizes as a common-pool good. The project under study very much emphasizes the latter aspect: it exacerbates both the rivalry over its consumption, the strains on its scarcity and sustainability, as well as discusses the role of the state in allocating access to it.

In Lebanon, drinking water accessibility does not match the country's resources. Although Lebanon is considered to hold the most abundant water resources in the MENA region, water supply in Beirut is intermittent and daily water shortages are frequent. Such discrepancy is symptomatic of policy failures and inefficiencies in water management, manifesting through informal drilling systems, decrepit distribution networks and considerable losses due to leakages. To alleviate such striking weakness in the provision of urban service, a 2000-million-dollar loan was approved from the World Bank, to fund the Greater Beirut Water Supply Project (GBWSP). The GBWSP characterizes as a large-scale project encompassing the construction of a damn, reservoirs and water conveyors, and is expected to bring potable water from the Litani river to over 1.6 million residents of the Greater Beirut area (GBA), as well as to villages in Metn, Aley and Baabda (source: World Bank). This project, contemplated from the 1960's was suspended in the late 1990's before being reinstalled and approved on December 16th, 2010. The GBWSP has been the subjected to numerous complaint causing delay in implementation.

Given the previously stated environmental context, this water project does not appear to be the type of polices that Wildavsky calls 'solution looking for a problem' but answers existing critical needs in the capital city. However, the scale and the implications of the GBWSP are consistent with Wildavsky notion of a 'policy as its own cause' defined as following "*by expanding public sectors in size and scope, the state generates interdependencies that are difficult to resolve without sectorializing government by linking it to strong centralized interest groups*" (Wildavsky, 1980). Such analysis is consistent with the GBWSP insofar as it

underlines two major aspects of the project, namely its centralization and the intertwinement of vested interests. As demonstrated by the considerable delay in the project's implementation, and its underlying complains, the GBWSP combines several contentious public policy instrumentations and thus figures as an interesting case of policy continuity challenged by the incremental emergence of an opposition coalition. In previous literature, GBWSP has been contemplated under the light of privatization and the introduction of private-public partnerships in the provision of urban services (Yamout and Jamali, 2005). It also has been studied through the prisms of governance and decision-making (Ghiotto and Molle, 2008), and put in relation to the informal water provision sector, potentially undermined by the project implementation (Verdeil, 2010, 2018; Harb-el-Kak, 1996). Given the nature of water and the network character of the considered infrastructure project, Urban Political Ecology's multi-scalar approach appears as most fitting to account for all GBWSP dimensions, when combined to findings from previously mentioned work, and to the broader theme of water governance in Lebanon. This project brings together both political, socio and ecological elements that all intertwine in processes of either creation or contestation of the GBWSP new 'environment', understood in Swyngedouw sense of "*spatial, temporal, social and material settings*" (Swyngedouw, 2003). Accordingly, this essay will ground its analysis of the socioecological change triggered by the GBWSP in a dual approach - coupling both political sociology and urban political ecology. To further develop, the present analysis will be borrowing tools of public policy analysis, such as Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier, 1988) and some elements from the Punctuated Equilibrium theory (True, Jones and Baumgartner, 2007). All in all, the following essay attempts at disentangling the socio, politico ecological relations at stake under the GBWSP, and the respective strategies of different parties to secure the realization of their interests and vision, in redefining Mount Lebanon's networked spatial scales, in respect to the territory of the Greater Beirut Area and its political arena.

1. GBWSP's resilience: the underlying features to a policy continuity

a. A well-anchored policy community

Much literature has been produced arguing for the neo-liberal turn undertaken by global, but more specifically Lebanese reforms in the 1990's, from the end of the civil war onwards. Although the rise of neoliberal institutions such as the World Bank, most certainly played a major role in the instigation of the GBWSP, the resiliency of this project through the years and despite its ebb and flows, rather takes after structural features. First and foremost, one should

consider the cohesive community of policy-makers at play, in the instigation and maintenance of the GBSWP. The government of Lebanon seems often portrayed by civil society and international press, as an old club of rich powerful leaders, charged with corruption and nepotism scandals from time to time. It does seem patent that the policy-makers, in charge of contracting and pushing forth the project, constitute a small elitist community, only little renewed, with networked interests in multiple sectors (service provision, media, real-estate) relevant to the GBWSP. As a matter of an example, Gebran Bassil, current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, and former Minister of Energy and Water (MoEW) throughout 2009-2018, also is the leader of President Aoun's political party, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), to whom he is the son-in-law. As Bassil stepped down of MoEW office to take on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2018, his position was allocated to a collaborator, working alongside him for almost 8 years, member to the same political party. Nevertheless, scholars all agree on characterizing the Lebanese government's political fragmentation, along sectarian or communitarian lines, as a major catalyst to the state's public policies blockage, inducing multiple reform failures. Such observation is relevant to our case-study insofar as it strengthens the required implication for the GBWSP to satisfy multiple faction's interests, in order to be backed and sustained the way it has been until now. It now appears particularly relevant to make the distinction between a public policy and a project, such as the GBSWP: both contrast in terms of funding and accountability. Indeed, the GBWSP funding, instead of being raised from national budget, is loaned by the World Bank (increasing Lebanese debt in the process). At the same time, GBWSP's system of accountability, in presence of such a large-scale project, grows in complexity and decreases in reliability.

Thus, these colluded elites operate within a particular framework, which specificities should be acknowledged as contributing to the maintenance and the prosperity of the GBWSP. This operating structure manifests both by the institutional overlap of the World Bank prerequisites on Lebanese administrative model, and the solid Lebanese policy-delivering structure marked by a high degree of centralization- or rather recentralization (Verdeil, 2010).

The latter characteristic of GBWSP's operative framework consists in the centralized Lebanese administrative model that hampers external meddling and topples its functioning from local interferences. Such functioning shows in the case of law no221/2000 on the organization of the Water Sector. Indeed, law 221 lays the foundations to the reorganization of water territorial governance and, accordingly, merges the former 22 Water Authorities into four regional Water Establishments whose functions and competences are defined under the observed law. This

reform on water governance substantively dispossesses former localities from their power over water management and reallocates it to regional administrations, placed under central control. As such, the article 4 of law 221/2000 specifies Water Establishment competencies as following "*Studying, implementing, exploiting, maintaining and renewing water projects to distribute potable and irrigation water and collecting, treating and getting rid of used water, according to the master plan for water and wastewater or upon previous approval by the Ministry*" whereas defines the Ministry of Energy and Water resources (MoEW) in the following manner, "*exercising control and guardianship on public institutions and on all bodies working in the field of water*" and, relevantly to the GBSWP "*Designing, studying and executing major water establishments such as dams, mountain lakes, tunnels, river flow correction, water networks*" (law 221/2000, article 2). Accordingly, law no221/2000 launches a redefinition of spatial scale by adjusting the territorial and administrative boundaries of urban service provision to greater more central entities, and attributing decisive competencies to top entities, placed under central state authority.

Furthermore, a World Bank partnership presents additional specific features impacting the policy operating structure of GBWSP. Ghiotti and Riachi identify an '*iron triangle'* or what Kunigk also designates as '*mutual knowledge'* playing in such partnership. These different concepts refer to a win-win partnership that allows the central state to deepen its national debt in favor of most economic sound regions, as national and local elites sustain their clientelistic networks through reallocation of loan parts along communitarian and territorial lines (Ghiotti and Riachi, 2013). In counterpart, Kunigk argues that Lebanon adapts its institutional framework to fit World Bank requirements as so to facilitate the implementation of their programs, and, in the long run, gain additional credibility among smaller but cheaper international donors, to unlock additional funds (Kunigk, 1999). In short, according to these thesis, World Bank international loans enable the implementation of the institution's watchword recommendations, while the allocated money bolsters Lebanese economic and further fuels private interest logics.

These mutually reinforcing mechanisms present us with a wider understanding of the structural collusion of elites and interests at play within the GBWSP framework, working for the successful continuous implementation of the project and its unfolding artefacts. These two structural features seem to further empower the central policy-community in facilitating the realization of the GBWSP program on the one hand, and, on the other hand, strongly underline a top-down decision structure that leaves little room for subsidiary principles, mobilizing local

knowledge. Such analysis is consistent with Swyngedouw's approach in the sense that the author distinguishes several scales of multiple nature, intertwined with one another around a socioecological matter, however always observing a hierarchal dimension. Here, the vertical dimension between central and local powers seems well entrenched.

b. <u>Establishing policy monopoly through narrowing processes</u>

This well-entrenched policy community succeeded in insuring a policy continuity until now around the GBWSP through the establishment of a policy monopoly (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Such process manifests as threefold and strategically articulates around the definition of the problem, the production of knowledge, and in restricting the visibility of alternatives. These several means enacted, until recently, a narrowing of the GBWSP scope not only in terms of the community involved in its decision-making, but in its perception as well, impacting the subsequent unfolding of the project.

First of all, dealing with water concerns, the policy community involved in the project secured a highly technical definition of the problem. Therefore, water provision issues came to be thought by, for, and around technical components. Institutionalizing this technical understanding of water shortages in Beirut and how to alleviate it with water resources drained from a neighboring district, ostracized other critical components to the question, such as the social and environmental stakes of the reform, impacting the local population. The use of an exclusive rhetoric around water storage capacity, seismic measurements and water treatment methods restricted the debate both in scope and in participants. The enactment of a technical frame proved to be an efficient strategy to decrease the number of participants partaking the policy discussion and reduced the policy attention of the project. In Wildavsky's term, this policy grew as a matter of *intellectual cogitation* before one of *social interaction*. Such statement verifies looking at the knowledge produced on the topic. Indeed, the understanding of the GBWSP as a matter of technical concerns induced, in a first part, a lack of production of local knowledge, that, later, translated in the failure to account for it. As such, the predominance of technical knowledge emanating from international institutions or disconnected experts over local one, figures as a strong grievance among the several complains filled to the World Bank's Inspection Panel, regarding this project (Chatila, F. 2010; Lebanon Eco Movement, 2018).

As the initial problem definition allowed the institutionalization the adopted technical frame, its unfolding knowledge production maintained within the same narrowing line. A major

obstacle hindering the opening of knowledge production lies in the lack of reliable data on water management in Lebanon (Kunigk, 1999). Such constrain limits the development of counter-narratives to oppose to the existing information channel. Furthermore, as Ghiotti argues, knowledge production has proven to be quite closely tied to the type of use one aspires to make of it (i.e. water). Thus, the type of information released tends to fall under the either economic, social or scientific functions advocated for, by the releasing authority. As a result, knowledge production on the Bisri Valley, came to justify, in highly technical terms and through multiple reports, the rightful construction of water reservoirs on the location (Dar al-Handasah,1992; Liban Consult, 2007; Inspection Panel, 2010). This statement should be contrasted by the following emergence of an opposition coalition. The forthcoming section is dealing with this aspect. Hence, looking closely at the rhetoric mobilized in communication on the project quite informs the previously outlined processes of justification (Ghiotti and Molle, 2008). In essence, as browsing through the coverage of the GBWSP, one can categorize the information produced by the supporters and developers of the project under four main arguments namely; their precise knowledge and understanding the technicities enabling an enlighten decision-making, the dam's prospects and opportunities for economic growth, the savings in terms of water leakages and waste, and lastly the critical geostrategic characteristic of the chosen location. This policy discourse engenders the thrive of a positive policy image based on notions of economic progress and technological advancement.

Finally, the establishment of the policy monopoly over the GBWSP utterly completes when accounting for schemes impeding the visibility of alternatives. In this sense, alternatives are to be understood as both opposing views and concrete counter-proposals to the recommended use of the Litani river and Bisri valley. In terms of counter-proposition, the geologist Fathi Chatila filled a request for inspection at the World Bank in 2010 as he believed his suggestions, submitted to the World Bank in 1996 had been overlooked, if not at all. Indeed, the scientific conducted an independent research thereby he demonstrated the unfitness of the contemplated location for the GBWSP, given environmental reasons, and otherwise suggesting another more suitable location, two kilometers upstream the Damour river, closer to the Multaqa juncture. He further strengthened the legitimacy of his study by pointing out three international experts endorsing it (Chatila, 2010). Later, other Scientifics spoke up against the environmental risks presented by the project (Nemer, 2005). However, their voices were until the end of the decade, mostly confined into academic channels, thus making their argument very little accessible to a broader audience, but not however, to the project developers.

Additionally, when considering the impediment of opposing views, media coverage and its unfolding conflict of interests proves to be quite informative. Indeed, no media coverage is neutral insofar as solely covering a subject, grants it some peculiar visibility, which already consists in a bias. Nonetheless, one could question the type of coverage a given project receives. In the case of the GBWSP, a first phase of media coverage materializes from the early stage of the project until 2015, during which newspaper attention to project, more specifically through articles published in *L'Orient-le-Jour* and *Daily Star*, consist in descriptive work, reporting information. Nonetheless, one should keep in mind the narrow frame through which knowledge was then produced. Correspondingly, my research proved unsuccessful in finding columns expressing a reasoned opposition viewpoint on the GBWSP during this period. Now, a way of looking at this, consists in using the lens of political media ownership. As stated by Samir Kassir Foundation's Media Ownership Monitor report on the matter, most media organizations show direct ownership by the state or current members of the government. More specifically, Michel Eddé and Michel Pharaon current Minister of Planning, both members of the FPM political party, are partial owners of the newspaper *L'Orient-le-Jour.* Concerning the *Daily Star*, Saad Hariri, current Prime Minister and critical key actor of the GBWSP, owns share of the media (SKeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom and Reporters Without Borders, December 2018). Therefore, one can add another layer to the collusion of interests that contributes in the narrowing of the understanding frame of the GBWSP plan, supplementing the establishment of a policy monopoly over the policy image by a wealthy powerful urban elite (policy community). On a general note, the obstruction of alternatives' visibility further sustains policy monopoly. As stated by Harvey, "*the more explicit character of the tradeoff, the more difficult to implement it*" (Harvey. in Swyngedouw, 2003). Nevertheless, it is during a second phase of more public contestation that some articles started adopting a more balanced perspective on the topic, in a restrictive manner. The nature and implication of such newly developed channel of information will be the object of an upcoming section on the emergence of the anti-GBWSP advocacy coalition.

c. Polarization of the redefinition of territorial and networked spatial scales

Altogether, one can argue that this work of policy monopoly undergone by a policy community and its rooted allies, mobilizes both territorial and networked scales. Socio-spatial processes mesh as so to alter the city's administrative territory and the network of authorities' power relations, constituting the socioenvironmental metabolism of the area. The set of relations between the different scales takes place in a vertical hierarchy to achieve an ecological conquest

through capital circulation (Swyngedouw, 2003). In the given process, the redefinition of the territory figures as a primordial stake. In fact, the GBWSP project first enacts a new eco-administrative scale, which requires the merging of previous autonomous spatial entities under the umbrella of the Mount Lebanon Beirut Water Authority (BMLWA), but secondly observes an even wider impact zone, due to the circular and networked character of water that exceeds the delimited administrative boundary of the BMLWA. Nevertheless, these various processes of territorial overlap are all articulated in such manner to be coopted by a central authority, the BMLWA, or more essentially the MoEW, and then polarized around the GBA. To achieve this redefinition of territorial and networked spatial scales, the strong policy community at play in GBWSP, has mobilized narrowing processes, through the production of policy discourse, in terms of both scope, content and language. The policy has been limited to a reading through a liberal rationale. As such, a strong Environmental Justice background prevails in the articulation of the pro-GBWSP coalition reasoning, as it rather emphasizes a distributional view of justice, mobilizing and articulates around concepts such as resource allocation and the production of externalities with a Rawlsian understanding of fairness. Such reasoning has been instrumentalized in the justification of the GBWSP policy. Indeed, the mobilization of an Environmental Justice discourse, as opposed to one of Urban Political Ecology, shows through the provision of certain policies disposition. For instance, faced with a dilemma such as the production of externalities, and the adequate way to compensate for them; the GBWSP has issued and procured compensation packages, to evaluate the loss induced by the expropriation of local residents in the dam are. Although compensating for the loss in housing, the expropriation packages were criticized by Save the Bisri Valley Campaign, as not rightfully accounting for the loss of livelihood induced by the expulsion of agriculture households from their productive land. Such logic is symptomatic of a distributional understanding of justice as, it further contrasts from a wider socio-ecological comprehensive frame, promoted by a UPE approach. A UPE understanding would have required a more complex solution for compensation packages as it perceives socio-ecological concerns as salient to the production of multi-dimensional environmental settings. Arguments emerging from the former school of thought, grow into constituting a counter policy discourse, present in the opposition coalition's advocacy rhetoric.

2. External system factors anchoring the nexus of power and social actors

a. Territorial Discontinuity

The GBWSP policy presents by several aspects, a case of territorialization, as characterized by Matthew Vitz as a "*policy deliberatively favoring the center by cutting the hinterlands from its benefits*" (Vitz, 2018). Indeed, following the project's logic, water is essentially subtracted to the periphery, generating both environmental and social concerns in its outsource locations, and then transferred to provide the center with additional water supplies. Hence, the discontinuity in resource allocation produced by this policy, generates a visible territorial cut among losers and winners.

Nonetheless, due to Lebanese politics, such tradeoff also translates, if not along sectarian lines, through social, communitarian and political fragments as well. As such, the GBWSP redistributes water from the Litani river, redirecting it from its upstream and downstream locations (Chouf, Barouk, Al Safa) to the GBA. Now, looking at this spatial redistribution from an electoral perspective, one notes that resources are taken from the fourth Mount Lebanon Electoral district (Chouf and Aley) – which consists in the only district under the BMLWA administrative boundaries that is of the Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), prevalence. The GBWSP plans on storing these resources before redirecting them to parts of the third (Baabda) and second (Metn) Mount Lebanon electoral districts - along to the overall GBA – both locations where the Free Patriotic Movement prevailed according to 2018 elections (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2018). The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) is President Aoun's political party, currently led by Gebran Bassil, former Minister of Energy and Water (2009-2018), and critical actor to the GBWSP implementation. The GBWSP also provides water to Beirut's two different districts, displaying strong representations of FPM, Prime Minister Hariri's political party, the Future Movement (FM) and Hezbollah-Amal (allies to FPM). These different parties are all partakers to the project, and to the pro-GBWSP coalition, as none of them voiced concerns or opposition regarding the policy. Such reading of the BMLWA area presents a political understanding to the territorialization processes at play. Hence one can adopt both a territorial and political understanding of the looser-winner divide and apprehend the territorial consequences from the perspective of the power - social actor nexus.

Nonetheless, Hezbollah's position appears as significantly interesting in this pattern. Indeed, Hezbollah holds great interests in the current territorial discontinuities of water provision services. In the absence of South Beirut suburbs' interlocking to the state provision network, it

is Hezbollah's philanthropic branch, Jihad al Binaa, that is in charge of the provision and distribution of water supply to the neighborhood's residents, through a cistern system (Harb El-Kak, 1996). This informal sector alleviates gaps in the state provision networks, and thus strengthens the group's cooptation mechanisms, as securing constant support to the political group. However, the lack of Hezbollah communication or critics opposing the BWSP supposes that it did not find their interests significantly jeopardized by the policy. My researches here reaches to their limits as I was unable to find solid data confirming or infirming whether Hezbollah's interests in the project were secured through corruption schemes or by delimitating a specific water regimes to the given area, sustaining Hezbollah's figure in the provision of the utility.

Furthermore, one should keep in mind that the territorialization processes outlined in the GBWSP do not only occur as part of this policy. Rather, it is the larger both political and institutional framework within which the project takes ground, that gives way to the thriving of territorialization policies. Hence, territorial fragmentation does not only manifest as an output to the GBWSP but plays a critical role in its emanation. One could argue that territorialization dynamics already show among the inputs to the GBWSP policy, by first the lack of local knowledge mobilization and secondly, the cutoff of local actors through centralization processes. Concerning the latter - and reitering what has previously been stated - the conduction of several World Bank studies and assessments of the project relied on exclusively extensive technical language, omitting local social and environmental concerns. As a result to the voicing of issues regarding such bias, the institution was compelled to undergo an Environmental and Social Assessment Impact (2008) commissioned by the World Bank, supposedly mobilizing local consultations. However, this former study, was further criticized by Roland Nassour (leader of the Save the Bisri Valley Campaign) in regard to the conditions under which the consultations were conducted and the followed methodology to the composition of the samples. Accordingly, local stakeholders were not adequately implicated in the process.

Further, one can make the argument that local institutions were prevented from involving in the project. Looking back at the law no 221/2000 on the establishment of the four Water Authorities, re-centralization efforts (Verdeil, 2010) show through the merging of departmental (caza) entities into regional (governorate) ones, coupled to a modification in competences allocation. As such, the law text condenses water authorities' competences around implementation and operation tasks, leaving them to execute Ministerial decisions, while

allocating critical decision-making powers to central authority (MoEW). Thus, the municipalities find themselves cornered out from the policy decision-making field by central administrative entities, that overtake and centralize the process of decision-making over local water management policies. Such structural setting further reinforces the periphery-center divide, and the institutional capacity of one group over the other. Additionally, the politico-territorial divide manifests when looking at the voting of the law. Only Walid Jumblatt, the Druze leader, expressed his opposition voting against the enactment of the law, as it is his region that found its interests the most undermined.

All in all, GBWSP's territorial discontinuities resonate within a wider socio-economic structure of defined losers and winners, that is symptomatic of strong spatial nexus of power and social actors. This analysis shows critical linkage of interests between the geographical boundary of water service delivery (BMLWA) and its link to a divided political and administrative framework of center-periphery divide, political fragmentation and communitarian competition. These processes are revealing of inequalities of power and alliances, that translate territorially.

b. Change in Political Structure

Moreover, the sustainment of the GBWSP policy, notwithstanding the emergence of an anti-GBWSP coalition, took place and nurtured from a wider context of political changes.

Indeed the 2018 reform on election law favors a proportional representation of political parties, thus impacting the traditional 'big' traditional parties. Nevertheless, looking at results, the election law very much anchored Hezbollah's foundations across the political map. Such changes in the representation of political forces induced a shift towards alliances between the traditional main parties to be able securing their stand. Further, the elections rooted Hezbollah's salience as an essential actor in political negotiations. This reiterates the necessity of involving Hezbollah's interest in the GBWSP, thus accounting the impact or no-impact of this new water provision channels on areas served by informal networks of interests. Finally, when considering the political agenda, one must acknowledge the time sensitiveness of the project in terms of election gains it might bring to the candidate able to on the project's potential success, by associating one's political branding to the realization of water supply augmentation. As such, Gebran Bassil, keystone of the project, both involved in the Water Reform (law no 221) and the re-launch of the GBWSP, can be thought to be President Aoun's successor for 2022. Such alleged potential presidentially would further increase the stakes into early realizing, and successfully implementing the GBWSP. Likewise, Saad Hariri who also figures among the

strongest project supporters but whose popularity has recently been jeopardized as shown by latest electional results, would prove to hold high interests too in a positive policy image, further exacerbating the urgency of the GBWSP.

Furthermore, a recent trend in politics favored the emergence, organization and mobilization of coalitions. One should note that different crucial components of the anti-GBWSP coalition predated the launch of the National Campaign to Protect the Bisri Valley (also called, *Save the Bisri Valley*). Small local initiatives and environmental non-profit (Lebanon Eco Movement) arisen, however their resistance to the GBWSP only occurred through fragmented actions. Their organization under a dedicated structure only happened from April 2017, date of the creation of the Save the Bisri Valley Campaign Facebook page, which provides a common medium to cohesively communicate on actions taken against the GBWSP. Organizing under a coalition structure enable different actors to pool their activities and increase their visibility, thus effectively reaching out to a broader audience. However, it is a wider movement of environmental concerns, civil society empowerment and the promotion of new values such as anti-corruption and secular initiatives, that facilitated the merging of these various actors. Re-contextualizing the rise and relative success of the anti-GBWSP coalition in articulating different types of actor and impacting a wider audience, needs to encompass for various triggers. The mobilization of the You Stink! Movement during summer 2015 and the popularity of Beirut Madinati before the 2016 elections set the stage for anti-establishment claims and the strengthening of a political understanding of environmental and infrastructural shortcomings. Although Beirut Madinati did not directly engage with specific issues of the dam project, the core of the movement did promote collective engagement across sectarian and sectorial lines to further urban infrastructural concerns, as directly pointing out to their political underpinning. On the other hand, the You Stink! Movement, appeared as a grassroots civil organization to challenge the government paralysis under the garbage crisis, raising awareness on civil society contestation capacity and the political character of urban service provision. One can try and distinguish the seeds of radical urbanism through both models. Further, environmental and anti-corruption concerns were relayed through the political programs of other traditional parties, such as the Kataeb, during the 2016 election campaign. This manifests the success in the widespread and mainstream of new values among the population, necessarily acknowledged by political parties, that try capitalizing on it. Altogether, these organizations helped disseminating new values into systems of beliefs (environmental concerns, social impact) and organizational

models (secular, grassroots, multi sectorial), that constitute great contributor leading the way to facilitating the constitution an anti-GBWSP coalition.

3. Towards Emancipatory Urban Politics: the emergence of advocacy coalitions through widening processes

a. Transversal and multi-scalar advocacy-coalition building

An advocacy coalition progressively emerged from 2010's, to bring change and oppose the policy stability of the long-rooted structure of domination. This coalition reflects long-time stable economic parameters to which external factors –as the ones mentioned in the previous section- brought a window of opportunities that minor policy networks present in the policy sub-system seized to capitalize on the momentum and organize into a broader advocacy coalition group. The former now manifests through the alliances of diverse actors (non-profit, scholars, activists, local stakeholders) combining both a long-term minority coalition and their inclusion of new partakers to the coalition, brought through widening strategies to include new members. However, as firstly underlined, the coalition came to existence because of the presence of long term structural dominating features revealing a system of minority actors in the policy subsystem, already working in low-key these issues. These minority sub-system actors predating the advent of the coalition differentiate into two types: the ones whose interests are impeded by territorialization dynamics, and environmentally belief-driven ones.

High inequalities between a hyper-center and its peripheries are found to be more likely to generate social conflict (Ghiotti and Riachi, 2013). In the Lebanese context, precedent can be found of such socio-territorial malaise translating into social conflict. Following the hazards and litigations of the Qaraoun dam. The 1958 context was one of striking disparities and scarcities whereby an estimated 70% share of the population did not access running water (Ghiotti, 2013), creating early on a strong bias towards Lebanon's center, Beirut. The understanding of this socio-territorial challenges also demonstrates through Jumblatt's opposing vote to the passing of law no. 221. As such, groups whose interests are adversely impacted by territorialization politics and the development of center-targeted infrastructure and reform, preclude the Bisri opposition movement. Furthermore, in terms of environmental concerns, the Lebanon Eco Movement network, regrouping 60 Lebanese environmental minded nonprofits already existed previous to the Save the Bisri Valley coalition. However, it had not yet seized and incorporated the GBWSP issue to their advocacy work. Alongside, plural

environmental science scholars conducted individual studies on the project, discussing its risks, but only little coordinated their action and work (e.g. Tony Nemer, Ata Elias, Roland Riachi). Nevertheless, as different actors increasingly came together, mutually supporting their respective actions, and coordinating over them, they also attracted new supports.

For instance, as Fathi Chatila first started launching organizational meetings and to support his World Bank request for inspection, his actions for mobilization attracted Salim el Hoss attention. The latter provided his and his Nadwat Al Amal Al Watani movement endorsement to the cause. Looking back at Hoss's continuous historic political competition and rivalry with Hariri- challenging Hariri economic policies since 1992 and having to step down in the face of Hariri's victory in 2000- one can imagine that his support rather came out of opposition to a Hariri-led project. Regardless of underlining motives, Hoss partaking to public meetings against the GBWSP and contribution to Chatila's request for Inspection, still added to a growing collusion of interests backing the opposition of the project. Likewise, as Lebanon Eco Movement started monitoring the situation and coordinating with local action and urban scholars on the topic, the progressively growing civil society came to pick an interest in the GBWSP case. As a result, new civil society organizations, such as the You Stink! movement, born on the ground of similar demands, joined the action. As a matter of an example, Tarek Serhan, chief figure of the movement broadcasted his participation to the protest at the World Bank headquarters. Again, such participation can be framed as resulting from capitalization strategy, attempting to get a hold on a new cause, for someone whose own movement suffers splintering in the wake of diverging interests and agendas. Nevertheless, the You Stink movement support still brought a new perspective, in terms of secular, civilian and sectorial dimension, to the growing advocacy coalition.

Altogether, the argument put forth consists in acknowledging the role played by initial minority groups present in the policy sub-system, that managed to develop their support base across sectors, field and community boundaries, to constitute a broader and more cohesive advocacy coalition. Such advocacy coalition now brings together both environmental minded, motivated by social justice goals and politically driven partakers. However, as the Advocacy Coalition Framework originally theorizes the coalition-building process as based of the collusion of ideas, the GBWSP examples brings another nuanced dimension as to the collusion of interests underpinning the process.

b. <u>Jumping in scale: the role of competing knowledge production in social conflict</u>

Advocacy coalition mobilizes through belief-driven system and collude forces, to convert ideas into policy outcomes, disrupting an initial policy stability (Sabatier, 1988). Accordingly, ideas thus play a major role to the organization of an advocacy group. The production of knowledge to articulate and support these ideas appears all the more critical in the light of the constraints surrounding GBWSP policy discourse. Competing knowledge production, language and redefinition of the problem manifest as critical triggers to the coalition's growth in both scope and visibility. Because previous communication on the GBWSP tended to limit the project's stakes to scientific and technical infrastructural capacities, and the political understanding of its territorialization dynamics to sectarian ancestral divides, the anti-GBWSP advocacy coalition hold great stakes in the production of a competing policy knowledge, widening these former channels of understanding.

On the first hand, the advocacy coalition operated a shift in discourse away from sectarian lines, towards central-local, urban-rural and political-social dichotomies. This change in prism appears particularly interesting as it stresses on new belongings. It further enables a widening of the we-group. Furthermore, the most efficient scheme to operate a broadening of GBWSP policy scope is to initiate what Swyngedouw calls a jump in scale. In this case, such process implies extending the GBWSP understanding into a multidimensional one (social, environmental, political) to make of what was framed as a local issue, one of global concerns. Therefore, the anti-GBWSP advocacy coalition focused its discourse on the environmental, social and even cultural concerns triggered by the dam project. Accordingly, many communication from the Lebanon Eco Movement dwelt with the environmental risks affiliated to the project, in terms of pollution of the water, exposure to carcinogen substances and the impact of the dam on the river's bedrock. Paul Abi Rached, president of TERRE Liban environmental nonprofit, further questioned the contracted consulting firm capacity to assess the harm inflicted by the project on the surrounding biodiversity, as highlighting the project's location in a pine forest. These different concerns combine in Lebanon Eco Movement 2018 complain to the World Bank. As emphasizing such key dimension to the project, the coalition also operated a disentanglement of environmental matters from a restrictive local understanding, by stressing the circular and networked character of water provision, that supposes impacting its delivery zone, the GBA, in case of water toxic pollution. Likewise, Paul

Abi Rachid's call on biodiversity triggers another collective challenge, namely the common both environmental and cultural heritage of pine forests in Lebanon.

In addition to that, Roland Nassour's work brings light to the archeological remains present on project site, and threatened by the dam construction. Although most of the heritage at stake advocated for consisted in the Mar Musa Church, the mobilization proved salient enough to generate an investigation by French experts that identified 52 archeological sites on the GBWSP project area. The policy community proposed to relocate the identified patrimony of interests to another site, in order to secure their preservation. Although Nassour issued a public statement expressing his outrage and opposition to the initiative, the contentious enabled the redirection of policy attention towards broader concerns, involving common heritage thus a wider segment of stakeholders, and redefining in consequence the boundary of the we-group affected by the GBWSP.

The coalition discourse provides a new territorial definition to the impact zone of the GBWSP, involving common stakes and goods (environment and cultural heritage) by underlining the circular character of the concerned policy object. Indeed, stressing the fluidity of the issue, and subsequently the unfolding circularity of its problematic, coupled to the collective dimension of goods impacted by the GBWSP, increases mobilization around newly perceived common stakes. Such widening processes proved successful as the recent coverage by an international media (Asia Times) demonstrated, by stressing the geological seismic risks of the project as jeopardizing the neighboring state of Jordan and Israel (Tahmizian Meuse, 18.04.2019).

Finally, a look at the language mobilized by the coalition discourses proves informative to the understanding of its strategy. As previously mentioned, the anti-GBWSP coalition encompasses for actors of different type. Among which figure some scholars who have written on both the project location (Nemer, 2005) and adequate socio-environmental policies to alleviate scarcities in water provision (Yamout and El-Fadel, 2005). Their findings essentially consist in advice against the implementation of the Bisri dam at its current location, due to earthquake risks, and rather recommending a socio-environmental approach to water provision policy, by suggesting the use of seawater desalination, wastewater reclamation and other non-conventional water sources such as rainwater harvesting. Indeed, such variety of actors present in the coalition enables for them to observe both a technical rhetoric – speaking the language of the policy community- and one triggering emotions by stressing socio-economic concerns among their audience, through outreach actions (such as online communication, petition or public protest). Hence when communicating to raise support and mobilize civil society, the coalition rather

resorts to registers such as the loss of livelihood, that was granted only little visibility. Mobilizing a more emotional and accessible language allows the translation of GBWSP technicalities into specific social implications, and gives back visibility to locally impacted stakeholders, notably by including their testimony to the requests for the World Bank (Chatila, 2010).

c. Targeted scalar strategies: venue shopping and agenda setting

Emancipatory urban politics define as "*acquiring the power to produce urban environments in line with aspirations, needs, and desires to those inhabiting the space*" (Swyngedouw, 2003). As we have demonstrated that politics among GBWSP community policy can prove to be quite detached from their constituencies, the growth of the anti-GBWSP coalition symbolizes an attempt for the civil society to recover its hold on its urban political environment. Now turning to the coalition's actions to realize such goals, one can distinguish differentiated strategies depending upon the addressed actors. First and foremost, the World Bank, as the funder of the GBWSP, proves to be a strong focal point to the coalition actions. Indeed, two requests for inspection were filled, a protest was organized at their headquarters on March 4th 2019, and the World Bank appears to be mentioned at high frequency in the coalition's advocacy work. One can explain such strong focus on World Bank-targeted actions by the very existence of remedy procedure made available by the institution. The World Bank describes its Inspection Panel as "*independent mechanisms for people and communities who believe they have been adversely affected by a World Bank funded project*" (source: World Bank). Subsequently, Fathi Chatila first addressed the panel in 2010 putting forth environmental, increase in water tariff and overall impact on Chouf farmer livelihood concerns he thought were not adequately addressed by the project.Although the Inspection Panel conducted an investigation to address such claims, Chatila and the overall coalition remains unsatisfied with their answers, leading the Lebanon Eco Movement to fill another Inspection request in August 2018, arguing alternatives to the dam project providing better solutions to socio-environmental concerns had not been inspected. These mechanisms display processes of public representation, thereby a civil individual or group files a request on behalf of local stakeholders, to impact a policy's frame of understanding and convert their ideas into policy outcomes. However, addressing an international institution to influence a project implemented in tight partnership with public institutions (the Government of Lebanon and the MoEW), is also symptomatic of venue shopping strategies. Venue-shopping mechanisms characterize as strategies to challenge a monopoly in one venue, by seeking an audience in another one (Cairney, 2012). In other words, by taking action with the World Bank,

the coalition is expecting to challenge the government's political establishment in the implementation of a project they have secured full domination over. This indirect process to tackle a matter of public policy also reveals lack of policy conflict solving mechanisms, issues of accountability and representativeness in Lebanese governance, orienting local and advocacy coalitions to rather engage with the World Bank instead of the government. Furthermore, all other efforts undergone by the anti-GBWSP coalition, using extensive online communication through social medias (Facebook), new citizen media (The Beirut Agenda, EJAtlas, GlobalVoices.org), and collaboration with other coalitions (such as Save Beirut Heritage and the Waste Management Coalition), contributes to widespread of awareness and mobilization, as well as the re-appropriation of the project's story-telling through an original coverage. Hence, provoking new media attention appears as a medium to disseminate a competing narrative to the technical frame adopted so far, and generates enough attention to put the topic on the political agenda. As of yet, the coalition has succeeded in launching a new approach to the project, as shows more nuanced and critical newspaper article on the subject (Baaklani, S and Mukhamedov, A.). However, one can still be quite skeptical of their effect regarding the political agenda. Generating a growth of interest among constituencies is expected to make political figures seize the topic. However, none major opposition to the project has been expressed so far by a Parliament member or government official, thus demonstrating some limits to the political agenda setting capabilities of this civilian movement. Further, one can note that, although advocating for a more comprehensive approach to the spatial socio-environmental implications underpinning the GBWSP, voicing presumed local concerns, most of the mobilization forces occurred with a predominant urban bias.

Conclusion

All in all this essay has undergone an analysis of the GBWSP, aiming at disentangling the different interests at stake and their respective strategies to further them. Although initially framed as a highly technical infrastructural project, involving a limited number of participants qualified to partake the discussion, this reasoning has underlined the social environmental and mostly political dimensions of the dam. The GBWSP is revealing of centralization and cooptation processes, that show both in the policy decision-making, communication and outcomes. As such, this infrastructural policy appears to be everything but strictly technical and even less neutral. The GBWSP policy is instrumentalized to further territorialization and metropolization dynamics, reinforcing an existing territorial divide between loser and winners

and strengthening the deepening of uneven socio-political conditions. However, the interdependencies between the territories of the BMLWA appear to be purposely exacerbated, oriented and captured to serve a central urban bias, intersecting with a strong political power – territorial nexus. Nevertheless, a temporal approach points out to structural changes in Lebanese politics, strengthening civil society organizational capacities and favoring the collusion of minority subsystem policy actors into a broader coalition. These factors challenge the political establishment's policy monopoly over the GBWSP, by widening processes, redefining the environmental and social boundaries of the contented policy. Therefore, the GBWSP appears to balance between policy continuity and change, through the enactment of new frames of understanding, belief systems and narratives. Nevertheless, the analysis of the coalition's preeminent actors' socio-economic profile, and their strategies, leads us to slightly reframe the initial understanding of the GBWSP policy problem as opposing the interests of the center to ones of the periphery. The urban mobilization symptomizes a s well a social and political struggle, opposing the reshaping of urban environments metabolism by the ruling of private both local and international powerful interests, through hermetic processes, prevailing over local social and environmental concerns. Mobilizing several scales, and intersecting multiple interest, the emerging advocacy coalition attempts to impact the GBWSP socioecological process of change, by achieving Emancipatory Urban Politics. As such, this essay should conclude on Swyngedouw's thought: "*Territorial and networked spatial scales are never set but are perpetually disputed, redefined, reconstituted and restructured in terms of their extent, content, relative importance and interrelations*" (Swyngedouw, 2013).

Bibliography

Ghiotti, S. "La Patrimonialisation des fleuves et des rivières. Une comparaison France Liban". *Mondes en développement* (2009) 1 : 145, 73-91. ISSN 0302-3052

Ghiotti, S and Riachi, R. « La gestion de l'eau au Liban : une réforme confisquée ? » *Études rurales* (2013) 192 : 135 152, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43948362

Ghiotti, S and Molle, F. « Vers de nouveaux grands barrages en Méditerranée ? » *Maghreb-Machrek* (2008) 196 : 1-16

Harb-El-Kak, M. « Politiques urbaines dans la banlieue sud de Beyrouth » *Les Cahiers du CERMOC* (1996) 14

Kunigk, Emmanuelle. « Policy transformation and implementation in the water secotr in Lebanon. The role of politics". Water Issue Study Group, School of Oriental and African Studies, Occasional Paper n°27, (1999)

Sabatier, P. "An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Changes and the role of Policy-Oriented Learning Therein", *Policy Sciences*, (1988) 21, 2-3: 129-68

Swyngedouw, E. "Urban Political Ecology, Justice and the Politics of Scale". Antipode (2003)

Verdeil, E. « L'eau et les réformes des services urbains dans le monde arabe : au-delà de la question de la privatisation ». L'eau et la ville, du Maghreb au Moyen-Orient, conférence organisée par le SEDET et l'Université de Tlemcen, Oct 2010, Paris, France

Verdeil, E. "Infrastructure crises in Beirut and the struggle to (not) reform the Lebanese State". *Arab Studies Journal*, Arab Studies Institute, 2018, XVI (1), pp.84-112. ffhttps://tadweenpublishing.com/pages/arab-studies-journal-1ff. ffhalshs-01854027f

Yamout, G. and El-Fadel, M. "An Optimization Approach for Multi-Sectoral Water Supply Management in the Greater Beirut Area". *Water Resources Management* (2005) 19: 791–812 DOI: 10.1007/s11269-005-3280-6

Yamout, G. and Jamali, D. "A critical assessment of a proposed public private partnership (PPP) for the management of water services in Lebanon". *Water Resources Management* (2007) 21:611–634 DOI 10.1007/s11269-006-9033-3

Reports

The Law on the Organization of the Water Sector, The Republic of Lebanon, The Parliament. Law no 221/2000 (26/05/2000)

Complaint Against Greater Beirut Water Project (Litani/Bisri), Fathi Chatila (September 2010)

Greater Beirut Water Supply Project Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, *Dar al-Handasah*. Council for Development and Reconstruction (August 2014)

Political Mapping in Lebanon, Ahead of the 2018 Elections, *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* (2018)

Media Ownership Monitor (MOM), *Samir Kassir Foundation SKeyes Center for* Media and Cultural Freedom and *Reporters without Borders* (December 2018)

Books

Vitz, M. *A city on a lake: urban political ecology and the growth of Mexico City*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2018.

Wildavsky, A. *The art and craft of policy analysis*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1980.

Periodicals

Baaklani, Susanne. «Barrage de Bisri, le non catégorique des habitants et des écologistes », *L'Orient-le-Jour*. (05/03/2019)

Baaklani, Susanne. «Jusqu'où peuvent aller les mouvements de contestation actuels », *L'Orient-le-Jour*. (18/12/2018)

Baaklani, Susanne. « Usine Polluantes le long du Litani, la justice se met en branle », L'Orient-le-Jour.

Mukhamedov, Anton. "Bisri Dam Plan Causing Ripples", *The Daily Star*. 11/10/2018

Mukhamedov, Anton. "World Bank's Bisri Dam decision draws fire", *The Daily Star*. (19/12/2018)

Tahmizian Meuse, A. « World Bank dam will weight on Lebanon quake zone" Asia Times (18 /04 /2019) https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/04/article/world-bank-dam-will-sit-in-lebanon-quake-zone/

Website

GlobalVoices.org, Blog: "*Inside the Lebanese campaign to stop a World Bank-funded dam project*" by Hassan Chamoun (13/04/2019)

> https://globalvoices.org/2019/04/13/inside-the-lebanese-campaign-to-stop-a-world-bank-funded-dam-project/

World Bank, official website "Projects & Operations." *Projects*, GBWSP

> http://projects.worldbank.org/P103063/lb--greater-beirut-water-supply?lang=en

Environmental Justice Atlas, "Conflict" *Bisri Dam*

> https://ejatlas.org/conflict/bisri-dam

Save the Bisri Valley Campaign, official Facebook page

> https://www.facebook.com/BisriValley/

The Beirut Report, "Environment and Public Space"

> http://www.beirutreport.com/category/environment-public-space

Lebanon Eco Movement, official website:

> http://www.lebanonecomovement.org/

Change.org, "The National Campaign to Protect the Bisri Valley" *Save the Bisri Valley*

> https://www.change.org/p/world-bank-save-the-bisri-valley-%D8%A3%D9%86%D9%82%D8%B0%D9%88%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AC-%D8%A8%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%8A-2a82386f-15fe-49ae-b1bb-a55e12a17b39