

ABSTRACT:

This study provides a comparative analysis of the situation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, during the pre-Oslo and post-Oslo periods. 40 open interviews with respondents from different political horizons were carried out. The respondents belong to several groups. The first group includes respondents from the NGOs. The second group includes activist respondents and experts on NGOs. Individuals from the third group work in Palestinian Authority institutions dealing with NGOs. The interviews were mainly conducted in and around Ramallah and Al-Bireh.

The chosen methodology carries out a diachronic comparison between the pre- and post-Oslo periods chapter by chapter. This has been done because differences and contradictions have appeared in the study groups concerning the critique of foreign funding, both American and European, and specifically criticism of the idea that foreign funding is given from the rich to the poor. This directionality may be seen as a tool of power that can be used by the funder to identify ways of using such a tool according to its interests, taking advantage of the situation of the occupied areas, which are poor and non-sovereign, which conditions their search for funding.

Foreign funding started flowing to the occupied Palestinian territories before the Oslo Accords in small amounts, based mainly on relationships between individuals on both sides, without any conditions or constraints on the funding process, but also with no impartiality or transparency, and in the absence of supervision of local and international bodies on the functioning of the NGO beneficiaries.

Over the years, the notion of NGOs involved with Palestine has evolved, from being related to struggle and resistance in the pre-Oslo Accord period, to being related to coexistence nowadays. The NGOs, moreover, became sources of employment with salaries higher than the local average wage. This led to imposing stricter international supervision over the NGOs' work. The nature of the NGOs also changed from being organizations that depend on programs and unattached money in the pre-Oslo Accord period, to organizations that depend on specific projects. In the earlier period, the funder was looking about for a local recipient. As

dependence on foreign funding became institutionalized, the funder started dominating the follower, intending this domination to play a fundamental role in promoting liberalism, peace and sometimes, popular nonviolent resistance.

One notes problems with the practices of the Palestinian Authority because of its lack of true sovereignty and thus fails to exercise any real supervision over recipient NGOs. Consequently, Palestinian NGOs came to be split according to their funding sources, and the number of NGOs greatly increased in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, because of the PA's policies of neo-liberal receptiveness and lack of supervision.

Based on this study's empirical research and analysis, the last chapter describes a series of results. Each part of the conclusion would provide the basis for further research in the political, economic, cultural and developmental areas.

The main results are the following:

1. The absence of a local committee that oversees the process of funding and puts it within a suggested local plan for implementation by the Palestinian Authority and the NGOs.
2. The absence of Palestinian decision-making and of a local policy which sets priorities and plans intended to control the funding process as a challenge to funders, rather than the existing struggle over funding sources, which permits funders to choose whomever and whatever they want, based on their interests and not in accordance with a comprehensive national economic policy.
3. The absence of political power that motivates the sectors of society to put pressure on those organizations in favor of increased transparency and sound local economic policies. This is not to say that the contradiction of development under occupation can be solved.

The study, based on its research and conclusions, ends by raising questions, such as:

1. Why not to establish local, community-level committees which question the international institutions and the NGOs, regarding the amount of funds they received and how they spent them, since it comes and is spent in the name of Palestinian people?

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2. How did the international financial crisis of 2007/2008 affect the NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip?
3. What are the differences in attitudes among the donors and what are their approaches after the international financial crisis in comparison to their attitudes and approaches before the crisis, especially since it is logical to assume that a financial crisis would lead to a reduction in funding for others, raising the following final question: why did funding continue despite the crisis?