

The Intifada and the Aid Industry: The Impact of the New Liberal Agenda on the Palestinian NGOs

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The outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000 marks a return for the Palestinians to a period of direct anti-colonial struggle against the Israeli occupation. As the intifada attempts to figure conditions of possibility for Palestinian independence, it poses practical and theoretical challenges to researchers and practitioners alike.

The intifada directly addresses Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as their international non-governmental organization (INGO) and donor counterparts. The uprising beckons these organizations to intervene and respond to the humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza; to act as a witness in the face of Israel's massive military offensive against the Palestinian population; and to support the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. In making this invocation, the Palestinian uprising provides the occasion, which unequivocally exposes the previously latent, manifold contradictions, and reveals the tensions in their relationship with the donors. The intifada exposes a disconnection between NGOs and popular movements in Palestine. It reveals Palestinian NGO activists as not able to articulate between their own aspirations for Palestinian freedom and independence and the overarching national agenda. This in turn raises complicated questions: how does one conceptualize and explain the relationship between NGOs, INGOs and donors, and what are the most important structural relations and historically contingent factors that have shaped and constituted this relationship?

This article will attempt to shed some light about the paradoxes illuminated by the uprising. Based on empirical research and interviews conducted before the outbreak of the second intifada and during it, we analyze in the first section the role of the NGOs during this intifada and the impact of the aid industry in shaping this role. More broadly the role of NGOs cannot be understood without unraveling the nature of the relationship between Palestinian NGOs (PNGOs), INGOs and donors, as set within and shaped by processes internal to Palestinian society, as well as mechanisms and structural relations within the aid industry. This will be developed in the second section.

I. The Intifada and the Problematic Modes of Action of the Palestinian NGOs

The outbreak of the second intifada is nothing short of a collective act of resistance against Israel's occupation and its colonial system of control. During seven years of the Oslo, Israel's exercise of control over the Palestinians not only deepened, but metamorphosed into an apartheid regime of checkpoints, permit system, bypass roads, and settlements, encircling and besieging Palestinian cantons of 'territoriality'.¹

By 2003, however, as the Palestinian uprising enters its third year, a palpable sense of crisis is evident. Not only has Israel's siege on Palestinian towns, its military invasions and its reoccupation of the West Bank, exacted a heavy humanitarian, social and economic toll, but disquiet looms over the achievements of the uprising. Behind closed doors questions are being raised about the capacity of the intifada to realize Palestinian political aspirations, given the variance in tactics and strategies espoused by different factions and the difficulties of harmonizing societal energies and harnessing them into a single end. This is not to mention the colonial stratagems of the Sharon government's and its use of armed provocations, particularly its assassinations of Palestinian leaders, not only as a way to escalate the conflict, but also to create havoc within Palestinian internal politics, in an attempt to thwart Palestinian national unity.

There are three separate challenges facing Palestinian society today. A consideration of each will delineate the disjunctures and antagonisms within the NGO sphere that are have a bearing on the current crisis, as well as illustrate the overarching issues framing NGO, INGO and donor relations in Palestine.

Leadership of Intifada

Firstly, from the outset, the intifada has been weakened by the absence of a unified leadership, a consequence of among other things, the decision of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to shun the command role in order to avoid the international repercussions of asserting formal leadership over the uprising.² In this context, a central paradox has been illuminated. While Palestinian NGOs have undertaken very successful forms of professional action—providing the

most accurate and up-to-date information on the number of Palestinian injuries and fatalities, the damage caused by Israeli military operations, as well as chronicling human rights violations—however, NGOs have not developed a synergy with the political forces (whether political parties, Islamic and National Committee for the Intifada or unions) or the local population. Therefore, while NGOs have used their international recognition for advocacy and to make available strategic information about the, locally they have contributed little to harnessing society's energies during a period of national struggle, nor have they had a significant impact on the direction, or lack thereof, of the uprising. While the PNGOs Network played a major role in organizing an international popular protection (in the form of international civil missions), they was not be able to work with these missions to develop non-violent forms of resistance.

This raises a number of questions. Why have PNGOs not taken on a more active leadership role during this intifada, by mobilizing the popular classes and organizing collective resistance efforts? Why for instance, has there been so little vocal support from Palestinian non-governmental organizations for the local and regional boycott of Israeli goods; and similarly, why have these organizations not attempted to strengthen community initiatives and build popular committees to sustain the socio-economic steadfastness population as during the first intifada? Why is it that Palestinian NGOs have contributed to the vacuum that has enveloped the grassroots since the uprising began?

Two examples will serve to illustrate the complex issues and processes that are bound up within this observation.

As indicated, since the beginning of the intifada, NGOs have generally been absent from the popular demonstrations that have been taking place in the West Bank and Gaza. After a long hiatus, however, the NGOs played a major role in mobilizing the population when the Israeli forces closed the road leading to the Bir Zeit University. Many organizations used their email lists and took out advertisements in the local newspapers to mobilize people for a demonstration from Ramallah to the new Surda checkpoint blocking the road leading to Bir Zeit. In light of the success of their mobilization efforts, one NGO leader declared in, *La Croix*, a French Newspaper, henceforth NGOs should impose their position to the National and Islamic High Committee (NIHC) of the intifada: "our activities are *independent* from Marwan Barghouthi [the leader of the NIHC]. It is our pressure, however, which has forced him to take civil society into account...He does not consider us as an entire part of his committee. We signed the press release. But *we did not take a position on the political aspect like the call for Sharon to resign*. Inside of the committee

our voice is well heard" (emphasis added).³

This example underscores the apolitical discourse of the NGOs—a discourse striking in its striving to maintain a 'neutral' position on a national political question in the middle of an anti-colonial nationalist struggle. At issue here is the way NGOs leaders confuse between the 'political' and the 'national' and recoil from the national agenda under the pretext of refusing to engage in 'politicized' activities.

This transformation is not product of the internal process that the PNGOs undergone but to an external one. This baffling observation only becomes intelligible when one recognizes that the aid industry constitutes what Foucault has called a 'regime of truth'. The Palestinian case reveals that it is the banality of aid systems and their 'conceptual maps', which envision the social field as neatly divided up into political and civil societies, subsumed under and embedded within public sphere, which is in need of questioning. Retreating from the challenge of re-articulating this social map, Palestinian NGOs have internalized a conceptual vision, which conflates between the 'national' and the 'political'. The intifada provides the occasion, which reveals the absurdity of this vision given the social reality of the occupied territories, illustrating the manner in which the internalization of this vision positions PNGOs in a contradictory and antagonistic relationship to the Palestinian national struggle against the Israeli occupation.

At the same time in which NGOs are going to great lengths to demonstrate their political neutrality, these organizations exhibit more and more of an internal politicization in their alliance building, an individualization of power and charismatic authority. For instance, the communiqué released on the 7th October 2000, entitled "Unifying the efforts for Ending the Occupation and Realizing Independence: All the efforts for Supporting the Popular Intifada for the Independence," was circulated among NGOs and political parties. The petition, however, requested the endorsement of individual leaders rather than organizations. This reinforces the argument that these leaders do not regard the NGOs as institution that have a role to play on national issues.

An additional example elucidates further set of contradictions. On 19 June 2002, a petition was published in *al-Quds*, a daily Palestinian newspaper, signed by academics, public figures, and many prominent NGO leaders. The signatories launched a critique of suicide bombings and called for a reconsideration of operations that target civilians: "We see that these bombings do not contribute towards achieving our national project which calls for freedom and independence. On the contrary, they strengthen the enemies of peace on the Israeli side and give Israel's aggressive government under Sharon the excuse to continue harsh war against our people."

Released in the direct aftermath of the Israeli invasion of April, during which Israeli forces re-occupied the West Bank, the petition was intended as a way to spark an internal debate on Palestinian resistance- and hence raise the issue of the inconsistencies between the means and aims of the intifada. However, the debate quickly fizzled out. The credibility of the petition was questioned and the initiative was critiqued on a number of counts, in general it was read as an affront to those, who have sacrificed for the resistance. In this regard, the petition met with reproaches and disapprobation⁴ One of the reasons for this, as Azmi Bishara has argued, is, in a moment of intense national crisis, as the one in which Palestinians now find themselves, it is simply not enough to critique resistance practices- but it is incumbent upon activists, intellectuals and political forces to also promote alternatives.⁵

By critiquing armed resistance without a sustained critique and strategic analysis of the occupation- upon which to firmly advance a viable practical and theoretical alternative mode of resistance, the NGO activists and intellectuals left themselves open to counteract and de-legitimation. In contrast to the first intifada, when activists, intellectuals and community leaders were embedded within the popular struggle and bound by mass based national movement, the incident of the petition reveals much about the location of Palestinian NGOs today within the social and political fields. The petition exposes these actors as *spectators* in the intifada, unable to make the necessary linkages and *articulate* between their own aspirations for Palestinian freedom and independence, the objectives of their organizations that promote democracy and social justice and the overarching national agenda and strategies of the intifada. As such, it also reveals the NGOs as isolated and lacking an organic base in society.

This observation is inseparable from a number of processes and the overall transformation of Palestinian Non-governmental organizations since the early 1990's, concomitant with their entry into the aid industry. Since the Oslo process began, and the Palestinian 'state-building' exercise got underway, with the intervention of donor countries and their peace-building initiatives, a new space has been constructed for Palestinian NGOs and civic institutions. Paradoxically, however, this has been accompanied by a dis-embedding of local organizations from linkages within society and their footing in popular movements. It is also a process marred by fractures and disjunctures, as the 'national' agenda has been re-conceptualized and conflated with 'politics' and hence redefined as too politicized for 'civic' organizations.

These examples provides a brief glance at the problematic of NGOs in Palestine, the complex issues touched upon here will be further explored and ex-

plained in the conceptual framework outlined below and the ensuing chapters.

Defining 'Development' in the Midst of an Anti-Colonial Struggle

The second major challenge facing Palestinian society today concerns the task of defining development in the midst of an anti-colonial struggle.

The interim period was perceived by many donors and international organizations not as 'peace-process' but more aptly as the beginning of decolonization. The situation in the Palestinian Territories was seen then as a post-conflict area and not conflict area. This has a tremendous implication on the conception of the aid industry in conceptual and procedural levels. In the first level the vision of post-conflict assistance become linear, when in fact conflict is invariably cyclical. In procedural level the donors agencies and international organizations actors want then of being a 'neutral' mediator which ignore root causes of the conflict and its colonial nature.

Aid, then follows the modality of colonial control- thus within Palestine as a new site of 'peace-building' the international order is superimposed over the colonial order. Brynen explains, new peace-building efforts have been devised which not only entail, regularly established patterns of diplomacy and military peacekeeping, "but also a variety of social and economic objectives and instrumentalities, underpinned by substantial commitments of financial support."⁶

The problem that results in practice is that the peace-building assistance, which buttresses a wide range of interventions, including supporting the start up costs to establish the Palestinian National Authority, infrastructure projects and a range of social as well as economic initiatives, is based on the assumption that the conflict is ending, when as we have witnessed in Palestine, the conflict has renewed. In the NGOs level this perception shape the nature of the NGOs' programs and projects. These become developmental projects without often any emergency plan in case of the accentuation of the national conflict. The Majority of the NGOs was shown incapability to articulate the civic with politics or to separate the 'politics' from the 'national'. Their actions betray a lack of awareness of the fact that they are in an occupied land.

It is quite clear that the intifada has shattered the veneer of the Oslo process and the euphoria of donor projects that projected Palestinian political as well as social and economic development as linear processes, all the while masking the transformations on the ground and the Israeli practices that have obstructed Palestinian development options and political independence. During the Interim period, Israeli settlements increased by sixty-five percent⁷ and Israeli's mechanisms of control, its by-pass roads, closures and control of border crossings, continued, enabling Israel to a-priori restrict Pales-

tinian development strategies and unilaterally and preemptively alter political realities in advance of the final status talks.⁸

With the outbreak of the intifada, Palestinian governmental, non-governmental and international development agencies have been grappling with the task of responding to the looming humanitarian crisis, the potential economic collapse and physical destruction caused by Israeli military operations and the siege imposed by the occupation power. According to the World Bank report the GDP per capita shrink 50% and 60% of the population live under the poverty line and the lost that the Palestinian economy undergone is \$5.4 million.⁹

Confronted with an influx of emergency assistance, Palestinian NGOs have also faced an additional challenge, the need to maintain a modicum of space from which to define Palestinian development needs and develop strategies for the medium term, while retaining a focus on the dialectic relationship between socio-economic development and resistance.

The lessons of the Oslo period have not gone unheeded, Palestinians now look upon aid somewhat more warily, aware of the way donor assistance can undercut and prefigure local development strategies, options and vision, often according to donor practical and political agendas. For Palestinians the immediate concern is one of priorities, and the issue is as follows: should donor emergency relief simply be channeled into short-term efforts, such as food aid, that alleviate the immediate humanitarian suffering, but also bear the costs of Israel's anti-insurgency war? Or can aid support more proactive strategies, linking socio-economic development to forms of resistance, such as creating new enabling governmental structures, or promoting alternative forms of grassroots community empowerment? Just as important, from the Palestinian perspective is the 'voice' of the donors. Are donors going to bear the financial costs of Israeli military campaigns as well as the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinian people, in the process condoning Israeli actions? Or can donors use their role as third party to penalize and dissuade Israeli state violence and address the root causes of the conflict?

Palestinian organizations such as the Development Studies Programme (DSP) at Bir Zeit University have been theorizing alternative development strategies that re-engage with national resistance efforts and reconceptualize the relationship between development and resistance. A recent study commissioned by DSP envisions the creation of new linkages between the PNA, NGOs and grassroots in order to facilitate resource mobilization, within a project of collective action, thus addressing both the basic needs of the population, while also strengthening the steadfastness and

resistance of the mass populace.

But a brief survey of Palestinian attempts to apply such innovative strategies to donor emergency assistance programmes exposes the tensions underwriting the relationship between PNGOs and donor agencies, as well as underscoring some of the limits of 'partnership.' For instance, in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion and reoccupation of the West Bank, in April 2002, donors and aid agencies were focusing on the massive physical destruction and damage to infrastructure. PNGOs, cognizant of the human suffering, responded by urging the donors to recognition the humanitarian effects of the Israeli invasion. The NGOs not only wanted the donors to recognize the grave human rights violations committed by Israel, but also to acknowledge the moral and legal responsibility of the occupying power as defined in the Fourth Geneva Convention, which have been brazenly contravened, as Israeli anti-insurgency campaigns uses forms of collective punishment and assault the very structures of collective existence in an attempt to force Palestinians into submission.

NGO activists hoped that if the donors acknowledged the gravity of the humanitarian crisis, on the one hand, the donors could confirm the need for political intervention, on the other hand, they could support broader development strategies to empower the Palestinian people in their resistance to the occupation. Yet as a woman's activist and health practitioner explains, the donors were very quick to 'co-opted' the humanitarian argument and reduce it, in both scope and intent, to a narrow focus on 'food aid'. It is no coincidence that this is exactly in line with the vision of the World Bank which calls about donor agencies to focus their emergency assistance to the Palestinians on 'priority' areas such as budget support for the PNA, support for basic services and support for welfare schemes. The welfare support includes, "providing *jobs, cash and food* through multiple channels ranging from UNRWA, Ministry of Social Affairs and the municipalities to a wide variety of NGOs."¹⁰

This example illustrates one of the constraints NGOs come up against as they attempt to harness the support of donor and aid agencies and direct this 'assistance' into local development strategies that have been defined by PNGOs. At issue is the antagonism and conflict that arises when donors possess their own contrary set of interests. The intifada, as a moment of renewed anti-colonial nationalist struggle, is precisely the moment that reveals the limits of donors support. Faced with the Palestinian struggle for their collective national rights, aid agencies have opted for dispensing controversial food aid, devoid of any meaningful support for the national rights of the Palestinian people, and invariably leaving the root causes of the crisis in place. As such the uprising provides the occasion, which renders visible the

interests and agendas that underwrite donor-NGO relations, enabling one to observe the effects on PNGOs. Conflicting interests represent one of the central dynamics that underpin the relationship between NGO, INGO and donors.

The Role of the Witness: Raising Palestinian Rights to the International Arena

The current Intifada also represents a unique moment to observe the modes of moral-political action of the international NGOs, humanitarian organizations and donors during a quasi-war period, as well as the interaction between them and the Palestinian NGOs, especially given that during the peace process both sets of organizations withdrew from the national-political question, including the reality of the occupation. We find in Palestinian Territories different forms of humanitarian actions: passive intervention (international committee of Red Cross, UNRWA), the humanitarian action which combines intervention with the duty of witness (MSF, Oxfam, etc.) and finally the new form of activism with is a popular protection of the population under occupation (Civil missions, the International Solidarity Movement, Ta'aush, phr- Israel, etc.).

From the international organizations (INGOs) side, the Intifada has revealed their incapability to confirm themselves as witnesses, in a period of crisis and war. In comparison to the solidarity model of the first Intifada, the synergy between local and international organizations has been slow to develop. In this Intifada, few of the INGOs remaining in the Palestinian territories were acting as solidarity groups. The majority was closer to the model of the professionalized INGOs. However, the issue is not that all INGOs must function as solidarity groups, but rather the manner in which they articulate each of these aspects, when necessary. Some organizations in health sector, such as Italian INGOs are highly professionalized, and thus they are able to receive bids from EC for health projects. But when it comes to being a witness to a human crisis as in Palestine, they fail to be here to document what is going on or this speaks on behalf of the events (and local NGOs) to their representatives and the press of their own country. Even the international organizations which are known by their focus on the duty of witness like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) suggest the neutrality concerning the current conflict.¹¹

II. The Palestinian NGOs

For a few decades, a hot debate has been waging in the Palestinian territories, as well as in other Arab countries, regarding the issue of agenda setting. Within this debate that the question of 'agendas' is usually posed in terms of an opposition between "local" agenda(s) and that of others, often those of the "West." Sometimes

socially and politically contentious topics turn into a discussion about agenda priorities. On many occasions, Palestinian National Authority (PNA) officials have considered sectors like human rights and democracy, and gender, as over-funded and a response to donor priorities. An uncritical emulation of donor agendas is criticized, not only by PNA officials, but also by some intellectuals who consider it as politically serving the interest of the enemies. In June 1999, a crisis between NGOs and the PNA erupted concerning funding, and led to the creation of Ministry of NGO Affairs. NGOs are often regarded by the PNA with suspicion for two reasons: firstly, because of their foreign ties; secondly, because their activities sometime substitute for state service provisions, thus reducing state control over resources and services.

In this context, This article began as a research project inquiring into the ways in which external actors influence Palestinian NGOs' development policies and their promotion of democratization, as well as examining the capacity of Palestinian NGOs to contribute to the elaboration of global agendas through transnational activism and global conferences. Yet, as the empirical investigation for this project proceeded, we became aware that an investigation of the sites where the 'global' and the 'local' intersect and become intertwined is inseparable from an analysis of the effects that new transnational relations, specifically the aid system, have on local social formations. This is to say that local actors and social structures are not always already pre-given, but are transformed as they are drawn into new transnational relations, as they seek to negotiate their place within the aid industry and their relations with donors and international NGOs.¹²

Our central premise, therefore, is that there is a restructuring of knowledge and practices and a new process of elite formation underway in the Palestinian NGO sector today. Examining the agenda setting process between donors and their local recipients by investigating the relationships between donors, INGOs and Palestinian NGOs and exploring the encounters between global trends and the local society is essential to chronicle the emergence of what we termed a 'globalized Palestinian elite', composed of the leaders of NGOs, and the local leaders of international NGOs. This elite is largely composed of new urban middle class activists that emerged in the 1970-80's, which led the popular movement of the first Intifada, we suggest that they can be increasingly characterized as a *globalized elite* due to their connectivity to international NGOs, actors and agendas.¹³

In the literature much has been written on the way salaried positions in the NGO sector attract skilled and educated individuals, often to the detriment of the public sector. The notion of elite used here is much broader

and includes the way in which the rise of a new social formation disrupts the embeddedness of local organizations within social local and international networks, concomitant with the rise of the neo-liberal paradigm, which transforms the relationship between the individual and social institutions. These changes not only have a direct bearing on collective action, but also reconfigure the ways subordinate classes are incorporated into emerging state-society relations. These transformations are intrinsically linked to three complex processes.

Firstly, there was a fundamental shift in the political economy of aid to Palestinian NGOs in the early 1990's. Internationally, this moment coincided with a significant transformation in the distribution of aid; solidarity support between northern and southern NGOs withered and was replaced by the advent of bilateral and multilateral relations between SNGOs and European as well as North American governments and development agencies. Regionally and locally, this period coincided with the 1991 Gulf war and the onset of the Madrid peace talks, through which Palestine's geo-political status was reconfigured and the West Bank and Gaza Strip reinscribed as a site of 'peace-making'.

These developments must be understood as part and parcel of the Arab world's integration into unipolar world system globalization, both as a process and as a project.

It is worthwhile to reflect upon the meaning that meaning that *globalization* has taken on within the experience of modernity in the Arab world. The mid-1980's brought a harsh economic downturn in most of the non-producing oil countries, resulting in many of these nations acquiring loans from the World Bank. Through this process these countries were integrated into a neo-liberal order; many of these nations had to implement Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), privatize state industries, and reduce social spending. At the same time, following the collapse of the former Soviet Union the Arab countries were incorporated more firmly into the Western sphere of influence. With the fall of the Soviet regime, Arab leverage with the United States was reduced and Arab states became much more dependent on Western financial and military assistance. Furthermore, the 1991 Gulf war consolidated the hegemony of the United States in the region. Therefore, in its political and economic moorings, globalization has been associated with a feeling of frustration and a sense of powerlessness in the face of structural transformations that have increased the vulnerability of the region to economic and political actors external to the Middle East.¹⁴

Secondly, the shift in the political economy of aid to NGOs in Palestine created new internal forms of social and political capital, as well as new forms of exclusion. It is essential to recognize that the availability of new forms of bilateral and multilateral assistance to NGOs

induced a state of competition between Palestinian organizations. This resulted in a struggle for organizational survival, between the urban middle class activists in the NGOs and the traditional elite in the charitable societies and grassroots leadership within the committees. Western donor funding introduced new criteria of funding and new conditions for dispersing aid, this established a hierarchy among organizations in terms of access to funding, and invariably it was the charitable societies and popular committees which lost out and were subsequently marginalized. Therefore, just as there was a reduction in the overall availability of funding, there was also a concentration of funds within a few highly competent and professional organizations.

As a result of this logic of competition, introduced by new sources of funding, new cleavages have emerged. The middle class actors have overturned the old elite of the voluntary charitable societies and represent an emerging social force. Moreover, internal divisions such as urban/rural, pro-Oslo/against, English/Arabic speakers, professionalized technocratic/militant activist, have been reproduced and become more pronounced. These divisions represent markers, which reflect and index the process out of which this new elite is emerging.

Thirdly, the entry of local NGOs into aid channels involves a process of new subject formation as well as changes in the conceptual and institutional foundation of NGO, as local organizations or incorporated a new 'modernity'—a heightened state of socio-economic differentiation mediated and facilitated by aid. NGOs represent fragmentary sites; they are positioned locally, within development channels and outside their own borders. As such, NGO actors' knowledge and practices are the result of a *complex subject formation*, and a negotiation of these different positions.¹⁵ In this regard, the notion of globalized elite refers to a type of transnational subjective formation, in which local actors' actions are foregrounded by debates, development paradigm and international standards, which are not bound in their local context.

In one sense, this suggests that a more complex notion of NGO-donor relations is needed. The notion of dichotomous donor-NGO relations, which is usually assumed in investigations of agenda setting, is challenged by the way in which both sets of actors occupy and move within the same local spaces as well as international sites, particularly global forums and UN conferences. Secondly and more importantly, this transnational subject formation alerts as to new disruptions, as well as a process of disembedding and disassociation which accompany neo-liberalism and its focus on 'empowering' the individual to fend for him/herself, in the face of reduced government services and increased economicability within social life. It is precisely this logic

that underpins the historical shift among the activists within the Palestinian NGO sphere, from their role as nexus of the popular movement of the first intifada, to their role today as missionaries preaching the importance of advocacy, workshops and training programs. As Qassoum argued the advocacy approach, arrived on the global scale to: “put an end to mass social movements, dismantle the “triad affinity” between the intellectual, the masses and the progressive and revolutionary ideas. In other words, exporting and applying advocacy at the global scale aims at demobilization, de-radicalization, de-politicization in order to maintain the emerging global neo-liberal order.”¹⁶

Having outlined these three complex processes, we will present our conceptual framework of the encounter between the global and the local in an era of globalization, as pertaining to the disruptures produced by new institutional arrangements of neo-liberalism.

Globalization, Aid and the Neo-Liberal Agenda

Globalization is deeply intertwined with, if not representing, a new phase in Western ‘modernity’. The process of modernization that accompanies globalization has generated what can loosely be labeled *new forms of modernity*, new institutions, social categories and concepts that not only manifest in a particular form but also perform a functional role within the post-industrial society. The most important of these include the new institutional arrangements associated with neo-liberalism; the dismantling of state responsibilities; new social spatial configurations, redefining ‘society’ and ‘market’; and a process of differentiation within the ‘life-world’ and the rise of new institutions within civil society.¹⁷ The aid industry is the conduit through which these new institutional arrangement arrives locally and affects NGOs. As we will argue here there are two forms of disruptures accompanying this process which creates shifts and displacement within the local field of action.

The process of globalization is also producing new structured relations between nations as well as with international organizations and capital. From the vantage point of non-Western nations, these relations facilitate the expanse of the institutional forms associated with the Western experience with modernity. Two developments stand out as particularly significant. Firstly, together liberal democracy and the capitalist economy form a new horizon in which the role of the state is envisioned. Within this horizon, neo-liberalism has emerged as a new political rationality of government that redefines state institutional arrangements. This is reflected in the new norms of political and economic management evident in the World Bank and Western donor new agendas.¹⁸ Secondly, just as there has been a collapse of what constitutes the ‘political’, reflected in the loss of the conceptual purchase of concepts like the

‘left’, ‘socialism’, ‘revolution’, there has been increased emphasis on the role of non-governmental organizations and building ‘civil society’ in developing countries within aid and development cooperation.

The particular form and function of the institutions, social spatial arrangements and categories that have emerged and displaced the social forms of the industrial order, within the Western society has already been recognized. In contrast to the generalized view that describes neo-liberalism in an abstract manner as a retreat of the state and an expanse of the market, neo-liberalism has been explained as a way of organizing government in relation to increased differentiation within the capitalist system. As some argue, it represents a new form of liberalism as an *art of government*. Therefore, it has been explained that while neo-liberalism appears to represent a ‘degovernmentalization of the state’, this is not necessarily a ‘degovernmentalization of government.’¹⁹ A range of techniques are deployed within the neo-liberal model, which produce ‘governmental/disciplinary’ entities within social field, that while separate and distinct from the state, are tied to it through complex relations and shaped through a particular economic model of action.²⁰ This brings into view the logic of neo-liberalism as a modern way of organizing power that governs by shaping possibilities for action. This represents a liberal rationality of rule that responds to a new process of modernization. At the same time, the development of civil society has also been attributed to processes of modernization; structural differentiation within the life world as well as processes of differentiation within the economy and the modern bureaucratic administration.²¹ Along with Habermas, Arato and Cohen identify the functional role of civil society as being linked to communicative action and facilitating a new reflexivity on social norms and values within a democratic society, which are both facilitated by and allow for a response to certain processes of modernization.

Studying the aid industry in the Palestinian Territories, therefore, is part of a more complex assessment of the spreading of institutional forms accompanying the process of globalization, which is being accepted by many as unproblematic. The Palestinian Territories as other non-Western societies has undergone two processes: disembedding of social relations from the local context, in a manner in which the interaction and restructuring of relations occurs across an indefinite span of time/space.²² The second process is the re-embeddness within new sets of relations with international organizations, financial institutions and Western governments. Within these relations the neo-liberal model, and its re-ordering of *arrangements within* and *relations between*, state-society-market, constitutes a new reference for the organization of social and political life in non-Western

societies. In this context, there are those such as Giddens that suggest modern institutions are being extended and spread through globalizing processes in universalizing fashion.²³ However, this view obscures more than it explains. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari theorize the expansion of capitalism as operating through a double movement, a decoding and deterritorialization of institutions and cultures that have already been developed, followed by a violent and artificial reterritorialization that institutes all sorts of 'residual and artificial, imaginary or symbolic territorialities.'²⁴ This double movement a de/re-territorialization increases the fragmentation of the society, especially the NGOs sector. Alain Touraine explains this fragmentation through his notion of 'disassociation' a concept he identifies as one of the features of late capitalist modernity. Disassociation refers to fissures and disabling forms of disconnection, as a result of which social, political and economic structures no longer cohere and mesh together in a cohesive fashion but are marred by disconnections and forms of disassociation. This impedes social cohesion and induces fragmentation.

According to Beck, in Western societies, it is a heightened form of capitalism and the 'risk society' that induce a disembedding and re-embedding of the industrial social formations by new categories and institutional forms.²⁵ If these new institutions respond to a heightened form of capitalism then clearly non-Western societies, such as Palestinian Territories are twice removed from this process in that they have neither undergone a process of industrialization nor are they situated within the new processes of modernization. Without fetishizing the externality of new institutional forms in non-Western societies, it is undoubtedly necessary to raise the question: how do we conceptualize the emergence of new political and social models in these societies, given that the models have developed out of and perform a particular function in the post-industrial society?

It is important to inquire into what configuration of institutional forms emerge in the non-Western society. Arguments have already been made against the notion of a process of homogenization accompanying globalization. The transferred institutions do not necessarily carry the same normative dimensions or functions that they do in the original societies. A process of decoding and re-coding of symbols making the new "imported" institution appropriate new meaning of their existence. As some argue, the transfer of institutions or ideas to a local context should not be assumed but described; for even if the same phenomena is transferred to different localities it will be interpreted and articulated in a unique manner in each context.²⁶ Others emphasize the importance of questioning and looking beyond the discourse of international organizations that implies uniformity between the global form and its local manifestation.²⁷

The process, by which concepts and institutions are transferred and emerge locally, varies. Therefore, while the neo-liberal model forms a new horizon in the period of globalization, one cannot, however, disregard the different modalities characterizing the way ideas, categories and institutional forms are transferred and articulated locally and the need to account for why and how this occurs.

Our study attempts to map the alterations in the institutions and practices structuring political and social life in the non-Western context and examine the transformations that occur in a field of action. In this manner, our project draws its inspiration from Scott.²⁸ We accept his basic premise that postcolonial inquiry, insofar as it focuses on the formation of a colonial subject and thus on 'decolonizing representation', has reached the limit of its uses to address questions of the present. Following Scott's lead, this project falls in line with attempts to redirect thinking about neocolonialism, towards an inquiry into encounters with the *conceptual* and *institutional* dimensions of modernity. Scott understands the transfer of institutional and political rationalities to the non-Western context in a colonial encounter as a process in which modern power becomes inscribed in the social terrain of the local society, *transforming and reorganizing a field of action*.²⁹ A Foucauldian view of power guides this conception, which recognizes power as "an action which influences another action by determining a field of possibility for it."³⁰ For Scott a transformation in a field of action occurs because as the institutions which organize political life are altered, the *means through which* and therefore *the very way in which actors relate* to a political experience is transformed. For example, in the context of colonialism, as the structures of the project of political sovereignty were set in place, a new legal system, a judiciary, and an economic field with property rights this led to the transformation of the overall rules of the game of action. Two movements underlie such an alteration of a field of action; the establishment of new structures that reorganize a social space; this in turn *disables* old life forms and *obliges* new forms to come into being.³¹ For instance, he describes the establishment of a legal system as establishing a new authoritative game of justice. In this context, the courtroom becomes a site that disciplines the native to modify his own conduct according to the new rules for deliberating justice.³² Overall, the central problematic outlined by Scott is that as the means through which action is conducted are modified, a field of action is transformed. As a result the manner in which actors relate to and respond to the political in their society is redefined.

One can observe a similar process at work in the Palestinian context. Among the changes that have occurred in the organizations that formed part of the liberation

movement, one observes a displacement of a political mode of action, in the form of mobilization, by a civic mode of action, promoting new subjectivities and a new reflexivity on social norms. Following a process of professionalization and institutionalization in relation to their increased entry into development cooperation, Palestinian NGOs have taken on new practices in the form of civic education training programs, as well as awareness raising activities. This type of activity is linked to a notion of the 'public' and is meant to facilitate reflection on social and political norms. One observes new knowledge claims, in the form of statistics and surveys produced by local research centers, illustrating the efficacy of this type of action in producing effects in the body-politics, hence legitimizing it over old modes of action. In line with the problematic identified by Scott, it is not enough to observe these changes. One must probe the effects that this institutional reconfiguration and the emergence of these new practices has on a terrain of action and the effects that are produced at the level in which actors relate to and respond to the political in their society.

Conclusion

The current Intifada represents a unique moment to observe the dominant social actors in the Palestinian society. The Palestinian NGOs sector which represent its-self as the major political and social forces emerged to bring development and national liberation was failed to mobilize the population when the intifada outbreak. These organizations withdrew from the national-political question, including the reality of the occupation since the beginning of the peace process. This article want it to highlight the transformation of the Palestinian NGOs agenda which is tremendously influenced by the neo-liberal agenda of the international organizations and the donors agencies during the ten year of transition proceeding the intifada. Since the end of the Cold War, influenced by the model of 'good governance', the development policy and aid transfers have come to be dominated by so called the 'New Policy Agenda'. This agenda play a major role in de-politicizing the NGOs mission. In the time of war and national liberation this becomes so problematic.

In the Palestinian context three observations can be made. First, the local NGOs have not moved beyond professionalized action. On the one hand, this is not necessarily bad, especially as effective forms of transnational networking and advocacy work to convey Palestinian rights internationally, require highly capable organizations, endowed with the resources and skills to communicate, network and lobby across borders. Yet, Palestinian NGOs face the problem of dependency on few specialized people if professionalized activities are not supplemented with local grassroots networking and

strategies for action. In the context of the renewed national struggle, the Palestinian NGOs have not developed a synergy with the population or other political and social organizations. Second, many PNGOs have reverted into the familiar pattern of short-term relief work. This in turn reflects the absence of a long-term vision or strategy on how the NGOs and social organizations can contribute to change in the context of national transition. The third observation concerns the incapability of NGOs to articulate the civic with politics or to separate the 'politics' from the 'national'. Their actions betray a lack of awareness of the fact that they are in an occupied land. NGO leaders are from the urban middle class; this Intifada is taking place in the refugee camps, the remote cities in the North and South of the West Bank, and in the South of Gaza, more than in the urban centers like Ramallah. At the same time, this Intifada is not simply political, but social and economic and is propelled by people who did not gain from the peace process. Moreover, the ongoing Intifada expresses cumulative popular anger at both the violence of the Israeli occupation and meager achievement of the PNA in the peace process and its bad management to the public affairs.

NOTES

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³Pénélope Larzilliere, "Intifada: un tournant?" in *La Croix*, Paris, lundi 2 avril, 2001.

⁴Allen Lori, "Palestinians Debate "Polite" Resistance to Occupation." *Middle East Report* (Winter 2002): 225.

⁵Azmi Bishara, "Beyond Belief," *Al-Abram Weekly* (2002), 596.

⁶Rex Brynen, *A Very Political Economy Peacebuilding and Foreign Aid in the West Bank and Gaza* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Studies, 2000), 6-7.

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⁸Jeff Halpern, "Losing Ground? The Politics of Environment and Space," *Middle East Report* (2000): 216.

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¹¹See <www.msf.org>.

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¹⁶Mufid Qassoum, "Imperial Agendas, 'Civil Society' and Global Manipulation." *Between the Lines*, 2:19 (2002), 51.

¹⁷Arato Andrew and Cohen Jean, "Civil Society and Social Theory," in *Between Totalitarianism and Postmodernity, A Thesis Eleven Reader*, eds. P. Beilharz, G. Robinson and J. Rundell (London: The MIT Press, 1992).

¹⁸See Richard Jeffries, "The State, Structural Adjustment and Good Government in Africa," *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 31:1 (1993); P. Nunnenkramp, "What Donors Mean by Good Governance, Heroic Ends, Limited Means and Traditional Dilemmas of Development Cooperation," *IDS Bulletin*, 26:2 (1995); Mark Robinson, "Governance, Democracy and Conditionality: NGOs and the New Policy Agenda," in *Governance, Democracy and Conditionality: What Role for NGOs*, eds. P. Beilharz, G. Robinson and J. Rundell (Oxford: INTRAC, 1994b); David Williams and Tom Young, "Governance, the World Bank and Liberal Theory," *Political Studies*, 42 (1994).

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²⁰Graham Burchell, "Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self," in *Foucault and Political Reason*, 27-29.

²¹Arato Andrew and Cohen Jean, "Civil Society and Social Theory," in *Between Totalitarianism and Postmodernity, A Thesis Eleven Reader*, ed. P. Beilharz, G. Robinson and J. Rundell (London: The MIT Press, 1992).

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²⁴Gilles Deleuze and Guattari Felix, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone Press, 1984).

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³⁰Ismael Al Amoudi, "The Economy of Power: an Analytical Reading of Michel Foucault." Unpublished manuscript (2000), 18.

³¹Scott. *Refashioning Futures*, 26.

³²Scott. *Refashioning Futures*, 50.