

The dove behind barbed wire

What are the limiting factors regarding Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank?



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Executive summary

This thesis focuses on the limiting factors regarding Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank. These limiting factors explain discrepancies stemming from a comparison made between theoretical perspectives on the role of local NGOs in peacebuilding process and the practical situation of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank, and, in addition, through a comparison between the goals of common peacebuilding activities of local NGOs and the same practical situation.

A comparison between the activities of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and common types of peacebuilding activities by local NGOs shows that these activities are quite similar. The programmes and activities of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, which focus on concepts of nonviolence, empowerment, reconciliation, democracy, human rights and justice, can be linked to five types of peacebuilding activities: dialogue and reconciliation, peace education, civilian mediation, representing a particular group, and addressing broader structural issues of democracy, human rights and development. Each of these types of activities has certain goals, or envisioned effects. An assessment of contributing aspects and unreached goals of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs shows that these organizations reach part of the goals of all five categories, for example by changing the perceptions Israeli's and Palestinians have of each other through people-to-people dialogue, by promoting and popularizing the concept of nonviolence, and by raising awareness among internationals for the realities of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and for the positive aspects of Palestinian culture (since internationals' perceptions of Palestinians are often shaped by images linked to the conflict). Unreached goals could only be indicated in two of the five categories: 'representing a particular group' and 'addressing broader structural issues'. The empowerment of women and villagers in the West Bank is still lacking and, in addition, there is still a large gap between the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian community in the West Bank.

Where theoretical perspectives on the role of local NGOs in peacebuilding processes argue that NGOs have comparative advantages over other actors in peacebuilding processes, like their embeddedness in society, their independence from political parties, their credibility, their flexibility etcetera, this research shows that there are many factors which cause the practical situation of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs to not completely correspond with these theoretical perspectives. These factors are both caused by the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs

themselves and by external aspects, like the conflict itself or the cultural and political environment of the Palestinian society. These limiting factors range from hierarchical decision-making structures within the organizations, the occurrence of corruption and nepotism, an elite-culture which surrounds these NGOs, to a lack of cooperation between Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, a difficult relation between these NGOs and the Palestinian Authority, and a relationship with international donors which revolves around the competition for funding and the struggle to influence each other's agendas. Finally, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and its repercussions for the daily life of Palestinians living in these territories do not only cause logistical problems for Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, but also make it difficult for Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs to maintain support for their work.

Since most of the approaches of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, although limiting or decreasing the contributing aspects of these NGOs, stem from prioritizing personal interests and guaranteeing the organization's survival, it is difficult to recommend measures which might improve or increase the contributing aspects of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs while simultaneously protecting these interests. However, what could be changed is an improved level of cooperation between the NGOs, which can increase their contributing aspects and can protect or even raise the funding they receive. In addition, international donors need to be stricter in order to fight nepotism and financial corruption within some of these organizations. They can use the dependence of these NGOs on international donor funds to pressure for more legitimacy. Simultaneously, if the local Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs increase their level of legitimacy, they increase their chance of receiving or holding on to their funding.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most ‘famous’ and long-lasting conflicts in the world. It can be described as a ‘protracted social conflict’: “the prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation” (Azar et al., 1978). It denotes “continuous hostile interactions between communal groups that are based in deep-seated racial, ethnic, religious and cultural hatreds, and that persist over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of violence” (ibid.). These identity-based clashes stem from an underlying fear of extinction that often exists within vulnerable ethnic groups who have a history of or fear for persecution and massacre. Ethnic divisions and perceived threats often lead to the rule of state being controlled by a single group or coalition of elites who deny access to basic human needs for the majority of the population (ibid.).

Since the constitution of the state of Israel in 1948, preceded by a war of independence, the region has known several outbreaks of severe violence, of which the Gaza war at the end of 2008 until the beginning of 2009 is the most recent. Although outbreaks of severe violence are relatively sporadic in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, hostile interactions, clashes (both violent and nonviolent) and injustice are part of everyday life. The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, cause a daily suffering for the Palestinian people, who are constrained to live a normal life due to checkpoints, roadblocks, sanctions, arrests, economic deprivation, discrimination and violence. On the other hand, Israeli citizens have to live with the threat of terrorist attacks by Palestinians and some of their Arab neighbours.

There have been several attempts to end the conflict, of which the Oslo Accords in 1993 between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), together with the following peace process, seemed the most promising, but it is not resolved until this day. Although the Israeli military left Gaza and several cities in the West Bank and the Palestinian Authority was created, amongst other things, the occupation of the Palestinian territories, the building of the Separation Wall and the continuous increase of Israeli settlements in the West Bank still causes a daily oppression of the Palestinian people on a political, economic and cultural level. On the other hand, violent attacks by Palestinians continued as well (Meital, 2006).

After the Oslo Accords were signed, peacebuilding activities were initiated to let the peace accords take root in both the Israeli and Palestinian society, thereby trying to create a long-lasting and sustainable peace. Peacebuilding is a concept with many definitions and approaches. It was first introduced in 1992 by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, defining it as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Peacebuilding activities revolve around changing or strengthening society structures which can prevent a conflict from becoming violent in the first place or from relapsing into violence (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000; Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

Previous peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and peacebuilding activities accordingly, took place at the highest level of society, that is between the Israeli government and, before and during the Oslo Accords, the PLO, and, after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority. Although peacebuilding actors working at other levels of both societies, like the grassroots level, were active as well, they did not get the support and attention they needed. Practice shows that the peace process did not lead to peace. In fact, Israel’s power increased and the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians got more unbalanced than it had ever been. Although Israel was, and is, occasionally threatened by violent attacks by Palestinians or their Arab partners, the conflict does not affect every single aspect of the daily life of its citizens, as is the case within the Palestinian society in the occupied territories.

Jad (2007) states that since the Oslo Agreements, international NGOs, foreign states, and donors shifted their focus from development aid to a particular set of issues concerning peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and related issues. Although there were already some Palestinian NGOs focusing on these issues before this moment, the shift in focus of the international community, and available funds accordingly, led to a substantial increase in Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs (ibid.). According to several scholars (Zartman & Rasmussen, 1997; Verkoren, 2008; Babbitt, 2009), peace needs to take root in all levels of society, and NGOs’ characteristics, like their embeddedness in the community and their independence from political parties or military groups, makes them valuable contributors to peacebuilding processes. However, NGOs’ characteristics can also limit their possible contribution, and, in addition, they face external factors that can influence their efforts.

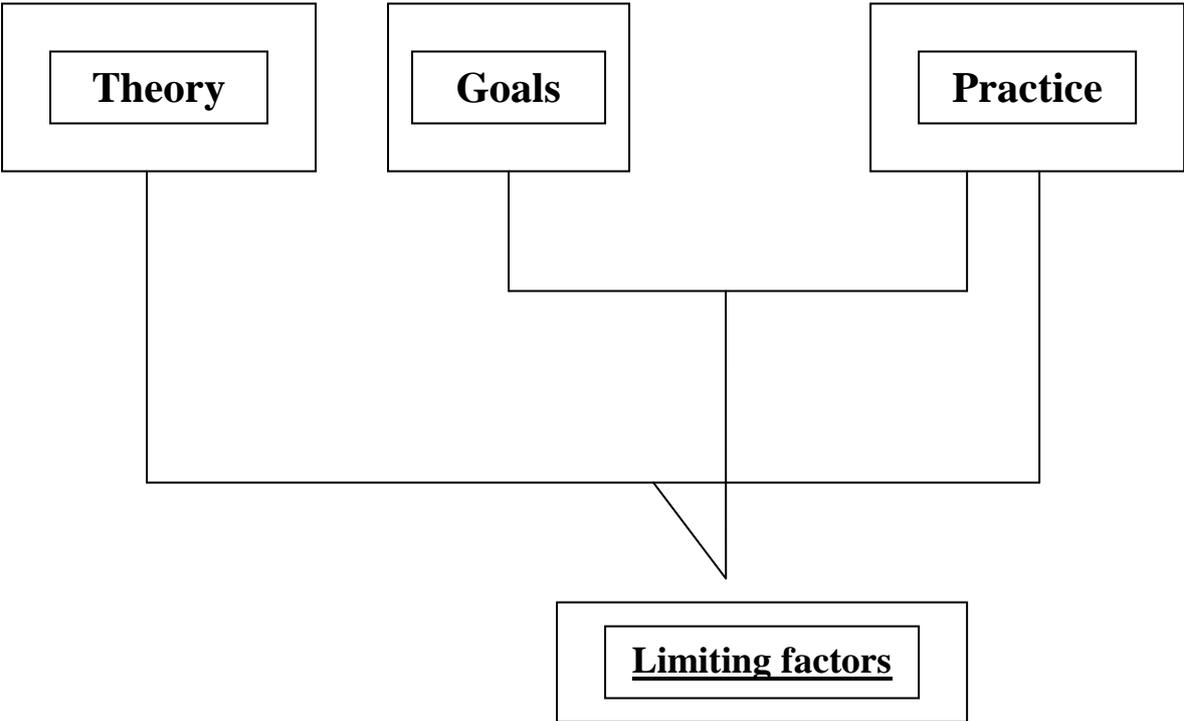
These aspects lead me to the central question of this thesis: *What are the limiting factors regarding Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank?* (Note: Since the Gaza Strip is inaccessible for most internationals, my research could only be executed

in the West Bank and therefore this central question, and the thesis as a whole, focus only on Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank.)

Following the central question, I formulated six sub-questions to be able to answer the central question.

1. What is the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and how can the development of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank be linked to the events in this conflict?
2. a. What are the theoretical perspectives on the role of local NGOs in peacebuilding processes?
b. What are the goals of peacebuilding activities carried out by local NGOs?
3. What are the approaches, goals and activities of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank?
4. What are the contributing aspects and unreached goals of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank?
5. What are the characteristics of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank?
6. How are the relationships between Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank and other actors involved in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank?
7. What are the aspects, stemming directly from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which influence Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank?

The rationale behind these questions can be clarified with the diagram below:



The approach in this thesis is to compare theoretical perspectives on the role of local NGOs in peacebuilding processes, and, in addition, the goals of specific peacebuilding activities (or the effects they are supposed to have) with the practical situation of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank. The answer to sub-question 2 provides the theoretical framework for this comparison, where the answers to sub-questions 3-7 provide the practical framework. Following this comparison, the discrepancies between theory and practice, and between goals and practice, can be explained by the limiting factors regarding Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank.

Methodological approach

To be able to answer the sub-questions and the central question of this thesis, three main methodological approaches were used: literature analysis, interviews and informal conversations, and participative observation. With its focus on general peacebuilding theory, activities of peacebuilding NGOs, and on theory concerning the positive and negative aspects of NGOs in peacebuilding processes, the main rationale behind the approach of literature analysis is to set up a framework in which the approaches and activities of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs can be placed in order to see whether the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs' work and its contributing aspects are in line with general peacebuilding practices of NGOs. Based on the data gathered through the other two main methods, the activities, approaches and contributing efforts and aspects of the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs from the sample cannot only be placed within this framework, but discrepancies with this framework can be explained as well. In addition to academic literature, annual reports, guidelines and evaluation reports of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, partially retrieved from their websites and partially received on paper from their directors, were analyzed in order to obtain data on the goals, approaches and activities of these organizations. Finally, analyses of several evaluation reports of certain international donors about their cooperation with CRR were made in order to get a perspective on the goals international donors have while funding local Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, and to see whether these goals match those of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. Secondly, these analyses give an insight in the relationship between international donors and local Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, which, in combination with the interviews, give a clear perception of the way this relationship influences the work of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs.

The second methodological approach focuses on interviews and informal conversations. During the period between February 2010 and July 2010, ten in-depth interviews were conducted with both directors (seven) and employees (one) of seven Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank, and one director and one employee of an NGO umbrella network (for a list of the interviewed directors and employees and their organizations accordingly, see Appendix 4). The peacebuilding organizations were found through two sampling methods: snowball sampling and purposive sampling. First, the director of CCRR, the basis of my participative observation (see further on in this chapter), referred me to several Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank and several directors of these NGOs referred me to similar NGOs as well. The other interviews were based on purposive sampling. PASSIA, the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, and the Palestinian NGO Portal, a website through which Palestinian NGOs can publish their achievements, both list many Palestinian NGOs. After a selection of NGOs that work and are located in the West Bank (since the Gaza Strip is inaccessible), a second selection was made to separate the NGOs which focus on peacebuilding activities from NGOs focusing on other topics. Although contacting twenty organizations from this selection, the final number of organizations to be interviewed resulted in only eight. This number resulted from two limitations: first, many organizations were not responsive (although contacted on several occasions and through several means), and secondly, occasional turbulent situations prevented me from travelling through the West Bank, thereby making it impossible to arrange and conduct interviews. In addition to these in-depth interviews, three additional interviews were carried out through email in October 2010; one with an employee of an additional Palestinian peacebuilding organization, one with an employee of the NGO Development Center and one with an employee of the DED (Deutsche Entwicklungsdienst), which is one of the main donors of CCRR.

To ensure comparability of the answers, the interview questions were largely standardized and divided into four categories: the activities and approaches of these NGOs, their position within the Palestinian society (i.e. the perceived contribution of their work on Palestinian society, but also their relationship with the Palestinian community), external influences (PA, INGOs/donors, conflict situation), and the perceived role of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs within the Palestinian peacebuilding process. Although all the directors and employees were asked the same standard questions, follow-up questions differed according to the answers that were given.

In addition to the interviews, informal conversations with several additional employees of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and with employees of international donor organizations, working in the West Bank, provided me with additional data. The interviews, combined with informal conversations, gave me a good insight in the approaches of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and of international donor organizations, their reasoning behind these approaches, the way they perceive their role in peacebuilding, their stance towards other actors, and their view towards the external influences that according to them influence their work, both in a positive and a negative way.

It has to be noted that the information gathered through the interviews is based on personal perceptions and interpretations and is therefore not fully objective. Combined with the fact that the amount of organizations in the sample is limited, this data is not fully representative of the entire Palestinian peacebuilding NGO sector and of international donors. Although the other two methodological approaches (literature analysis and participative observation) could partially tackle this limitation, it is still a limiting factor in this research which has to be taken into consideration.

Finally, the approach of participative observation is based on an internship (from the 15th of February 2010 until the 6th of July 2010) at the Palestinian Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation (CCRR), based in Bethlehem, the West Bank. By working within a Palestinian peacebuilding NGO, my insight on the internal organization of such an organization, their approaches, the external influences on their work, and their ability and/or willingness to contribute to the peacebuilding process, was enlarged. Since my expectation is that CCRR's practices are similar to those of other Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, it gave me the opportunity to compare the information received from the interviews with practice.

The internship also provided me with the possibility to attend workshops which were part of several programmes of CCRR. In cooperation with a Palestinian colleague, who explained what was being done and who translated what was being said, I could observe how these workshops were executed, but more importantly I could study the attitude of the participants towards these workshops. Since NGOs work mainly on the community level and focus on the "ordinary people", it is essential to know what the attitude of these people is towards the work of the NGOs, and what the effects of this work are according to these people themselves. There were several limitations concerning these workshops that have to be noted; first of all, the majority of the participants did not speak English, which prevented me from interviewing them myself about their perception towards the workshops and generally

the work of peacebuilding NGOs. Second, my Palestinian colleague and I were bound to office hours and other work assignments, which meant that we could not stay until the end of the workshop, where, if we could have stayed, my colleague could have provided me with translating my interviews with the participants. Therefore, the analysis of the attitude of the participants towards programmes of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs (programmes of which I visited some workshops) is based solely on the translations of my colleague during the workshops and of my own observations.

Assessment of contributing factors

Peacebuilding is difficult to measure, especially since it is an ongoing and long-term process rather than a concept with set and fast results. In addition, possible effects or impacts might be perceived differently by different actors. However, within this research it is possible to make an assessment of contributing aspects of specific projects of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. This assessment is based on several aspects.

First and foremost, the majority of the contributing aspects were possible to indicate based on a combination and comparison of statements (made both in formal as in informal conversations) of directors and employees of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, employees of international donor organizations, international participants of programmes and activities of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, and Palestinians ‘from the streets’; of my own observations within CCRR (and all the activities aligned with CCRR), at the peacebuilding NGOs I visited and of the daily situation in the West Bank in general; and of (evaluation) reports from the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs and from international donors. Since both the statements and my own observations are personal, it has to be noted that the indications made based on these aspects are not fully objective and that others might draw other conclusions. However, due to the combination and comparison of the three aspects, the subjectivity could be limited.

Still, there are some additional indicators which are more specific. First, the number of years a programme continues to be executed indicates if there is a certain basis in society for the topics these programmes focus on. If there is no need or no support within the Palestinian community for specific programmes, such programmes have generally no high endurance, and, going into the opposite direction, programmes that are welcomed by the Palestinian community will be executed for a longer period of time. Second, partially merging with the number of years a programme is being executed, the number of participants of specific programmes, and also the increase or decrease of this number, indicate the existence of a

social basis for these programmes in Palestinian society. If the number of participants of a specific programme stays the same over a period of several years or even increases, it indicates the support for this programme within the Palestinian community, and, on the other hand, a low number of participants or a decrease in participants shows that the specific programme has no social basis within Palestinian society. Finally, the attitude and involvement of participants during workshops and their statements considering the workshops and/or entire project reflect the effects these projects have on its participants. Since I attended only a limited amount of workshops and the majority of the statements are translations from a non-official translator, this aspect is inferior to the other aspects.

Relevance

This research is relevant both on a social as on a scientific level. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict exists for over sixty years, in which thousands of people have been killed, houses have been destroyed, land kept on being occupied and lives have been torn apart. Most of the people living in Israel and the Palestinian territories do not know their country in another way than as a country in conflict. If things do not change, future generations are destined to a life with limited freedom, justice and peace. So far, peacebuilding efforts by governmental actors have not led to sustainable peace, but the increase in Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs after the signing of the Oslo Accords demarcates a new approach to the peacebuilding process. By identifying, analyzing and discussing the limiting factors regarding Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank, these NGOs and/or other actors involved in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank, can, if they are willing to, address and possibly tackle these issues. This can increase the contributing aspects of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank, thereby possibly strengthening this process as a whole.

This study has scientific relevance as well. A lot has been written about the role of NGOs in conflict areas and/or their role in peacebuilding processes. A large part of this theory is based on cases in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, but it hardly focuses on the Middle East and especially not on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, by focusing on Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the West Bank, a new case study can be added, which will broaden the existing literature on the subject. In addition, by comparing theory on the role of NGOs in conflict areas and in peacebuilding processes with the practical situation of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, the applicability of the theory can be evaluated, thereby strengthening

it, or, on the other hand, pointing out possible flaws in this theory. In both cases, an expansion of the theory on NGOs in peacebuilding processes can be realised.

Outline chapters

Following the introduction of this thesis, each chapter will focus on (a) specific sub-question(s). In chapter 2, the first sub-question will be answered. An overview of the main events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be given, followed by an insight in the Oslo peace process and the reasons why it failed, and an analysis of the current situation of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. This chapter finishes with an overview of the evolution of Palestinian NGOs and is linked to the political events in the conflict. In chapter 3, sub-question 2(a) will be answered, which leads to the creation of a theoretical framework which will be used throughout chapter 4, 5 and 6 to compare with the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs.

Chapter 4 focuses on the third sub-question and elaborates on the goals, approaches and activities of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. Additionally, a comparison will be made between these three aspects and the common approaches and activities of peacebuilding NGOs outlined in the theoretical framework. Chapter 5 raises the matter of sub-questions 2b. and 4, and outlines a comparison between the goals of the types of activities of peacebuilding NGOs in theory, discussed in chapter 3 and 4, and the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. By making an assessment of the contributing aspects and unreachd goals of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, an insight can be given in to what extent the envisioned goals of peacebuilding activities in theory match those of the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. Chapter 6 answers sub-questions 5, 6 and 7 and discusses how both the characteristics and relationships of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, and, in addition, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself, (might) influence the contributing aspects of their work.

Finally, in chapter 7, the findings of this research will be summarized and a final conclusion will be drawn. In addition, an overview will be given of some personal recommendations for the approaches and activities of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, which might, in my opinion, decrease (the influence of) the limiting factors regarding these NGOs. This chapter will end with a personal evaluation of my research by discussing both the positive and negative aspects (or limitations) of its execution, and by reflecting on the position of this research in a theoretical and societal framework.

Chapter 2

Context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

To be able to understand the difficulties and complexity of the peacebuilding process in the West Bank, it is necessary to get an insight in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this chapter, I will first give a brief overview of the conflict by describing the major events happening during the last sixty years. Following this, I will have a closer look at the Oslo Accords and the peace process following these Accords, thereby elaborating on the reasons why this peace process failed. Finally, I will focus on the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories, specifically on the Separation Wall and the Israeli settlement building in the West Bank after the Oslo Accords.

§ 2.1 An overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

For the better part of a century the conflict of two peoples over one land has defined the politics of the region. One of the processes that led up to this conflict was the rise and influence of a new Jewish nationalism: Zionism. During the late 1800s, the emergence of Zionism, mainly in Europe, crystallized the desire within the Jewish Diaspora for a Jewish homeland for the Jewish people (Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe, 2004). Its main architect, Theodor Herzl, a European Jewish intellectual, believed that assimilation for Jews would never happen and that the Jews should found their own state, preferably in Palestine, the ancient home of the Jewish people. The call of Zionism was the direct product of hundreds of years of European anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jewish communities (ibid.). During the late 1890s, the first Zionist settlers set off for Palestine to join the pre-existing 50,000 members of the Jewish community there, a period which is also referred to as the first aliyah. During 1903 and 1914, 35,000 additional Jews followed their footsteps, leading to a Jewish population of over 85,000 in Palestine at the outbreak of the First World War¹.

When the Ottoman Empire was dissolved at the end of the First World War most of the Middle East became subject to colonial rule or influence. European powers, especially Britain and France, re-drew the boundaries of the Middle East and many areas in this region came under their direct political rule. On November 2nd, 1917, the British government had already issued a statement of policy, called the Balfour Declaration, which outlined the government's pledge to support the Zionists and in which it announced "his Majesty's

¹ http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Compelling+Content/Eye+on+Israel/12_0/Chapter+Three+From+Political+Zionism+to++Synthetic+Zionism.htm

Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). In 1923, the League of Nations² awarded the British government the mandate for Palestine, thereby urging Britain in Palestine to “be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of a Jewish national home” (Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe, 2004). But the British were caught between conflicting pressures: Zionist attempts to establish their own state (something more than the ‘national home’ envisaged in the Balfour Declaration, as incorporated into the mandate’s provisions) and Arab efforts to oppose this in the pursuit of their own national aspirations. Due to these conflicting pressures the British decided to pursue an often oppressive policy of control and public order (ibid.).

The grievances of the Arab community in Palestine at the time, particularly due to the large influx of Jewish immigrants, raised tension between the two communities and resulted in several violent clashes, which the British authorities were not able to resolve. After the Second World War Jewish immigration reached new heights, and pressure for a Jewish state in Palestine as a haven for the survivors of the Holocaust grew relentlessly (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). The British were increasingly unable to maintain law and order, and meanwhile the Palestinian Arabs and their national leadership demanded self-determination. Eventually the whole problem was turned over by the British to the newly established United Nations, which decided to resolve the competing claims for self-determination by promoting partition between the Jews and the Arabs, with Jerusalem, including the old city, falling under international authority (ibid.). The Zionist movement accepted statehood as a much better deal than the ‘national home’ they had been offered in the Balfour Declaration. The Diaspora could be gathered under the flag of Israel. However, the Palestinian Arabs and Arab states rejected the UN partition plan, arguing that it was inherently biased and ignored the legitimate rights of the Palestinian Arabs. They complained that their land was being given away as a means of appeasing European guilt over the Holocaust. When the British withdrew in May 1948 the battle for the land of Palestine broke out in earnest between the Israelis and the Arabs (ibid.).

On May 14th, 1948, David Ben Gurion, leader of the Zionist movement, announced to the world the birth of the state of Israel with the following words:

“On this day that sees the end of the British mandate and in virtue of the natural and historic right of the Jewish people and in accordance with the UN resolution we

² The League of Nations (LON) was an intergovernmental organization founded as a result of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919–1920, and is the precursor to the United Nations.

proclaim the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine” (Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe, 2004).

The war broke out shortly after the Israeli Declaration of Independence as units from the Arab armies of Egypt, Jordan and Syria (backed by forces from Lebanon and Iraq) attempted to win back the Palestinian land that had been lost to the Israeli state. The Arab armies, poorly equipped, were ultimately unsuccessful and failed to defeat the small but well-motivated and highly trained Israeli Defence Forces. The war, by the Palestinian Arab community referred to as ‘al-Nakbah’ (“the catastrophe”), lasted until January 1949, when an armistice was secured. By this time 700,000 to 800,000 Palestinians had fled their homes or had been forced to flee, ending up in Lebanon, Transjordan, Syria, Egypt and the Gaza Strip (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). Territory-wise, the end of the war meant that the West Bank and East Jerusalem fell under control of Jordan and the Gaza Strip under the administration of Egypt. The rest of the country, which as a result of the armistice had been enlarged from 14,000 to 21,000 square kilometres, fell under the rule of the new Israeli state (Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe, 2004). The Arabs were left with one-fifth of the original territory of their land. This situation led to an initial period of instability in the Arab countries as they came to terms with their defeat, and, in addition, a backlash against British and Western influence in the region (ibid.).

In the eyes of Arab nationalistic radicals in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, Israel was an enemy, not only because of the injustice against their Arab brothers in Palestine, but also because of its close association with what they perceived as Western imperialist aspirations towards the region and in particular its recently exploited massive oil reserves. Radical Arab nationalism and pan-Arab pretensions created a new dimension in the conflict with Israel, as was demonstrated during the 1956 Suez war. The Suez conflict, which erupted over the decision by Nasser to nationalize the Suez Canal Company in July 1956, was a major escalation of anti-colonialist and, by association, anti-Zionist sentiment in the Arab world (ibid.). The British, who were in control over the Suez Canal before the nationalization, were, together with the French, outraged at Nasser’s decision. The British were afraid to lose its efficient access to the remains of its empire and France was nervous about Nasser’s growing influence on its North African colonies and protectorates. In addition, both countries needed the Canal to stay open in order to maintain its access to the oil-producing countries (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009).

Great Britain organized a secret tripartite operation in collusion with France and Israel to regain control over the Suez Canal. Israel’s participation originated from Nasser’s

additional decisions to block all Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal and to block the Gulf of Aqaba, which prevented Israel's access to a large part of its hinterland. In addition, it wanted to strengthen its southern border and take over the Gaza Strip in order to remove the training grounds for fedayeen groups, who were trained to combat the British, the Israeli's and every other Western power which intruded in 'their' Arab world (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). Despite military successes of the tripartite operation, the British and French were forced to accept a ceasefire and withdraw their forces as a result of US economic pressure and international public opinion expressed through the UN. Nasser was able to hold on to the canal. As a result of Israel's part in the conflict, tensions remained high and the deep animosity between the nations worsened (Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe, 2004).

Remaining disputes between the Arabs and Israelis and a peak in the confidence in Arab nationalism led to the 1967-war. Arab troops (from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) attacked the Israelis in order to win back Palestine. Within six days, despite the large number of Arab troops and weapons, the Israeli army occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem and the old city) and the Golan Heights. The acquisition of territory by the end of the war had increased Israel's size by six times (ibid.). Since then the only area which has seen an ending of the Israeli occupation is the Sinai Peninsula, after a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979, following the Camp David Accords of 1978. Egypt regained the Sinai, but its relationship with other Arab countries in the region worsened as it was seen as a traitor of the Arab world (Meital, 2006).

Since 1967 the Palestinians, through the extension of their commitment to nationalism, have established political movements for national liberation and self-determination, of which the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is known best. Since its official establishment in 1964, the PLO and other Palestinian dissidents have been involved in acts of political violence such as hijackings, bomb attacks and assassinations against Israel and its representatives abroad. Indeed, until the late 1980s the Palestinians were regarded by many, especially Western, nations as synonymous to terrorism (Milton-Edwards & Hinchcliffe, 2004). Most of these violent acts grew out of frustration within the Palestinian community with the restrictions they faced in everyday life. In the occupied areas, Palestinians were restricted in their freedom of movement, any form of political activity was criminalized by the Israeli military authorities, the PLO was outlawed, people were banned from free assembly, public meetings were forbidden and membership of political organizations was punishable by long prison sentences, often without trial (ibid.). By the late 1980s, with the PLO expelled from Lebanon, Jewish settlement continuing apace and the

occupation controlling every aspect of daily life, the Palestinians were desperate. They felt abandoned by their Arab partners and the international community. All this frustration and resentment led to the outbreak of the first Intifada in December 1987 (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). Initially the Intifada was not a planned event, but rather a very powerful and spontaneous Palestinian protest against the everyday indignities inflicted by Israeli control. The media portrayal of the Intifada caused a turn in public international opinion towards Palestinians: they were not generally perceived as terrorists anymore, but started to be viewed as victims of a military occupation as well. Both at home and abroad, even some Jews began to question, for the first time, the efficacy of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which exposed tensions within the Jewish community itself (Andoni, 2001).

It was an event outside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that encouraged all the parties to get involved and make an effort for a peace process. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the Gulf crisis stimulated an American-led initiative to secure some kind of Arab-Israeli peace process in the Middle East. The US sought to re-establish stability in the region and the heart of any settlement between Israel and the Arab states was the Palestinian issue. Since Arafat had made the crucial mistake to support Iraq during the war, which made the position of the PLO weaker, he was left with no other option as to negotiate (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). It all led to the first round of Arab-Israeli peace talks under the auspices of the US and the former USSR in November 1991 in Madrid. While these talks did not have the results everybody hoped for, negotiations continued in Norway, finally culminating in 1993 in the Oslo Accords, which permitted limited and phased autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israeli withdrawal of the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. They also provided a future framework for the peaceful resolution of the most important issues pertaining to the conflict: land, Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security and borders (ibid.).

The peace process was difficult with both sides generally not holding up to their promises and with an absence of genuine compromise. Although Israel had left Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho and a Palestinian Authority had been created, frustration grew within the Palestinian community that the Oslo peace process had not solved the issues of refugees, Jerusalem and borders, that Israel continued building settlements in the West Bank and that it continued with its repressive measures (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). This Palestinian frustration crystallized around the deliberately provocative visit of former Likud Minister Ariel Sharon to Jerusalem's Islamic holy site the Dome of the Rock in September 2000 and a second Intifada broke out, also known as the 'al-Aqsa Intifada' (Meital, 2006).

Like the first intifada, the al-Aqsa intifada erupted from the “bottom”. Violence, suppressive measures and acts of terror followed one another. The vicious cycle of brutality and hatred was both self-sustaining and spiralling. The second intifada officially ended on February 8, 2005, when Sharon and Abbas declared a mutual truce between Israel and the Palestinian Authority at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit (Jaeger & Paserman, 2008). Although both leaders shook hands, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued in the same way. An intensification of the conflict occurred in December 2008, when Israel launched a military campaign targeting the members and infrastructure of Hamas in response to rocket attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip. In January 2009, Israel announced a unilateral ceasefire, conditional on elimination of further rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza, and began withdrawing over the next several days. Hamas later announced its own ceasefire³.

§ 2.2 The Oslo peace process and its failure

The Oslo peace process took place in the period 1993-2000, from the moment the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government (DOP), or the Oslo Accords, were signed on 13 September 1993 until the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000. For the Palestinians, the Oslo process was an ideological, political turn-about, as summed up by Sayigh (1997):

“the Palestinian national movement, established with the express aim of liberating Palestine in armed struggle, had proved unable in the intervening years to liberate any part of its national soil by force and had finally accepted the Oslo negotiated compromise, whose terms ran counter to virtually all the principles and aims it had espoused for so long.”

The Oslo Accords basically consist of three main elements: recognition of the state of Israel by the PLO and vice versa, the institution of a “peace process” in the transitional period, and a commitment to achieve a permanent status agreement where most entangled issues will be solved (Meital, 2006). The DOP’s articles related to a wide range of topics, which included the provision for a transitional period leading to permanent status-negotiations, during which time the most controversial issues would be tackled: Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, settlements in the Occupied Territories, security arrangements, and borders. The DOP stipulated a transitional period “not exceeding five years”, with permanent-status negotiations to commence as soon as possible but not later than the beginning of the third year of the

³ <http://www.haaretz.com/news/idf-begins-gaza-troop-withdrawal-hours-after-ending-3-week-offensive-1.268326>

interim period (ibid.). The preamble to the September 1993 DOP stated that Israel and the PLO “recognize their mutual legitimate and political rights” and strive “to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security” and “to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process” (ibid.). The DOP outlined the steps leading to the establishment of a Palestinian Authority (PA) that would have sovereign powers, a political entity whose future essence would be determined in permanent-status negotiations. It was agreed that free and general political elections would be held for the Palestinian Council and:

“Jurisdiction of the Council will cover West Bank and Gaza Strip territory, except for issues that will be negotiated in the permanent-status negotiations. The two sides view the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit, whose integrity will be preserved during the interim period” (ibid.)

Where the Palestinian negotiators lodged the hope that the Oslo process could lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian entity in all of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Israelis sought to limit the jurisdiction of the elected council to the autonomous administration of internal affairs in the physical areas to be transferred to Israeli control (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). The vague formulations incorporated in the DOP and some of the later agreements are what made their signing possible, but they also opened the door for wrangling over the extent of Palestinian sovereignty and independence. Israel wished to see a minimalist Palestinian Authority in terms of political sovereignty; the Palestinians wished the opposite.

The vagueness of the DOP was the first cause for it to fail, since both sides interpreted the agreement differently, both expecting their own goals to be reached. The Accords did not mean a definite settlement, but merely a continuation of the struggle in another, diplomatic, context. A second cause for failure was the limited support on both sides of the agreement. On both sides, most of the criticism came from national-religious groups who regarded Oslo as an accommodation of intolerable religious and historical concessions that posed a real threat to the respective national interests of the two peoples (ibid.). The third cause was the settlement issue. During the negotiations leading to the Oslo Accords and during the Oslo process, construction was stepped up inside the Jewish settlements with the blessing of the Israeli authorities. Israeli state officials allocated enormous public funds for infrastructure that served mostly the settlers and settler security. Israeli governments upheld the settlers’ right to expand according to natural increase and security needs (Meital, 2006). According to Israel’s Central

Bureau of Statistics, in 1990 there were 78,600 settlers; in September 2004, there were 239,800 residents of settlements, of which about 8,000 in the Gaza Strip. The number of settlements in this period grew from 118 to 123.⁴

Israeli extremists did not back down from using illegitimate measures. The assassination of Prime Minister Rabin on 4 November 1995 was the climax of this activity, but it had been preceded – and was followed – by threats and assaults on politicians and violent language against opponents in the media. Offenses by right-wing extremists against Palestinian residents in the Occupied Territories became a daily occurrence, ending, in many cases, in bodily harm and damage to property (Meital, 2006). On the other hand, the Palestinian and Arab camp opposing Oslo also grew stronger as the peace process progressed. Its most vociferous agents were Hamas, the Islamic Jihad, the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), and the PDFLP (Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine), along with unaligned intellectuals and public figures, bound by their negative perception of the agreements the Palestinian administration had signed with Israel. All parties, but especially Hamas, champion armed struggle against the “Zionist enemy” everywhere (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). Palestinian oppositionist groups and factions had a greater impact once the euphoria of ‘liberation’ was met with the reality of the ‘liberated’ Occupied Territories. The effects of the occupation on Palestinian daily life were for example restricted movement on roads in the West Bank, the requirement to present passes, the hardship caused by IDF-imposed closures and blockades, and the drastic drop in income and standard of living (Meital, 2006). Both Palestinians and Israelis stoked the cycle of violence without end. On 25 February 1994 Baruch Goldstein massacred thirty-five Palestinians and wounded another two hundred at the al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron. With this one single act of terror, brute force and hatred was reignited and even aggravated. In the following months, Hamas carried out a series of terror attacks in ‘Afula, Hadera, Ramle, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, murdering dozens of Israelis and wounding hundreds (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009).

The “holes” in the Oslo process grew ever larger and blacker. The weak points were insufficient attention to how the two sides envisaged permanent status, fuzzy thinking on mechanisms of control to ensure that commitments would be honoured during the long interim stage, and a lack of provision for the constraints plaguing Palestinian and Israeli administrations that were caused by domestic groups on sabotaging the blueprint. Because of political and national considerations, neither administration took a tough stand against

⁴ www.cbs.gov.il/population/new_2004/tab_1.pdf

saboteurs during this period, which left the field free for oppositionists to disrupt the implementation of interim arrangements and torpedo the possibility of true compromise in permanent-status negotiations (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003).

On 28 September 1995 Israeli and PLO leaders signed the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It elaborated the expansion of Palestinian self-government and stipulated the establishment of the Palestinian Council, its election, and its powers; the redeployment of IDF forces and security arrangements; and arrangements for “safe passage” to facilitate free Palestinian movement between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. On the Israeli side, troops were to withdraw from six cities and hundreds of villages in the West Bank, and for purposes of transferring control and responsibility during the interim stage, the West Bank was to be subdivided into categories denoted as A (under control of the PA), B (shared control by PA and Israel), and C (under Israeli control). Permanent-status negotiations were to begin as soon as possible, but not later than May 4, 1996 (Meital, 2006). In an attempt to prevent either side from resorting to unilateral measures, it was further fixed that “neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent-status negotiations”⁵. Again, the agreement was interpreted in two ways: the Palestinian leadership regarded the agreement as a major milestone on the road to independent statehood according to the borders of 1967, while Israel regarded it mainly as a guarantee for maximal security for its population, both in Israel and the settlements (Meital, 2006).

The Interim Agreement received even less support than the initial DOP. Reciprocal killings in January-March 1996 enraged Israelis and Palestinians, obviously doing little to enhance trust. Often, to appease an irate public, the Israeli government would impose closures, blockades, and curfews on the residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, against which the Palestinians were powerless to act (Meital, 2006). Although the PA, realising that the armed struggle of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad threatened both the political process and the hard-won Palestinian government, stood up against the violence by arresting and imprisoning many Hamas leaders and activists, the Israeli government and many Israeli citizens still believed that the Palestinians wanted to destroy Israel. The new Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (1996-1999), one of the major opponents of the Oslo Accords, stated that implementation of the agreement would depend completely on the Palestinians’ abiding

⁵ <http://telaviv.usembassy.gov/publish/peace/interim.htm>

of their promises. The failure of the Palestinian leadership to meet its commitments, even on a secondary matter, furnished immediate grounds for Israel to postpone the implementation of the entire agreement (Cleveland & Bunton, 2009). Netanyahu took full advantage of one of Oslo's weak points: the absence of an external watchdog to oversee implementation. He ignored the fact that Israel, too, had failed to carry out many of its commitments to the Palestinians (ibid).

The situation continued as it had the previous years. Although the US tried to intervene, causing the conflict to calm down a bit, the Oslo peace process was perceived to have failed when the second Intifada broke out in September 2000. According to the Palestinians, this failure had led to the Second Intifada, while the Israeli's viewed this renewed outbreak of violence as the cause for its failure (Meital, 2006).

§ 2.3 The Separation Wall and Jewish settlements

The idea of unilateral separation from the Palestinians had been raised occasionally from the start of the Oslo peace process. At the end of January 1995, following several terror acts against Israelis, Rabin decided to explore the option. Thus was born the concept of a "security fence" to be situated along the "seam area" between Israel and the West Bank (Meital, 2006). The idea was not carried out under Rabin, but it took further shape under Barak's premiership, and was finally realized by the government of Ariel Sharon. At first Sharon had some reservations against the separation fence, fearing that the route would be seen as a political border and that Israel would come under international pressure to do something about the settlements. At the same time, the plan earned widespread support among politicians, the security establishment and the Israel's Jewish population, who viewed it as an effective defence against terror. Sharon backtracked and had work begin on the construction (ibid.).

In April 2006, the length of the barrier approved by the Israeli government was 703 kilometers. In August 2008, approximately 58.04% had been constructed, 8.96% was under construction, and construction had not yet begun on 33% of the barrier⁶ (see Appendix 1 and 3 for a map of the Separation Wall). The repercussions of the Separation Wall are severe for Palestinians living in the West Bank. The official route for the wall was supposed to be the same as the Green Line, which is used to refer to the 1949 Armistice lines established between Israel and its neighbours after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, but in reality considerable parts of the route have been drawn east of this line, thereby not only attaching additional land

⁶ http://www.btselem.org/english/Separation_Barrier/Statistics.asp

to Israel, but also leading to several Palestinian villages being turned into isolated enclaves (see Appendix 1) (Meital, 2006).

Palestinian agricultural lands have been confiscated and damaged or destructed resulting from the construction process, causing many Palestinians to lose their means of earning a living. In addition, the wall separates villages from the agricultural land belonging to the villages, causing Palestinians to not be able to reach their land and, since Israeli law states that agricultural land, which is not being cultivated for at least three months, will fall in the hands of the state of Israel, Israel could obtain more land to build settlements (Roy, 2004). The wall does not only separate villages from their agricultural land, but it also cuts through villages themselves, causing previous neighbours to be separated from each other by an eight metres high wall. Furthermore, urban localities near the path of the wall's construction are commonly subjected to increased movement restrictions in the form of closures and curfews, reducing and sometimes prohibiting mobility within and between Palestinian towns, villages, and hamlets. Hence, communities situated near the wall are cut off from part or all of their agricultural land, water sources, business assets, urban markets, public services, and extended social networks, resulting in huge income losses (ibid.).

Another major restriction on the life of Palestinians is the settlement policy within the Occupied Territories. According to B'tselem, the Israeli information center for human rights in the Occupied territories, the number of settlers in the West Bank has increased from 239,800 in 2004 to 297,000 at the end of 2009, living in 124 settlements. When including East Jerusalem, which the Palestinians consider as their capital, there are close to 500,000 Jewish settlers living in 137 settlements, all based on occupied land.⁷ (See Appendix 2 and 3 for maps on Israeli settlements and restricted areas in the West Bank). Israel does not only confiscate Palestinian land for the Jewish settlements themselves, but also for the construction of settlement infrastructure. Designed to connect Israeli settlements and create massive barriers to Palestinian movement, bypass roads, including checkpoints and roadblocks, are built like a grid running north-south and east-west through the entire West Bank, further encircling, truncating and separating Palestinian islands, especially since many of the roads are only allowed to be used by settlers (Roy, 2004).

⁷ <http://www.btselem.org/English/Settlements/>: Settlements population, XLS.

The Separation Wall, the establishment of settlements in the West Bank and the occupation in general have all been publicly indicated as violating international law (Meital, 2006). However, Israel continues with the construction of the Wall, the building and expansion of settlements in the West Bank, and the occupation of the Palestinian territories and its inhabitants.

§ 2.4 The evolution of Palestinian NGOs

As the previous paragraphs show, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the events which led to this conflict, has played a pivotal role in the Middle East for over a century. It has affected many societies and turned many lives upside down. So far, attempts to end the conflict have not succeeded. How did Palestinian NGOs evolve during this period, how did specific events in the conflict influence this evolution, and how did the Oslo peace process affect their activities and function in society?

The first Palestinian NGOs were developed in the 1920s and 1930s and functioned mainly as welfare organizations. After the '67 war, which had led to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, these organizations developed into a vibrant and important sector in Palestinian society, due to a need of relief and developmental services which were not provided for by the Israeli government. This need and therefore the development of Palestinian NGOs increased even more with the outbreak of the first intifada in 1987 (Sullivan, 1996). However, the role of Palestinian NGOs was not limited to development services. Before the establishment of the PA, "Palestinian society was organized in and around political parties and mass grassroots organizations" (Jad, 2007). NGOs were linked to these parties under the umbrella of the PLO, which supported these parties and their satellite organizations. While the PLO and its political parties were banned by Israel, their satellite organizations were, since they were perceived as service-providing organizations, allowed to work to some extent in the occupied territories (ibid.). Through these NGOs, the PLO was able to maintain its influence in the occupied territories and could support and strengthen the national struggle (Hammami, 2000).

From the early 1980s on and increasing after the first intifada, Palestinian NGOs began to form contacts with European donor NGOs. Due to this increase in foreign funding, NGOs became less dependent on and therefore less connected to political parties, thus "enabling them to develop a degree of programmatic autonomy and institutional security" (Hammami, 2000). Between the end of the first intifada and the signing of the Oslo Accords, the NGO sector was the main channel of foreign aid aimed at providing services at the

grassroots level. The result was that these NGO actors increased in importance and acquired even more power than their parent parties (Jad, 2007).

The Oslo peace process changed the situation for Palestinian NGOs. Starting in the early 1990s, the number and importance of popular grassroots organizations declined and was related to the decline of ‘institutional politics’: “politics practised through institutions such as unions and parties” (Vivian in Jad, 2007). The importance and possibilities of NGOs decreased with the establishment of the PA, which took over a large part of the services previously provided by the NGOs and with international funding shifting from NGOs to the PA. Since then, some Palestinian NGOs have merged their resources into the structure of the PA, while others continued to execute their work, but on a much smaller scale (Sullivan, 1996). Another effect of the Oslo peace process, was that “the visual display of the ‘peace process’ was accompanied by an abundance of internationally funded projects on conflict resolution, peace-building measures, building trust, ‘engendering the peace process’, and ‘parallel negotiations’” (Jad, 2007). This shift in focus of international donors led to a huge increase in the number and development of specialized Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. (ibid.).

This evolution of Palestinian NGOs shows that the function and focus of these NGOs is constantly influenced by external developments, like the political environment, specific events in the conflict (like the first intifada) and the attention and focus of international donors, and that their importance and position in society is faced with constant fluctuation.

Chapter 3

Theoretical framework

The central research question in this thesis is: *What are the limiting factors regarding Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank?* In order to create a theoretical framework for this question, several aspects need to be considered. First, what is peacebuilding? Second, who are generally the actors in peacebuilding processes? Third, which types of activities can be linked to local peacebuilding NGOs? And finally, what are considered the positive and negative aspects of NGOs in peacebuilding?

§ 3.1 Peacebuilding

Many actors involved in peace processes in post-conflict areas after the end of the Cold War use the concept of peacebuilding to frame and organize their post-conflict activities. However, the conceptualization of and approaches to peacebuilding differ widely. However, since the rationale behind this thesis does not require an extensive elaboration of the conceptualization of ‘peacebuilding’, I will limit its discussion to three definitions.

First, the original formulation of former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992) is the following: “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict”. Peacebuilding involves more than just the elimination of armed conflict; instead, it is meant to create a positive peace and to eliminate the root causes of conflict so that the incentives for using violence will be dissolved (ibid.). In addition, “the same technologies that are used to help build peace after war can be used to help societies avoid war in the first instance” (Call in Barnett, 2007). In the early 2000’s, the Brahimi Report of Peacekeeping Reform further refined the UN definition of peacebuilding: “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war” (UN, 2000).

Third, peacebuilding is defined as “an attempt, after a peace has been negotiated or imposed, to address the sources of current hostility and build local capacities for conflict resolution. Stronger state institutions, broader political participation, land reform, a deepening of civil society, and respect for ethnic identities are all seen as ways to improve the prospects for peaceful governance. In plural societies, conflicts are inevitable. The aim of peacebuilding is to foster the social, economic, and political institutions and attitudes that will prevent these

conflicts from turning violent. In effect, peacebuilding is the front line of preventive action” (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000).

The two definitions (including its clarifications) of the UN, on the one hand, and that of Doyle & Sambanis on the other hand, are similar in the sense that both state that peacebuilding activities can be used to prevent a conflict from becoming violent, and in addition, both state that the structures in societies in conflict need to be changed or strengthened in order to let peace take root. However, a difference between the two is that Doyle and Sambanis specifically and exclusively address conflicts in plural societies and they link peacebuilding activities for the prevention of violence only to conflicts in these kinds of societies. However, conflict in plural societies does not have to be inevitable, and second, conflict is also not limited to plural societies.

Although there are many more definitions (although they often overlap), scholars in the field of conflict studies in general and of peacebuilding specifically, generally use the original definition of Boutros-Ghali. Therefore, I will use this definition in this thesis as the leading concept of peacebuilding as well.

Not only the definitions of peacebuilding are various, but also the approaches to this concept. To get an insight in some of these approaches, I will discuss two research papers on this topic. First, Barnett et al. (2007) identify three dimensions of post-conflict peacebuilding: stability creation, restoration of state institutions, and addressing the socioeconomic dimensions of conflict. The first dimension is “the desire to reinforce stability and discourage combatants from returning to war. Peacebuilding activities directly attempt to reduce the available means, and the incentives, for actors to return to conflict” (ibid.). The second dimension is “helping to build or restore key state functions that have the capacity to generate basic public goods and possess a certain level of legitimacy” (ibid). Finally, the third dimension is “the attempt to build not only the state’s but also society’s ability to manage conflict peacefully and develop the socioeconomic infrastructure necessary to underpin economic development....The goal is not only to try to create a culture of peace, but also developing civil society organizations and a viable private sector that have the capacity to represent diverse societal interests and constrain the power of the state” (ibid).

Heathershaw (2008) identifies and discusses three basic discourses in peacebuilding which “constitute the main structural positions within the debate in the international community”:

1. Peacebuilding-via-democratic reform: Democracy is often seen as a prerequisite for peace, and, going the other way, peace is seen as a necessary aspect of a stable democracy. Through monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions, and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation, a sustainable peace should be achieved.
2. Peacebuilding-via-civil society: Civil society peacebuilding is based on the idea that peace should take root in every level of society and that peacebuilding activities should therefore be carried out at the grassroots level, or ‘bottom-up’. These activities focus on relationships between and within societies (‘people-to-people’), on the local capacities of a society and its participation on the road to peace, and on the achievement of justice.
3. Peacebuilding-via-statebuilding: Statebuilding is often referred to as nation-building as well. Through the creation of new government institutions or the strengthening of existing ones, the so-called ‘failed state’ should be attacked and a strong, democratic and sovereign state should be created. Such a state carries a high level of legitimacy and is, according to this approach, a prerequisite for a sustainable peace.

Although the approaches mentioned above are only a small part of all the existing approaches, they do show that there is a wide variety in how peacebuilding can be carried out. A limiting aspect of discussions about the concept and approaches of peacebuilding, is that they often focus on the possibilities and activities of international peacebuilding actors, and mainly of the UN. However, there are many different international actors with different focuses and approaches, and additionally, there are also local actors who try to contribute to peacebuilding processes. The next paragraph focuses on these different actors in peacebuilding and will be discussed through the approach of track-diplomacy.

§ 3.2 Actors and their peacebuilding activities

Track diplomacy contains three tracks, each representing a level in society. Track one represents the higher level of society with heads of state and/or foreign ministries of national governments. In addition, it represents intergovernmental organizations, such as the UN and specifically the office of the UN Secretary General, and regional organizations, such as the African Union and the Organization of American States (Babbitt, 2009). Track one

interventions aim at the leaders of the warring parties and may include state diplomacy or high-level mediation to prevent or end warfare. Track One is largely the realm of states and international organisations, but sometimes NGOs are involved as well. An example of an NGO involved in Track One diplomacy is the Dutch branch of Pax Christi, which became closely involved in peace negotiations in Northern Uganda. As the NGO had worked in the area for an extensive period of time and had built up relations of trust with the various sides it was invited to play a mediatory role (Te Velde, 2006). After a settlement has been reached, Track One peacebuilding focuses on building institutions and structures that strengthen the government and make it accountable to its citizens. Strengthening government legitimacy and building up the judicial system, army, and police forces are all generally considered elements of a long-term peacebuilding strategy (Verkoren, 2008).

Track Two initiatives aim at drawing important societal figures into a peace process in the hopes of giving it a broader base. Track Two peacebuilding involves high-profile, influential societal figures in a conflict region, such as leaders of political parties, journalists, interest groups, local government leaders, or religious organizations. It may include consultations, workshops and dialogues in which representatives of different sides in a conflict are involved. In addition, Track Two strategies involve institutional development of local NGOs, media, and other potential checks and balances. NGOs often work at this level, sometimes in cooperation with international organisations like the UN (Ramsbotham et al. 2005).

Track Three peacebuilding focuses on 'ordinary people': the communities at the grassroots level. It focuses on the causes and consequences of conflict at the level of the individual citizen. These causes and consequences may include inter-communal hatred, discrimination, unequal opportunities, poverty and trauma. Track Three interventions are usually carried out by NGOs, sometimes in conjunction with the local or national government. These interventions are varied and many, and include development work, peace education, the training of community mediators, the organisation of dialogues, strategies to reduce the availability of small arms, the reintegration of former (child) combatants and of refugees, and psycho-social work (Verkoren, 2008).

According to Babbitt (2009), a significant evolution over the past two decades has been the increasing role of nongovernmental actors, as both antagonists and intermediaries in international conflicts. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, new states emerged from the Soviet Union and internal challenges to these and other state governments increased. Consequently,

sub-national and transnational identity groups, usually representing minorities, demanded recognition and legitimacy. The state-centric apparatus of the international system, weakened after the Cold War, could not respond adequately to these new players who were considered illegitimate, which, according to Babbitt (*ibid.*) led to an expansion in nongovernmental conflict resolution organizations to fill this need; the 1990s saw a huge increase in ‘track two-organizations’ (*ibid.*).

Track Two diplomacy, in which NGOs are often active, provides many advantages over the state-to-state forum of Track One (Babbitt, 2009):

1. Discussions are often confidential and involve influential individuals rather than decision makers, which provides the opportunity for brainstorming and exploring options that official public forums lack. Such “influentials” are not constrained by the commitments of public office and can therefore explore options in ways that official representatives cannot.
2. Actors who are considered illegitimate by governments can participate because the proceedings are nonofficial and the conveners are not constrained by charters or interstate agreements that preclude talking with rebel groups or those labelled as terrorists. These conversations open up possibilities for non-military solutions to intrastate violence.
3. In addition to being facilitators or mediators, Track Two practitioners can provide consultation and training for disputing parties. Training can give the disputing parties confidence to engage in negotiation and choose talk over guns.

In addition to these advantages, both Verkoren (2008) and Zartman & Rasmussen (1997) state that peacebuilding cannot be a top-down process in order to make peace sustainable. Peace policy cannot be left to politicians and diplomats only, but Track Two and Track Three strategies are needed as well. Peace should not only take root at the governmental level, but also at the grassroots level. Civilians – individual citizens, families and communities – have increasingly found themselves directly affected by the intra-state wars of recent times and the targeting of civilians by armed parties has increased the cost of conflict for ordinary people. In current day wars high-level political dynamics combine with grassroots-level grievances and animosities to create “a complex tapestry of interconnected and self-sustaining conflict dynamics at the community level” (McKeon, 2005). As a result, ordinary people, living alongside the armed actors and greatly affected by them, have both an interest and a potential in contributing to the building of peace (Verkoren, 2008).

Since the focus of this research is on NGOs, it is valuable to make an additional note on these specific actors. The term ‘NGO’ is often used as a general term for nongovernmental organizations, but it needs to be highlighted that there are many types of organizations hiding behind this term. Vakil (1997) made an overview of all the different classifications which are often treated as one and the same:

Type	Description
BINGO	Big international nongovernmental organization
CBO	Community-based organization
CB-NGO	Community-based nongovernmental organization
DO	Development organization
DONGO	Donor nongovernmental organization
GONGO	Governmental nongovernmental organization
GRO	Grassroots organization
GRSO	Grassroots support organization
IDCI	International development cooperation institution
INGO	International nongovernmental organization
NGDO	Nongovernmental development organization
NNGO	Northern nongovernmental organization
PO	People’s organization
PSC	Public Service Contractor
QUANGO	Quasi-nongovernmental organization
SCO	Social change organization
SNGO (1)	Support nongovernmental organization
SNGO (2)	Southern nongovernmental organization
WCO	Welfare church organization

There is much overlap between the different types of NGOs and there are several which can be applied to the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs analyzed in this research: CB-NGO, GRO, SNGO (2) and SCO. Although the context of this research does not ask for a deeper examination of this categorization, it is necessary to keep in mind that there are many types of NGOs and that when referring to the term ‘NGO’ in this thesis, only a limited number of NGO types are considered. What is more important in this context is to distinguish different

types of NGOs based on their focus. The NGO Handbook⁸ distinguishes eight types of NGOs: humanitarian NGOs; human rights NGOs; educational NGOs; environmental NGOs; women's NGOs; children's NGOs; youth NGOs; peace and conflict NGOs. In this research, the focus is mainly on the last type, peace and conflict NGOs, and partially on human rights NGOs. Since these NGOs try to contribute to a solution for the conflict and additionally try to prevent it from relapsing into violence, I will refer to these organizations as peacebuilding NGOs.

Following this typology, the next step is to distinguish between the different types of activities of these peacebuilding NGOs.

§ 3.3 Types of activities of peacebuilding NGOs

As Verkoren (2008) already mentions in her dissertation, there is hardly any literature available on the range of activities which local peace NGOs are engaged in. Based on her own field research, she has categorized the activities of local peace NGOs in nine different types of activities, which will be elaborated upon in this paragraph. In addition to Verkoren's categorization, three other academic research papers on this topic will be discussed in order to give more insight into the theoretical approaches towards this topic.

Verkoren: Local peace NGOs' activities

1. Dialogue and reconciliation: Reconciliation “includes a wide range of activities that include promoting reconciliation through support to Truth and Reconciliation Commissions; initiating joint reconciliation rituals and symbolic acts; the use of art, sports and theatre to deal with traumas and animosities; and targeted reconstruction or economic development efforts that involve representatives from different groups” (Verkoren, 2008) In addition, many local organisations focus on “bringing representatives of divided communities together for dialogue. At a higher political level, some NGOs facilitate unofficial negotiation channels among political leaders from different sides to a conflict. They also employ advocacy to apply pressure on parties to start a peace process” (ibid.)
2. Peace education: Peace education programmes, taking place inside schools as well as in communities, include “creating awareness of the common ground between groups

⁸ http://www.ngohandbook.org/index.php?title=NGO_Overview

and training people in conflict analysis, peace skills, or non-violent activism” (Verkoren, 2008). In addition, peace NGOs are increasingly active in supporting the development of “peace media” stations to promote objective reporting or to counter pro-war propaganda (ibid.).

3. Civilian mediation: Civilian mediation programmes, sometimes linked to peace education activities, “train community members basic conflict resolution skills in order to mediate in conflicts that may arise in the community” (Verkoren, 2008). Some of these programmes focus on influential community members, on women, or on school children, who are trained to mediate within the schools. In some cases, mediators from different communities form committees that meet regularly to share experiences (ibid.).
4. Peace zones and civilian peacekeeping: In these activities, NGOs try to mobilize civilians to protect those people who are vulnerable to violence. Peace zones are areas in which the warring parties promise not to attack, which can be achieved through NGO pressure and negotiation. These zones give peacebuilding NGOs, but also NGOs working in other fields, the space to start and develop their projects. Examples of civilian peacekeeping are the monitoring of a ceasefire or the accompaniment of people who might be in danger of attack (Verkoren, 2008).
5. Representing a particular group: “Many NGOs work to increase the role of women or youth in peace processes and in society more generally” (Verkoren, 2008). In addition, others work to “empower an ethnic, religious or socially marginalised group whose emancipation is considered necessary for long-term peacebuilding” (ibid.). In addition to ‘specialized’ peacebuilding NGOs, there are also religious organizations active in the field of peacebuilding, which focus on religion as “a source of tolerance and inspiration and often organise inter-religious dialogues” (ibid.).
6. Organizational development, training and networking: “Larger, city-based NGOs often work to support grassroots, community-based partners to strengthen and develop their organisations. This set of activities includes giving training, providing advice and helping organisations to find donors and to write funding proposals. Some NGOs engage in research to find out more about the needs and conditions of beneficiaries as well as possible methodologies for meeting these needs. A related set of activities is networking with other NGOs at home and abroad and with governments and regional and international organisations in order to extend the reach of an individual

organisation, exchange knowledge, and undertake joint advocacy and other activities” (Verkoren, 2008).

7. Disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR): “Usually the DDRR process is led by a United Nations mission or government and NGOs carry out supporting activities at the grassroots level. These activities often entail helping ex-combatants find alternative means of living to prevent them from picking up arms once again. To help former fighters find alternative employment, skills training (such as computer proficiency) and vocational education (for example in car garages or tailoring shops) are prominent NGO areas of work within the range of DDRR-related projects. In some cases reintegration activities are combined with rehabilitation and development work” (Verkoren, 2008).
8. Early warning for early response: The idea of NGOs being able to prevent violence (instead of responding on it) is based on the fact that these organizations are socialized into the areas in which they work and have access to information about rising tensions and impending events. However, the NGOs are not the ones which act upon these warning signs (Verkoren, 2008).
9. Addressing broader structural issues of democracy, human rights and development: Peacebuilding NGOs try to contribute to the strengthening of democracy, both at a local as a national level. Examples of activities to reach this goal are “lobbying and advocating for increased transparency and accountability and organising training sessions for parliamentarians and government employees” (Verkoren, 2008). Related to democracy are activities concerning human rights advocacy, which includes “gathering information on abuses and making this available to various channels and institutions. Local and national governments, governments in the North, and regional and international organisations are addressed in order to put issues on their agenda (ibid.). “In addition, ‘regular’ development work is sometimes carried out by peace organisations based on the recognition that sustainable peace requires socio-economic progress and an equitable division of wealth. The reverse is also true (development requires peace) and therefore development organisations increasingly have peacebuilding divisions” (ibid.).

Additional perspectives on local peacebuilding activities

First, Anderson and Olson (2003) identify several peacebuilding activities of local NGOs: peace education or training in conflict analysis, peace skills, or non-violent activism; the

organization of people-to-people exchanges; the promotion of reconciliation through “specially targeted reconstruction or economic development efforts”; the facilitation of unofficial negotiation channels among political leaders; bringing the representatives of communities in conflict together for dialogue; sending civilian peace monitors to conflict areas to report on abuses and to possibly prevent these abuses; and, finally, supporting the development of ‘peace media’ stations to “foster objective reporting or to counter pro-war propaganda” (ibid.). What is lacking in the identification of Anderson and Olsen is that they mention very specific activities on the one hand and large concepts, like ‘reconciliation’ and ‘reconstruction’, on the other hand, without elaborating or explaining these concepts. In addition, their identification is very limited.

In addition to Anderson and Olsen, Gidron et al. (1999), who studied and compared the structures, resource bases, ideologies, and strategies of P/CROs (peace and conflict resolution organizations) in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel/Palestine, identify six categories of activities in which these P/CROs are active: public education, service, networking, protest, lobbying and research. The large majority of P/CROs have adopted “an eclectic approach to the use of tactics” by combining different types of tactics to pursue their goals (ibid.). Within this approach, they frequently combine both ‘institutional’ and ‘extrainstitutional’ forms: “extrainstitutional refers to everything other than the use of the electoral system, the judicial system, and the peaceful petitioning of public officials (lobbying, testifying at public hearings, presentations, letters, petitions)” (Gamson, 1998). Although Gidron et al. make an identification of six categories of P/CROs’ activities, their article lacks the necessary elaboration of what these categories specifically imply.

Finally, Barnes (2006) gives a very detailed overview of the range of roles and activities of civil society organizations (thus not only NGOs) in peacebuilding:

- “Addressing structural violence and promoting human security through development, human rights monitoring and promotion, preventing environmental degradation.”
- “Making governments and state structures more responsive through participation in political processes, policy dialogue, monitoring, advocacy campaigns, and protests.”
- “Alleviating social tensions and conflict through challenging xenophobia and discrimination, facilitating dialogue, promoting tolerance and a culture of peace.”
- “Strengthening capacities to mediate conflict and manage difference through conflict resolution training, mediation services, education, and promoting rule of law.”
- “Early warning of emerging crises – monitoring, analysis, and communication strategies to raise awareness and generate attention.”

- “Developing options and strategies for response – formulating recommendations, engaging in policy dialogue, problem-solving workshops.”
- “Mobilizing political will for response – lobbying and campaigning, sensitizing domestic audiences.”
- “Developing and strengthening ‘constituencies for peace’ and public awareness work, facilitating social dialogue, and public protests.”
- “Violence reduction and monitoring; creating ‘zones of peace’.”
- “Humanitarian relief and support to war-affected communities.”
- “Facilitating communication and generating alternatives – Track 2 dialogue processes.”
- “Creating a ‘pragmatic peace’ at the local level, strengthening CSO capacities for conflict transformation and peacebuilding through public dialogue.”
- “Developing a negotiation agenda and vision for the future that addresses the causes and consequences of conflict.”
- “Participating in the political negotiations.”
- “Facilitating/mediating political negotiations process.”
- “Public education and awareness-raising on the peace agreement and consolidating support.”
- “Facilitating the rehabilitation of war-affected relationships and communities; laying groundwork for reconciliation.”
- “Contributing to transitional justice processes.”
- “Resumption of initiatives contributing to structural prevention – encouraging good governance, reconstruction and development, mediating social conflict, promoting human rights” (ibid.).

Although Barnes’ analysis of peacebuilding activities of civil society organizations is extensive and well elaborated upon, some of the aspects are overlapping and the analysis in general is a bit too extensive to be effectively and clearly compared with the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. In addition, Barnes’ analysis bears on all forms of civil society organizations and not just on NGOs. The latter do not always have the same capabilities and possibilities, but also ideologies and approaches, as other organizations falling under the umbrella concept of CSO. Therefore, Barnes’ analysis is not fully applicable in this thesis.

Compared to the three analyses and categorizations of peacebuilding activities of grassroots organizations outlined above, Verkoren's categorization is extensive, comprehensive and clearly arranged. In addition, her analysis bears solely on local peace organizations. Therefore, Verkoren's categorization will be used in the following chapters to be compared with the goals, approaches and possible contributing aspects of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, in order to see to what length theory on NGO peacebuilding can be applied to the Palestinian context. However, since some of the types of activities she identified lack an elaboration of what the goals or expected effects of these types of activities are, which is the subject focused upon in chapter 5, Barnes' analysis will be integrated in Verkoren's categorization in this specific chapter.

§ 3.4 Positive and negative aspects of NGOs in peacebuilding

In relation to the position of NGOs in peacebuilding processes, there are certain aspects which need to be considered. First, what is the (possible) valuable contribution of NGOs to peacebuilding processes? Second, which ('involuntary') difficulties and constraints do these NGOs face which might decrease their valuable contribution? Third, what are the (intentional) negative aspects of NGOs which might limit the positive effects they have? All these aspects will be linked to the data in chapter 5 and 6.

§ 3.4.1 The value of NGOs in peacebuilding

According to Goodhand (2006), NGOs are, compared to governmental and intergovernmental agencies, closer to the communities in which peace ultimately needs to take root and they can enable ordinary people to articulate their needs and make their voices heard. He states that NGOs are:

“mid-level actors with linkages upwards to political leadership and downwards to communities; they have the potential to play a bridging role between identity groups in contexts characterized by extreme horizontal inequalities; they have the ability to work across lines and gain access to communities living on the wrong side of a conflict; [and] they [...] can work in high-risk environments” (ibid.).

According to Fisher (2008), NGOs have comparative advantages over state actors, which makes them better equipped for peacebuilding activities. These advantages include their “political independence, the flexibility of their mandates, their impartiality and high standard credibility” (ibid.). Van Tongeren (1998) elaborates on this:

“Collectively, NGOs have the ability to (a) function without being constrained by narrow mandates of foreign policy imperatives, (b) achieve access to areas inaccessible to official actors, (c) talk to several parties without losing their credibility, (d) deal directly with grassroots populations, (e) operate in confidentiality without media, parliamentary or public scrutiny, (f) take the greatest risks, given their public advocacy and social-justice agendas, (g) effectively network, given their longstanding relationships, built on trust, with civil society in conflict zones, (h) draw upon public opinion to galvanize political will to focus on a longer-term perspective than governments are able to.”

In addition, NGOs are often considered to be more “flexible, adaptive and innovative” than governmental and intergovernmental institutions (Goodhand, 2006). Indeed, “the study of local peace NGOs has shown that they are relatively unbureaucratic and decision-making structures are flat in that all staff members tend to have easy access to leaders and are consulted over policy” (Verkoren, 2008).

Another aspect through which NGOs can add value to peacebuilding relates to their own values:

“[t]hey do not only seek to get things done, they embody a particular set of values or way of thinking about the world. Therefore, just as material resources interact with the political economy of conflict, NGOs’ values and ways of thinking interact with ideational and discursive aspects of war and peace. Individual peace entrepreneurs [...] play an important role in the diffusion of ideas and the generation of social energy that can transform social structures and social relations” (Goodhand, 2006).

Finally, people coming together in associations and organisations and taking part in the public sphere create so-called “social capital”: networks of interaction, mutual assistance and trust that give a sense of common identity and foster civic engagement and democracy (Putnam, 1993). Not only the cooperation between different NGOs, working in the field of peacebuilding, can strengthen the peacebuilding process, but also the NGOs’ ability to involve the community in the peacebuilding process through their close contact with the ‘ordinary people’ (ibid.). Therefore, NGOs can contribute to strengthening the capacity of societies to manage conflicts peacefully (Barnes, 2006). The more people are active within the peacebuilding process, the more effective it will be.

§ 3.4.2 Difficulties and constraints

There are certain difficulties and constraints which NGOs face when working within a peacebuilding process. I will elaborate on three major restrictions: the conflict situation, the political environment and the influence of international (often Western) donors.

When we talk of peacebuilding activities, it does not mean that a conflict has ended completely. What it does mean is that the situation is relatively calm and stable. However, violent incidents still occur and the chance remains that the conflict will revive. Therefore, NGOs have to work in difficult circumstances. They are not always allowed to move wherever they want, thereby not being able to reach all the people they want or need to reach. In a situation where there are parties that do not agree with the NGOs' peacebuilding activities, it becomes even dangerous for their employees to execute their work (World Bank, 2006). The conflict situation limits the possibilities of NGOs, thereby making their work less effective.

A second restriction is the political environment. Local NGOs, especially those set up by actors from the side of the 'enemies', but also those who have mission statements, values and goals which do not correspond with those of the political elite, are often mistrusted by governments, especially when the situation is still unstable (Verkoren, 2008). In these situations, NGOs face many difficulties in carrying out their work, since governments do not support them financially, prohibit them in talking to government officials, or thwart the building or using of institutions to set up their programmes; sometimes NGOs are even officially denied in their existence (ibid.). These political circumstances can restrict NGOs in carrying out their activities.

A third major constraint is the influence of international donors, which has two aspects: the 'demands' of INGOs and the setting of agendas. There are many international donors who fund local NGOs in (post-)conflict situations, through which they aim at contributing to the peacebuilding process. Although this can be a positive contribution, it can also cause problems. According to Verkoren (2008), NGOs are often pressured by donor agencies to show the impact of their work. The problem is that peace is a difficult concept to measure and even if positive developments are measured, it is hard to determine whether these developments are effects of the work of the NGOs. When international donors do not see clear results of the work of the local NGOs they support, funding is often stopped, which leaves local NGOs with even more difficulties to continue with their programmes (ibid).

In addition, international donors often try to put their ideas and policies concerning peacebuilding on the receiving NGOs, and are thereby defining the agendas of local actors,

which Bornstein (2009) refers to as a new form of imperialism. In these situations, there is often a large gap between the policies of international donors, and the context in which these policies are applied. International actors have policies based on western values and which are often focused on stable societies (ibid.). (Post-) conflict regions often do not share the same values and are most of the time not stable yet. Therefore, applying these policies can endanger the peace process (ibid). International donors often forget that knowledge of the local context, and personal relations with different actors in the region, both on a top- as on a grassroots level, are vital to implement a peace process effectively (Challand, 2008). According to Challand (ibid.), local NGOs know what the needs of the population are and which policies should be implemented to be able to respond to these needs. In addition, he states that these organizations are in contact with several actors in society, like the government, other NGOs, community leaders, schools and the ordinary people, and therefore have the best knowledge in how to approach the situation most effectively (ibid). However, local NGOs are so dependent on funding of international donors, that they often see no other way as to apply the policies of international donors on their local situation. Unfortunately, this can and regularly has the effect of preventing the peacebuilding process to be developed well (Bornstein, 2009).

§ 3.4.3 Negative aspects of NGOs in peacebuilding processes

The image of local NGOs in peacebuilding processes, presented above, assumes that these NGOs can add a substantial value to a peacebuilding process and that they are only constrained by external aspects for which they cannot be blamed. However, there are also some ‘intentional’ negative aspects of NGOs which might harm a peacebuilding process or which might limit their own valuable contribution to this process.

Fisher (2008) mentions some central lines of criticism on local NGOs in peacebuilding, which can be summarized as follows:

- 1) NGOs are not independent per se, but often state-driven.
- 2) The performance of NGOs has changed because of the requirements of donor markets.
- 3) NGOs are not subject to any democratic controls and thus lack legitimacy.

When local NGOs receive funding from their government or from donors who are publicly financed, there is a danger that NGOs are merely implementing state-driven politics. In this case, local NGOs can function as private branches of governments that outsource their services to these organizations. Although funding by state agencies does not exclude criticizing official state politics by the receiving NGOs per se, it is a great danger in post-conflict states, which are often still weak and not democratically organized yet (ibid).

The second argument, the change of performance of NGOs because of requirements of donor markets, is already discussed in the sub-paragraph above. Where Bornstein (2009) argues that it is often the case that NGOs involuntarily have to change their policies according to those of their (often Western) donors, Fisher (2008) states that there are also local NGOs which voluntarily change their policies and methods, since their first priority is not to effectively change their society, but to receive as much funds as possible; they respond to money in the first instance, instead of responding to social needs (ibid). This attitude can severely limit the valuable contribution these NGOs otherwise might have had.

Jad's line of thought is similar to that of Fisher, since she states that NGOs are often portrayed as passive recipients of external influence, where practice shows that NGO representatives have the power to manipulate, re-negotiate, and legitimise donor-agendas, using funds earmarked for peace to further their own agendas (2007). The huge amounts of money donors 'give' to local NGOs and the power these NGOs have to manipulate their agendas, has had the effect which Jad (ibid.) refers to as "NGOisation" or a "mushrooming of NGOs". She argues that many NGOs were set up, supposedly to contribute to the peacebuilding process, but which actually use the funds they receive to further their own agendas, causing honest NGOs to lose their funds.

This process of "NGOisation" also has another effect. As mentioned before, donors often try to put their policies and methods on local NGOs and many of these organizations are willing to adapt to these policies and methods. New NGOs, set up during this "NGOisation"-process, know exactly what donors want: success. Through the excessive use of the language of 'expertise', mostly by hiring professionals ("professionalism"), and through the "transformation of a cause for social change into a project with a plan, timetable, and fixed budget", further funding is secured (Jad, 2007). This is exacerbated by the 'magic bullet syndrome' (Vivian, 1994): the view among NGO staff members responsible for designing, implementing, and reporting on projects that they must demonstrate success if they are to maintain funding. A consequence of this 'syndrome' is a tendency to gloss over mistakes and to present the project as an unqualified success story. "NGOs are driven by the imperatives of professionalism and delivery, or 'project logic'" (Jad, 2007). Professionalization, as part of the "NGOisation" process, might not lead to more participation of the 'target groups' or the grassroots. 'Project logic' pushes towards "upward vertical participation", by focusing on a professional staff and can lead to further concentration of power in the hands of administrators and technocrats, instead of in the hands of the people who actually need it: the 'ordinary' people on the grassroots level (ibid).

Finally, the third argument of the lack of legitimacy, transparency and credibility. Unlike governments and parliaments, non-state actors are unable to obtain legitimacy through public elections, but they can acquire legitimacy and credibility by demonstrating their efficiency and effectiveness, which many NGOs do through public reports about their mandates, financing and funding. However, as mentioned before, many NGOs present their projects as success stories to secure their funding, and, additionally, receive funding for certain projects while they actually use it to further their own agenda. NGOs try to legitimize their projects and their funding through unrealistic project reports and adjusted financial reports. Although these reports seem to legitimize their work and make their organization transparent and credible, they are actually a forgery of the truth (Jad, 2007).

Anderson and Olsen (2003) express critique as well, stating that peace NGOs have a bias towards people that are easy to reach. For example, many programmes focus on women and children because these are perceived to be non-political, are often non-belligerent and willing to cooperate. Although working with these groups certainly is valuable, targeting the (potential) war makers is also important, and this is done less. Another bias is one toward 'doing good versus stopping bad'. Most organizations see their work as "building the positive preconditions for peace" (ibid.), but they tend not to address the systems of individuals that promote or perpetuate war, even though it would appear that doing so is a precondition for building positive peace. Because of this lack of regard for the negative characteristics of conflict-torn countries, organizations' objectives may be unrealistic: "the benchmarks for such positive-focused peace practice are highly idealized conditions of social harmony that do not exist even in most countries that are at peace!" (ibid).

In addition, local NGOs are part of the society in which they live and work. As a result, they are also part of the conflict situation. Notwithstanding their aims of building peace, they may be affiliated more closely with one conflict group than with others. Armed groups are usually supported by elements of civil society that champion their cause and view armed struggle as legitimate (Verkoren, 2008). In the worst case, a peacebuilding NGO may simultaneously be a vehicle for the political ambitions of its leaders and fundraisers for peace may in reality raise funds for warfare (ibid.). Aside from the embeddedness of NGOs in conflict structures, their projects may have an unintended impact on the conflict as well. Decisions on which local staff members to hire and which areas to target risk the deepening of cleavages by supporting one conflict group over another. Food or materials may inadvertently end up in the hands of fighting parties. Armed personnel hired to safeguard staff travelling to dangerous zones could be running warlord-related protection rackets. Even peace dialogues

run the risk of branding participants as belonging to one conflict group when in reality their identities may be much more complex (ibid). This argumentation is the same as what Anderson, although focusing on international aid agencies instead of local NGOs, outlined in her book “Do no harm” (1999):

“When international assistance is given in the context of a violent conflict, it becomes part of that context and thus also of the conflict. Although aid agencies often seek to be neutral or nonpartisan toward the winners and losers of war, the impact of their aid is not neutral regarding whether conflict worsens or abates. When given in conflict settings, aid can reinforce, exacerbate, and prolong the conflict.”

Although aid can contribute to the reducing of tensions and can strengthen people’s capacities to disengage from fighting and find peaceful solutions for the conflict, it can simultaneously and unintentionally have the opposite effect as well (Anderson, 1999).

Chapter 4

Approaches, efforts and abilities

As outlined in chapter 3, peacebuilding NGOs' activities can be divided in different types of activities. Each (post-)conflict situation is different and therefore asks for different peacebuilding approaches, and, in addition, the context of each conflict also influences the way peacebuilding actors, like NGOs, can execute their work.

In this chapter, I will first describe the goals of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and their approaches to reach these goals accordingly, and following this, I will compare these goals and approaches with the types of activities discussed in peacebuilding theory.

§ 4.1 Approaches, activities and methods

“We seek for the realization of the values of forgiveness, respect, hope, reconciliation and a just peace. It is our mission to contribute to a prospering, non-violent Palestine by empowering marginalized groups to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. CCRR seeks to strengthen democracy, human rights, and justice as they are essential to a lasting peace. We are working to turn the culture of violence into a culture of peace, believing reconciliation to be a long-term goal. We campaign for peace both within the Palestinian community and among the Israeli and Palestinian people which can only be realized by the establishment of justice” (CCRR, 2010).

The citation above is the mission statement of the Palestinian Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, located in Bethlehem, the West Bank. Although this is the mission statement of only one Palestinian peacebuilding NGO, a comparison with the mission statements, goals and objectives of the other analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs show that this specific statement represents very similar goals as these other organizations have. Within these NGOs, there are several themes which prevail: non-violence, empowerment, reconciliation, democracy, human rights and justice.

§ 4.1.1 Non-violence

“We believe that non-violence is a positive approach that will not surrender to the reality of the occupation, but rather reject and resist it. It can be economic, political and social, cooperating with the different movements that believe in a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis.” (CCRR, 2010)

According to Holy Land Trust, the “history of the struggle of the Palestinian people includes a rich and meaningful embrace of nonviolent tactics”⁹, most notably during the first intifada (beginning in 1987), but also before and after this event. Considering the first intifada, it was notably non-violent in nature, especially for the initial years:

“It is worth underscoring the largely nonviolent character of this intifada. Stone-throwing demonstrations and individual armed attacks against selective Israeli targets notwithstanding, the intifada was consciously and deliberately envisioned as an organized and universal unarmed civilian struggle against the Israeli Occupation” (Dajani in Zunes, 1999).

Non-violent activities included boycotting Israeli instructions, civil disobedience in the form of ignoring curfews and other orders from the Israeli army, an economic boycott in terms of refusing to work in the settlements and refusing to pay taxes, and protest activities like demonstrations and displaying the Palestinian flag (Dajani, 1995). The mass non-violent movement during the first intifada relied on the grassroots networks and popular committees that had already been established in the '70s as a response to the restrictive environment of the occupation. Israel responded to the uprising by outlawing popular committees, holding tax raids, establishing curfews and severe travel restrictions, and arresting and deporting leaders (Dajani in Zunes, 1999).

According to Holy Land Trust¹⁰, the efficacy of non-violence during the first intifada is a matter of discussion. The intifada did not lead to an ending of the occupation, but it did inconvenience Israel and some of the repression techniques, especially Rabin’s “break the bones policy”, which contains Rabin’s supposed orders to break the bones of Arab militants and to club, hit, and kick arrested Palestinians as a form of punishment¹¹, negatively effected

⁹ http://www.holylandtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=462&Itemid=307

¹⁰ http://www.holylandtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=462&Itemid=307

¹¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/07/12/world/israel-declines-to-study-rabin-tie-to-beatings.html?pagewanted=1>

public opinion within Israel. The mass movement of non-violent resistance exposed the power and dignity of the Palestinian people, both to themselves as to the international community¹². In comparison to the first intifada, the second, also called the al-Aqsa intifada, relied mainly on violent means. However, a number of direct action campaigns, boycotts, and civil disobedience were organized on a local level. While the first intifada was orchestrated to gain the attention and respect of the international community, the second was largely an internal response to the continuing oppressions of the occupation. Some think the violent nature of the second intifada was a disgruntled reaction to the lack of ‘successes’ of the first. The first intifada included massive participation in nonviolent demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, etc., but the situation for Palestinians did not improve¹³. Violence was therefore perceived as a mean that actually would improve their situation.

In 2005, when the second intifada ended, violence did not seem to have been a good alternative to non-violent action. Compared to the first intifada, there were more Israeli and Palestinian casualties (although exact numbers defer), more Palestinians arrested, more physical damage (in Israel due mostly to Palestinian suicide bombers; in the Occupied Territories due to Israeli military attacks and house demolitions), and Israel’s response to the violence of the intifada had made life much more difficult for Palestinians through new checkpoints, the continuing construction of the Separation Barrier, and increased security measures¹⁴. In addition, Israel continued to build and expand settlements in the West Bank.

After the second intifada, Palestinians slowly started to realize that violent rebellion is not the only way to fight the occupation. This realization did not only stem from the fact that the non-violent measures of the first intifada had more success (or, better said, had less severe repercussions) than the violent acts during the second intifada, but also from the realization that the Palestinian people will likely never be able to match the military capabilities of the state of Israel (Nafez Assaily, LOWNP). Palestinians do not have heavy weapons (the ones they do have do not compare to Israeli weapons) and they are not military trained. In addition, they do not even have the official permission to carry weapons and there are no logistical lines to receive weapons (ibid). “If power were only understood to be the kind of power that comes from uniforms and large weapons, then the Palestinian people would truly be powerless”¹⁵.

¹² http://www.holylandtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=462&Itemid=307

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ http://www.holylandtrust.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=462&Itemid=307

According to Zoughbi Zoughbi (Wi'am), Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are the only actors in Palestine which are able to reach the people on the ground and are therefore the main actors to promote the concept of non-violence within the Palestinian community. All of the directors and employees of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs see non-violence as the only effective way to bring a just peace to the Palestinian people. To quote dr. Fathi Darwish (Tawasul): "we [the Palestinians] tried violence, but it was a catastrophe; many people died, were injured or ended up in Israeli jails. There is no other way than a peaceful solution". He also expressed his perception, which is supported by CCRR (2010), that nonviolent resistance is the most effective method to encourage the world to increase their help for Palestinians in obtaining their rights, help that these organisations can not exist without (see chapter 6). Although it is not possible to say whether dr. Zoughbi Zoughbi is right by stating that Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are the main actors to promote nonviolence within Palestinian society, it is striking that *all* of the organizations from the sample are active in this promotion.

There are several ways through which the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs try to promote nonviolence. CCRR, for example, started the Young Negotiators Program in 2002, which focuses on high school students, their parents, their teachers and social workers. Due to the occupation, Palestinians live in a very tense environment and often encounter violent situations. One of the consequences of this is that young adolescents, who are more sensitive to these situations, bring their frustration with the situation with them to school, often leading to aggression and violence directed at their peers, their teachers, their social worker at school, but also at their parents (who play the most crucial role in the educational process of their children). The Young Negotiators Program aims at providing these students with the tools to solve their personal conflicts in a non-violent and respectful way. CCRR (2010) believes that peaceful relations need to be initiated from both directions, and therefore does not only provide training for the students, but also for their teachers, social workers and parents. In the long run, the aim of the programme is, according to CCRR (ibid.) not only to make relations within the Palestinian community nonviolent and peaceful relations, but also to convince Palestinians to lean on nonviolent means when resisting the occupation.

Other examples of nonviolent actions are boycott campaigns, supported by the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement People (PCR) and the Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace (LOWNP), focusing not only on the boycott of Israeli products, coinciding with the promotion of local products, but also of any relation with Israeli military or settler project (many Palestinians work in the construction of Jewish settlements in the

West Bank and Israeli military projects, like the construction of the Separation Barrier); publishing and distributing books on nonviolence, and the organization of and participation in demonstrations against the occupation.

According to Nafez Assaily (LOWNP), “Israel is not trained to defeat non-violence; they do not know how to react against it, since they only know how to use violence”. He states that the fact that Israel does not know how to respond to non-violent resistance, causes discussion within Israel, which is exactly what LOWNP wants to achieve. The act of non-violence divides the occupiers. “We want to provoke Israel to react; if they react, the [non-violent] action was a success”. Although the popularity of non-violent actions is growing among Palestinians in the West Bank (for example, the Young Negotiators Program of CCRR is carried out in more than 100 schools in the West Bank since 2002 and it continues to be carried out), there are still, according to Assaily, uncertain and sometimes even suspicious reactions within from Palestinians towards nonviolence; people are not sure if nonviolence is the way to achieve their goals. But, according to George Rishmawi (PCR), “non-violence needs a long time; we have to build on experience” and, quoting Nafez Assaily again: “we are planting the seeds for non-violence”. According to these organizations, Palestinians have to realise that non-violence is also a form of power and resistance; “non-violence is fighting without weapons” (Assaily, LOWNP).

§ 4.1.2 Empowerment, human rights, justice and democracy

Many Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs base some of their projects on the theory of ‘People Diplomacy’. People diplomacy was developed from the idea that the ordinary people affected by the conflict must play the most important role in peace negotiations, as it is them who also suffer the most from the violence. Most victims of wars are ordinary people from a society and not the political leaders who negotiate the solutions to the conflict. Accordingly, it is of utmost importance that these people are able to raise their voice and communicate their views on what is happening around them (CCRR, 2010). According to dr. Fathi Darwish (Tawasul), “the main failure of Oslo [the Oslo peace process] is that nobody came to the grassroots movements to explain what was going on. People have to take part in the process and believe that this is in their own interest. Peace should exist on the ground and not only on a political level”. Due to this reason, Tawasul has initiated specific programmes with the goal not only to empower Palestinians individually, but also the Palestinian community as a whole.

Not only Tawasul focuses on empowerment, but every analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGO executes projects which focus on this concept. According to CCRR

(2010), “we want to involve Palestinians in the decision-making process that affects their lives”. Within these goals, all of the NGOs from the sample say they focus mainly on the marginalized groups in Palestinian society – youth, women and villagers – since these groups are the least involved in decision-making processes. An example of such a project is the “Women and Conflict” project of CCRR. In Palestine and the rest of the Arab world, women are often faced with conflicts in the different stages of their development. Many of these conflicts are produced by their confrontation with the values of a traditional society and are exacerbated by traditional rules that are not allowing the women to mention, discuss or sometimes even reflect on these conflicts freely. In the “Women and Conflict” project, executed in villages in the West Bank, CCRR tries to provide these women with tools to confront themselves with questions that they are not used to addressing, thereby improving their knowledge, strengthening their self-perception, and solving their conflicts (CCRR, 2010).

Civic education is also a method used by most of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in order to reach their goal of Palestinian empowerment, which materializes in programmes where the participants are taught about all aspects of Palestinian society (traditions and culture, but also the political and economic system), but also where they are supported in developing themselves, through communication training (where the participants not only learn how to communicate with each other in an effective and respectful way, but also how to write official letters and how they should contact official institutions) and through trainings and workshops where they can acquire specific skills (e.g. setting up businesses and organizations, filming, editing etc.), which will, according to the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs from the sample, help improve their position in society. Another aspect of civic education, conducted by most of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs and crucial according to all of them, is to learn Palestinians about their basic human rights. Many Palestinians are not aware of what they are entitled to and are therefore also not able to defend themselves when these rights are violated.

According to the majority of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs, those which use civic education, the goal of this method is not only to develop Palestinians as individuals, but also to decrease the inequality within the Palestinian society, and to make Palestinians more aware of the identity, skills and power of the Palestinian people as a whole, and of the situation they are living in. “We have to call for unity and make them [Palestinians] feel responsible for their own lives” (Zoughbi Zoughbi, Wi’am). If the position of Palestinians will be improved

and if they are aware of their position, Palestinians will be more effective in resisting and defending themselves against the occupation and its consequences (George Rishmawi, PCR).

As mentioned before, another aspect within the concept of empowerment is to involve Palestinians in the decision-making process that affects their lives. According to Naseef Muallem (PCPD), there is “a large gap between the government and the people, while the people should be able to speak for themselves towards the government”. He continues by saying that “to strengthen the rule of law, people have to feel that the decisions made are theirs; they have to be aware of their role in society”. To achieve this, his organisation focuses on a so-called “upside-down approach”, realized in meetings between representatives of the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian civilians, where the latter can express their needs, do recommendations and can ask questions. The goal behind these meetings is that the government will listen more to the people and will improve in incorporating the needs of Palestinian civilians into their policies. In this way, PCPD hopes to shrink the gap between the government and its people, thereby strengthening democracy.

Another example is the “Young Politicians Program” of CCRR, which is focused on student leaders in ten Palestinian universities. According to dr. Noah Salameh (CCRR), student political factions play a central role in Palestine and many leaders of modern political parties have been council leaders during their university years. In the YNP programme, students are trained in peace education, alternative conflict resolution (nonviolence), communication, the rule of law, and democracy, both as a set of values and as an election method. “University students of today will be the leaders of Palestinian society in the future. By investing in these students, improving their leadership skills, and making them aware of the values of justice, democracy and peace, our chance on a powerful, democratic leadership and a peaceful future will be a step closer” (CCRR, 2010).

§ 4.1.3 Reconciliation and peace

The concepts of nonviolence, empowerment, human rights and democracy, discussed above, are concepts which are approached and materialized in relative similar ways by the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, but when it comes to the concepts of reconciliation and peace, and the approaches to reach this accordingly, it becomes a different story.

Looking at the mission statements of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, it is clear that all of them state ‘peace’ as one of their main goals, calling it a “just peace” (CCRR), “civic peace” (Tawasul), “a just and peaceful Palestine” (PCR), etc. But what does

this mean? What is peace? Analysis of the interviews with the directors and in some cases employees of the peacebuilding NGOs from the sample and of websites of additional Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs show that ‘peace’ is a subjective concept. Although recognizing that there are similarities in the analyzed NGOs’ perception of peace, like an end to the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the right of Palestinian refugees to return, there is one striking, but essential difference between the perceptions of certain of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs: the one-state vs. two-state solution. For example, Tawasul, Miftah, Wi’am, LOWNP, PCPD, and the Al-Hares Association for Democracy and Media all envision an independent, sovereign, democratic and secular Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, where Palestinians and Israelis would live side by side. On the other hand, CCRR is the only organization which sees ‘peaceful coexistence’, or the one-state solution, as its ultimate goal. Palestinians and Israelis would live together in a single, democratic, and secular state. Holy Land Trust is an exception in the sense that it does not envision a political solution for the conflict, stating the following (interview through email, see Appendix 4):

“Holy Land Trust doesn't have or endorse any “political vision” for Palestine, Israel, the Holy Land, etc. i.e. one state, two states, ten states, etc. Our vision as HLT is to say that we do not have and we do not seek to present a political solution. Our goal is to address the real core issues that do not allow for the right and most just political solution to be established. We focus our efforts on recognizing the deep inherent issues that are not providing for the best solution and we believe that once these issues are addressed then the right political solution will be chosen by the people and it could be one that has not been thought of thus far.”

First of all, it attracts attention that most of these Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs strive for a two-state solution. Second, when comparing their visions with their approaches and activities, it is striking that five out of the six organizations which strive for a two-state solution focus their activities only on the Palestinian society and avoid joint activities with Israeli organizations. For example, dr. Zoughbi Zougbi addressed “the importance of dialogue between all the Palestinian people, and called for reconciliation between the different political parties along with civil peace. Assuring that it is the only way the Palestinians will ever be able to reach their goal which is independence and freedom” (Wi’am, 2009). Dialogue, reconciliation and peace within the Palestinian society should be enough to reach its aim of an

independent Palestinian state. This vision corresponds with those of the other four organizations mentioned above.

CCR, on the other hand, also believes that a just solution to the conflict is only achievable through dialogue, not only dialogue between Palestinians, but also between Palestinian and Israelis. Dr. Noah Salameh, director of CCR, explains his vision on joint projects with the following words: “I think that for us as Palestinians to participate in joint projects is not merely an activity, it is a national responsibility....CCR is engaging in joint work aiming to change the participants and affect their attitudes and opinions regarding the conflict, especially on the Israeli side. The clear and explicit goal is to affect public opinion in Israel, to change the stereotypes and prejudices about Palestinians, and to influence people’s political convictions” (Salameh, 2006). CCR has put this vision into practice by conducting several joint projects over the years with two Israeli organizations, School for Peace and Rabbis for Human Rights, thereby bringing Israelis and Palestinians together to discuss and negotiate about topics like the role of media and religion in the conflict.

It appears that the fact that five out of the six organizations which envision a two-state solution do not carry out joint projects, while the only organization envisioning a one-state solution does, is not a coincidence. According to Mohammed Musa (al-Hares Association), joint projects are perceived, not only by him, but also by many other Palestinian NGOs as well as by the majority of Palestinian civilians, as leading to normalization, thereby implicitly accepting the occupation and surrendering the Palestinian land and the Palestinian people to the Israelis. If an independent Palestinian state is to be realized, normalization is exactly what should be fought. Although this statement is coming from one individual, informal conversations with many Palestinian civilians showed that cooperation with Israelis is generally not accepted, independent of how this cooperation takes place, thereby confirming Musa’s statement. Therefore, it does not seem too unrealistically to believe that those analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, striving for a two-state solution, *intentionally* do not commit to joint activities with Israeli organizations, while CCR, striving for one state, is.

The only Palestinian peacebuilding organization which deviates from this hypothesis is Tawasul. It believes that direct contact, in the form of joint activities, will transform people’s attitudes and behaviours, leading to sustainable peace and reconciliation, creating support for ending the occupation and creating a Palestinian state within secure and recognized borders.¹⁶ According to Tawasul’s director, dr. Fathi Darwish: “Palestinians have

¹⁶ <http://www.tawasul.ps/freepage.php?id=21>

to realise that there is a difference between the Israeli soldier and Israeli citizens. They [the Israelis] are human beings, have the same dreams, same problems...but it is difficult to get this through [to the Palestinians]”. On the other hand, joint projects can enable Israelis to see the effects of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian society by themselves and can make them realise that Palestinians are the same, normal people as they are (Darwish). Thus, according to Tawasul, joint activities do not lead to normalization, but rather to the opposite, which is an independent Palestinian state. This example makes it clear that the same approach can be used to reach two opposite goals.

§ 4.2 Comparison with theory

According to Verkoren (2008), peacebuilding activities of peacebuilding NGOs can be divided in nine different types of activities: dialogue and reconciliation; peace education; civilian mediation; peace zones and civilian peacekeeping; representing a particular group; organisational development, training and networking; disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR); early warning for early response; and addressing broader structural issues of democracy, human rights and development.

When comparing these types of activities with the approaches and activities of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, it appears that the latter are quite similar to the first. To be more specific, five out of the nine types of activities classified by Verkoren are similar to those stated approaches of (some of) the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs from the sample. First, all analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs focus on dialogue and reconciliation, let it be only between Palestinians or between Palestinian and Israelis. Secondly, all NGOs in the sample carry out peace education programmes and try to create awareness among Palestinians concerning their common culture and history, their position in the conflict, and their rights, skills and responsibilities. These NGOs give workshops and trainings in peace activism, conflict resolution, communication and most importantly, nonviolence.

Third, civilian mediation is also a type of activity which applies to certain programmes of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs, and is linked to their peace education activities. Most of the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs from the sample have programmes designed to teach different groups of people in Palestinian society – youth, university students, women, community leaders – basic skills in conflict resolution and nonviolent communication (e.g. the Young Negotiators Program of CRR), with the goal of enabling them to resolve conflicts they face in their daily lives in a peaceful way.

The fourth activity similar to the goals and approaches of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs is the representation of a particular group. Many of the activities of these organizations are focused on those groups in Palestinian society which are marginalized and/or vulnerable, which are mainly women, youth, and villagers. They provide these groups with workshops and trainings to teach them certain skills and provide them with knowledge through which they can develop themselves, thereby strengthening their position. In addition to the empowerment of these specific groups, one of all the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs' main goals is to empower the Palestinian community as a whole, enabling them to defend themselves against the occupation, and to give them a voice towards the outside world. Empowering the Palestinian society as a whole is seen by all of the NGOs from the sample as one of the main preconditions for ending the occupation and for reaching a sustainable peace in the end. Thus, the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs present themselves as representing not only the Palestinian community as a whole, but also the Palestinian youth, women and villagers specifically.

Finally, most of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are active in addressing broader structural issues, especially human rights and democracy. Some of these organizations provide Palestinians with workshops and trainings to improve awareness concerning their basic human rights with the goal of enabling them to defend themselves better when their rights are violated. In addition, they try to involve Palestinians in the decision-making processes that affect their lives, for example by organizing meetings to bring civilians and political leaders together, by strengthening leadership skills of the youth and students, and by monitoring elections.

In opposition to these similarities between several of the categorized activities of local peacebuilding NGOs and the stated goals and approaches of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, there are also discrepancies. The current situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict provides the context for the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs not being able to or, on the other hand, not being necessary to carry out certain peacebuilding activities. The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, with the Separation Wall, its numerous checkpoints and roadblocks and the continuation of settlement building, prevents the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs from the sample to create peace zones and to physically protect those who are vulnerable. Even those Palestinians living in Area A, which is officially under full control of the Palestinian Authority, are faced with house demolitions, raids, nightly arrests and house searches by the Israeli army. The analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding

NGOs, which are small and relatively isolated organizations, do not have the capacities and power to stand up against and prevent military actions of that extent.

In addition, Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs do not focus on DDDR activities, due to two reasons. Most of the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, also those which are analyzed, were set up in the late 1990s or early 2000s, so just before or during the second intifada. The second intifada, although disrupting many lives, lasted for ‘only’ five years. Due to this relatively short period, it was not the case that Palestinian militants did not know anything else than just a life of armed struggle or that they were excluded from ‘normal’ Palestinian society. Therefore, there was no need for these militants to be educated and reintegrated. What contributed to this absence of DDDR activities from the agenda of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs is that international donors did not focus on the aspect of DDDR in the Palestinian territories, leading to a lack of funds available for these activities. Although it might look as a logical causal explanation that there are no available funds if there is no necessity for certain activities, or on the other hand, that certain activities are not on the agenda of local organizations if there are no funds available, this explanation is not that logical when you analyze the relationship between international donors and the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. As will be discussed extensively in chapter 6, international donors often have their own agendas which they try to put on local Palestinian organizations, and additionally, the Palestinian NGOs from the sample are not always unwilling to adjust their own agendas to those of their international donors. Therefore, if international donors would have put DDDR activities on their agenda and would have made funds available for these activities in the Palestinian territories, it would not have been unlikely that the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs had put these activities on their agendas as well, necessary or not.

The idea of peacebuilding NGOs being involved in the aspect of early warning for early response is based on the proposition that these organizations are socialized into the areas in which they work and therefore have access to information about rising tensions and impending events (Verkoren, 2008). As will be discussed further in chapter 6, the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are not that imbedded and socialized into Palestinian society as they make themselves out to be. In particular, most of these NGOs are not active in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank, which, as history shows, are actually the places where Palestinian militias recruit their people, since the bad conditions in these camps lead to anger, frustration, and a feeling that there is nothing to loose among its inhabitants, which makes them ‘easy targets’ for recruitment (Cleveland, 2009). These two factors lead to the

fact that it is unlikely that the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are aware of rising tensions, at least not in a way where they can specifically identify these threats.

Finally, the approaches of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs do not correspond with the aspect of organisational development, training and networking. First of all, the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding organizations are too small to be able to support and help develop other organizations. In addition, as will be elaborated on in chapter 6, there are four umbrella organizations for Palestinian NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza which support local NGOs and try to strengthen Palestinian civil society, but only one of the analyzed peacebuilding organizations is a member of such an umbrella organization. In addition, as will be discussed and clarified in the next chapter as well, the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs from the sample hardly cooperate with each other or with other local peacebuilding NGOs outside of the sample. Therefore, the approaches of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs collide with this last categorized activity of peacebuilding NGOs.

Chapter 5

Assessment of contributing aspects and unreached goals

In the previous chapter, the comparison between common types of peacebuilding activities of local NGOs and those initiated by the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs showed that there are five types of activities in which the analyzed NGOs are active in: dialogue and reconciliation, peace education, civilian mediation, representing a particular group, and addressing broader structural issues of democracy, human rights and development. Each type of these activities has a certain goal, or, in other words, is supposed to have certain effects. In this chapter, these goals will be compared with the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. The assessment of both contributing aspects and unreached goals of the analyzed NGOs is based on the indicating factors described in the introduction (statements of various actors, observations, reports, number of years a programme is being executed, number of participants and the attitude and involvement of participants).

§ 5.1 Dialogue and reconciliation

Within the aspect of dialogue and reconciliation, joint programmes between Palestinian and Israeli organizations are an important activity. According to Barnes (2006), people involved in conflict often have a dehumanized image of their ‘enemy’, which is a “psychological precondition to engaging in or sanctioning violent aggression”, and is often stimulated by propaganda. Direct engagement, or ‘people-to-people dialogue’, is an activity often initiated by peacebuilding organizations to ‘rehumanize’ relations across conflict divides. By meeting those who are regarded as enemies and perceiving them as human beings can structurally change the perception of ‘the other’ and can challenge the “discourse of hate” (ibid.). Not only can the individual cognitive framework of the participants be transformed, but also those of the people around them when they share their experiences of meeting people in the other community who are similar to themselves and strive for a peaceful solution of the conflict as well. Especially when the participants have central roles in their communities, like local politicians, religious leaders or teachers, the ‘conflict attitude’ of a community can be transformed (ibid.).

Although joint activities are a topic of discussion for Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, CCRR and Tawasul have been conducting them for several years and, based on the initiators’ view on the (changed) attitude of participants, the results of these programmes correspond with the perceived objectives of these activities mentioned by Barnes. Tawasul focuses

mainly on organizing meetings between Israeli and Palestinian youth to discuss issues that affect the lives of youth in both areas. According to Tawasul's director, dr. Fathi Darwish, these meetings contributed to the realization among both groups that the others are just 'normal' peers and have to deal with the same issues as they do. In his opinion, these kind of meetings have helped the young Palestinian participants to separate the image of the Israeli soldier from the image of the Israeli civilian, and on the other side, it helped the Israeli's to separate the image of Palestinians they receive from television and from their surroundings as the 'enemy' from the reality of a Palestinian youth with the same goals and dreams as they have. According to dr. Darwish, some of the Israeli participants have decided to refuse military service following their participation in the joint meetings, which is a decision that has major repercussions for them (e.g. their chance on finding a job diminishes severely, since military service is considered as a basic qualification someone should have when applying for most jobs in Israel).

CCRR focuses their joint activities mainly on religious leaders and journalists. For several years, CCRR is, together with Rabbis for Human Rights, conducting the Interfaith Dialogue Programme, which consists of meetings between rabbis, priests and sheikhs from Israel and the West Bank to discuss controversial issues stemming from the political situation and to address these from a religious perspective. One of the outcomes of these meetings was the publication of a joint statement by the religious leaders, stating that violence is not justified in all three religions and that intolerance, discrimination and violence in the name of religion, which is often the case in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, should be condemned (CCRR, 2010). Because religious leaders generally have a certain level of moral authority in society, if they distance themselves publicly from the conflict leaders and/or their ideology, they can "severely undermine the legitimacy of the cause" (Barnes, 2006). Since the participating religious leaders have a central position in both societies and are able to reach many people, it is expected that their public condemnation of violence and propagation of respect and peace towards and between each other will reach a wider public in both societies and might change the perception of this public.

In addition to the interfaith dialogue programme, the media programme, conducted by CCRR in cooperation with the School for Peace, brought more than one hundred journalists from different Palestinian and Israeli media together to discuss the role of media in the conflict and how journalists deal with the conflict. Based on the participants' reaction, this project has helped to increase the journalists' awareness regarding their own position and contribution to the conflict in the sense that their own environment and the specific sources

they use influences the way they reflect on certain events. Not only is this realization a contributing factor to peacebuilding in itself, since this increased level of awareness can influence the way they individually reflect on certain events and thus the way they report on this, but also the fact that, according to some facilitators of the programme, several participants have stayed in contact after the meetings to exchange opinions, information and specific sources. Since journalists can reach a wide public, a more balanced report on events related to the conflict can change public opinion.

§ 5.2 Peace education and civilian mediation

As set forth in the theoretical framework (paragraph 3.3) and in chapter 4, peace education and civilian mediation are often linked. Through peace education programmes, awareness is to be created of the common ground between groups and people are to be trained in non-violent activism and basic conflict resolution skills in order to mediate in communal conflicts (Verkoren, 2008). “People of all ages have to be empowered to become agents of change to address conflicts from the grassroots upwards. As their knowledge about prevention of violence and of conflict transformation grows, it should become entrenched in the mainstream consciousness” (Barnes, 2006). When people are able to address problems in their own society and when alternatives to violence are cultivated, a sustainable peace at the local level should be possible to be built (ibid.).

In the context of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, peace education and civilian mediation are partially connected. One of the concepts which falls under these categories is that of nonviolence. Certain developments show that nonviolence is gaining popularity within Palestinian society. For example, the Young Negotiators Project of CCRR, focusing on non-violent communication between high school students, teachers and parents (described in chapter 4, paragraph 1.1), was carried out in five schools in its first year (2002). At this moment, nine years later, the YNP project has been carried out in more than one hundred schools in the West Bank and preparations are carried out to implement the project in additional schools. The fact that this many Palestinian high schools accepted the project and that there are still schools that would like to welcome it, shows that the concept of nonviolence is not only accepted, but also alive in Palestinian society.

In addition, nonviolent protests against the Separation Wall and the Israeli occupation have, according to an employee of Holy Land Trust, which is one of the organizers of these kind of protests, grown in number and frequency for the last couple of years, of which the weekly Friday protests in the Palestinian villages of Bil’in and Ni’lin are a good example.

These protests are not only remarkable for their persistence and growing number, but also for the fact that a growing number of internationals and Israelis participate in these protests. In addition, and also important, the Palestinian Authority has recently started to adopt the concept of non-violent protest and even started to promote popular resistance. Where nonviolent protests and projects were originally left to grassroots movements and activists on the street, members of Fatah, the mainstream faction of the PLO, are now openly calling for “an escalation of popular protests against symbols of Israeli occupation in the West Bank: the construction of the separation barrier as well as settlements”¹⁷. Some Fatah members are now even participating in the protests. According to Nafez Assaily (LOWNP) and dr. Allam Jarrar (PNGO Net), this change in perception and attitude of political parties can be attributed to the efforts of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, which made the concept of nonviolence widely known.

Although it cannot be indicated that the participants of programmes like the YNP project and those participating in nonviolent demonstrations are able to make structural changes to the conflict on the grassroots level or that a sustainable peace within the West Bank itself can be achieved through these initiatives, the rising popularity of the concept and use of nonviolence might be an indication that alternatives to violence are starting to become entrenched in the mainstream consciousness, which is a positive development for the achievement of peace.

§ 5.3 Representing a particular group

One of the aspects of ‘representing a particular group’ for peacebuilding NGOs can be to represent the case of their society to international audiences. By raising awareness within the international world about the situation their community is facing, they hope to raise international support for their case and, additionally, increased international pressure on their opponent (Barnes, 2006). In order to promote the Palestinian case internationally, several of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, like Wi’am, Holy Land Trust, PCR and CCRR, organize trips within the West Bank for international groups, not only to show the reality of the occupation and its effects on Palestinian society, but also to show and teach them about the cultural, social, religious and historical aspects of the area. These tours enable internationals to get a different perception of the region and the Palestinian people than the image they generally receive through the media, which is mainly focused on the conflict.

¹⁷ <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/0401/Changing-course-Fatah-officials-call-for-Palestinian-protests-against-Israel>

From my own experience in organizing a two-week trip through the area for a group of American students and in meetings with tourists, I noticed that these internationals came to the territories with prejudices towards Palestinians and with unbalanced views towards the conflict, but left with a completely different perception. Although these encounters were with a relatively small number of internationals, my expectation is that they are not the only ones who experience a change of perception. In this way, these tours can contribute to the strengthening of the Palestinian case internationally by giving the Palestinians and their culture a more humane face and by creating more awareness towards the gravity and repercussions of the occupation.

Another aspect of this type of activity is to “increase the role of women and youth in peace processes and in society more generally” and to “empower an ethnic, religious or socially marginalised group whose emancipation is considered necessary for long-term peacebuilding” (Verkoren, 2008). The rationale behind the empowerment of marginalized groups consists of several aspects: first, by addressing and tackling the grievances of these marginalized groups, inter-communal violence can be decreased; second, by supporting individual development and strengthening local capacities, the community as a whole is likely to become stronger and more stable; third, by involving marginalized groups in decision-making processes, a society is likely to become more democratic and more stable, which increases the opportunity of peace taking root at the community level and therefore becoming sustainable (Barnes, 2006).

Many of the analyzed NGOs state that they strive for the empowerment of marginalized groups in the Palestinian territories, which they indicate as women, children/youth and villagers. However, they do not reach these groups completely. Although it is not possible for one organization to reach all the Palestinians in the West Bank, part of the non-participation of these marginalized groups can be blamed on the efforts of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs. It has to be mentioned that there are many programmes for children and youth throughout the West Bank, but the focus on women and especially on villagers is lacking. Most of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs recruit the participants of their programmes in urban areas and additionally mainly through means that are not always widely available in rural areas, like internet, newspapers and local television. For some organizations, a lack of available funds might be the reason for not operating or recruiting in remote areas, but for others, this recruitment approach is intentional and they are fully aware that they thereby exclude a part of their target group. Therefore, while stating to work for the empowerment of inhabitants of remote areas, the absence of efforts of most of

the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs to involve villagers in their programmes show a discrepancy between words and actions.

Considering the case of women, there are some organizations from the sample, like PCPD, Wi'am, CCRR and the al-Hares association, which have special projects focused on women, but there are also some, like Tawasul and Holy Land Trust, which, while openly propagating the empowerment of women, have no special activities focused on this marginalized group. Thus, first of all, there are organizations which do not act upon their so-called goals, which can make us question their trustworthiness. On the other hand, the organizations which do specifically focus on women do not fully reach their objectives. Although women are educated in several concepts and skills during workshops and trainings, like non-violence, democracy, crafts and the English language, when it comes to decision-making processes, both on a governmental as on a social level, Palestinian women are still marginalized. The Palestinian society is patriarchal, with men as head of the family and with men dominating the governmental institutions. Even in the Palestinian constitution, women are still discriminated against in laws governing topics as marriage, divorce, custody of children etcetera¹⁸. Thus, although the programmes may give women a chance to develop individually, they do not enable women to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives, which is stated as the end-goal of these kind of projects.

Based on this data, it cannot be said that the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs *entirely* lack the ability or the desire to contribute to the empowerment of marginalized groups in the Palestinian territories, since it only covers specific aspects of these organizations and of their empowerment programmes. However, it does show that the analyzed peacebuilding organizations miss the full capacity to contribute to a more democratic and stable Palestinian society.

§ 5.4 Addressing broader structural issues

According to Barnes (2006), part of the objectives of addressing broader structural issues is the promotion of equitable and sustainable development and improving the structural relationships between members of a society. A contributing factor to peacebuilding in the West Bank which can be linked to these objectives is created by summer camps and field trips that some of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs, like CCRR and Wi'am, organize every year. Palestinian children and youth do not have many opportunities to travel, due to physical

¹⁸ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=180>

barriers caused by the occupation and to financial restrictions, and therefore do not know a lot about their own country and about the lives of their peers in other areas. These activities are well-known and popular among the Palestinian youth, which is shown by, for example, a higher number of applications in the last two years for the summer camp of CRR than the number of available spaces, which is one hundred. The summer camps and field trips give the children and youth an opportunity that they otherwise would not have had, and not only enrich their knowledge of the country, but also connects them to the land and to other Palestinians. Especially for Palestinians, this feeling of being united and connected to their land is a way to strengthen their struggle.

In contrast to this contributing aspect, the comparison with another goal of this type of peacebuilding activity shows a discrepancy between this goal and the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. NGOs are often perceived as being able to take the role of mediator between governmental institutions and the community (Goodhand, 2006). This process of mediation is meant to close the gap between the government and the community, by not only enabling the community to address their issues directly towards government officials, but also by giving these officials the opportunity to explain government policies and the rationale behind these policies to the public. These activities can not only increase the transparency and accountability of the government, but also improve the democratic structure of society in general, leading to a more stable society (Barnes, 2006).

However, this is not the case with the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, due to three reasons. First, there is a growing distance between most of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and the Palestinian community, due to the elite culture which surrounds these organizations, caused by the large discrepancy between the relatively low standard of living in the West Bank and that of the directors and employees of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, and in addition, because of their approach of assessing the needs of their target groups which excludes the involvement in this assessment of these groups itself (for an elaboration on this topic, see chapter 6, paragraph 1.3). Therefore, if there is already a (self-created) gap between these NGOs and the community, the first is not in a position to close the gap between the PA and the Palestinian society.

Second, the relation between the majority of the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs from the sample and the PA is not good. The PA perceives these NGOs as a threat to their position and power, while the NGOs, supposedly independent, do not accept the constant government interference and control (for an elaboration, see chapter 6, paragraph 2.2). Due to this bad relationship, the majority of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs is not suitable to

mediate between the PA and the Palestinian community. Finally, as Cleveland & Bunton (2009) mentioned, there is a lack of trust within the Palestinian society towards the Palestinian Authority, due to their instability, their authoritarian characteristics and their inability to strengthen and defend the Palestinian society. In spite of efforts of PCPD and Tawasul, which do try to bring community members and government officials together to diminish the distance between these two groups (as discussed in chapter 4, paragraph 1.2), the three aspects above make this goal difficult to reach.

As this chapter shows, the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are responsible for contributing aspects in all five of the types of peacebuilding activities they are active in. In contrast, an assessment of unreached goals could only be made of two of the types of activities. Although the assessment of contributing aspects and unreached goals of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs bears only on very specific aspects, it does show that the goals of common peacebuilding activities of local NGOs correspond with the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs.

Chapter 6

Limiting factors

In the case of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, there are several aspects which (might) limit the contributing aspects of these organizations. Most of these aspects are intentional, in the sense that they are based on approaches and an attitude chosen by the analyzed NGOs themselves, but there are also aspects to be mentioned which cannot be influenced by these organizations. Section 6.1 focuses on the internal organization of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and their position within the Palestinian community, 6.2 on the relationships these NGOs have with other actors involved in the peacebuilding process in the Palestinian territories, and finally, section 6.3 focuses on the direct influences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The limiting factors, discussed in this chapter, explain the discrepancies between theory on the role of NGOs in peacebuilding processes and the goals of specific peacebuilding activities on the one hand, and the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs on the other hand.

§ 6.1 Internal organization and position within Palestinian society

In this paragraph, I will address two aspects of the internal organization of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs which might influence the effectiveness of their programmes and activities. The first aspect is that of the decision-making structure within these organizations, and the second aspect is that of corruption. In addition, I will focus on several characteristics of NGOs which influences their position in the Palestinian community.

§ 6.1.1 Decision-making structures

In her dissertation, Verkoren (2008) states that “the study of local peace NGOs has shown that they are relatively unbureaucratic and decision-making structures are flat in that all staff members tend to have easy access to leaders and are consulted over policy.” Further on, based on her own research, she mentions that:

“although one would expect NGOs to be naturally democratic in nature, this is not necessarily the case. Many SNGOs [Southern NGOs] are highly dependent on a strong leader figure who founded and continues to run the organisation. These leaders are not necessarily authoritarian – in fact they usually are not – but their preponderance in terms of skills and contacts makes them dominant figures around whom the

organisation revolves. Knowledge is often concentrated in the head of such a figure, rather than being spread evenly in the organisation.”

In the case of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, Verkoren’s own findings correspond more with those in my research than the theory on local peace NGOs. What I’ve noticed during my internship at CCRR and my visits to other Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, is that the patriarchal system which is prominent in Palestinian society is also apparent in the organizational structure of many of these organizations. All of the analyzed NGOs are led by relatively older, male directors (except for Miftah, which is led by a woman) who were also the founders of the NGO. These directors position themselves as the only decisive power in the organization in a, in contrast with Verkoren’s findings, close to authoritarian way. Frequently, staff members are not consulted over policies, but are just informed by the director about which programme or activity the organization is going to execute and which policy should be followed, without any discussion or exchange of knowledge. Therefore, the decision-making structures in the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are not flat, but strongly hierarchical.

Although it is not the case in every Palestinian peacebuilding NGO from the sample, it is striking to see that in many of these organizations the majority of the employees consists of females, and although it cannot be said with certainty that this explanation applies to every analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGO, an employee of one of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs, who will remain anonymous in the context of this topic, explained that most of the male directors prefer female employees, since it is easier for them to ‘rule over’ these women, since it is generally not accepted in Palestinian society that women publicly challenge men. Therefore, it is easier for the director to implement his ideas and policies when having female employees.

On the one hand, this decision-making structure is not in line with one of the goals most of these organizations have, namely strengthening democratic values, since the voice of employees is marginal to that of the director, and can even influence the effectiveness of the work of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs. The knowledge and skills of the employees might positively contribute to the effectiveness of the organization in general or of certain programmes specifically, but, when ignored, can diminish these positive effects. On the other hand, and what is a priority within the branch of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, these organizations need a strong leader who can powerfully represent the organization, not only towards the Western donors, but also towards the Palestinian community. Since there are

many Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, which all compete for the same funding and the same support from the Palestinian community, an organization as such has to stand out. One of the ways to do this is by having a powerful leader who can attract attention to the organization, thereby enhancing the chance of receiving the support the organization needs.

Thus, although this system might cause contributing knowledge of employees to get lost, possibly leading to less effective programmes than the organization otherwise might have had, these programmes might not even have existed at all without the funding and support received due to this hierarchical decision-making structure.

§ 6.1.2 Corruption

When looking at literature on NGOs in general and on peacebuilding NGOs specifically, it is striking to see that the topic of corruption within NGOs is not explicitly discussed. Corruption is part of reality, also of (at least) some of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. In this subparagraph, I will discuss two forms of corruption which could be indicated in some Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs: nepotism and financial corruption. Due to the sensitivity of this topic, the involved informants and organizations will remain anonymous.

Within Palestinian society, as in many other Arab societies, families are large and are the main bases for support and sometimes even survival. This form of support can take shape in favouring family members over others, for example when looking for someone to renovate your house, even when this family member is less skilled than someone else. Since there are no laws that determine otherwise, and because it is merely part of a social system, it is not illegal, but if you apply this favouritism to companies, organizations or politics, it is. Favouring friends or family members without a legitimate reason then becomes a form of corruption: nepotism.

Nepotism is not uncommon within the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. Family members or personal friends get positions in the organization where they are sometimes not qualified for, are members of boards linked to the organization, or serve as representatives of the organization while they do not even work there. One example is a Palestinian peacebuilding NGO of which two out of the four local employees are close family members of the director and where other family members and some of his personal friends are members of the board of trustees and are participants of certain programmes of this organization. Although it cannot be said that none of these people are qualified or experienced enough to have the position they have, it is definitely true for some. And, in addition, which also leads me to the aspect of financial corruption, these people receive more financial

benefits than other employees. Although I have not seen pay checks personally, I have been informed by several employees with different positions in the organization and who do have access to financial documents, that the family members receive a higher salary than other employees, and in addition, that family members and friends are, for example when attending workshops abroad, subsidized, while others are not. Although it cannot be said that all Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are guilty of nepotism, these examples show that it does exist within this branch.

The previous example of financial corruption was linked to the aspect of nepotism, but there is also a matter of 'general' financial corruption within Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. When talking to the directors of the al-Hares Association, PCR and CCRR and dr. Allam Jarrar of PNGO Net, they expressed their opinion that many Palestinian NGOs, with similar activities as theirs, are corrupt and that their directors put part of the funding they receive in their own pockets. Even specific Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs were identified and directly accused of being corrupt. Although this might be a harsh accusation, they are not entirely wrong. During several informal conversations with employees of a Palestinian peacebuilding NGO, I was informed about several examples which indicate financial corruption within this organization, of which I will mention a few.

For example, declarations of expenses to the donors of the organization were made on the name of an employee who was not officially working at the organization yet in the period these expenses were supposedly made. Another example that was given is that expenses were declared to the donors for a certain number of people who supposedly participated in a workshop, while half of those people had not been there. A final example is where a certain donor pays the monthly salary for one employee of the organization. This employee, unknowing how much her employer receives for her salary, receives less than half of it. In addition, several informal conversations with acquaintances of the director of this NGO, who is well-known in the area where he lives, provided me with the information that this director possessed hardly anything before setting up his organization, while he is now very wealthy according to Palestinian standards, with several houses (of which some abroad), a fancy car, an orchard and the possibility of sending his children to universities abroad.

When combining this sudden enrichment with the knowledge considering the administration of this organization, it is not unreasonable to believe that part of the donor funding this Palestinian peacebuilding NGO, which is supposed to be a non-profit organization, receives, goes into the pocket of its director. This director might not be an exception, since most of the directors of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs I encountered, who

all emphasized their organization is non-profit and of whom some accused others of being corrupt, were very wealthy compared to Palestinian standards. Although it has to be emphasized that I do not accuse all these directors of gaining their wealth through corruption, the examples mentioned above make the legitimacy of this wealth questionable.

In an unofficial conversation, an employee of an international donor organization explained to me that most donors are well aware of the fact that there are some Palestinian (peacebuilding) NGOs which use part of their funding for their own benefits, but, as this employee added, these organizations do have certain positive effects on Palestinian society. If the donor would decide to stop its funding due to the aspect of corruption, these positive effects would vanish as well. Therefore, there are international donors which decide to close their eyes for the negative aspect of corruption in favour of the good work these Palestinian (peacebuilding) NGOs do. However, I have also been given specific examples of international donor organizations which did step up against corruption in a Palestinian peacebuilding NGO; one by reclaiming a certain amount of money, and another by entirely cancelling their funding of this Palestinian peacebuilding NGO.

Financial corruption does not only mean that less money is going to the projects it is intended for, thereby limiting the contributing aspects these projects might have, but, in the situation where donors stop their funding entirely, can cause projects to shut down completely. Therefore, corruption, in those Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs where it is present, will severely limit the effectiveness of the work of these organizations.

§ 6.1.3 Distance from the Palestinian population

One of the valuable contributions of NGOs in peacebuilding processes which is often mentioned, for example by Goodhand (2006), is that NGOs are closer to the communities in which peace ultimately needs to take root and that they can therefore provide for the needs of the ordinary people. In the case of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, this is not the case. As Hammami (2000) already noted, in the post-Oslo period, when the standards of living dramatically dropped for much of the population, Palestinian NGOs have been accused of “living to well off the donor gravy train”. In addition, she says that NGO pay scales (of local Palestinian NGOs) are higher than professional and semi-professional salaries in the mid-to-lower level PA bureaucracy or in the public sector generally. The greatest discrepancies are found between NGO salaries and those of the underpaid public sector (ibid.).

Due to their professionalism, Palestinian NGOs have become desirable workplaces for a new generation of middle class professionals who view NGO employment as a career path to more lucrative salaries and prestigious jobs in international organizations (Hammami, 2000). This wave of new professionals has, according to Hammami (ibid.), further de-politicized the Palestinian NGO sector, which is resulting in an even greater separation from a popular social base. In her opinion, the new professionals tend to treat the grassroots in a “patronizing and condescending manner, perceiving them as social groups in need of instruction, rather than as constituencies from which they take their direction and legitimacy” (ibid.).

Based on my own experiences within the Palestinian peacebuilding NGO sector, I do not agree with Hammami’s statement that Palestinian NGOs treat the grassroots in a patronizing and condescending manner. Although these organizations are very active in giving workshops and trainings on various subjects, these activities do not stem from an attitude of instructing ‘the right way’ to the people, but rather from a sense of giving the Palestinian people alternative means and knowledge to be able to deal with daily difficulties, thereby leaving the choice of which way to choose in the end up to the people themselves. Still, Hammami’s statement concerning the growing distance between Palestinian NGOs and a popular social base is very much applicable to the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. As previously described, many directors of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are very wealthy compared to Palestinian standards and their employees, although earning less than they are, still have a higher income than the average Palestinian. These aspects have led to a perception of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs (at least the ones analyzed) as being a sort of elite culture and as organizations which are not, in contrast to how they want to position themselves, on the same level as the ‘normal’ people they represent.

A factor that contributes to this perception is the way these organizations determine the needs of the Palestinian people. All the peacebuilding NGOs I encountered declared that their organizations exist to serve the Palestinian people and that they respond to the (changing) needs of their community. When asking how they determine these needs, it was evident that all (new) activities or projects were chosen by the organization itself (mostly even only by the director of the organization) without consulting ‘normal’ civilians about what they wanted the organization to do for them. Although the staff of the Palestinian peacebuilding organizations from the sample are also living under occupation and are therefore aware of some of the problems Palestinians are facing, their relative higher ‘status’ and the different environment they live in accordingly in comparison to their target groups, do not put them in a position to know entirely what the needs of their target groups are. In addition, many of the

projects which the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs initiate are based on a response to donor funds (for an elaboration on the relationship between the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and international donors, see chapter 6, paragraph 2.2). These funds are often only made available for projects with a specific topic and therefore, the content of these projects is designed by international organizations or institutions, based on their own perception of what is needed within the Palestinian society. Therefore, the fact that the (directors of the) analyzed NGOs decide, and in addition, that they let international organizations decide for them what the needs of Palestinians are instead of the Palestinian civilians themselves, increases the gap between the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and the Palestinian community.

§ 6.2 Relationships with other peacebuilding actors

As discussed in chapter 3, actors and their peacebuilding activities are commonly structured through track diplomacy. Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are mainly active in Track Three diplomacy, focusing on the communities on the grassroots level, but there are several other actors involved in the peacebuilding process in the Palestinian Territories: the Palestinian Authority (PA), international NGOs and donors, the United Nations, and other civil society organizations. The analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are mostly involved with and influenced by the first two actors, mainly due to organizational and financial reasons. In the coming subparagraphs, I will elaborate on the cooperation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs with the PA and international NGOs/donors, their attitude towards each other and the influence these actors have on the Palestinian organizations. However, before elaborating on the relationship with these ‘external’ actors, I will first discuss the relationship between the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and organizations similar to theirs.

§ 6.2.1 Cooperation and coordination between Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs

According to dr. Allam Jarrar, committee member of PNGO Network (one of the four Palestinian networks for local NGOs), there are about four thousand registered NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but there are probably more. NGOs were the most important institutions before the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, since, due to a lack of organization and the absence of an effective and strong leadership, they were the main bodies to support Palestinian civilians. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, they mainly had the role of development agents, and, during the first intifada, they were instrumental in relief

activities. NGOs were the main institutions who responded to the needs of the people (Code of Conduct Coalition, 2008).

One of the main reasons that the PLO, at this time unofficially representing the Palestinians, was not able to respond to the needs of the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was not only because it was mainly an umbrella organization for Palestinian militias (considered as a terrorist organization by the United States and Israel until the Madrid Conference in 1991), but most importantly that it was not located in the West Bank or Gaza, but first in Jordan (until their expulsion to Lebanon after Black September), in Lebanon (until 1982, when they were driven out by Israel during its invasion of Lebanon), and Tunis. There was some kind of local leadership in the Occupied Areas, but it was not well organized and not cohesive (Cleveland, 2009). Therefore, the responsibility of providing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza with their basic needs fell on the shoulders of NGOs.

After the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, as part of the Oslo Accords, the position of Palestinian NGOs changed. According to Jarrar (PNGO Network), the Palestinian Authority tried to take over the space NGOs had created for themselves by taking over some of the responsibilities these organizations had before, like health care, education, business development, agriculture etc. Therefore, there was “an emergent need for NGOs to cooperate to defend their rights and needs”, leading to the emergence of NGO networks and umbrella’s (Jarrar, PNGO Network). There are four NGO umbrella networks and unions in the Palestinian Occupied Territories: the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), the Palestinian National Institute of NGOs (PNIN), the Palestinian General Union of Charitable Societies, and the General Palestinian Union for NGOs (in Gaza)¹⁹. These networks try to strengthen Palestinian civil society as a whole by promoting coordination, cooperation, and the exchange of knowledge and experiences between NGOs on a local, national and international level, and, in particular, they aim at strengthening the independence of the Palestinian civil community.

A good example of these efforts is the formation of the Code of Conduct in 2008. The NGO Development Center (NDC) facilitated the formation of the Code of Conduct Coalition comprised of the four NGO umbrella networks and unions mentioned above to prepare and implement the Palestinian NGOs Code of Conduct²⁰, which would be “the standard for the ethical and work behavioural patterns within the framework of the functioning of NGOs” (Code of Conduct Coalition, 2008) and it focuses on concepts as coordination and

¹⁹ <http://www.ndc.ps/main.php?id=22>

²⁰ Ibid.

networking, transparency, accountability, equality and inclusiveness, good governance, conflict of interest, and influence and effectiveness (ibid.). The document states that “it seeks to be a model consolidating monitoring principles to protect the institution [Palestinian NGOs] from any deviations” (ibid.). According to Rasha Salah Eddin, capacity building coordinator of NDC, there are now 520 Palestinian NGOs from the West Bank and Gaza Strip which signed the conduct, thereby not only aligning themselves to concepts as transparency, accountability, good governance etc, but also to the dedication to cooperate and coordinate with other NGOs.

Not only umbrella organizations in itself, but also initiatives like the Palestinian NGOs Code of Conduct promote cooperation between Palestinian NGOs. But, when looking at the membership lists of the four Palestinian NGO network organizations, it is striking to see that hardly any Palestinian peacebuilding NGO is a member of one of these networks. For example, the members of PNGO Network consist mainly of NGOs working in the field of children and youth, health, culture, communication and media, and women. There are several organizations focusing on democracy and human rights, but they form a relatively small percentage²¹. In addition, programme overviews of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs show that the number of activities and/or programmes executed with other local peacebuilding NGOs is negligible. In case of cooperation, the partner is mostly an international organization.

The directors of PCR, Wi’am, PCPD and the al-Hares Association, in addition to PNGO Network, confirm this reality and give several reasons for this lack of cooperation. As Ronza, an employee of PNGO Network, mentions, coordination and cooperation between NGOs working in fields like agriculture and health goes well because they *have* to cooperate to have results, since their funding is limited and their fields of focus cover too many aspects for a single organization to handle. In comparison, peacebuilding organizations have relatively more funds at their disposal and have more freedom to focus on specific topics, like non-violence, awareness, individual capacity building etc. Therefore, the need to cooperate with other local peacebuilding NGOs is not that evident as in other fields.

Second, she states that “all Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are initiated from a political background.” What I have noticed during my interviews with the directors of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs is that they all have their own specific experiences in and with the conflict – most of them have participated in political activism in the past and two of them,

²¹ <http://www.pngo.net/default.asp?i=215>

Noah Salameh (CCRR) and Mohammed Musa (al-Hares Association) even mentioned that they have been imprisoned for several years due to this activism – and therefore have a clear vision on the conflict (and its possible solution) and on the future of the Palestinian territories. The peacebuilding NGOs they set up carry out these visions and they all have their own approaches accordingly (they may have even been their reason for setting up such an organization), which, evidently, sometimes clash with each other. These experiences, visions, and approaches are sometimes so deep-rooted, that they prevent some organizations to cooperate.

Lack of cooperation is not only caused by a clash of ideologies, but also because of money. Verkoren (2008) states that her research has shown that:

“such competition [for the same donor funding] can influence people’s willingness to share information beyond their own organisation. This not only applies to information about funding sources, but also to any other knowledge that may be seen to provide an organisation with a strategic advantage over others. As a result, there is a reluctance to share for fear of losing one’s competitive edge.”

George Mishrawi (PCR) mentions that the PA does not give funding to Palestinian NGOs, which leads to these NGOs being dependent on funding from international actors. Since most of the international donors have a certain budget, for peacebuilding activities or for a certain region, Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs have to compete for the same funding. This competition stands in the way of cooperation, since most of the peacebuilding NGOs put their own interests before that of any of their ‘colleagues’. Naseef Muallem (PCPD) refers to this practice as a “private sector mentality”, where every organization works on their own and where, according to Muallem, the director of the organization has all the power. Finally, Mishrawi (PCR) mentions that networking requires time and money, two resources that, according to him, Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs often do not have. Therefore, if there is cooperation between local peacebuilding NGOs, it is often only strategic (e.g. if a programme cannot be executed without cooperation, in which case the NGO will miss additional funding), and temporary.

§ 6.2.2 The Palestinian Authority

The relation between Palestinian NGOs as a whole, and therefore also peacebuilding NGOs, and the Palestinian Authority (PA) is a difficult one. The origins of this difficult relationship lie in the complex context of the establishment of the PA and its effects, the same process

which led to the need of NGOs in forming network organizations. According to Hammami (2000), the relationship between the PA and the local NGO community is characterized by ever-growing PA authoritarianism towards the various NGO sectors, and, on the other hand, by constant attempts of these NGOs to thwart governmental control.

By 1995, the local NGOs, dominated by people with political histories in left factions, had become increasingly professional and therefore strong in expressing their rights and needs. The first clash between these NGOs and the PA took place when the ministries of social welfare and justice issued a repressive draft law on charities and associations in February 1995 (Hammami, 2000). This conflict was aggravated in the same year when the World Bank created a \$15 million Palestinian NGO trust fund, which, according to Hammami (ibid.), led the PA to believe that the NGOs formed an actual (though limited) political threat. NGOs became increasingly well-organized and successful in vocal lobbying, while the PA became even more repressive, for example by auditing the NGOs' finances and by sending "public security" groups to screen not only the NGOs' documents, but also their employees (Sullivan, 1996).

The fact that the trust fund of the World Bank was controlled by a vocal and oppositional group of NGOs was, according to Hammami (2000), viewed by the PA as a serious threat to their financial hegemony. In addition, there were local human rights organizations which spread information on PA human rights abuses, which the PA saw as a direct threat to its image both on a local as an international level (ibid.). As a reaction, the PA created their own networks and started funding new NGOs in order to increase its support. In addition, it arrested and sometimes molested human rights activists and initiated press campaigns against human rights organizations, portraying them as violators of national interest (ibid.) Things changed for the better when in 2000 the NGO law was endorsed, which "allowed organizations to form relatively freely, to access foreign and other funds without informing the government and also protects organizations' abilities to set their agendas and control their budgets without government interference" (Hammami, 2000). The law contained one negative point for NGOs: NGO registration came under control of the ministry of interior, which many Palestinians believe is an extension of the intelligence services (ibid.).

Although the relationship between the PA and Palestinian NGOs, discussed above, deals with the Palestinian NGO sector in general, interviews with directors of several peacebuilding NGOs reveal that also the majority of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs perceive the PA as not being supportive of their organization, both financially as organizationally. According to dr. Allam Jarrar (PNGO Net), the PA says they support NGOs,

but in reality they do not. He states that the PA has a lot of suspicion towards NGOs, due to several reasons. First, the PA wants to control every aspect of Palestinian society, but since NGOs are independent, the Authority cannot control them completely. Second, the PA believes that NGOs compete with them over funding and even ‘steals’ money from them. Although ‘stealing’ is a harsh accusation, the PA is partly right that international donors shifted part of their funding to local NGOs, especially peacebuilding NGOs. Jad (2007) states that later on in the Oslo peace process (the end of the 1990s), international NGOs, foreign states, and donors concentrated on a particular set of issues concerning peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and related issues. The PA had shown that it was not a strong, cohesive and trustworthy institution and, in addition, that it had not been able to bring peace to the Palestinian territories. The shift in focus of the international community led to the situation that part of the funding, previously received by the PA, now went to (new) local peacebuilding NGOs (ibid.). On the other hand, in the fields of relief and development work, Palestinian NGOs saw a huge decrease in resources after the signing of the Oslo Accords, because the international community shifted a huge percentage of their funding from local development NGOs to the Palestinian Authority. While Palestinian NGOs received between \$170-240 million in the early 1990s, it decreased to \$100-120 million after the peace agreement (Sullivan, 1996).

According to Jarrar, the third reason for the PA’s suspicion towards NGOs is that the PA believes that NGOs act out of their mandate, in other words, that local NGOs work in fields where they should not be working in. This aspect is linked to the first point concerning control, since, if the working fields of the two parties overlap, the PA does not have full control and cannot completely implement its own policies. Finally, Palestinian NGOs, also the majority of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs, are often critical towards the PA, something the latter does not accept according to Jarrar. Although this is a harsh accusation, it is plausible considering the history and organization of the PA. Yasser Arafat, leader of the PA until his death in 2004, is known for his nepotism and despotism, leading to an authoritarian regime. He did not only implement policies trying to silence the opposition, but he even gave orders to arrest or expel oppositional leaders (Cleveland, 2009). His successor, Mahmoud Abbas, does not seem to be more open towards oppositional voices. After the elections in 2006, with Hamas as the convincing winner, a crisis erupted between Hamas and Fatah, since the latter did not accept Hamas’ victory (ibid.). In March 2007, a unity-government was formed, which incorporated members of Hamas and Fatah, but three months later Abbas dissolved the Hamas-led unity, declared a state of emergency, and appointed a new prime

minister, Salam Fayyad (ibid.). Especially this last action is disputable, since Palestinian Basic Law states that the president is not allowed to appoint a new prime minister without approval of the Palestinian Legislative Council, which was the case in Fayyad's appointment²². The PA, both under Arafat as under Abbas, has gained the image of not being democratic and as an institution which tries to silence the opposition to be able to hold on to its own power. Since local NGOs are often critical towards the PA, also the majority of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs, these authoritarian policies worsen the relationship between these two actors.

In addition to these four points, Mohammed Musa (al-Hares Association) and Zoughbi Zoughbi (Wi'am) mention another 'threatening' aspect for the PA, namely that the NGO movement is strong, and that, since it works on a grassroots level, it is able to reach the Palestinian community, while, on the other hand, the political movement of the PA is very weak and unstable, and it lacks close ties with the Palestinian community. According to Musa, the PA is afraid that, due to the power of the NGO movement, it will lose its power completely. Since its establishment, the Palestinian Authority has not been able to prove that it is a strong, stable and effective institution which can count on the support of the Palestinian community, but it is questionable whether the NGO movement, or at least the peacebuilding NGO sector, is that much stronger. As already discussed in this chapter, some Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are not organized well and effectively, some of them are corrupt, and their relation with the Palestinian community seems better on paper than it is in reality. In addition, as mentioned in the previous subparagraph, the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs hardly cooperate and if they do, it is often temporary, ineffective and sometimes even counterproductive. The analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are not as strong as they state to be and therefore it is questionable whether the suspicion and fear with which some of them say they are being approached by the PA, is justified.

Although the majority of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs state that they are not supported by the PA, Naseef Muallem of PCPD and dr. Fathi Darwish of Tawasul state something different. Darwish states that the PA supports his organization in its work, both financially and organizationally; "the PA does what we need". Muallem agrees with this statement by saying that "the PA is not opposing the work of NGOs; we don't receive any obstacles from the PA". These two Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs perceive their

²² <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article7038.shtml>

relationship with the PA much more positively than all the other organizations from the sample, so what is the difference between these two ‘sides’ which can explain these opposite perceptions?

A striking difference between Tawasul and PCPD on one side, and the other analyzed peacebuilding NGOs on the other side, is that the first two have programmes organized with, or even for, departments of the PA, while the others do not. For example, Tawasul held a series of town hall meetings in Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps before the elections in 2004-2005, to “strengthen democratic values and encourage people to go and vote”²³. In addition, during the Hamas takeover of Gaza in 2007-2008, Tawasul held another series of town hall meetings to “promote democratic and peaceful dialogue”²⁴. Both these activities were in favour of the current government. PCPD, on the other hand, has been organizing meetings between political parties and sessions for local government representatives for years and is even involved in the monitoring of elections. Although it cannot be proven that there is a linear causal relation between the supportive activities of these organizations and the support they receive from the PA, it is striking that exactly these two organizations get support (or do not face any obstacles), while the others do not. A possible explanation might have been that Tawasul and PCPD are GONGOs (governmental nongovernmental organizations), which are created by the government and which “serve as instruments of government policy” (Korten, 1990), but the directors of both organizations indicated that they are independent of the PA. Therefore, the sole fact that these two organizations organize activities which are supportive of the government remains a probable explanation for the governmental support they receive.

§ 6.2.3 International organizations and/or donors

As the previous paragraphs have already briefly shown, international organizations, and especially their funding, are essential for the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. Since most of these NGOs do not receive funding from the Palestinian Authority and since there is hardly any money available within the Palestinian community itself, the analyzed NGOs are dependent on foreign funding. The previous paragraphs mention how this dependence influences the relationships within the Palestinian peacebuilding NGO sector and between these NGOs and the PA, but it also influences the relationship between the Palestinian

²³ <http://www.tawasul.ps/freepage.php?id=35>

²⁴ Ibid.

peacebuilding NGOs from the sample and international organizations and donors, and following this, the agenda of these local organizations.

According to Bornstein (2009), international organizations and donors often bring their own policies, values and approaches concerning peacebuilding to the countries they work in and force them on local organizations or sometimes even set them as preconditions for their support to these organizations, thereby setting the agendas for local actors. He states that local NGOs are often so dependent on international funds, that they see no other way as to apply the policies of the international donors on their own programmes and activities (ibid.). Most international organizations which are active in the Palestinian territories have a framework in which local NGOs have to fit in order to receive support. This framework does not only apply to the organizational features of these organizations, but also to their area of work and the specific topics on which they focus.

The German Development Service (DED) is one of the major international actors in the Palestinian territories. According to Jonas Geith, program advisor of the DED in the Palestinian territories, every intervention the DED does has to fall within a framework which is set up by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development in coordination with the Ministry of Planning. Therefore, the German government decides, without any involvement of the Palestinian Authority or local Palestinian organizations, on which aspects the DED has to focus within the Palestinian territories. In addition, the Civil Peace Service (ZFD), which work is partially executed by the DED, has to work according to instructions from the German Ministry and their interventions have to fall within the areas of “promotion of peace alliances” and “support for population groups especially affected by violence” (J. Geith, DED). Considering these policies, dr. Fathi Darwish (Tawasul) puts his finger on the right spot by saying that “international support to Palestinian NGOs is a political act”.

The problem, mentioned by Bornstein (2009), that policies and values of Western organizations can clash with those of local organizations, is striking in the example of dialogue projects. The DED supports dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian representatives, since “we regard these contacts as essential for reaching a just and lasting peace accepted by a broad majority of both peoples”²⁵. As discussed in chapter 4, most of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, except for CCRR and Tawasul, do not have dialogue projects or even general joint projects with Israeli organizations, since they believe that the needs within the Palestinian community itself are the priority and, in addition, that joint projects lead to some

²⁵ <http://palestine.ded.de/en/working-fields/strengthening-civil-society.html>

kind of normalization. This example shows that what the German government perceives as what is best for the Palestinian community is not in line with the beliefs and approaches of the majority of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. It is therefore not surprising that the only Palestinian peacebuilding NGO which the DED supports is CCRR²⁶.

The DED deviates from many other international organizations and/or donors in that it is not a classical funding agency, but rather an organization seconding personnel into local partner structures. It sends development workers into the hierarchical structure of the local organizations who will develop projects together with the local partner and who will give assistance in the development of the local organization. In addition to the development worker, the DED provides funds for the developed projects and for local personnel. Although this form of partnership seems more effective than just giving financial support, since the development workers have an actual post in the office of the local organization and they cooperate to develop the projects, my own experiences at CCRR show that this structure can also cause severe clashes. The development workers come from a Western society and therefore have certain ideas and experiences considering organization, planning and hierarchical structures (or cultural values) which do not always match with those in the Palestinian territories and often also do not work within this society. In addition, I have noticed that many Palestinians, often those who are highly educated, which most directors of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are, do not like to be educated in Western ideas and values. Based on my participatory experiences, I can state that when international development workers try to push their organizational techniques and cultural values on their local partners, it can severely damage the relationship between the international organization and the local Palestinian NGO.

Dr. Allam Jarrar (PNGO Net) calls the relationship between international donors and Palestinian NGOs a “giver-recipient relationship”, which often results in that the giver (the international donors) becomes the implementer. International NGOs come to the Palestinian territories to implement their own programmes, using local NGOs as subcontractors, thereby ignoring the programmes, knowledge and expertise of local NGOs. According to dr. Jarrar, there are over five hundred international NGOs registered which are working in the West Bank and Gaza Strip of which many are implementing bodies, thereby positioning themselves above local organizations. Regarding the framework and preconditions most international donors put on local organizations, also on the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, it is

²⁶ <http://palestine.ded.de/en/projects.html>

not unrealistic to assume that these international donors feel comfortable in their position as implementing body. Still, it is worthwhile to quote the personal opinion of an employee of an international donor organization (who wishes to remain anonymous) who has been working in the West Bank for a number of years:

“I think we are also aware that the general development policies and especially the “peace industry” [Western organizations and institutions occupied with trying to bring peace to areas which are faced with conflict] is actually doing more wrong than good....the EU peace building programs in the 1990’s effectively killed the peace movement in Palestine (and in Israel). Not to speak about the inconsistency to support and build upon interventions that are in my opinion objectively against the interest of the Palestinian cause.... Actually, we should not be here, Palestine is not a classical development country, so we are here for political reasons and partly because our countries do not take the political consequences that would bring an end to the conflict. From there, there is only a short way to say that we are actually perpetuating the conflict (taking the occupation out of the hands of Israel) or serving as an alibi for our governments. I am always saying that I am also a small wheel in a wider machine that is turning into the wrong direction, I try of course to steer against her to make her go more slow, but there are limits to what a small wheel can do without being broken out of the system...”

Fisher (2008) argues that the adjustment of local NGOs’ programmes is not as involuntary as Bornstein states; local NGOs often aim at receiving as much funds as possible and therefore respond to money in the first instance, instead of responding to the social needs in their community. Jad (2007) continues by saying that local NGOs are often represented as passive recipients of external influence, but that NGOs actually have the power to manipulate, renegotiate, and legitimise donor agendas, using funds meant for peacebuilding to further their own agendas. Dr. Jarrar (PNGO Net) confirms this theory by saying that “it is not only the fault of the international donors, but it also depends on the integrity of local NGOs and how they respect their own values”. First, this argument can be validated by a development during the Oslo peace process and especially after the second intifada, when there was a substantial increase in the number of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, also referred to as a “mushrooming of NGOs” (dr. Allam Jarrar). Although there could be several reasons for this increase, there is one striking development coinciding with the increase of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, which is that there was a shift in the focus of the international

community (not only international NGOs, but also international institutions like the EU, and foreign states) towards a particular set of issues concerning peacebuilding, conflict resolution and other related issues, and the funds it made available for these concepts accordingly (Jad, 2007). Although there are no documents stating that the increase in funds was the direct cause of the general increase in peacebuilding NGOs, it seems quite probable that the very existence of many Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs stems from merely a response to money.

A more specific example of this attitude of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs is that most of them only initiate new programmes or activities if an international organization sets up new funds for these programmes, something dr. Jarrar calls “shopping for funding”. In the context of funding, international donors, for example the EU, make a certain amount of money available for projects in a specific country/area concerning a specific field of work, for which they call for project proposals from local organizations. From my own experiences in writing project proposals during my internship, I can state that the projects designed for this call for proposals are sometimes only created because there are funds available for a certain kind of project, not because the organization saw a specific need within the society for such projects. In addition, in my encounters with the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs I saw that not only CCRR, but also the other organizations from the sample use professionals or foreign, often Western, volunteers to write these proposals for them, since they not only know the right vocabulary to be used when addressing Western donors, referred to by Jad (2007) as the “language of expertise”, but who are also able to show a level of “professionalism” by setting up a professional plan, time table and fixed budget. With regard to these budgets, it is an international standard that, when an organization is granted the fund, it receives eighty percent of the proposed costs. While setting up these budgets, it is not uncommon that non-existent or exaggerated costs are estimated, leading to funds which are higher than necessary. Personally, I was, when writing a grant proposal for an international donor organization, literally instructed to “make up some extra expenses” and to make the final amount of the proposed costs as high as possible in that it would still be credible. Considering the fact that many of these proposals have been accepted and that CCRR has received the proposed funding for them (and with the expectation that CCRR is not the only Palestinian peacebuilding NGO with this approach), shows that NGOs have the actual ability to manipulate donors for their own benefits.

In addition, the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are well aware of what Vivian (2004) refers to as the “magic bullet syndrome”: the view among NGO staff members responsible for designing, implementing, and reporting on projects that they must demonstrate

success if they are to maintain funding. This leads to a situation where local organizations, when writing evaluation reports, tend to ignore mistakes and present the project as a complete success story (ibid). When reading through evaluation reports and annual reports of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, it is difficult to find a single negative word. Most projects are presented as if they had all the expected results (or even more than expected) and that every single participant was satisfied, more educated and more developed than he or she was before. I even witnessed a situation where the director of one of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs literally told one of his foreign volunteers, who was about to write an evaluation report, not to mention the things that went wrong during the project, but to make a positive story out of it. In portraying their projects as a success, these NGOs are able to secure their funds.

§ 6.3 Direct influences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and specifically the Israeli occupation, influences every aspect of daily life of the inhabitants of the Palestinian territories. Most Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are set up with fighting against and ending the occupation as their main goal, but also these organizations experience direct repercussions of the occupation. In this paragraph, I will discuss several aspects of the occupation which the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs mentioned as having a direct influence on the execution of their work and which is causing this execution to be less effective.

§ 6.3.1 Second Intifada

Most of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs were set up during or after the second intifada (2000-2005), a period that had major repercussions for the work of these organizations. First of all, according to CCRR (2010), severe restrictions of movement between Palestinian cities, due to the violent environment and the increased number of Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints accordingly, caused a delay of workshops and even a cancellation of some projects. Secondly, the number of available participants decreased, especially those of projects in high schools and universities, since many male adolescents took themselves to the streets to participate in actions against the occupation, like “throwing stones and participating in protests” (ibid.).

In addition, “the occurrence of political events such as assassinations, kidnappings, home demolitions or attacks inside Israel affected the general mood of Palestinians tremendously” (CCRR, 2010) and made the Palestinians more suspicious towards the work of

peacebuilding organizations, especially because of their focus on peace, reconciliation and non-violence. These values were so far away from reality at that moment, that organizations focusing on these concepts were perceived by some as not supportive of the Palestinian struggle, which made it more difficult for peacebuilding NGOs to carry out their work.

With the outbreak of the second intifada, joint partnerships between Palestinian and Israeli organizations have disappeared almost completely from the activities of most organizations and the political agenda of international donors (CCRR, 2010). “Many Palestinians felt abandoned by the silence of most of their Israeli partners, while many Israelis felt betrayed by the subsequent return to violence”.²⁷ Israeli peace activists wondered why there were no demonstrations from the Palestinian side against suicide attacks and, on the other hand, Palestinians “reject as moral relativists Israeli peace activists who condition their struggle for ending the occupation with condemnation of terror attacks by the Palestinians” (Said, 2003). PNGO Network even made a statement on October 23, 2000, asking Palestinian NGOs to “halt their joint projects with the Israeli side, particularly the ‘people to people projects and any program which contains an approach of ‘normalization’....[PNGO] asks the Palestinian NGOs to discontinue any transaction with Israeli NGOs until they recognize publicly...the right of the Palestinians to establish a state in the West Bank and Gaza, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of return for the Palestinian refugees”.²⁸

As is described in the annual report of CCRR (2010), “the Israeli policy of separation and repression has made meetings between Palestinians and Israelis virtually impossible. In addition, the lack of perspective for the future has deteriorated the life of Palestinian people and their trust in the Israeli side to end the occupation and allow for their self-determination”. Palestinian peace organizations felt that Israeli organizations were not willing to engage themselves in a partnership that would ask them for a commitment to overcome the imbalanced power structure in the conflict. Therefore, joint work received a bad reputation in Palestinian society and organizations engaging in it were (and still are) subject to criticism (ibid.). This mutual lack of trust, combined with a decline in funding for joint projects from international donors during the second intifada²⁹, caused an almost complete disappearance of joint projects.

Not only due to the almost complete disappearance of joint projects, but also due to the situation in general, dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis on the individual and

²⁷ <http://www.peacemagazine.org/archive/v19n2p06.htm>

²⁸ <http://www.peacemagazine.org/archive/v19n2p06.htm>

²⁹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6688515.stm

grassroots level stopped entirely. According to George Rishmawi (PCR), this development caused a change in approach of Palestinian peacebuilding organizations from dialogue to direct, non-violent actions, like boycott campaigns and protests. Where dialogue was already just complementary to resistance against the occupation instead of being an alternative, resistance now became the sole activity of the majority of Palestinian peacebuilding organizations (Mishrawi, PCR).

§ 6.3.2 Post-intifada

In the period after the second intifada, leading up to the current situation, the environment in which Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs have to work improved only partially. With the violence coming to an end and the number of Israeli soldiers decreasing accordingly, it was relatively easier to reach different cities and therefore the participants in the West Bank again, which meant that the NGOs could revive some of the projects which had come to an end. In addition, with the violent struggle being over, Palestinians returned back to their normal lives, leading to an increase in available participants for the programmes of the peacebuilding NGOs.

On the other hand, the second intifada increased the security measures taken by the Israeli's, with more checkpoints and roadblocks compared to before the second intifada and, most extremely, with the building of the Separation Wall. These aspects do not only erode the freedom of movement of Palestinians, including that of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, but, together with the continuous increase in Israeli settlements in the West Bank (and East-Jerusalem), it demoralises Palestinians in such a way that it is difficult for local peacebuilding organizations to maintain support from the Palestinian community for their work. "Across the West Bank and Gaza these days it is difficult to find many Palestinians that will talk of peace. Daily life in the West Bank involves frequent Israeli military incursions into their cities and towns or hours spent waiting at Israeli checkpoints...for most Palestinians, the process of any sustainable peace movement is a dim prospect. Many feel that the events of the last decade have set it back irreparable."³⁰

There are several aspects which contribute to this feeling of demoralization. First, Israel tries to make it difficult for Palestinian peace workers to carry out their work through different policies, for example by not granting them permits to enter Israel for meetings with Israeli partner organizations.³¹ Second, ever since a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv in 2003 by

³⁰ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6697647.stm

³¹ <http://www.peacemagazine.org/archive/v19n2p06.htm>

two British peace activists, Israel has intensified the restrictions on international peace activists who support the Palestinian cause. It restricts their movements, and has arrested and detained activists (Payes, 2005). At weekly protests against the occupation, it is not rare when demonstrators have to face tear gas attacks, arrests, and sometimes even the risk of getting killed. Finally, according to Nafez Assaily (LOWNP), the Israeli army sometimes confiscates programme material at checkpoints, which severely delays the programmes or campaigns in being executed. Because of Israeli actions like the ones described above, Palestinians start to stop believing in the programmes of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, especially those which aim at bringing Israeli's and Palestinians together. "The Israeli's are destroying what we have been trying to build" (dr. Fathi Darwish, Tawasul).

As this chapter shows, there are many factors which limit the contributing aspects of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and which explain the discrepancies between theory on the role of NGOs in peacebuilding and the goals of specific peacebuilding activities on the one hand, and the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs on the other hand. Most of these factors are created by the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs themselves, like the vertical decision-making structures inside the organizations, the existence of nepotism and financial corruption and the distance between the analyzed NGOs and the Palestinian community. In addition, the limitations caused by the relationships of the peacebuilding organizations with other actors involved in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank, can largely be blamed on the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs themselves. However, the PA and international donor organizations carry part of the responsibility of the as well. Due to a clash between ideologies and approaches, the central role of funding and the competition for it, and competition for control severely decreases and limits the extent of contributing aspects of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. Finally, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its repercussions for the daily life of Palestinians in the West Bank constitutes a limitation in itself, but cannot be blamed on the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs.

Chapter 7

Final conclusion, recommendations and reflection

Final conclusion

The rationale of this thesis is to compare theoretical perspectives on the role of local NGOs in peacebuilding processes and the goals of peacebuilding activities of local NGOs with the practical situation of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. Discrepancies found through these comparisons can be explained by the answer to the central question: *What are the limiting factors regarding Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank?*

The comparison between common peacebuilding activities of local NGOs and those of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs shows that they are quite similar. Of the nine types of peacebuilding activities identified, there are five categories in which one or more of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are active: dialogue and reconciliation, peace education, civilian mediation, representing a particular group, and addressing broader structural issues of democracy, human rights and development. Every type of activity has certain goals or envisioned effects. Do these goals match with the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs? An assessment of contributing aspects of the analyzed NGOs show that similarities can be found in all five of the categories, where discrepancies could only be identified in two categories: ‘representing a particular group’ and ‘addressing broader structural issues’. Within the category of dialogue and reconciliation, which has the goal of changing the perception of ‘the other’ and challenge the ‘discourse of hate’, some of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs are, due the organization of people-to-people dialogue and activities, able to (partially) change the attitude of its Israeli and Palestinian participants towards each other. With the expectation that these participants will share their changed perceptions with their surroundings, public opinion in both societies can be changed, especially when it concerns participants who have a central role in their society.

Regarding the categories of peace education and civilian mediation, which are often linked, awareness is to be created regarding the common ground between groups and people are to be trained in non-violent activism and basis conflict resolution skills in order to mediate in communal conflicts. In the case of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, the concept of nonviolence has risen in popularity. Programmes focused on nonviolent communication in Palestinian high schools have had a large number of participants and, in

addition, more and more Palestinians are participating in nonviolent protests against the Israeli occupation.

When representing a particular group, several goals are envisioned. First, local NGOs can represent the case of their society to international audiences with the goal of raising international support and possibly increasing international pressure on their opponent. Several of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs have been able to, by organizing trips through the West Bank for international groups, change the perception of (some of) these internationals towards the region and the Palestinian people. With the expectation that these international participants share their experiences with their surroundings, international support is possible to increase. In addition, another goal of this type of activity is to empower marginalized groups in society, which is believed to lead to a decrease of inter-communal violence and, in addition, to a stronger, stable and more democratic society. However, this goal is not similar to practice. Partly due to a lack of effort of (some) of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, and partly due to the cultural context of Palestinian society, marginalized groups, especially women and villagers, are not enabled to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Finally, when addressing broader structural issues, equitable and sustainable development is to be promoted and structural relationships between members of a society are to be improved. A very specific contributing aspect of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs within this type of activity is created by the organization of summer camps for Palestinian children and youth, which gives them the opportunity to get to know their country and their peers in other areas, which creates a feeling of unity with the Palestinian land and its people. However, another goal of this type of activity, which is to improve the democratic structure of a society and increase the transparency and accountability of the government, cannot be found in the Palestinian context. Although some of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs bring government officials and civilians together in order to close the gap between the two and make the PA more transparent and democratic, they do not reach this goal.

Theoretical perspectives on the role of local NGOs in peacebuilding processes argue that local NGOs have, due to their position at the grassroots level and due to their attitude, characteristics and possibilities, comparative advantages over other actors to contribute to a peacebuilding process. They are closer to the 'ordinary' people and are therefore able to involve the community in the peacebuilding process. Since peace needs to take root in all

levels of society to be sustainable, NGOs' activities are perceived to be of high importance. In addition, they are perceived to be politically independent, impartial, ideologically based, credible and relatively unbureaucratic, and their mandates are perceived to be flexible.

When comparing these theoretical perspectives with the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, there are many discrepancies to be found. These discrepancies can be explained by several limiting factors regarding the analyzed NGOs. First of all, concerning the internal organization of the analyzed peacebuilding NGOs, both the decision-making structures and the aspect of corruption limit the contributing aspects these NGOs otherwise (might) have had. The decision-making structure within these organizations is not flat, but strongly hierarchical, with the director of the organization making all the decisions concerning the projects to be executed and the approaches accordingly. The knowledge and skills of the employees are marginal to those of the director, while they might be a valuable contribution to the development of programmes and approaches. In this way, the effectiveness of the work of the peacebuilding NGOs might not reach its full potential. In addition, nepotism and financial corruption are two limiting factors regarding the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. By assigning friends, family and acquaintances functions where they are not qualified for and have no experience in, it is questionable whether these people are a valuable contribution to the organization and therefore also to the effectiveness of the work these organizations do. The other aspect, financial corruption, leads to a situation in which less money is going to the projects it was intended for. With fewer resources a project cannot be executed as well and effective as it would have with more resources.

Another limiting factor is that due to an elite-culture which is surrounding these organizations, these NGOs separate themselves from the 'ordinary' people on the ground. What contributes to this separation is the way these NGOs determine the needs of the Palestinian community, which they state they are responding to. Most of the activities and approaches are chosen by the peacebuilding organizations themselves without consulting 'normal' civilians about what they want the organization to do for them. Due to the elite-culture, which gives the directors and employees of the peacebuilding organizations a higher status and a different living environment accordingly compared to their target groups, they are not in a position to know entirely what the needs of their target groups are. In addition, many of the projects these NGOs initiate are based on a response to donor funds, funds which are often only available for projects with specific topics. The content of these projects is designed by international donors or institutions, based on their own perception of what is needed within Palestinian society. Therefore, the fact that the analyzed NGOs decide, and in addition, let

internationals decide for them what the needs of Palestinians are instead of the Palestinian civilians themselves, increases the gap between the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and the Palestinian community. These factors, combined with an additional lack of effort of most of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs to reach the marginalized groups in Palestinian society, which they say is one of their main priorities, shows that these peacebuilding NGOs are not closer to the 'ordinary' people and hardly genuinely involve the Palestinian community in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank.

Concerning the relationships the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs have with other actors involved in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank, it is clear that there is a lack of cooperation. Due to clashing ideologies, but mostly out of defence of their funding, the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs do not want to share their knowledge, skills and resources with organizations similar to theirs. The NGOs are, due to a lack of funding from the PA and of available resources in the Palestinian community itself, dependent on funding from international donors. Competition for this funding prevents cooperation, since most of the peacebuilding NGOs put their own interests before those of their 'colleagues'. If they cooperate, it is only strategic and temporary.

The same limitation can be applied to the relationship of the peacebuilding NGOs from the sample with international donors. When donors let their funding be determined by their own ideas, values and approaches, and when they implement projects themselves instead of letting the local peacebuilding organizations implement them, they do not only ignore the opinion and skills of the people who are affected by these actions, but they might even weaken the Palestinian peace movement in general. If international donors take everything out of the hands of the Palestinian peacebuilding organizations, these organizations are less likely to be able to develop into a strong and independent movement. On the other hand, when these Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs manipulate international donors and use the funding they receive to further their own agenda, it can be said that this might limit the positive effects of the work of these organizations as well, since there are less resources to build on than there could have been.

Finally, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict directly influences the work of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and its execution. The second intifada caused logistical problems for the organizations due to the severe restrictions of movement, a decrease in available participants for their programmes, and a negative change of attitude within the Palestinian community towards the work of local peacebuilding organizations, and especially towards joint programmes between Palestinian and Israeli organizations. After the second

intifada, it is still difficult for Palestinian peacebuilding organizations to find support for their work, since increased Israeli security measures within the West Bank, but also towards international peace activists, have demoralised Palestinians in such a way that many of them stopped believing in the value of peacebuilding activities.

All in all, there are many factors which limit or decrease the contributing aspects of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank. This thesis shows that the context of a conflict and of a society in general, and, additionally, the characteristics and attitude of local peacebuilding NGOs, do not only influence, but even *decide* whether the role these NGOs can play in peacebuilding processes (those which are outlined in theory) is actually played, and whether the goals of specific peacebuilding activities are actually reached. In the case of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, it seems as if their own interests and survival are prioritized over their possible contribution to the peacebuilding process in the West Bank or the possibilities to serve the needs of the Palestinian people.

Recommendations for praxis

This research has shown that there are many limiting aspects regarding Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank. Although some of these factors stem from the cultural or political context of Palestinian society in the West Bank and from direct ‘consequences’ of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and cannot directly be changed by the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, most of them are ‘chosen for’ by these NGOs and can therefore be changed. Apart from this research, I would like to make some personal recommendations which might, according to my opinion, decrease the influence of or tackle these limiting factors. There are many improvements to be made, but, being realistic, the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs would never change a certain approach or attitude if it harms their position. Therefore, I will only make recommendations which will not harm and might even improve the position of these peacebuilding NGOs.

First, Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs need to cooperate and coordinate more with and between each other. Most of the analyzed NGOs choose not to cooperate out of fear of losing their position in the competition for funding. My opinion is that if these organizations cooperate, they actually strengthen their position. By joining forces and sharing knowledge, it does not mean that the organizations individually lose their strategic advantage, but by showing to the international donors that the joint initiatives have more effect than the

organizations have separately, which is expected due to an increase in knowledge, skills, resources and outreach, they might receive more funding than they otherwise do. Being more effective strengthens the organization's position in the competition for funding.

Second, the approach of international donors needs to be changed. Although international donors should not misuse their power, where they can use their power for, and which I believe will also strengthen the position of the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, is to fight the corruption which exists in some of these local organizations. As my research has shown, international donors are well aware of the existence of corruption, but some of them close their eyes for this negative aspect in order to 'protect' the contributing aspects of these NGOs, but because of this, they actually encourage and facilitate corruption. If the money, which is now used for personal benefits, was to be used for the purposes it was meant for, the contributing aspects of these organizations would probably be increased or strengthened. International donors should be stricter and should put more pressure on local NGOs to attack this corruption. It might even be more positive for the local peacebuilding NGOs themselves, because they might receive more funding if the international donors know the local organization is not corrupt or less corrupt than others.

Reflection on research

When reflecting on the research executed for this thesis, there are both positive aspects and limitations to be identified. One aspect which, in my opinion, has contributed much to the quality of this thesis is the approach of participative observation. Through my five-month internship at a Palestinian peacebuilding NGO in the West Bank, I could see and experience how such an organization is organized internally, which approaches they use and what the rationale behind these approaches is. I could use these observations to compare with the information I received through the interviews I had with the directors and employees of other Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs. In addition, the internship did not only give me the opportunity to attend workshops, thereby enabling me to see the approaches in programmes in practice and to observe the attitude and involvement of its participants, but it also revealed topics which I did not expect to come across. Finally, due to the internship I lived in the West Bank for five months. Although my life during these months differs from those of Palestinians living in the West Bank, the experience of actually living and working in the West Bank gave me a good insight in the context in which the Palestinian community has to live and the Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs have to work, and the way this affects daily life.

However, there were also some limitations. First, the relatively small number of interviews conducted decreases the representativeness of this research, not only regarding Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, but also regarding international donors and NGO umbrella networks. Although this decreased level of representativeness could partly be brought back into balance through the combination of different methodological approaches, it is still a limitation of this research. Regarding the interviews, another limitation is that I did not do any interviews with representatives of the Palestinian Authority. The analysis of the relationship between the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs and the PA (section 6.2.2) is now based on perceptions of the peacebuilding NGOs and on literature regarding this subject, while it would have been valuable to add the perception of (a) PA representative(s) as well. In addition, I analyzed most of the information gathered through the interviews after my return to the Netherlands and therefore I noticed too late that some specific details or explanations were missing. Although I contacted several organizations for additional information through email, none of them were responsive. If I would have analyzed all the interviews during my stay in the West Bank, I would have been able to do follow-up interviews, which might have led to more comprehensive results.

Finally, the assessment of contributing aspects and unreached goals focuses only on very specific aspects. Although it is very difficult to measure and/or indicate effects of peacebuilding activities, a more extensive assessment might have been possible to be made if I had used a more extensive list of possible indicating factors, would have asked more specific questions about these factors in the interviews, and would have visited more workshops and/or activities of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs.

Despite these limitations, the use of different methodological approaches enabled me to make a comparison between theoretical perspectives on the role of local NGOs in peacebuilding processes and the goals of common peacebuilding activities of local NGOs, and the practical situation of the analyzed Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, and additionally, enabled me to explain discrepancies between theory and practice, and goals and practice. How can the results of this research be placed in a theoretical and societal framework?

Although much has been written about the role of NGOs in conflict areas and/or their role in peacebuilding processes, a large part of this theory is based on cases in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. With this research, a new case study can be added, not only in the sense of a different region of focus, but also because of its focus on NGOs which specifically focus on peacebuilding activities (and thus not NGOs in general). This expands the literature on this

topic. In addition, this research shows that the applicability of theoretical perspectives depends on the context of the conflict, the specific society and the characteristics of the actors involved. It confirms that the role of NGOs differs in every peacebuilding process and every conflict asks for different peacebuilding activities.

Regarding the societal framework, this research shows that the activity in peacebuilding at the grassroots level in the West Bank is extensive and that much (international) attention is given to these initiatives. However, it also shows that peacebuilding, which is supposed to direct societies in a positive direction, has many negative sides. In the West Bank, peacebuilding activities go together with competition and power struggles. Personal benefits and survival are often a priority, instead of the needs of the community. Palestinian peacebuilding organizations are supposed to serve. If peace is actually to take root at the grassroots level of the Palestinian society of the West Bank and/or if violence is actually to be prevented from erupting, the approaches and attitudes of all the actors involved in the peacebuilding process in the West Bank, thus not only of Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs, need to be changed, or, when already leading to contributing aspects, need to be strengthened.

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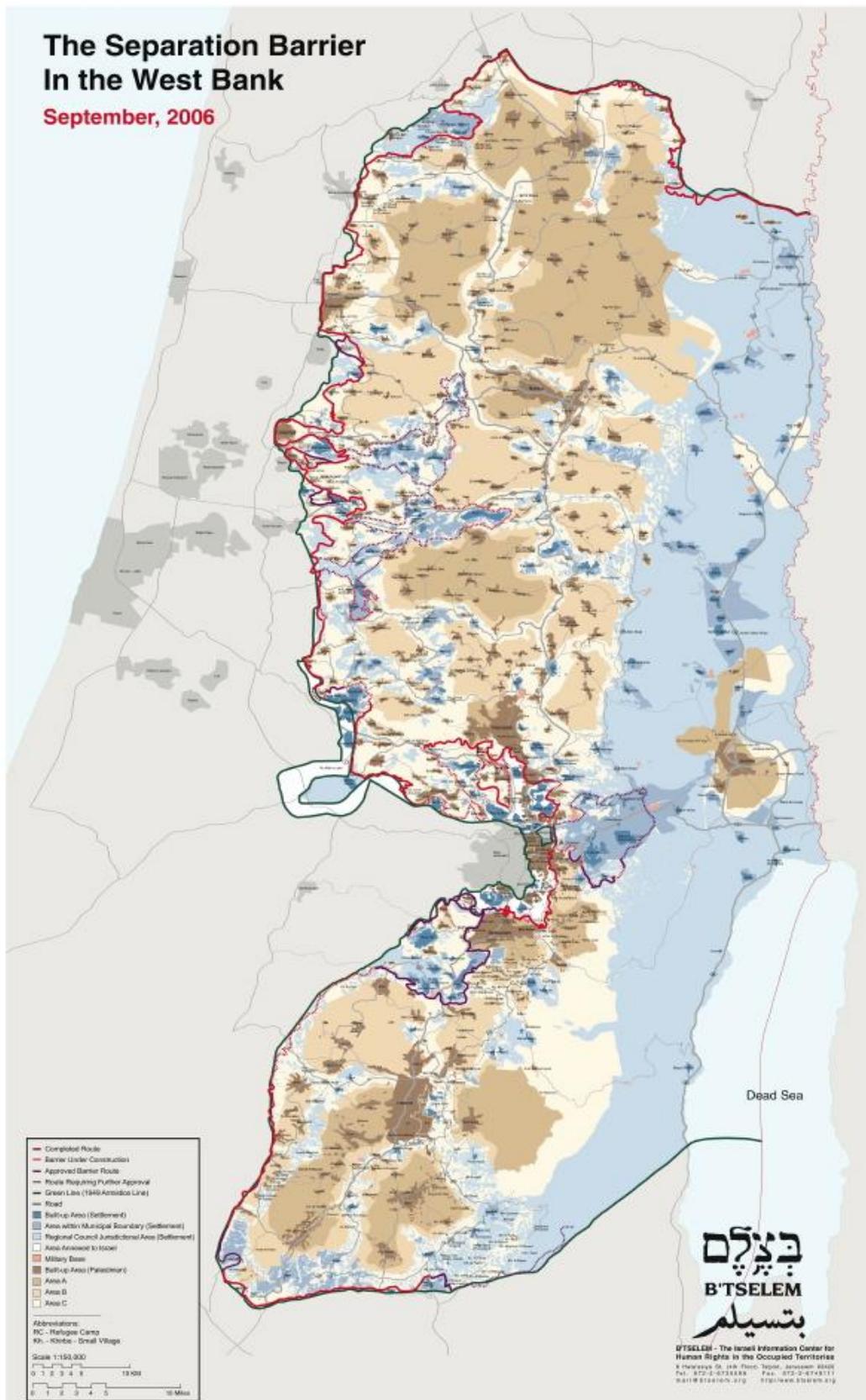
<http://www.pngo.net/default.asp?i=215>

<http://www.tawasul.ps/freepage.php?id=21>

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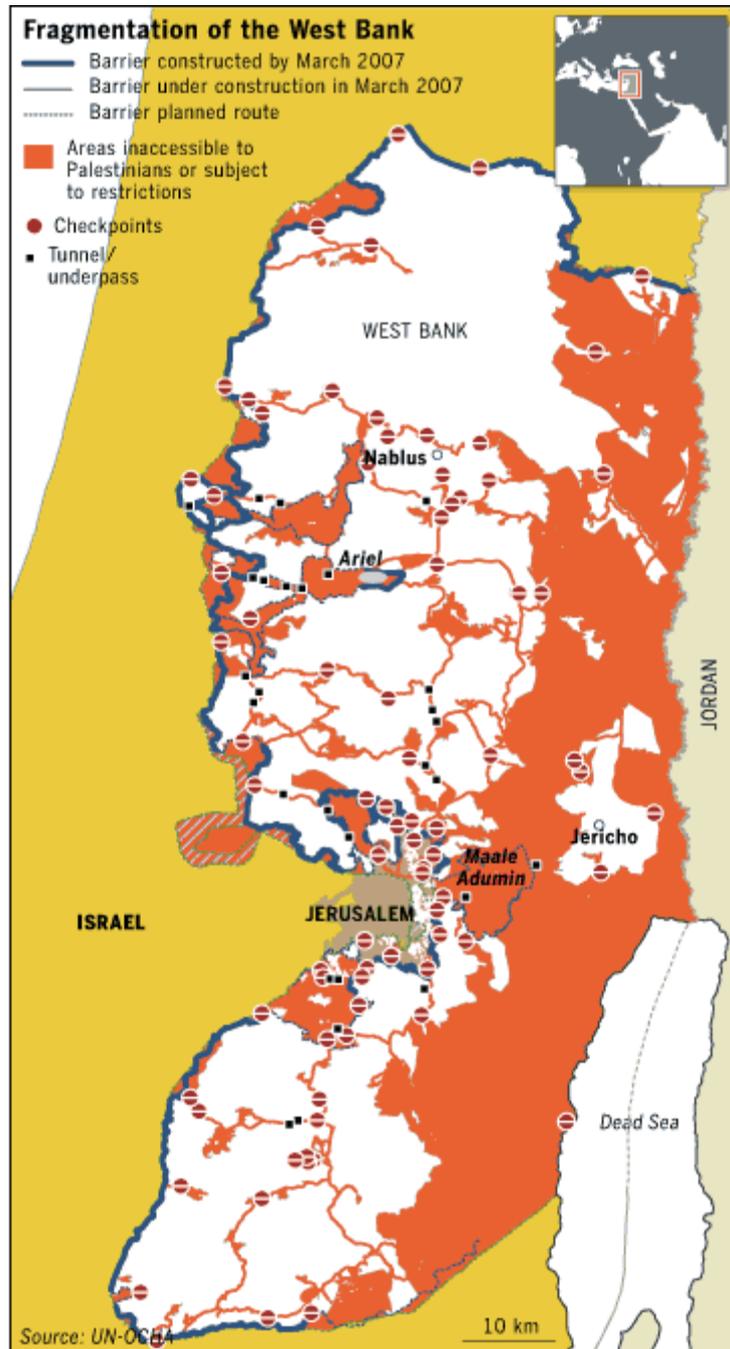
Appendix 1



Source: http://bilin-village.org/francais/xmedia/cartes/separation_barrier_map_2006-09.jpg

Appendix 2

UN Map chart West Bank

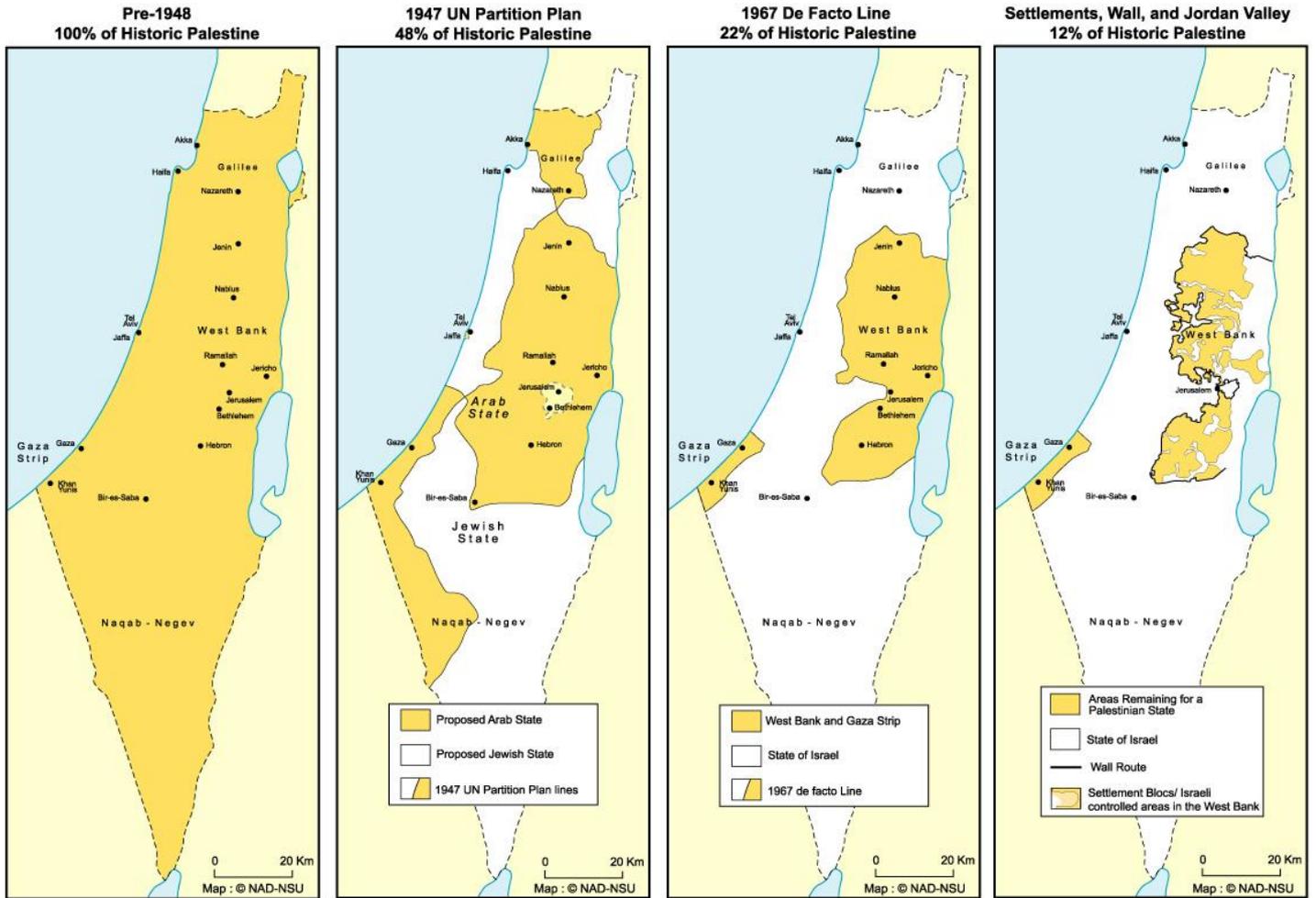


Source: <http://inpursuitofjustice.files.wordpress.com/2007/06/un-map-ft.gif>

Appendix 3

DESTROYING THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

JULY 2005



These maps are for illustrative purposes only. Boundary representations are not authoritative.

Source: http://www.palestinemonitor.org/spip/IMG/jpg/two_state_solution_map.jpg

Appendix 4

Informants (interviews)	Organization/City	Type of organization	Date interview
George Rishmawi (director)	Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People (PCR) – Beit Sahour	Peacebuilding NGO	2-03-2010
Nafez Assaily (director)	Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace (LOWNP) – Hebron	Peacebuilding NGO	4-03-2010
Zoughbi Zoughbi (director) + employee (name unknown)	Wi'am – Bethlehem	Peacebuilding NGO	25-03-2010
Dr. Fathi Darwish (director)	Tawasul – Ramallah	Peacebuilding NGO	1-07-2010
Dr. Allam Jarrar (committee member) + Ronza (employee)	PNGO Network – Ramallah	NGO umbrella network	1-07-2010
Naseef Muallem (director)	Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy (PCPD) – Ramallah	Peacebuilding NGO	1-07-2010
Mohammed Musa (director)	Al-Hares Association for Peace and Democracy – Bethlehem	Peacebuilding NGO	5-07-2010
Employee (name unknown)	Holy Land Trust (HLT) – Bethlehem	Peacebuilding NGO	07-10-2010 (email)
Rasha Salah Eddin (capacity building coordinator)	NGO Development Center (NDC) – Ramallah	Supporting organization	25-10-2010 (email)
Jonas Geith (programme advisor)	DED/ZFD – Ramallah	International donor	26-10-2010 (email)

Additional organization analyzed:

- Miftah, Palestinian peacebuilding NGO, located in Ramallah and Jerusalem.