Coming Too Late? The EU's Mixed Approaches to Transforming the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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Coming Too Late? The EU's Mixed Approaches to Transforming

the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict[1]

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Abstract: As is well known, the amount of aid given by international donors both to Israel and to the occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt) is unparalleled in the world, but the fact that people can turn violent against their own CSOs trying to promote reconciliation speaks abundantly about the resentment that external aid can generate. Studying the nexus EU-civil society-Palestinian-Israeli conflict cannot therefore be done without a general overview of the particular setting in which aid for conflict transformation takes place. This report is articulated in four parts. The paper first briefly discusses the nature of the conflict and recent trends in its development, affecting, inter alia, the domestic context in which civil society operates. It then looks at the EU's involvement in the conflict and presents the tools that the EU uses in its support for civil society. Moving on, it analyses the impact and effectiveness of Israeli and Palestinian civil societies (with a view on CSO typologies and activities) and suggests why the effectiveness of civil society has remained limited. Finally the paper deals with the EU's impact and the role of EU-funded programmes supporting civil society involvement in conflict transformation, testing the different hypotheses outlined in the guiding report issued for this work package.

1. Introduction

Yesh Gvul ("There is a limit") is an Israeli peace group campaigning against the occupation by backing soldiers who refuse duties of a repressive or aggressive nature.[3] In a 4 June 2009 collective email, *Yesh Gvul* invited its supporters to join a demonstration in Tel Aviv two days later. The announced purpose of the demonstration was to 'strengthen Israeli voices that are fed up with the government's policies'. Not a protest against a new law passed by the Israeli government, not a generic call to end occupation, not a call to stop Israeli government harassing anti-militarist activists, but a cry of despair and an expression of alienation in the face of the general trends of government policies. This invitation by people 'fed up by with the government's policies' should hint at a sort of moral fatigue by Israeli peace activists and the difficult struggle that some small groups try to organize in the view of transforming and confronting the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Yet, renewed forms of civil society activism might be coming more from the Israeli side than from the Palestinian side, this paper will argue.

In April 2009, two acts of violence were committed by masked Palestinians against two cultural centres in the West Bank town of Jenin. One of the targets was *Kamandjati* a cultural NGO founded in 2002, teaching classical music to local children and running a youth orchestra. The other was the Freedom Theatre whose entrance was set on fire. No one was hurt in these two incidents, yet, they show a profound malaise in Palestinian society. The motives for these attacks were unclear, but it seems that the attack against the Theatre was a response to the too caustic criticism of Orwell's classic *Animal Farm* which, in the Jenin's re-interpretation, criticized the local political elites for corruption and treason against its own people. Some saw behind the attack against the cultural centre an Islamist hand unhappy with the gender promiscuity that such cultural associations can harbour, while others thought of it as a retaliation for having accepted to play in Tel Aviv in one of the joint activities that many international donors like to fund on their agenda of "peace and conflict-transformation" (Giorgio, 2009: 20).

These two vignettes illustrate the predicament of civil society organizations (CSO) active in conflict transformation, and working often against difficult odds. The second example also illustrates the power of foreign aid and its mixed blessing. As is well known, the amount of aid given by international donors both to Israel and to the occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt) is unparalleled in the world, but the fact that people can turn violent against their own CSOs trying to promote reconciliation speaks abundantly about the resentment that external aid can generate. Studying the

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[3] See Yesh Gvul, http://www.yeshgvul.org/about_e.asp

nexus EU-civil society-Palestinian-Israeli conflict cannot therefore be done without a general overview of the particular setting in which aid for conflict transformation takes place. A senior analyst of the impact of aid, Mary Anderson noted, during a visit to the oPt in May 2004 that 'everyone with whom [she] spoke, without exception (international, Palestinian, Israeli), agreed that donor assistance to the oPt plays into and reinforces the Israeli occupation of Palestine. People noted that aid "relieves Israel of its obligations as an occupier", that it "rebuilds whatever Israel destroys" and "enables" the continuation of such actions, that currently it simply "maintains" levels of poverty resulting from a strict closure regime and other aspects of Israeli control by providing major financial resources for food, employment, etc.' (Anderson 2004: 5).

Since the EU has started supporting explicitly civil society in the field of conflict transformation only recently (if we take two programmes conferring a clear mandate for the EU in this domain, one can notice that the Partnership for Peace Programme and the European Neighbourhood Policy in Israel and the oPt (see below for more details) were adopted respectively in 2000 and 2005), one can wonder whether this engagement on the European side is not a latecomer. The first generation of conflict transformation activities through civil society (with the so-called normalization programmes, or people-to-people activities) emerged very quickly in the first years of the Oslo peace process (1993-2000) and international donors featuring prominently in that field at that time were the USA and the Norwegian government, not the EU.

The EU might now be the single largest donor in the oPt, but it is well known that politically it is only second to the US in terms of influence on the peace process. Tocci speaks also about 'the widening gap between rhetoric and reality in EU policy' in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Tocci 2005) and stresses the ambiguities in some of EU's decisions, in particular with regard to the last round of military operation against Gaza (Dec. 2008.-Jan. 2009) (Tocci 2009). It is important here to stress that the local population is very conscious of the erratic attitude and programmes promoted by certain donors. A survey conducted in 1997 revealed that about 40 per cent of the population believed that 'foreign funding had a […] negative or very negative' effect in the Territories (Kassis 2001: 44), a trend that could explain why people can turn violent against certain associations perceived as too subservient to foreign donors' policies, as in the case of Jenin's cultural centre mentioned above.

As I have argued elsewhere (Challand 2009, 2008a) one cannot and should not dissociate the impact of local civil societies (at least in the Palestinian case, but arguably also in part in the Israeli case)

from the overall influence of international aid. Aid (in general and the one earmarked for civil society in particular) has contributed to a profound transformation of the social and political fabric of local societies. This trend, in part set in motion from the mid-1980s, was accelerated with the professionalization of aid (at the expenses of small-scale solidarity funding which still favoured voluntary work) and the gradual governmentalization of aid, introducing technical criteria (at the expenses of political support). One important result of the transformation ushered in by the politicization and institutionalization of aid has been the political disaffection of the leftist factions in Palestine (and in the light of the 2009 Israeli election one might wonder whether this is also true for Israel) and even contributed to the victory of the Islamist camp in 2005-2006 (Challand 2008a).[4] Nabulsi even argued that one consequence of aid in favour of the peace process 'was both to interfere with and to undermine democratic processes in already existing structures of associational networks. By entirely neglecting local party, grassroots and union platforms and committees, donors contributed to a de-democratization of civil society in the West Bank and Gaza instead of increasing the capacity of civil society for democratization' (Nabulsi 2005: 123). In order to understand what can be the impact of the EU's projects for CSOs active in conflict transformation, one therefore needs to know certain facts about the context of aid, its historical evolution and that of CSOs.

This report is articulated in four parts. The paper first briefly discusses the nature of the conflict and recent trends in its development, affecting, inter alia, the domestic context in which civil society operates. It then looks at the EU's involvement in the conflict and presents the tools that the EU uses in its support for civil society. Moving on, it analyses the impact and effectiveness of Israeli and Palestinian civil societies (with a view on CSO typologies and activities) and suggests why the effectiveness of civil society has remained limited. Finally the paper deals with the EU's impact and the role of EU-funded programmes supporting civil society involvement in conflict transformation, testing the different hypotheses outlined in the guiding report issued for this work package (Tocci 2008). One final note on terminology. When we refer to CSOs we follow the loose definition given by Tocci (2008: 9). At times we will use NGOs and this term should not be interchanged with CSOs, since the former refers to professionalized organizations, while CSOs also include smaller and less formally structured organizations such as charitable organizations, *zakat* committees or youth clubs.

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[4] The current boycott of the Hamas-run PNA certainly does not reverse the trend.

2. Dynamics and representations of the conflict

Much has been written and said about the origins and evolutions of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As any conflict in the world, both sides have generated contrasting narratives, myths and histories about a conflict that started nearly one hundred years ago. As anthropologists have shown, conflicts are always about power and/or resources but only then express themselves or find a justification in terms of identities (Cohen 1974). This is not the proper place to chart again the course of this conflict. So we will limit ourselves to a conceptual description of a conflict that had arisen for a small yet symbolically charged piece of land.

To qualify the nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in one phrase, one could say that although it is often confused and thought as a conflict between two roughly equal or even entities, the conflict is the result of an 'extreme asymmetry of power and resources' through which Israel is able to maintain and feed the vulnerability of the quasi-Palestinian state (Khan 2004: 43, 49f). This opposition – "equal actors vs. asymmetric rivals" – is, in my view, central in the discussion of conflict transformation and to the success of its project. It allows a clear articulation of the dominant arguments that one can hear about the conflict, both on the general level and on the possible role that the EU can have in supporting local civil societies.

'Asymmetric containment' (Khan 2004: 49f) is a quite astute formulation because it captures the political and economic dimensions of Palestinian-Israeli relations. Politically, the oPt are literally surrounded by Israel, if not physically, at last in terms of sovereignty over its (quasi-)borders: indeed Israel controls, in one way or another, all entry points into the Territories[5] and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) lacks effective sovereignty (not to mention formal international recognition).[6] On another level, the fate of the PNA and of any future Palestinian state are dependent on the goodwill of the Israeli government to continue the path opened with the Oslo process in which the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) voluntarily (and probably mistakenly) accepted a legally ad-hoc, stage-based and interim form of negotiations rather than insisting on a comprehensive negotiated solution under the framework of existing international legal norms (Legrain 2002). Israel has since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September

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[5] Even if Israel has abandoned direct control over the Rafah Crossing since the disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005, it retains a form of control on who enters and leaves. On this issue, see Gisha (2009).
[6] No embassies in the oPt, only Representative Offices.

1993 exploited to the last drop this initial mistake of the Palestinian leadership.[7] Despite the fact that many people have declared the Oslo process dead, the model of negotiations has remained that of incremental stages and performance-based interpretations (i.e. the 2002 Road Map for peace or the 2007 Annapolis process). Only the 2002 Saudi peace initiative puts forward an alternative to this negotiation process by offering a definitive agreement not only between Israel and the PNA/PLO but also with Arab countries. Unilateral moves made by Israel since 2002 – disengagement from the Gaza Strip, the building of the wall in the West Bank, etc – could also be interpreted in this framework of asymmetric containment since it has relegated the Palestinian leadership to an even more difficult situation at the negotiating table since the latter fails to bring home any significant achievement to boost its case.[8] The "offer" by Prime Minister Netanyahu in June 2009 to recognize a Palestinian state only if demilitarized[9] and with no control of its airspace is the latest manifestation of Israeli arrogance in imposing the parameters of negotiations onto the Palestinians.

Asymmetric containment is also clearly perceptible in terms of economic and developmental indicators. Israel has created a captive marked in the oPt (hinting at a form of colonial practice) and the economic viability of a rent-seeking PNA depends on the transfer of its VAT revenues by Israel (and Israel has in many moments of the conflicts used this, among others, as a pressuring tool on the PNA by withholding the VAT refunding), not to mention the essential financial manna of international donors' aid, in which the EU has come to play a leading role in the last ten years in becoming the main financial supporter of the PNA (Le More 2008). The emerging Palestinian state is one best characterized as neo-patrimonial in practice (Brynen 1995), in which good working connections between the Israeli military/intelligence milieus are paramount to economic success in the oPt (Lagerquist 2003). 'Palestinian economic vulnerability ensured that control over critical Palestinian rents gave Israel greater leverage to ensure compliance in security and other issues' (Khan 2004: 50). The tragic economic situation of the Gaza Strip is mostly the consequences of the four decades of Israel's de-development policies (Roy 2001) amplified with the harsh closure during most of the second Intifada, but also the result of the uneven access to economic rents on the

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[7] On the reasons why the PLO leadership accepted the Oslo logic 'to revive its flagging political fortunes', see Sayigh (1997a: 615).

[8] Such interpretation would reinforce Legrain's interpretation that since the mid-1990s, Israel has worked on rendering the non-existence of a Palestinian state a permanent feature (Legrain 2009). In that light Hamas is just an indirect pawn in the hands of Israel since it gives the latter the justification not to negotiate and to pursue the politics of the 'facts on the ground' (settlements, network of by-pass roads, Judaization of East Jerusalem, etc) (Keating & Le More 2005). Dov Weisglass, top aid to PM Sharon famously called the disengagement plan a 'formaldehyde' to buy time for Israel so as not to negotiate with the Palestinians (Shavit 2004).

[9] See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8099948.stm. For the full text, see, e.g. http://www.palestine-pmc.com/details.asp?cat=2&id=2073 (accessed 17 July 2009).

side of corrupt Palestinians, two features which have only accelerated the extent of Hamas' political success since the Islamist movement entered the political game in 2005. Rent-seeking is not only a feature of PNA institutions and leaders but the political economy of aid has also profoundly affected the transformation of Palestinian society and politics at large (Challand 2009), as we will discuss later.

In opposition to the idea of asymmetric containment, some have suggested a reading of the conflict in terms of two more or less equal opponents. The depictions of the conflict as one premised on clashing religious and/or cultural identities contribute to the idea that these are rivals on the same footing. Note that a certain twist to this interpretation may suggest that it is Israel that is currently in a position of weakness, tapping into to the Biblical myth of the Jewish (Israeli) David opposed to the giant (Muslim/Arab) Goliath or insisting, as the current Netanyahu government does that Israel could be washed away by fanatical Islamist military threats, *in primis* by Iran or its Lebanese allies.

Certain strategies of conflict transformation contribute also to the idea that Palestinians and Israelis are equal partners. If one thinks of the model of people-to-people contacts, a model that was heavily supported by a cohort of international donors during the Oslo years (1993-2000), it is in large part based on the assumption that through peer-to-peer contact and exchange – namely that favouring joint activities – a sense of normalization would emerge amongst the two peoples and favour reconciliation (PIJ 2005). As we will see later, this type of activity was rather quickly (from 1998 onwards) boycotted by most Palestinian CSOs precisely because they gave the false impression of a discussion amongst equals and thus hid the profound asymmetry between Israelis and Palestinians.

The idea of equal footing is also the result of the battle for victimhood. Looking at the Israeli establishment's PR and of self-defence arguments, one can see that Israel insists on being presented as the (main) victim of terror, hatred and eternal anti-Semitism, negating thus the structural violence of occupation, the question of land confiscation, amongst other charges that are frequently levelled against Israel. Similarly (I succumb to the equal-footing trap I am describing), Palestinians tend to depict themselves as the only victims of occupation and of the *nakba* and fail to acknowledge that certain uses of violence are unjustifiable and overlook Jewish suffering provoked by the conflict. Both lines of argument when put together (and it is a sort of *passage obligé* for political correctness to mention collective suffering on both sides) contribute therefore to the impression of an equal suffering and therefore equal footing between the two enemies.

Hanafi's analysis of the reports and statements published over the last five years by Human Rights Watch (HRW) is a case in point in the misleading equal footing representation (Hanafi 2009). By focusing too strictly on certain aspects of human rights violations committed both by and against Palestinians and Israelis, the HRW reports under scrutiny lead to an impression of what the author terms 'false apoliticism' namely the impression that there are only "technical" violations of human rights, but such reports often overlook the political origins of the conflict and the structural imbalance between an occupier and an occupied population. Hanafi points thus to the lack of reference to the nature of occupation, but this could be extended to other types of coverage (legal, academic or media) that fail to state that for example that Jewish settlements in the oPt are a grave breach of international humanitarian law (IHL).

A final problem with this false symmetry is that it induces readers of the conflict to conceive of the two societies as monolithic blocks, succumbing to the more general bias of what Ulrich Beck coined methodological nationalism.[10] In that reading, Israel is a Jewish State in conflict with the Palestinian of the oPt. Leaving the fact that nearly half of the Palestinians reside outside Mandatory Palestine and that Israeli Jews have their stark internal fragmentation in terms of *Ashkenazim* vs *Mizrahim* (or Oriental) Jews, this depiction overlooks the fact that about 20 percent of Israeli citizens are Palestinians ("Arab Israelis" as they are referred to in Israel or "Palestinians citizens of Israel" in their self-depiction). The recent electoral success of the Israeli far-right party of Avigdor Liebermann has shed a crude light on the level of racism existing inside Israel against the Arab minority, although the policies of Israel to prevent this minority to become full and equal citizens has been existing since its inception in 1948 (Cook 2006). If conflict transformation is about bringing peace, democracy and lasting justice and equality, then it also ought to consider seriously the question of the Arab minority inside Israel. This report will suggest that there is some potential to be explored for CSOs in this regard, but often scholars and conflict specialists tend to exclude this minority out of the equation, or simply ignore basic facts about this part of the Israeli population (Payes 2003 being the notable exception). This paper will develop the issue of forced dualism throughout its analysis, highlighting how "queering strategies" have percolated into the strategies of some peace activists in response.

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[10] 'Methodological nationalism assumes that humanity is naturally divided into a limited number of nations, which internally organized themselves as nation-states and externally set boundaries to distinguish themselves from other nation-states… Much of social science assumes the coincidence of social boundaries with state boundaries, believing that social action occurs primarily within and only secondarily across, these divisions…' (Beck 2003: 453-454).

Any sound conflict transformation strategy entails addressing the causes of the conflict and not just work on its symptoms. This seems to be popular wisdom for conflict specialists and all those familiar with the Palestinian situation: The frequently heard call to boycott aid in order not to subsidize the occupation (Anderson 2004) is a proof that donors and development actors know all too well that much of the money goes down the drain for the never-ending cure of symptoms that will continuously remerge, and that effectively eradicating the causes of the conflict would be the best solution. On the Israeli side, those working on addressing the causes of the conflict are becoming an increasingly small minority, while many work on alleviating the symptoms of violence. Thus, during the campaign against Gaza in January 2009, the Israeli media relayed almost uniquely the suffering of those exposed to Qassem rockets in Sderot and in southern cities of Israel. The last Knesset election is another good example of the gradual shift inside Israeli society: in those elections, the parties that made significant progress in terms of seats are right-wing parties calling for unilateralism, when not outright dismissal of the peace agenda, and the evolution of the left-wing party Meretz illustrates the fate of the peace-camp which was strong in the 1992 and 1996 elections but which has since then seen the ground vanish under its feet. General trends seem therefore not to be moving towards the right direction.

3. The EU and Civil Society in Israel and Palestine

The EU's array of instruments in support of civil society described in Tocci (2008: 2-6) are all used in Israel and Palestine and with a view to conflict transformation. First and foremost, the ENP has translated into different sets of Actions Plans leading to annual Progress Reports in which civil society organizations (CSOs) have received a fair degree of attention (although, it must be underlined, are not always viewed as central).[11] The Action Plans came into force for Israel and Palestine in April 2005. While the Action Plan remains valid for the PNA, the equivalent for Israel has formally expired in May 2009: originally planned for three years and later extended for another year, the AP for Israel was meant to be transformed in 2009 through an upgrading of the official ties between the EU and Israel. Despite an announcement by the EU in December 2008 that upgrading would be granted to Israel, this decision was later frozen, both in the light of the Gaza military campaign and of the uncertainties regarding the new Israeli government's commitment to a two-state solution.[12] At the time of the interview for this report, the Commission Delegation in Tel Aviv underlined the fact that the Commission would probably have to issue a Progress Report in 2010

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[11] See http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/enp/index_en.htm
[12] Interview with Jonathan Claridge, Head of Political and Trade Section, EU Delegation in Tel Aviv, 8 May 2009.

without clear terms of reference as the Action Plan had not (yet) been prolonged or substituted by another AP between Israel and the EU.[13] The Action Plan with the PNA is still formally valid, but the internal Palestinian confrontation, the existence of two parallel PNAs (one appointed by presidential decrees in the West Bank led by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, and the other in Gaza run by Hamas that claims legitimacy through the 2006 elections) and the hiccups inEU-PLO relations entails that 'EU-PA Action Plan largely remains a dead letter' (Tocci 2009: 22).

The EU has also adopted a series of programmes supporting civil society through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched in 1995 and revamped in July 2008 as the Union for the Mediterranean. Euro-Med funding is thus made available at the regional level for southern Mediterranean partners and therefore also for Israeli and Palestinian civil societies. The latter can therefore also benefit from yearly budget lines made available by the Commission's Directorate General for External Relations in different fields such as youth, cultural exchanges, women's empowerment and support for the media.[14] In the OPT, the EU disbursed aid from 2004 to 2007 in the field of cultural activities, some of them in relation to conflict transformation (like funding of theatre plays dealing with the Other's suffering, education, etc.).

Other EU regional initiatives provide funding for civil society. The Middle East Peace Project (MEPP) is another important tool of support for the EU, and in that package the Partnership for Peace features as the programme's flagship for conflict transformation through civil society support. This programme, established nine years ago, was meant to work through local civil society to reinforce the chances for peace to succeed. It has supported joint Israeli-Palestinian activities, but also transnational cooperation. A recent development in this budget line has been to work on intra-communal dialogue as the EU came to the conclusion that peace had also to be built from within the different societies.[15] Thus, the latest call of the Partnership for Peace precisely wants to support the role of CSOs in persuading, within their own constituencies, so-called veto groups, that is clusters of people who have proved resistant to the idea of peace and conflict transformation. Beneficiaries over the last years include CSOs promoting joint activities (such as the Peres Center for Peace) or a peace activists' initiative to launch a website (www.perspektiva.org) which translates in Russian alternative information about the peace process (a project run by the Coalition of Women for Peace)

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[13] On the timing and political implications of the (non-)upgrading, see Tocci (2009). At the time of final revisions (October 2009), no formal decision had been taken on either side (upgrading or extending the Action Plan).
[14] See http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/index_en.htm
[15] Interview with Christian Berger, Head of Delegation, EU Delegation in the West Bank and Gaza, Jerusalem, 7 May 2009.

targeting thus an important veto group in Israeli society: the Russian migrant community.[16] A last example, illustrating the regional dimension of the EU's support was the funding given to an international NGO ('Search for Common Ground') in cooperation with a TV company to produce a series of the famous children's programme "Sesame Street" for the Middle East as a way to depict the "Other" in a more positive way.

The Head of the Commission Delegation in the West Bank and Gaza acknowledged that the EU's instruments supporting CSOs in the difficult tasks of conflict transformation could always be expanded, but at the same time the existence of the Instrument for Stability (IfS) allowed good coordination and mobilization both of international and local CSOs in various international conflicts.[17] The Commission's support for CSOs in the field of conflict transformation, crisis management, and civilian peacebuilding were quoted as evidence of the accuracy of the EU's strategy to support civil society around the globe, a support that includes financial means to help civil society in peacebuilding partnerships through four components (political roster, capacity building, dialogue on policy and close collaboration with academic research).[18] In this same basket of worldwide tools of DG Relex that civil society organizations can use, one should quote the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), and to a lesser extent the support for Civil society and local authorities (which provided co-financing for Palestinian NGOs in 2004). The EIDHR (adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in December 2006 under the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013) is an important budget line and in the oPt 10 to 15 projects have been funded yearly for an amount ranging between €500,000 to €700,000 (with sub-calls dealing, e.g., with culture of human rights in 2006, Democracy, Rule of Law and Governance in 2004). The latest EIDHR call for proposals dedicated to the oPt in June 2009 was entitled "Strengthening the Role of Civil Society in Promoting Human Rights and Democratic Reform, in Facilitating the Peaceful Conciliation of Group Interests and in Consolidating Political Participation and Representation." This call generated a certain ambiguity amongst local actors as there was a great deal of overlap between this mandate and regular calls supported by the budget line of Partnership for Peace.

Finally, both Palestinian and Israeli CSOs can benefit from funding granted by the EU at the global level, with funding available for calls on human rights, support for local authorities, youth activities,

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[16] Interview with Inna Michalin and Vera Reider, Coalition of Women for Peace, Tel Aviv, 4 May 2009.
[17] See http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/stability-instrument/index_en.htm
[18] Interview with Christian Berger, Head of Delegation, EU Delegation in the West Bank and Gaza, Jerusalem, 7 May 2009.

or cultural actions. The European Commission's Delegation to Israel coordinates only three areas of collaboration for CSOs: the EU Partnership for Peace, the EIDHR, and Local and Regional Cultural Activities.[19] Palestinian CSOs in Israel have thus less access to financial resources than the ones in the oPt since the latter have access to all kinds of developmental budget lines. This is due to the fact that Israel has a high level of economic development which does not allow the EU to fund developmental projects within Israel although standards of living are notably much lower in the Arab parts of Israel where that type of aid would be welcome by local Arab CSO leaders.[20] A last difference for CSO funding is that emergency/humanitarian aid is also made available for CSOs of the oPt, but little of that money goes to conflict transformation; it rather goes to alleviating the costs and treating the symptoms of the conflict with scores of projects dealing with mental health, as one prominent type of project that has flourished in the last nine years in the Territories. The Head of the Commission Delegation in the oPt estimated that overall, from the €486 million spent by the EU in 2008, 'not more than 5 percent went to civil society', mostly disbursed through the Partnership for Peace, human rights and democracy projects, or for cooperation projects carried out through NGOs. The vast majority of aid given by the EU goes to recurrent costs (budgetary support) of the PNA and humanitarian relief programmes.[21]

4. Civil society in Israel and Palestine

4.1. CSO Typologies

There is a peace industry (Bouillon 2004) in the oPt and many new CSOs were created in the last twenty years reflecting this pouring of money for advocacy purposes. Yet some of the Palestinian activism dates backs to the Ottoman empire (the oldest NGO still active was established in 1907) , and the core of Palestinian civil society, at least the more structured one, started in the 1970s with the popular committees as a reaction to the Israeli Civilian Administration's policies of de-development. In that process, nationalist political parties which were banned under the occupation regime organized various popular committees orientated around certain themes, such as health, women, education, agriculture, etc (Hiltermann 1991, Robinson 1992). These committees were later consolidated into professional NGOs. Table 1, based on findings published in 2001, shows that a large chunk of NGOs active around 2000 were founded during the Oslo years.

[19] See http://www.delisr.ec.europa.eu/english/content/cooperation_and_funding/3.asp
[20] Interviews with different Arab CSO leaders, Haifa, 5 May 2009: Ja'afar Farah, Musawa and Ameer Makhoul, Ittijah.
[21] Interview with Christian Berger, Head of Delegation, Jerusalem, May 8, 2009.

Table 1: Percentage of NGOs according to their period of establishment[22]

Date of creation	Percentage of active Palestinian NGOs
Post Oslo (1994 onwards):	37.6%
1988-1993 (1st Intifada):	18.8%
1987-1980:	13.3%
1968-1979:	15.4
1949-1967:	11.5%
Pre-1948:	3.4%

In terms of CSOs active in advocacy (HR, democracy, conflict resolution), the database I gathered on Palestinian NGOs (890 institutions) includes about 50 NGOs active in cause-oriented organizations or broad advocacy activities (a little less than 5 percent of the total NGOs in Palestine). Activities range from legal protection, human rights protection and awareness-raising, civic education and democratization information, peace promotion activities, as well as a few research centres (dealing with advocacy). They were mostly founded after 1992, reinforcing the view that they are recent creations only (Challand 2009: 68). Nakhleh's work on the politics of aid given to Palestinian CSOs (1989; 2004) also shed interesting historical light on the gradual increase of money given to Palestinian civil society from the 1980s to the 2000s.

On the Israeli side, peace organizations can be placed in three difference phases (Chazan 2005). The first type of peace activism started in the 1970s characterized by voluntarism and personal initiatives to break the deadlock (such as the personal initiative of Uri Avnery trying to speak to the PLO in Lebanon). With the Oslo years, there started a second phase of gradual professionalization, which built on the contact that had been patiently built in the first phase. This phase is characterized by the NGOization of civil society activism and the emergence of so-called transitional groups like the people-to-people institutions. The third phase, in this depiction, started with the trauma of the second intifada and by the fact that "Palestinians themselves pulled the rug under the feet of Israelis" as Israeli peace activists often complained. The feeling of betrayal by Palestinians is widespread by Israelis justifying a trend of moving back to unilateral forms of peace activism.[23]

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[22] Adapted from MAS (2001) and taken from Challand (2009: 69)
[23] Interview with Janet Aviad, Founding member and activist, Peace Now, Jerusalem, 3 May 2009.

Through the data collected for this report, I wanted to check how much change took place in the advocacy sector during these years. Many new CSOs emerged on the scene. I therefore surveyed the organizations which are members of the Peres Center-led Palestinian Israeli NGO Forum (see below). Out of its 99 members, I searched the founding year for half of them. The result (Table 2) confirms that there is a great level of turnover in the formation of CSOs active in conflict transformation and that many peace organizations are only recent constructs.

Table 2: Years of foundation of conflict-transformation CSOs members of the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum (PIPNF)[24]

Period of foundation	N. of Israeli CSOs established	N. of Palestinian CSOs established
Second Intifada (2001-...)	5	5
Oslo years (1994-2000)	4	1
First Intifada	1	2
Pre-1987	3	2
Total	13	10

A final overview in terms of "historical depth" of CSOs comes from a brief analysis of the member organizations of Ittijah, the Union of Arab Community Based Associations, an umbrella organization lobbying for the advancement of Arab CSOs inside Israel and based in Haifa (Table 3).[25] Here again, one can see that the Oslo years kick-started the creation of many CSOs but that many more organizations have been created during the years of the second Intifada.

Table 3: Years of foundation of members of Ittijah[26]

Period of foundation	Number of CSOs established
1976-1987	8
1987-1993]	11
1993-2000	27
2001-...	17
Total	63
Average foundation year (oldest 1976)	1996

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[24] Table compiled by the author from information taken from PIPNF website at http://www.peacengo.org/ (accessed June 2009). The sample is built on 49 CSOs only, since many CSOs did not include establishment years on their website and are hence missing in this short overview.

[25] Interview with Ameer Makhoul, General Director, Ittijah, Haifa, 5 May 2009.

[26] See http://www.ittijah.org/?intLanguage=3&chrSystem=members&intPMenu=293&intMenu=293. Data in part collected during the interview and in part drawn from the institution's website (in Arabic).

The 16 interviews carried out for this report (9 Palestinian CSOs, 7 Israeli CSOs, and 2 with EU officials) took place between 2-8 May 2009 (See Annex I for an overview of these CSOs). Interviews were done in English, with one interview in Arabic (UCS, Jerusalem). Most interviews were recorded after having obtained informed consent and thorough explanations about the purpose of the report and the limited use of these recordings. Fieldwork was originally planned for 8-21 Jan. 2009, but due to the military operations in Gaza and the volatile situation in the West Bank, it was postponed. Previous experience of interviews in the region in such tense moments proved that it was at best useless to do interviews (people do not really concentrate on your questions but comment on the ongoing operations) and at worst potentially ethically damaging to the wider scientific community since doing interviews on peace-building in such circumstances would be an insult to the civilian populations suffering from ongoing attacks.

4.2. CSO Activities

The activities of CSOs in Israel and Palestine are split in direct and indirect actions on the conflict. The most obvious cases of direct action are (in some cases joint) activities confronting openly the question of the occupation and trying to force changes of public opinion on this crucial aspect of the conflict. Throughout the last three decades of peace activism, there have been different themes that have brought peace activists to demonstrate around the bridging activism of women against the occupation (from the "Women in Black" to "Black Laundry" and gays and lesbians activists), solidarity peace coexistence movements ("Neve Shalom - Wahat al Salam Village", "Ta'ayoush"), or recently activism against the wall/security fence ("Anarchists against the Wall").

More specific to Israel, one should list here the activities of various peacenik movements, calling for Israeli youth either not to serve at all in the Israeli Army (e.g. "New Outloook"), to refuse to serve in the violent context of the occupation (e.g."Yesh Gvul") (Dloomy 2005), or to bring to the fore testimonies of reprehensible behaviour and action performed by soldiers in the oPt in order to expose the structural rather than ad hoc vices of the occupation (e.g. "Breaking the Silence"). There are also numerous organizations lobbying at transforming the conflict be it towards a peaceful and just resolution ("Peace Now", "Gush Shalom") or towards an even more securitized understanding of the conflict, leading to even more unilateralism on the Israeli side and possibly also fuelling the conflict (various think tanks and university institutes could be named here) (Brown et al. 2008).

On the Palestinian side, the vast majority of NGOs active either in advocacy or in service-provision run activities and programmes in direct relation to the conflict, for two main reasons, one historical and the other structural. First as the brief history of Palestinian civil society above suggested, many organizations have been created because of the occupation and of Israeli policies of de-development. In other words, they have their *raison d'être* in fighting the occupation, closure, de-development and their manifold consequences. Second, because of the neo-patrimonial nature of the quasi-State in Palestine and because of the huge amount of aid disbursed for civil society, many NGOs emerged out of opportunism because of the conflict and 'have made hay while the sun was shining'.[27] Le More (2008) rightly points to 'money wasted' by donors trying to compensate for their 'political guilt' with regard to Israel (and the Jewish extermination during World War II). Only a tiny fraction of Palestinian CSOs consciously refuse to link their work to the conflict or even to the occupation. According to one person interviewed, the over-concentration over themes of the national struggle is detrimental to the quality of civil society and of Palestinian leadership.[28] To this rather rare case, one should add professional CSOs working on very specific or technical themes that are not related to the conflict. Even charitable organizations or smaller CSOs whose work has been on the rise in recent years (Challand 2008a) work in one way or another on the conflict, closure, or lack of mobility. Because the level of poverty has increased tremendously during the second intifada and because almost everyone in the oPt has had her or his life affected by the occupation and military escalation, people have had to tap into local resources to face extremely dire circumstances (Bocco el. al. 2003; Malki 2001).

If reflecting in terms of adversarial/non-adversarial actions of CSOs, again, the vast majority of Palestinian organizations work through adversarial means, since they want to disclose the nature of the conflict and relate it to occupation and decades-long Israeli politics of dispossession of land (through settlements) and of identity (e.g. by stripping Eastern Jerusalem citizens of their residence permits). A few years ago, during the auditions about the security barrier at the International Court of Justice, Palestinian CSOs created a unified forum to present further evidence to the Court about the negative implications both of the route of the barrier and of its nature. Other examples of adversarial actions by Palestinian CSOs are the many demonstrations, strikes and petitions

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[27] This is a quote by the then Board Member of the Palestinian General Union of Charitable Organizations criticizing professional NGOs for their opportunism and propensity to bandwagon where money is made available by donors. See Challand (2009: 147).

Quite ironically, when Hamas won the parliamentary elections in 2006, Fatah intellectuals who had always been very critical of civil society during the Oslo years because, in their view, it was important to build a state first and then only civil society (Abu Saif 2005), discovered the virtues, benefits of (and probably also the economic advantages of speaking) the language civil society.

[28] Interview with Rami Nasrallah, Head of the Board of Directors, International Peace and Cooperation Center, East Jerusalem. May 2009.

organized locally (at times with the help of the internationals present in the oPt), internationally (marches of solidarity, etc) or virtually through internet. As these two sets of examples show, such activities can be both the fruit of top-level professional advocacy organizations and of mid-level to grassroots social activism. There are few examples of non-adversarial Palestinian civil society activities: organizations active in non-violent communication (e.g. "MEND") or in intra-communal reconciliation (e.g. "Wi'am") typically work on non-coercive methods of discussions (although one could also see these activities as changing the nature of the conflict by changing mentalities).

In Israel as well, both approaches are found. Many CSOs work through adversarial means through public mobilization to state the basic truth that the occupation is the mother of all troubles. Professional human rights organizations, though careful in not entrapping themselves in predefined political positions on the conflict or on preferred negotiations strategies,[29] also work on monitoring the costs of the conflicts, but only few work publicly through the "naming and shaming" strategy. A recent initiative using such strategy has been launched by the "Coalition of Women for Peace" (a forum 'bringing together independent women and ten feminist peace organizations who work relentlessly for peace and justice'[30] created in 2000) who monitors the economic dimension of settlement expansion.[31] In this web-observatory (www.whoprofits.org), this activists' network provides the public in Israel and internationally with accurate information about business interests invested in maintaining and even fuelling the occupation. This is a typical example of the name and shame strategy which is at the very heart of monitoring corporate governance.[32]

Finally both on the Israeli and Palestinian sides, CSOs work on a vast array of activities operating on the causes and symptoms of the conflict. One interesting and recent example is an Israeli Jewish NGO ("Zochrot") whose main aim is to teach the Israeli public about the 1948 *nakba* and show the historical roots of the conflicts. Many other CSOs work on confronting prejudices and stereotypes or documenting the impacts of the occupation. By contrast, many organizations work on relief and rehabilitation, trauma and reconciliation, all of which are instead symptoms of the conflict.

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[29] Interview with Tania Hary, Gisha, Tel Aviv. 4 May 2009.
[30] See http://coalitionofwomen.org/home/english
[31] Interview with Inna Michalin and Vera Reider, Coalition of Women for Peace, Tel Aviv, 4 May 2009. See also www.whoprofits.org (accessed 15 June 2009).
[32] Gush Shalom, another prominent peacenik NGO in Israel, also monitors some of the problematic funding provided to settlers by US-based Jewish charities. See for example, it recently called on the National Lawyers' Guild in the US to act against American organizations supporting Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories and get the tax authorities to remove the tax exempt status presently given to donations to the settlers. See http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/events/1256566250 (Accessed 27 October 2009).

Arguably, many of these dichotomies (direct/indirect bearing on the conflict, adversarial/non-adversarial, and causes/symptoms) are at best blurred. Indeed one could argue that an organization monitoring human rights violations both confronts the reality of the occupation (direct bearing) and tries to do awareness raising amongst the local population (indirect and non-adversarial approach). Clearly this work is about discussing the symptoms of the conflict, but at the same time tries to address the very cause of the conflict by showing its negative effects.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, another dichotomy may more accurately capture the activities of CSOs, based on two opposing yet not mutually exclusive paradigms. On the one hand, the **contact paradigm** argues that conflict transformation can occur through exchanges or discussions between people. Through interaction, a feeling of trust is built onto which a gradual rapprochement between conflicting societies can take place. People-to-people actions are a prime embodiment of this approach. On the other hand, the **cognitive paradigm** is based on the idea that it is the gradual exchanges and possibly even *recognition* of conflicting ideas, narratives but also of emotions that makes reconciliation possible between conflicting societies. This cognitive dimension can also be part of the people-to-people activities, but what distinguishes it from the contact paradigm is that the cognitive dimension of exchanges allows *transgressing* fixed senses of (national) identities and lead to a new sense of supra-national identity. This is what German sociologist Giesen called the paradigm 'from triumph to trauma' (Giesen 2004): in this line of reasoning (that emerged in the context of the debates about the possible existence of a distinct European identity), the traditional sense of national identification to triumphant events (national upheavals, victorious wars, or founding myths framed within the framework of methodological nationalism) is substituted, or complemented, by a recognition of the centrality of collective traumas (World War II, Holocaust, etc.). Only through this recognition of traumas (one's own trauma but also the suffering of Others) can formerly conflicting societies build new bridges and a dialectical sense of identity politics can emerge. In other words, the cognitive paradigm entails a queering strategy, which makes different senses of belongingness possible and coexistent (Yuval-Davis 2008).

In developing the cognitive paradigm, one should take into consideration as much as possible not only the definition of the conflict but also the emotional/traumatic experience. The more cognitive activities are open and mutually inclusive about the suffering of both parties are cognitive activities, the more likely are they to succeed. In normative terms, one could say that a mutual discussion on the cognitive dimensions of the conflict (in our case, acknowledging the asymmetric containment characterizing the conflict) is a necessary condition for the possible success of the contact

paradigm. If not, contact is easily void of significance. Hence, donors should work in making the cognitive dimension of the conflict part of the agenda of civil society, including in their promotion of people-to-people contacts. Certainly contact and cognitive approaches must go hand in hand, as evolution in terms of cognition of the conflict cannot happen without contact between the sides.

To give concrete examples of how the two paradigms were instead divorced from one another in practice and upon inducement by donor policies one can quote the (in)famous "people-to-people" activities, that mushroomed to become veritable businesses during the Oslo years but which collapsed first in the oPt from 1998 onwards and then in Israel in 2001 with the beginning of the second intifada.[33] Yet this approach still exists and is currently undergoing revival. One flagship example of this is the powerful "Peres Center for Peace", which runs many people-to-people activities, with children from both sides playing soccer together, or a more sector-based approaches of business-to-business activities bringing Israelis and Palestinians together. It also coordinates the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum (PIPNF) mentioned above, which promotes peace through cross-border cooperation and works on building 'a joint infrastructure for Palestinian and Israeli cooperative efforts at the civil society level'.[34] Several Palestinian NGOs are dedicated to this approach, either internally in the oPt or with Israelis (MEND, Centre for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, etc.). A last interesting feature of this people-to-people strand is that its original institutional impetus stemmed directly from eminent political figures involved in the Oslo Process and who are now both Presidents of their respective countries. The Peres Center is named after and was founded by Shimon Peres (it is now run by Ron Pundak, a former assistant of Peres, in theory independent from Shimon Peres, but in practice all acknowledge that he still is the inspirational figure of the institution). In the oPT instead the first organization adopting this approach during the Oslo years was the "Palestinian Center for Peace, People-to-people" based in Ramallah, founded and directed for the first six years by Mahmoud Abbas, alias Abu Mazen. There is therefore a genuine elitist taste to these activities, which may thus be viewed not only under a social constructivist light but also as an example of *Realpolitik* to create new channels of political (and economic) influence.

On the other end of the spectrum of CSOs acting on transforming cognitively the conflict, we can name different Israeli organizations working on recalling the Palestinian memory, teaching the

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[33] The title ("What went wrong ?") of the special issue of the *Palestine-Israel Journal* dedicated to people-to-people" speaks for itself (Palestine Israel Journal 2005).

[34] Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum Delegation to Brussels, March 17th to 19th 2009 Visit Summary. Document obtained at the Peres Center for Peace, interview with Yale Patir, Assistant to the Dir. General, Tel Aviv, May 4, 2009.

Nakba in Israeli schools and organizing visits of destroyed Palestinian villages during the independence war ("Zochrot"), joint circles of families who have lost a member in the conflict and who confront their trauma together ("Circle of Bereaved Parents"), or mental health professionals working on a form of group therapy amongst themselves in order to replicate possibly at a later stage the same approach to lay people on both sides of the wall ("Psychoactive"). In Israel, there are other organizations such as "The Other Voice" which, in one activity that was carried out while doing fieldwork, invited supporters to join a day of action to erase racist graffiti against Arabs that flourish on Israeli walls. The battle for the mind ranges also across the world-wide-web with an Israeli organization monitoring international and local NGOs active in the Territories ("NGO Monitor") in search of international funding for "terrorist" or "anti-Semitic" organizations, or on the Palestinian side with many sites bringing witnesses and images about the cruelty of the occupation.

In other words, the battle of CSOs active on the cognitive side of conflict transformation ranges from rather superficial efforts (erasing the graffiti will not alter the nature of the conflict, yet an important message is sent through such activities) to tackle very profound and emotional issues such as overcoming the trauma occurred because of the death of a family member.[35] That the potential of the cognitive agenda is immense is evident from the law that Lieberman's party Israel Beitenu is currently trying to pass in the Knesset (and whose first reading took place in June 2009) – the so-called "Nakba Law" (a superb example of paradoxical injunction) –, which would forbid the celebration of the *nakba* inside Israel.[36] Increased pressure (at times even physical violence) has also been exerted against peace organizations, or refusnik organizations such as "'New Profile" (which gives advices to Israeli youth to dodge the military draft) by raiding the houses of militants in order to confiscate their computers or by beating Jewish feminists in a Tel Aviv demonstration in April 2009.[37] A last proof that the cognitive, symbolic, or emotional dimension of conflict transformation is something to be seriously considered stems from the criticism levelled by many activists (Palestinians in particular, but also from the Israeli side) against the Peres Center for Peace, which has just built its new flashy HQ on the fringes of the mixed city of Jaffa (something politically correct or even trendy nowadays). The problem with this construction is that it is built in part on the old Muslim cemetery of Jaffa, creating on outcry in the Palestinian community and

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[35] There are many examples of activities to overcome trauma at the individual level, some of which are supported by CSOs. Of interest are the example of non-verbal communication (Rosenberg 2004) or of Buddhist methods of dialogue and reconciliation (Nhat Hanh 2004)

[36] For a strong reaction against this law by one of the CSOs active in conflict transformation, see http://www.nif.org/issue-areas/stories/nakba-bill-threatens-freedom.html

[37] Interviews with Israeli CSOs, May 2009. See also http://jewishpeacenews.blogspot.com/2009/07/rela-mazali-criminal-investigation-of.html (accessed 20 July 2009).

bearing witness to a crass lack of sensibility on behalf of an organization working on reconciliation.[38]

Beyond the symbolic relevance of the cognitive paradigm, there is a whole transformative dimension to some of these ideational/identity claims, in so far as it creates rich avenues for strong political claims that can be made by what are usually tiny minority groups. On the forefront of this battle are feminist organizations which have always been a vanguard in the peace movement by focusing on the gender dimension of the conflict and on the common battles of women in both societies.[39] Lately, some gay and lesbian organizations have also been very vocal against the occupation and have relayed common complaints. Questions of sexual minorities and successful litigation cases dealing with discrimination against women in Israeli courts have paved the way for human rights organizations working on asserting collective rights for the Arab minority inside Israel. Thus "Adalah", a Palestinian human rights NGO based in the mixed Israeli city of Haifa, has now won important cases in the defence of collective rights for Arabs/Palestinians of Israel over the last years.[40] All these are examples of what we could call the queering potential of litigation cases or of feminist/gay activism (Miccoli 2007, Whitaker 2009). These very marginal organizations are on the cutting edge of transgression of dualist identities (male vs female, Palestinian vs Israeli). What has been labelled 'the intersectionality of belonging' (Yuval-Davis 2008) is a way to contest the mainstream Israeli sense of citizenship. Interviews with CSOs of the Arab minority within Israel all agreed that there was some degree of convergence with feminist organizations on this issue. This type of CSO activism suggests another face of the conflict: a denial of fundamental rights for minorities and a serious problem in the democratic and all-inclusive credentials of the Jewish state. Convergence of ethnic minority rights (Arab as opposed to Jews inside Israel) with sexual minorities rights can therefore shed intersecting light on new ways to tackle the inertia of the conflict and confronts the forced dualism engendered by conflicting nationalisms.[41] Not by coincidence, many of these small CSOs also confront what Kimmerling (2008: 132) has termed the high degree of 'militarism' inside Israeli society, a feature which had been for many years a taboo

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[38] For another case of a Jewish Israeli attempt to erase the importance of another Muslim cemetery (the Mamilla Cemetery) into a "Center for Human Dignity - Museum of Tolerance" in Jerusalem, see http://www.mamillacampaign.org/ (accessed 25 April 2010).

[39] For a thorough analysis of Palestinian women' s associations inside Israel, see Marteu (2009).

[40] Interview with Rina Jabareen, International Advocacy Director, Adalah, Haifa, 5 May 2009.

[41] Zochrot, one of the organizations active on the cognitive dimension of CSOs is also using the gender tool of subversion: Zochrot means 'those (feminine) who remember'. In Hebrew the expression is awkward (but that's the purpose of the name) because the male version ("Zochrim") is much more frequent. Interview with Eitan Bronstein, Director, Zochrot, Tel Aviv, 4 May 2009.

in Israeli public debates, and which might limit the impact of CSO activism and particularly the challenge that CSOs can put forward about the cognitive dimension of the conflict.[42]

4.3. CSO Impact

On the basis of the interviews carried out for this report, it may look like all CSOs lead or at least try to contribute to peacebuilding. This is at least their more or less declared goal, although many human rights organizations prefer not to have an official position in terms of the outcome of the negotiations between Israel and Palestine in order not to jeopardize the impartiality in their work.[43]

Other in-depth studies of civil society in the region have pointed to the negative impact of CSOs on the conflict by discursively exacerbating positions and by politically calling on the use of violence. This is true both for Israeli CSOs and political parties (calling for ethnic transfer, or demonstrating for the Jewish state in the midst of Umm Al-Fahem, etc.) and for Palestinian extremist groups who still call on the destruction of Israel. Civil society, as often forgotten in normative social sciences means also "bad civil society". Brown et al (2008) offer many examples of CSOs having a direct negative impact on the conflict. Looking at the negative spiralling of violence over the last nine years, one is forced to acknowledge that there are also CSOs at play in fuelling the conflict, and this on both sides.

One controversial question is whether support for CSOs contributes or not to the holding of the conflict. Many holding activities affect, as we have seen, the material (poverty-alleviation programmes) or the psychological symptoms of conflict (mental health projects, etc.), but they somehow let Israel off the hook, and even, in the eye of some, subsidize the occupation (Anderson 2004; Patten 2009). Another question is whether peacebuilding activities may inadvertently hold or even fuel the conflict. The introduction vignette about the attack against the seat of the youth orchestra illustrates the fuelling impact that even the best intentions can have on the internal fabric of Palestinian society.

One less covered dimension of civil society impact is that it might serve another purpose than that of peacebuilding (or contribute only indirectly to it): it seems that certain peace organizations are the preferred channel for political retribution (hence the fact that the dividends of people-to-people

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[42] Militarism should not understood as a sort of permanent coup d'etat by the army, 'but rather as a *cognitive* process shared by all segments of Israeli society' (Dloomy 2005: 697, emphasis ours).
[43] Interview with Tania Hary, Gisha, Tel Aviv, 4 May 2009.

activities were reaped at least in the first years by key political actors). One can also wonder, with the notion of asymmetric containment in mind, whether the people-to-people, or business-to-business approach do not serve the purpose of establishing alternative channels of control and of cooptation. The situation of the two conflicting PNAs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip contributes to the activation of these alternative channels: rumours suggest that business channels between Palestinians of Israel and the West Bank are fully operating with the blessing of Israel (and of the international community) precisely to demonstrate that the model of "economic exchanges" with the West Bank-PNA is giving fruits also to the Palestinian population (and indeed, the impression that one gets nowadays in the street of Ramallah is that of a buzzing economic life, a bit like in the years that preceded the outbreak of the second Intifada).[44] If this interpretation is correct, then it reinforces the idea that there is a true "peace business" (Bouillon 2004) or at least, that there is a stark overlap between military-intelligence milieus in Israel and economic elites in the oPt (Lagerquist 2003), hinting therefore at the limits of effective independence of both Palestinian and Israeli civil societies (and reinforcing the asymmetric containment characterization of the conflict). Spotting CSOs speaking the "right" language that influential donors want to hear or working with multiplier NGOs which "teach" the "right" approach to smaller community-based organizations (Challand 2009: 186-9) shows, at least in theory, to increasing the civil society impact. Yet above all it illustrates the possibility and functioning of co-opting different (discursive) networks. It remains to be seen whether such measures are actually effective.

CSO impact is probably also limited in Israel because of the fact that Israel is a militarized society: Ben Eliezer has also shown, historically, how the praetorianization of party politics has 'helped to blur the distinction between military and civil in a way that would bring about the militarization of society and spread the idea of a military solution to the national problem from the narrow confines of a military unit to the whole of society' (Ben Eliezer 1998: 62). It makes it therefore even more difficult for CSOs to air criticism of the securitization of the conflict (Dloomy 2005), let alone to organize alternative social networks in which military/security people do not steer the course of civil society debates and activities in one way of the other.

4.4. CSO Effectiveness

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[44] President Shimon Peres is also a fervent advocate of the Erez model of economic development (and per extension of a Middle Eastern Free Trade Zone): industrial plants are built on the borders, manned with cheap Palestinian labour and selling products labelled as "Israeli" (in part with the EU turning a blind eye and granting preferential treatment to products originating in the oPt yet bearing Israeli certificates of origin).

The issue of effectiveness is probably the crux of all evaluations *on* CSOs, less so if one looks at the evaluation made *by* CSOs. If one follows the latter trail of appraisal, one would have a rosy picture of powerful CSOs able to mobilize large constituencies. The conflict would probably be solved, were it not for the spillover of wider regional dynamics. Surely, there are powerful undercurrents working to destroy the patient work of CSOs (and there is food for thought for those who saw so many bridges washed away by the second intifada: a peace deal was almost tangible in the summer 2000, but few weeks of rebellion and military operations destroyed the fruit of six or seven years of work and funding for CSOs and conflict transformation). Turning instead to an external appraisal of civil society effectiveness, let us look into the five determinants of civil society effectiveness spelled out in Tocci's conceptual framework (2008).

First, there is the question of the rootedness and legitimacy of CSOs in society. For Israeli CSOs, it seems that the factionalization and the rather high degree of personalization of the various peace movements hinder broad legitimacy of the civil society sector since organizations have difficulties in penetrating the many militarized segments of Israeli society and in mobilizing beyond personal networks.[45] Many interviewees quoted their capacity of mobilizing tens of thousands of protesters at certain times, but one person also acknowledged that at present, the peace camp in Israel probably would not be able to mobilize more than a few thousands supporters.[46] The difference in the Israeli case is probably that there are nonetheless a series of very dynamic associations, albeit tiny in size, offering an alternative framing to the conflict with interesting work done, again, by feminists organizations, but not only. "Achuti" ('My sister' in Hebrew), Coalition of Women for Peace, Russian female activists and other women associations in the Shass movement are all evidence that some of the civil society activism is genuinely grassroots. The impression that one has in the oPt is that this authentic grassroots spirit has been lost to a large extent by professional NGOs. Smaller charitable organizations (paralleling somehow the Israeli trend) seem to be expanding, but they are not working directly on conflict transformation, but rather on organizing self-help at the local level and empowering people, albeit with a different ideological equipment than professional NGOs.[47] For professional NGOs, the assessments of de-politicization (Hammami 1995), NGO-ization (Kuttab 2001), and even of de-democratization (Nabulsi 2005) speak abundantly of the high degree of uprootedness which many Palestinian CSOs (and particularly those which worked in the "peace

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[45] Some people also insisted that the peace camp in Israel might seem rather busy, but looking at who does what, one could see that much is done by the same tiny group of people.

[46] Interview with Janet Aviad, Founding member and volunteer, Peace Now, Jerusalem, 3 May 2009.

[47] Interview with Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud Barbour and Fatima el-Fitiani, President and General Manager, Union of Charitable Societies, Jerusalem, 6 May 2009. If this regional UCS counted 150 members in 2003, they have now 200 members, confirming the *nahda* (the Arabic word for renaissance or revival) of charitable organizations (Challand 2008a).

industry" during the Oslo years) are still suffering from nowadays. This has been described by some as a purely internal defeat of the Palestinian left, but there is little doubt that the politicization of aid and the professionalization of civil society has led to a sort of heteronomy of local Palestinian civil society, incapable anymore of steering profoundly their course of action and choosing the vocabulary in their work (Challand 2008b).

The second factor of civil society effectiveness is the degree of interconnectedness within the wider civil society domain. Again, CSOs often mean personal empires and possibly also big businesses. This turns CSOs into instruments of personal advancement which prevents a broad sense of interconnectedness amongst civil society. Both Israeli and Palestinian societies are rife with political factionalism (not to mention the militarization of Israeli society in general). CSOs tend to speak exclusively to their own political constituency and despite efforts made by donors to force CSOs to work in non-partisan and/or cross-sectoral manner, this has principally resulted in new forms of connections, either geographical or vertical, with multiplicator NGOs heading, often in a paternalistic manner, a pyramidal set of smaller follower organizations (Challand 2009: chapter 8). A more positive picture emerges when assessing the effectiveness of civil society relations with state institutions and the mainstream media. In Israel, few well equipped CSOs working on conflict transformation deal with the media and lobby state institutions, very often in an extremely professional manner. The Geneva Initiative (Israeli branch) does careful work with the mainstream media inside Israel, and tailors information sessions with Knesset members, their assistants, party officials and members of the Central Committees, mayors, and other key actors in ministries. It has recently started a programme targeting veto groups, with a series of conferences on the Geneva Initiative for Shass party members, Shass' women associations and also with many Russian individuals or CSOs (Galit 2008). In his careful media monitor, the director of the Geneva Initiative in Israel counted 54 articles in 2008 that spoke of the Geneva Initiative in Israel print media, a proof, according to him, that one needs to work at the professional level to foster change in public opinion[48] (the Geneva Initiative, both in Israel and Palestine, was re-launched ahead of the 2005 Gaza disengagement in order to oppose the trend of Israeli unilateralism and to finish the work on the different annexes of the 2002 and 2003 talks). The Palestinian branch of the Geneva Initiative (Palestinian Peace Coalition) is definitively less proactive than its Israeli counterpart, although it also tries to reach out to the Palestinian population,[49] even if only for those living in the West Bank.

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[48] Interview with Gadi Baltiansky, Director, Geneva Initiative, Tel Aviv, 7 May 2009.
[49] Interview with Nidal Fuqaha, General Director, Palestinian Peace Coalition – Geneva Initiative, Ramallah, 6 May 2009.

It can also be less pro-active since it resides anyway close to power and benefits therefore from direct access to the national media in the oPt.

In terms of effectiveness in reaching out the international community, one can only say that the glass can be seen as half-empty or half-full. Many CSOs have developed their own networks of international correspondents and have professionalized the diffusion of news feed. Whether these actually influence international public opinion is probably a matter of subjective opinion. One can also wonder whether this type of information is not simply a form of preaching to the converted since people rarely "change allegiance" in their source of information (but what matters, eventually, is to fill the space of media coverage). The fact that there is still a small portion of aid given to solidarity and political organizations hints nonetheless at the effectiveness of certain CSOs to mobilize private resources and support abroad, although these organizations tend not to be the ones funded by the EU, which prefers, instead, politically neutral organizations.[50]

Finally, and this should have become clear from the different introductions given above (conceptual definition of the conflict, and brief historical introduction of CSOs activities) that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is one of a kind where so many factors come and blur the picture. The conflict is somehow part of European history, political guilt and political revenge are all at play. The further problematic of the war on terror comes as another important intervening variable, interweaving this conflict to the Greater Western Asia Crisis (Halliday 2005). In other words many time-contingent factors make it difficult to assess the effectiveness of CSOs active in conflict transformation (and scholars of the region know that it is like aiming at a moving target, with all the pitfalls this can have).

5. Back to the EU and conflict transformation through civil society

5.1. EU Impact

Since at least the 1980 Venice Declaration, peace between Israel and Palestine has been a cardinal objective of the EC/EU. But is lack of internal cohesion and its inherent difficulty in turning an overall objective into an effective common foreign policy is a well-known problem of the EU. The

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[50] With all the consequences that it had during the Oslo years for CSOs close to Palestinian parties who opposed the peace process. Thus NGOs close to the PFLP and DFLP lost a lot of money in the first years of the Oslo years, demonstrating that donors were keener on buttressing the peace process even if came at the expenses of sound development.

Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a perfect example of this and the fact that the US was the main political sponsor of the Oslo peace process did not give a chance for the EU to be in the driver's seat. The Camp David negotiations, the Road Map, or the Annapolis conference were all initiatives where the US took the lead, despite the fact that the EU now spends much more than the US in the region.

The EU certainly has a different approach and probably displays greater sensibility regarding the dossier (Some EU actors have always kept a channel of discussion, even if unofficial, with Hamas, while the US simply refuses to take the Islamist organization as a dialogue partner, even if democratically elected). The EU provides funding for the oPt that no-one else does in terms of quantity (with the Temporary International Mechanism and the PEGASE funding mechanism to bypass the Hamas-run PNA since 2006). In terms of civil society, the EU provides core-funding on a global level for CSOs working on conflict resolution, as well as specific funding for CSOs in the Middle East and in Israel-Palestine in particular. EU policies entail therefore a bottom-up dimension. Many people interviewed, Israeli and Palestinians alike, appreciate the various consultation forums and discussion platforms that the EU organizes in general,[51] although some of them doubt that CSOs' suggestions actually feed (at least substantially) into EU policy-making. One or two success stories of civil society suggestions feeding official EU policy seem however to exist.[52] But the overpowering reputation of the EU remains that of a heavily bureaucratic institution. The difficulties in understanding the jargons of different calls for proposals as well as the never-ending reporting duties for CSOs which benefit from EU funding is a also a serious problem and hampers the chances of EU projects to make a significant impact on the ground. The EU is an important actor for Palestinian CSOs in particular (this explains also why many CSOs commission reports on the perception of the EU inside the oPt) but many remain disillusioned by the gap between EU rhetoric and its acts and facts on the ground.

The Commission Delegations are certainly aware of such criticism. They also acknowledge that more aid could be given to civil society and that there was a need to 'go back to the drawing board

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[51] Thus recently, the European Commission actively sought civil society's input in its broader evaluation of the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2009. See the "Invitation to contribute information" (published online on 14 October 2009) and available at
http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/consultation/consultation2009_en.pdf (accessed 28 October 2009).
[52] For example the Israeli branch of the Geneva Initiative suggested a few years ago to work on veto groups inside Israel. Although this proposal was not funded by the EU in 2007, the idea re-emerged in a recent call for proposals. Interview with Gadi Baltiansky, Director, Geneva Initiative, Tel Aviv, 7 May 2009.

[…in order] to recreate an environment in which the peace process could work again'.[53] It is also clear that the chances that CSOs actually deeply transform the conflict is close to zero since what is needed is a political solution (but again, this is an item on which the EU does not do much as such, since initiatives are rather left to single member states). Both Delegations in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem lamented the fact that politicians of the member states seem to content themselves with the same old recipe of people-to-people activities or of alleviating the suffering of a few cases (of Palestinians who get access to a scholarship abroad) instead of working on finding a collective approach tackling the overall dynamics of the conflict.[54] The latest call for proposals in the Partnership for Peace budget line dedicated to the oPt was precisely criticized by certain actors (Palestinian and international alike) because it was conservative in the means chosen: joint activities, focus on non-violent actions, trainings, etc., which are all part of the shopping list of the Oslo years' people-to-people activities. This further alienates the chances for Palestinian and Israeli CSOs to suggest news ways of approaching conflict and contributes to the overall impression that the EU is willing to disburse funds regardless of their actual impact on the ground.[55]

The EU's decision to line up with former US President George W. Bush's policy to put Hamas on the terrorist list and then of Condoleezza Rice not to give support to the Palestinian national unity government brokered in March 2007 probably accelerated the downwards spiral of confrontation and violence between the two main political factions in Palestine. With Fatah clinging to the remains of its power through the presidency (which formally expired on 9 Jan 2009) and more specifically to the massive rents that aid represent, it is difficult to imagine a way out of the current standoff between Hamas and Fatah. The EU should therefore explore more systematically the possibility to function as real political broker since it is already the most powerful actor in terms of funds pledged and disbursed to the oPt. Similarly, it should also use its close vicinity, both geographically and economically, with Israel to put pressure on the Israeli government to accept a negotiated solution leading to the creation of a viable Palestinian state. The pending decision on the upgrading of the formal ties between the EU and Israel is a golden opportunity that the EU has to exploit wisely.

5.2. Explaining EU activities in the civil society domain

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[53] Interview with Christian Berger, Head of Delegation, EU Delegation in the West Bank and Gaza, Jerusalem 7 May 2009.
[54] Interview with Jonathan Claridge, Head of Political and Trade Section, EU Delegation in Tel Aviv, 8 May 2009.
[55] Interview with Issam Aruri, PNGO, Member, Ramallah, 2 May 2009.

The EU's work on CSOs is noteworthy for its quantity. It has nonetheless three problems when it comes to quality. First it insists mostly on mid- to top-level CSOs. Whether this is intended is not clear, as some of the funding offered in different calls for proposal can be small amounts suited to smaller organizations. Yet the application intricacies and reporting requirements are so high that only experienced and fully institutionalized CSOs eventually get access to funding. This contributes further to a broader trend towards a managerial approach of aid for civil society, which is detrimental to the variety, dynamism and rootedness of local civil societies (Challand 2008b).

The second problem is that the EU is rather inconsistent, or put more mildly, the Union does not show a clear policy or preferred strategy in terms of conflict transformation. Over the last five years, the EU's pendulum of civil society support swings between the rather conservative approaches of the Oslo years (e.g. the people-the-people programmes) to cutting-edge projects (adopting innovative approaches dealing with the cognitive dimension of the conflict (e.g. Mosawa, whoprofits.org). However, it is clear that the EU has some preferred partners and approaches, as evidenced by the resurgence of people-to-people activities and the recent resurrection of the Geneva Initiative, which partly owe to the Union's financial support. Overall, the EU funds also innovative projects but not in a very consistent manner. There are also off-the record complaints that the EU has censored certain institutions which used to receive EU funding through the Tel Aviv office because of the fact that these programmes were too critical of Israel. Reversely, the EU seems to use local CSOs to air criticism against Israel, all of which hints further to the lack of a clear line that the EU would be ready to defend in the face of a backlash of the Israeli government.

The third problem relates to the three hypotheses discussed in the orientation paper (Tocci 2008). Overall, the interviewed people were mostly in favour of the Gramscian critique, though some observers also thought that there was ground to argue for both the liberal and the disembedded civil society hypotheses. The problem with all three hypotheses is that the EU is only sending top-down inputs and four CSOs interviewed lamented the fact that there was not a bottom-up arrow linking mid-range organizations and the EU. The point is not just a graphic one, but a substantial one in the sense that CSO actors perceive that there is a true dialogue only between the EU and state-level actors. Therefore, the EU reinforces the impression that state elites (both in Israel and Palestine) distrust mid and grassroots organizations, not to mention the fact that Palestinian Diaspora groups are conspicuously absent in EU funded civil society activities. Others commented on the fact that grassroots organizations are nicely represented as the basis of the pyramid, but in terms of funding, the number of organizations and their actual rootedness is rather low. A more realistic depiction of

civil society in the region would rather have Lederach's pyramid standing on its tip. This also hints at a serious lack of rootedness of local CSOs with the local population. To the extent to which this has also been the product of EU funding, then the disembedded civil society hypothesis may best depict the situation on the ground.

Certain observers wonder whether the EU has not been co-opted into Israeli strategies of chaos management, namely the idea that violence between the two sides are largely instrumentalized and guided so as to create the "good" conditions for Israel to dictate the course and terms of (non-) negotiations, and/or pushing for its own networks of "peace NGOs" with little rooting in their respective society (a view which would reinforce the realist critique). The fact that the EU has been following US policies of non-engagement with Hamas seems also to paralyze Palestinian CSOs in their effort to engage with such a central actor in Palestinian politics because the EU could retaliate by cutting funding to CSOs willing to speak with Hamas. Instead, it is safer for the EU to engage into the "sexiness" and the visual graphics of "people-to-people" projects which fail however to alter the conflict dynamics.

We will conclude this report on the complex interplay between the EU and civil society in Israel-Palestine by referring briefly the Commission's 2009 Progress reports on the implementation of the ENP. While the report for Palestine laments the internal divisions between Fatah and Hamas, the report hardly mentions civil society. It does so only in relation to some initiatives with the Ministries of Women Affairs and of Youth. If it talks about a potential role of CSOs to tackle the problem of corruption in the oPt, it does not mention anything on the role of CSOs in conflict transformation.[56] Whereas one could expect stronger recommendations for CSOs in the oPt, it is actually in the Israel Progress Report that the EU uses a rather harsh tone towards Israel for not tackling seriously the injustices against the Arab minority, which is mentioned in many places of the report.[57] It even clearly states that: 'Overall, the promotion and protection of the Israeli Arab minority remained unsatisfactory during the reporting period, particularly in areas like land allocation, housing, planning, economic development, investment in social infrastructure and justice.' (Commission 2009: 3). Another example of strong rhetoric followed by inconsistent action may well be the eventual upgrading of EU ties with Israel.

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[56] See Commission (2009) Progress Report, Palestinian Authority,
http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/progress2009/sec09_519_en.pdf.
[57] See Commission (2009) Progress Report, Israel, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/progress2009/sec09_516_en.pdf.

Annex: list of interviews

	Name of the CSO	Person met	Function	Place	Date	Field of activity
1	Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy	Nasseef Mu'allim	Director	Ramallah	2 May 2009	Training and education
2	Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO)	Issam Aruri	Board Member	Ramallah	2 May 2009	Activism
3	Peace Now	Janet Aviad	Founding member and Volunteer	Jerusalem	3 May 2009	Activism
4	Zochrot	Eitan Bronstein	Director	Tel Aviv	4 May 2009	Communication
5	Peres Centre for Peace	Yael Patir	Assistant to Dir. General	Tel Aviv	4 May 2009	Professionals/Economic
6	Gisha	Tania Hary	Dir. of International Relations	Tel Aviv	4 May 2009	Professionals in resolution
7	Coalition of Women for Peace	Inna Michaelin and Vera Reider	Fundraiser and Activist	Tel Aviv	4 May 2009	Private citizens
8	Ittijah	Ameer Makhoul	General Diector	Haifa	5 May 2009	Professionals
9	Musawah	Ja'fat Farah	Director	Haifa	5 May 2009	Activism
10	Adalah	Rina Jabareen	International Advocacy Director	Haifa	5 May 2009	Activism
11	Union of Charitable Societies(Jerusalem Branch)	Abdel-Rahim Mahmoud Barbar	Vice-President	East Jerusalem	6 May 2009	Religious
12	International Peace and Cooperation Center	Rami Nasrallah	Head Board of Directors	East Jerusalem	6 May 2009	Training
13	New Israeli Fund	Naomi Chazan	President	Jerusalem	6 May 2009	Funding
14	Ramallah Centre for Human Rights Studies	Iyaad Barghouthi	Director	Ramallah	6 May 2009	Training/Religion
15	Palestinian Peace Coalation - Geneva Initiative	Nidal Fuqaha	Executive Director	Ramallah	6 May 2009	Professionals in resolution
16	H.L. Education for Peace Ltd. The Geneva Initiative	Gadi Baltiansky	Director General,	Tel Aviv	7 May 2009	Communication
17	EU WBG Delegation	Christian Berger	Head of Delegation	Jerusalem	7 May 2009	Donor
18	EU Delegation to the State of Israel	Jonathan Claridge	Head Pol. And Trade Section	Ramat Gan	8 May 2009	Donor

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