



BRILL

Understanding the Rationales of Donor-Funded NGOs in Palestine

Author(s): LINA SULEIMAN

Source: *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, MARCH 2021, Vol. 14, No. 1 (MARCH 2021), pp. 51-90

Published by: Brill

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48649377>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48649377?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Brill is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Contemporary Arab Affairs*

Understanding the Rationales of Donor-Funded NGOs in Palestine

A Game Theory Approach

ABSTRACT This article uses game theory as a conceptual approach to gain a holistic understanding of the aid policy of donors supporting Palestinian nongovernmental organizations (PNGOs). It asks how the work of donor-funded PNGOs has impacted Palestinian societal common good in general, and who are the winners and losers as a result of their work. Quantitative methods are used to capture the perceptions of the main actors in relation to the societal outcomes of PNGOs' work and actors' political and socio-economic payoffs in the occupied West Bank. Most of the findings align with much of the critical research on the negative societal outcomes of the aid policy to the NGO sector, and corroborate that the Palestinian public is a major loser in political terms and the least beneficiary in socio-economic terms. **KEYWORDS** Palestinian NGOs, international aid, game theory, social capital, corruption, societal common good

INTRODUCTION

From a historical perspective, civil society is understood as an embedded concept in a structured web of other concepts that has created the dominant Anglo-American citizenship theory (Somers 1995). According to the theory, civil society is a space where an envisioned society of uncontested popular sovereignty, voluntarily driven, self-organized, autonomous and free from the control of political authority constructs common public opinion according to local societal norms to decide on the general will and common good, and thus the rule of law for a given society (Somers 1995). The argument that civil society is a precondition for a transition to democracy perpetuates until today.

Contemporary academic and policy discourses often assume that civil society promotes norms of interpersonal and general trust as well as cooperation and plays a key role in advancing development and democracy

Contemporary Arab Affairs, Vol. 14, Number 1, pp. 51–90. ISSN: 1755-0912, Electronic ISSN: 1755-0920 © 2021 by the Centre for Arab Unity Studies. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, <https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/caa.2021.14.1.51>

(Challand 2009; Putnam 1993). It works for the societal common good by building up a culture of tolerance, pluralism, shared political identity, values that advance social development and justice, and fulfils the promises of democratic rule (Muslih 1995; Norton 1995; Rothstein 2011; Somers 1995).

Previous studies do agree that norms of interpersonal societal trust stimulate cooperative interactions in society and build long-term interest in common interests as opposed to social norms of corruption (Hooghe and Stolle 2003; Jamal 2007; Ostrom 1990; Putnam 1993; Rothstein 2005, 2011). Corruption describes common practices of the abuse of entrusted authority, prioritizing and legitimizing individual interests for private gain. Yet how norms of societal trust and willingness to cooperate for the public common good are established is a contested issue. Putnam (1993) pioneered the idea that civil society, in the form of vibrant societal associations and networks, can play a key role in this process and promote societal norms of trust that strengthen democratic benchmarks in a society. Other studies stress that universal and trustworthy political institutions, based on scrutinized public structures and democratic values that serve society as a collective entity, foster norms of trust and societal cooperation (Carothers 2000; Hooghe and Stolle 2003; Jamal 2007; Rothstein 2005, 2011). Donors, however, downplayed the role of political institutions in creating and maintaining universal norms of interpersonal societal trust for development and democracy and supported the former view by spreading aid to civil groups in the form of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with the declared aims of resolving the long-standing societal problems of corruption, and fostering development and democracy (Harriss and Renzio 1997; Jonathan 1997).

This article focuses on the Palestinian context and is concerned with finding out if and in what way the post-Oslo Palestinian nongovernmental organization (PNGOs) sector has contributed to promoting general societal trust for the common good. Nakhleh (2012) argues that where people endure experiences of occupation and settler-colonization, the work of societal associations for the common good should be gravitated to encourage mass activity and self-organization of the people towards meeting their basic needs while engaging in resistance to occupation in a struggle for their political liberation. This article adds international aid as a specific variable that influences NGOs' work and aims to determine how the work of donor-funded PNGOs has impacted the promotion of the common good in Palestinian society, and examines who are the winners and losers of their work. In a context where,

nearly all aspects of life are impacted by the Israeli occupation and, at best, a pseudo-state structure, in the form of the Palestinian Authority (PA) exists (Hilal 2015; Turner 2017), investigating the question of whether political institutions or civil society, in the form of NGOs, promote general social trust and common good is even more complex.

With the onset of the Oslo peace negotiations, international actors simultaneously made huge investments in the Palestinian occupied territories, annually estimated as between US\$140 million and US\$200 million between 1990 and 1993, US\$65 million between 1994 and 1998, and US\$130 million between 1999 and 2008 (De Voir and Tartir 2009). These amounts do not incorporate funding channeled through international NGOs, which, if calculated, the total amount of external funding allocated to PNGOs would be almost double (De Voir and Tartir 2009). Officially, the aim of the investments was the building of a PNGO sector that would improve governance, advance development, and promote the Oslo peace process. These investments by global players—largely from the European Commission and its member states, United Nations (UN) agencies, the World Bank, and the United States (De Voir and Tartir 2009; Turner 2017)—created new frameworks for civil society actions that have influenced Palestinian society. This article is concerned with the work and societal outcomes of donor-funded Palestinian civil society infrastructure and, more specifically, the work of PNGOs that have officially stated their aim of simultaneously promoting societal common good in terms of peace, development, democracy, and state-building.

Despite the increasing amount of critical research that questions donor-driven PNGOs' incentives, assignments, and associated societal outcomes, two research gaps have been identified that may help one to understand the unabated aid support. First, a few studies (Le More 2008; Turner 2017) have applied a meso-theoretical approach, such as game theory, to understand the complete picture of aid policy support of donors to NGOs, despite its generally assessed negative societal and political outcomes. Such an approach does not obscure the power of donors that according to their policies and ideologies define which civil society is politically correct and entitled to carry out the mission of development, democracy, and peace while excluding other social groups. Second, despite the fact that many argue that PNGOs are not responding to the grassroots and national needs (Abdel Shafi 2004; Abdo 2010; Dana 2014; Hammami 2000; Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Jad 2007; Nakhleh 2012), we know little empirically about how various societal actors

(PA institutions, PNGOs, and the Palestinian public) evaluate the economic, political, and social payoffs and outcomes of PNGOs' work. Finally, how the PNGO sector's performance and donors' aid impact societal readiness to cooperate for the common good as well as how the general social trust is affected will be empirically tested. The new empirical insights have partly been triangulated in relation to the rich amount of previous research.

A sophisticated description of game theory is beyond the scope of this article, but its main theoretical arguments and framework is delineated. Game theory assumes that cooperation or noncooperation of individuals within an institutional/rules setting is part of a rational calculus that have impact on whether they work for individual gains or for the societal common interest (Ostrom 1990; Raiffa, Richardson and Metcalfe 2002).

A game is a formal description of a strategic interaction in which several players make decisions that potentially affect the interests of other players in the game (Dixit and Nalebuff 2010; Raiffa *et al.* 2002). Concepts of game theory comprise rules, players, strategies, payoffs, and outcomes (Shubik 1982; Turocy and von Stengel 2002). Game theory takes a jointly normative approach to how ideal decisions should be made, assuming that players are rational in a manner that maximizes the player's own utility (Raiffa *et al.* 2002). The theory has two branches: cooperative and noncooperative. The cooperative side of the theory describes an extensive array of models and solutions through a collective agreement in which gains and long-term interests are maintained when trust is built (Ostrom 1990; Raiffa *et al.* 2002; Turocy and von Stengel 2002). In contrast, noncooperative game theory is concerned with the analysis of strategic choices and model players making decisions for their own interests. Noncooperative and defective practices dictate social interaction in which trust is lacking (Raiffa *et al.* 2002). However, cooperation can, and often does, arise in noncooperative models of games, only when players find it in their own best interest and can benefit in some way (Turocy and von Stengel 2002).

In each society, individual norms of behavior and different institutional/rules settings and dynamics produce different equilibriums or social norms of path-dependency character (Rothstein 2005, 2011). However, this equilibrium is not fixed but dynamic and can be influenced when new institutional variable(s) are introduced as peoples' choices change accordingly. New rules may maintain the social equilibrium of existing norms or induce a shift from common norms of cooperative to noncooperative patterns, or vice versa. Experience shows that radical and well-designed collective institutions

inducing change towards generated common norms of social trust and cooperative modes for the welfare of a society can emerge from civil society in the form of social movements (Somers 1995) or can be designed by a genuinely reformist state (Hooghe and Stolle 2003; Jamal 2007; Rothstein 2005, 2011).

PARAPHRASING THE AID POLICY AS A GAME

In this section previous research results on civil society in the Palestinian context are reinterpreted against the backdrop of the game theory framework. It highlights the new rules of supporting PNGOs in terms of excessive funding, the power of donors to define which social groups constitute a civil society that should advance development and promote democracy and the peacebuilding process, and conditionality of funding as key to new institutional variables (Abdo 2010; Challand 2009; Sbeih 2011). New rules restructured PNGOs' incentives and their interactions with other players—donors, the PA, PNGOs, and the Palestinian public—their payoff, and created impacts on Palestinian society.

Much of the existing research describes civil society before Oslo as masses supported and voluntarily driven, based on inclusive and diversified civil associations connected to political movements and activism that worked for societal solidarity and maintaining the national liberation struggle (Abdel Shafi 2004; Challand 2009; Dana 2014, 2015a; Hammami 2000; Jamal 2013; Jesse 2011; Muslih 1995; Schulz 2012). Civil society contributed to building institutions that enabled Palestinians to support their resistance (i.e., steadfastness—*Sumud*), live on their land, and find ways to gain access to social and public goods and services under the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Abdel Shafi 2004; Abdo 2010; Hanafi and Tabar 2003). The Oslo Accords in 1993, however, became a radical political turning point that transformed the typology of civil society, its roles, and rationale, as well as the whole societal space (Hanafi 2010; Kouttab and Toaldo 2013; Zomlot 2010).

NEW RULES: THE AID POLICY AS THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN

Two years after the eruption of the first Palestinian uprising in December 1987, and when the peace negotiation process started, aid began to enter Palestinian society in accelerating magnitude with the stated aim of building peace through supporting projects and programs of civil society groups (Jad

2007). Donors provided substantial funds to civil groups in the form of NGOs (and later to the PA that came into existence in the early 1994) with the simultaneous aims of supporting development, democracy, but mainly the peacebuilding process (Challand 2008a, 2009; Dana 2015a; Hamdan 2011; Hanafi and Tabar 2004; Hilal 2010). Thereafter, a process of transforming mass-based associations and their structures and functions into foreign-funded NGOs was embarked upon and mushroomed (Dana 2015a, Hammami 1995; Hilal 2010; Jad 2007).

The PA absorbed the civil society organizations, originally affiliated with their main political party (i.e., Fatah), into their administrative apparatus and structures. The aid also offered a convenient, timely incentive and space for the originally leftist and communist factional civil society organizations (Hammami 1995, 2000) to gradually disengage themselves from political party activism and become autonomous entities (Abdel Shafi 2004; Challand 2008b, 2009; Dana 2014; Hanafi and Tabar 2004; Hilal 2010). Fundraising, rather than a sensitivity to the needs and priorities of the community, became the main preoccupation of most NGOs (Challand 2009; Hammami 2000; Hilal 2010). Tocci (2011) explains that because of the neo-patrimonial nature of the quasi-state in Palestine and the large amount of aid disbursed for civil society, many NGOs emerged out of opportunism.

Due to their political, economic, and normative power, international donors, mainly European countries, have become influential players in shaping Palestinian political terrain (Abdel Shafi 2004; Paragi 2013; Pitner 2000; Tocci 2011). To separate these organizations from politics, the main donors require funded PNGOs to maintain a neutral political position in the anti-colonial, national struggle and becoming close partners in the so-called peacebuilding process (Abdel Shafi 2004; Challand 2009; Dana 2014, 2015a; Jad 2007; Hamdan 2011; Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Nakhleh 1989). Donors, however, cannot be grouped in one category. They differ in terms of conditionality for funding and their rationales motives, objectives, and influence (Awashreh 2020; Challand 2009; Le More 2008; Tartir and Seidel 2019; Turner 2017). Meinzer (2019) notes that the German political foundations do not dictate the agenda of their partnering NGOs and are more committed to their official objectives. USAID, however, since 2002, has requested organizations sign the Anti-Terrorism Clause (ATC) in its contract arrangements with its partnering NGOs as a precondition for funding (Awashreh 2020; De Voir and Tartir 2009; Tartir and Seidel 2019;

Turner 2017). Since July 2019, the European Union (EU) has followed USAID and inserted a similar clause in contracts with organizations receiving funds. In general, to differentiate between their roles and undertakings, the “aid politburo” of the dominant players is overtly described as “the US decides, the World Bank leads, the EU pays, and the UN feeds” (Le More 2005: 995; Turner 2017: 90).

Despite differences, Western donors, to a substantial extent, converge around some key principles. They have defined which groups and individuals constitute civil society and exclude large segments of the entire civil society that do not fit their ideological selection criteria, these mainly being Islamist and traditionalist groups (Abdo 2010; Challand 2009; Sbeih 2011), which others (Abdel Rahman 2009; Challand 2008b; Durac and Cavatorta 2009; Nakhleh 1989) believe are trustworthy and popularly supported. Also, Western donors have worked for the pursuit of a general political agenda that corresponds to their own countries’ foreign policies and the promotion of neoliberal ideology and discourse (Dana 2019b; Hilal 2015; Nakhleh 2012; Pitner 2000; Tartir and Seidel 2019; Turner 2017).

RESTRUCTURING STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

Since Oslo, a new civil society has emerged that derives its legitimacy from new discourses, roles, and assignments becoming dependent on foreign funds (Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Hilal 2010; Jad 2007). The emerging PNGO sector has also become alienated from indigenous social movements, and conversely is strongly linked to donors that have working agendas, priorities, norms, and discourses based on neoliberal model ideals that transform institutional practices and settings (Challand 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2011; Dana 2015a; Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Jad 2007; Jesse 2011; Nakhleh 2012; Sbeih 2011). Many argue that discourses of empowerment, gender, participation, and individual rights replaced discourses of steadfastness, resistance, mobilization, and collective rights (e.g., Abdel Shafi 2004; Abdo 2010; Hamdan 2011; Sbeih 2011).

Whereas PNGOs’ relationships develop upwards, their relationships with the Palestinian wider public and its collective needs, popular grassroots movements, and aspirations have disconnected and thus lost both legitimacy and political empowerment (Abdel Shafi 2004; Abdo 2010; Challand 2009; Dana 2014; Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Jad 2007; Jamal 2013; Jesse 2011; Tocci 2011).

PLAYERS AND THEIR PAYOFFS

Much research argues that the aid policy has been beneficiary for donor countries in political and socio-economic terms. An aid-policy rationale can be in rendering their foreign policy objectives—whether geopolitical, commercial, or cultural—and security interests, maintaining normative domination, and infiltration of neoliberal economic ideologies and economic advantage (Abdo 2010; Challand 2009; Durac and Cavatorta 2009; Le More 2008, Nakhleh 1989). In reality, the motives for, and objectives of, foreign aid are often mixed (Le More 2008).

In political terms, the aid policy to the PA and donor-funded NGO projects is to maintain Western geopolitical interests in terms of political stability in the region and maintain the security of Israel, all of which have come under the banner of the peace process (Dana 2014, 2015b; Hanafi and Tabar 2003, Nakhleh 1989, 2004; Pitner 2000).

In socio-economic terms, under what Challand (2009) called “tied-funding”, a funding that is subjected to conditionality of using aid for procurement from specific resources where donors have become key beneficiaries. A considerable amount of aid money returns to Western capitals in the employment of their experts and using aid to procure European equipment and technical expertise (Challand 2009; Hamdan 2011; Hilal 2003).

Aid has also created a situation in which a few urban-based mega-organizations have become the greatest beneficiaries of donor funds being run by a newly emerged middle class of Palestinian elites (Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Hilal 2010; Jad 2007; Nakhleh 2012). PNGO leaders have also gained power from prestigious networking with international agencies, foreign delegates and diplomats, and the media, as well as access to resources and material benefits such as high salaries (Abdel Shafi 2004; Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Jad 2007).

Moreover, as a result of the whole package of Western donors’ interventionists’ policies that include state and peacebuilding, democracy promotion, and civil society support through the realms of governance and neoliberal economic development, a self-interested private sector emerged (Dana 2019b; Hilal 2015; Khalidi and Samour 2011; Turner 2017). The new sector, which includes communication companies, insurance agencies, and a new class of wealthy capitalists, constructed a specific set of mutual beneficiary relationships with the PA and PNGOs that play a role maintaining the cohesiveness of the PA regime and prolonging the Oslo status

quo (Dana 2019b; Haddad 2016; Hamdan 2011; Hilal 2003; Nakhleh 2012).

WHAT COMES OUT OF AIDING PNGOS?

Previous research argues that the post-Oslo aid policy to the PA and PNGOs worked on pacifying political activism and diminishing the prospects of grassroots actors (Nakhleh 2012; Tocci 2011; Turner 2017). It generated economic and normative disparities, class differentiation, political divides, and societal fragmentation, impeding social cohesion, thereby undermining the strength of societal movements needed for political struggle and maintaining popular resistance and steadfastness (Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Hilal 2003; Jamal 2013; Turner 2017). This led to mistrust, and in some cases to confrontations, between civil groups themselves (Pitner 2000), between civil groups and the PA (Hilal 2003), and between PNGOs and their constituents, all of which worked to undermine endogenous and domestic resources for activism (Abdel Shafi 2004; Challand 2009; Hamdan 2011; Jesse 2011; Tocci 2011).

Studies also highlight that funding fed into individualization and corruption tendencies, resulting in a lack of societal trust (Abdel Shafi 2004; Bouillon 2004; Brynen 2000; Dana 2014; Jamal 2007; Hilal 2015; Sbeih 2011; Tocci 2011). As a result, Palestinians delegitimized and lost faith and trust in both the PA and its structures, and PNGOs lost their impact as mobilizing forces (Challand 2008a, 2009, 2011; Kouttab and Toaldo 2013). However, the outcomes PNGOs do not necessarily result in pursuing a fixed political agenda and objectives (Azzam 2014). For example, research centers, which even though being funded by donors, produced a lot of critical research on PNGOs' work and the violation of human rights by the Israeli state, such as exposing its violation of prisoners' rights and reporting its crime acts, allowing for outcomes that connect with Palestinians' struggle issues. Pitner (2000) reports that PNGOs human rights advocacy has become a source of threat to the occupying power and was forced, at the request of the major funders, to change their mandate from reporting on Israeli violations of human rights to the PA's violations.

It is worth mentioning that even though the transformation process of civil society, the political landscape, and societal changes is reinterpreted in a simple way, the process that has reshaped norms, interests, and attitudes of societal actors (Challand 2009; Dana 2015b; Sbeih 2011) is not a simple

tactic. It is a process of “a complex subject and social structure formation” in which funding played a notable but not a singular role in the transformation process of civil society and the political landscape (Abdo 2010; Hammami 2000; Hanafi and Tabar 2003). The process of societal transformation came about as a result of joint and intertwined political and socio-economic processes and dynamics at multispatial levels, the analysis of which go beyond the scope of this study.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The research applies quantitative methods to capture the perceptions of key actors involved in PNGOs and the wider public in the West Bank within the game theory setting. It examines two overarching research questions.

- How do PNGOs’ work and external aid in general affect society in terms of creating common societal trust, constraining corruption, and contributing to delivering grassroots and national needs?
- What are the payoffs/costs for the actors involved? Who are the winners and losers in aid support to the PNGOs and aid policy in general?

Figure 1 describes the research methodology, which uses qualitative methods: structured interviews/questionnaires addressed to PNGOs and PA institutions in November 2015 and a public survey addressed to a representative sample from the wider public in June 2016. The study defines research aspects inquiring about the perceptions of societal actors regarding the payoffs/costs of key actors involved in the PNGO sector and societal outcomes, resulting from the work of the PNGO sector and aid in general.

Two different questionnaires were used to collect data from various Palestinian players, NGOs, the PA, and the wider public in the West Bank. A representative list of PNGOs was selected based on scrutinizing much previous research and many reports that identified and mapped different types of PNGOs (e.g., Costantini *et al.* 2011; De Voir and Tartir 2009). Accordingly, PNGOs that receive substantial donor funds are included, although to various extents. In the end, forty-one PNGOs that worked within four areas—human rights and democracy, social services, education and culture, and economics and development—participated in the study. Furthermore, PA institutions were also approached, and eleven public authorities that work closely with some PNGOs agreed to participate in the study. Interviewees

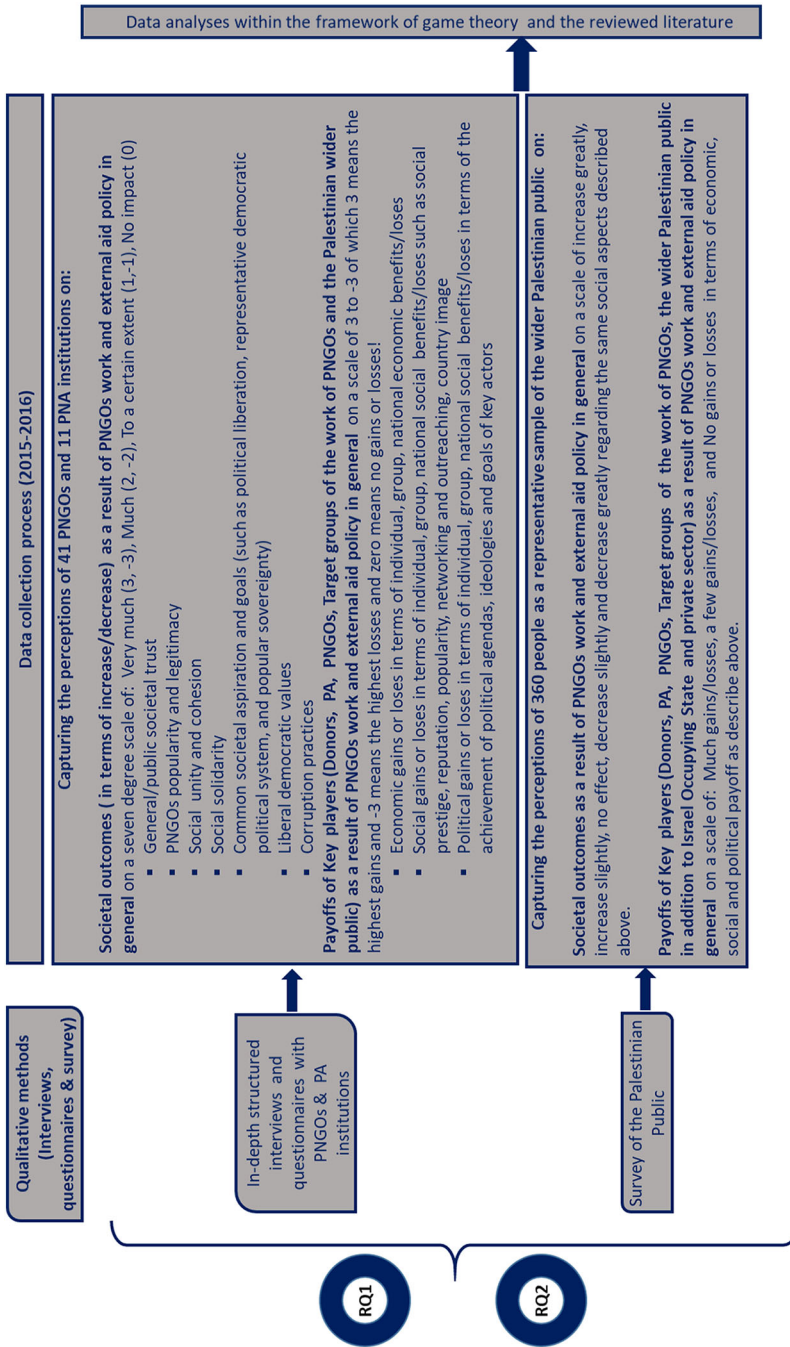


FIGURE 1. The Applied Research Methodology

were asked to fill out an anonymous questionnaire regarding the inquiries described in figure 1 (payoffs/costs for actors involved as well as the societal changes that have affected the space for maneuver for PNGOs since the first intifada of 1987 and the beginning of the Oslo peace process in 1993). Key potential actors assumed to gain or lose from the external aid are defined: PNGOs, the PA, donors, target groups of the work of the PNGOs, the Israeli occupying state, the private sector, and the wider public as a result of PNGOs' work and external aid policy in general.

In addition, the study used a survey addressed to a representative sample of the Palestinian public in the West Bank to capture its views on the same inquiries. A random sample of 360 people in the age range of 20–55 years was interviewed face to face throughout the West Bank in May 2016. Twenty areas that cover deferent types of settlements (cities, villages, and camps) were chosen randomly as sites for applying the survey. The interviews were conducted in randomly selected families and eighteen family/research areas, and the subjects in each home were selected randomly according to the Kish selection grid. A margin error of ± 5 percent, with a confidence level of 95 percent, is estimated.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the results (as percentages) in aggregated scale categories to make interpretation easy. The raw collected data are presented in appendices A–H. They present, first, the results regarding the perceptions of various actors on social outcomes of the PNGOs' work on different social aspects and, second, the payoffs in terms of gains and losses as described in figure 1.

Social outcomes

The views of PNGOs and PA institutions Table 1 presents the results regarding the social outcomes of the work of PNGOs from the point of view of PNGOs and the PA.

The results show, despite slight discrepancies, that both the PNGOs and the PA have general positive views of the impact of PNGOs' work on several societal issues, except for the impact on general social trust and corruption norms in Palestinian society, which are either slightly negative or neutral and polarized.

Ranking the perceptions of PNGOs and the PA on what the most positive impact of the PNGOs' work is produces different results/falling orders. The PNGOs believe their work positively affects liberal democratic values and has an equal positive impact on the popularity and legitimacy of PNGOs and

TABLE 1. PNGOs' Self-Evaluation and PA Evaluation of the Social Outcomes of PNGOs' Work

Views of PNGOs and PA institutions of the social outcomes of PNGOs' work	General/public social trust	NGOs' popularity and legitimacy	Social unity and cohesion	Social solidarity	Societal aspiration and goals	Democratic values	Corruption
PNGOs' self-evaluation	39.1	22.0	31.7	24.4	34.2	17.1	44.0
Decreased	26.8	9.8	17.1	7.3	19.5	12.2	9.8
No impact	34.1	68.0	51.2	68.3	46.3	70.4	46.4
Increased	27.3	18.2	27.3	9.1	9.1	9.1	18.2
PA evaluation	45.5	9.1	9.1	27.3	9.1	9.1	36.4
Decreased	27.3	72.8	63.6	63.7	81.8	81.8	45.5
No impact							
Increased							

TABLE 2. Public Perceptions of the Social Outcomes of NGOs' Work

Social outcomes of NGOs' work	Corruption	Public/general social trust	Popularity of NGOs	National unity	Social solidarity
Increased	52.80	30.60	50.30	21.70	35.90
No impact	24.40	21.10	15.40	41.70	33.10
Decreased	22.80	48.30	34.30	36.60	31.10

social solidarity, followed by social unity and cohesion, thereby achieving societal aspirations and goals. The PA interviewees believe that NGOs' work has an equal positive impact on liberal democratic values and achieving the societal aspirations and goals, popularity, and legitimacy of PNGOs, and an equally positive impact on social unity and cohesion and social solidarity.

Findings as to whether the PNGOs' work has constrained corruption behavior shows polarized views according to the PNGOs' self-evaluation and a negative perception by the PA through the contribution of their work to the increase of corruption. This finding contrasts with the rest of findings, which indicated that the PA is more positive vis-à-vis the PNGO sector's own views. When it comes to the impact of NGOs' work at the level of general social trust, which, in principle, is inversely correlated with corruption behavior, the results differ, but only slightly, showing again polarized views according to the PNGOs' evaluation, while the PA sees no significant positive or negative impact.

In conclusion, both PA institutions and PNGOs have a general positive view of the impact of PNGOs' work. However, PA perceptions are slightly more critical of the impact of the PNGOs in terms of constraining corruption, while the PNGOs are more critical of their work's impact on achieving societal aspirations and goals and general social trust.

The Palestinian public's evaluation of social outcomes Tables 2 and 3 present the public's perceptions of the social outcomes of NGOs' work and sector.

Table 2 shows that about half the surveyed public believe the popularity of PNGOs has increased, while the impact of their work on social solidarity is rather neutral. However, the public's perceptions are negative regarding the outcomes of PNGOs' work mainly on corruption, followed by general societal trust and national/societal unity and cohesion. More than half believe that corruption increased; almost half think that the general societal trust decreased; and more than one-third think that national unity decreased (almost half see no impact).

TABLE 3. Social Outcomes as a Result of the Work of the NGOs Sector (i.e., Including the PA and Donors)

Social outcomes of the work of the NGO sector	National aspiration and objectives		Liberal democratic values	
	NGOs' work	NGO sector (including the PA and donors)	NGOs' work	NGO sector (including the PA and donors)
As a result of				
Increased	20.00	20.30	45.60	38.10
No impact	46.10	52.10	32.30	41.70
Decreased	33.80	27.50	22.00	20.20

When it comes to national aspirations and objectives, and advancement of liberal democratic values in society (table 3), the public has a slightly negative perception of the first issue and a rather positive perception of the second issue.

Payoffs: winners and losers

The views of PNGOs and PA institutions Tables 4–6 present the views of PNGOs and PA institutions on how they perceive various actors' gains/losses economically, socially, and politically because of the external aid and funding schemes of PNGOs. The gains category includes all types of gains (to a certain extent, much gain, and very much gain; see appendices C–E).

The results regarding economic payoffs as a result of PNGOs' work show similar patterns as with external aid. As shown in table 4, the PA and PNGOs have the same views regarding the principal winner (PNGOs), which is particularly obvious from the point of view of the PA, but they have slightly different views regarding the second and third winners. However, donors are often the second winner according to both. When we consider gains in general, including "gains to a certain extent," the perceptions in general show that none of the actors is losing and all are benefiting, including the target groups of PNGOs and the wider public, although to different extents. This perception relates to a shared view among PNGOs and the PA that donors' aid in general is seen as something benign for Palestinian society.

Regarding social payoff, we find a pattern similar to that of the economic aspect. In general, both PNGOs and the PA believe the donors gain a lot, but the biggest winners are the PNGOs, and the PA believes this even more than

TABLE 4. Economic Payoff as a Result of External Aid and PNGOs' Work

Economic payoffs as a result of	Gains/losses for: Views of	Donors		PA		PNGOs		Target groups of PNGOs		Palestinian public	
		PNGOs	PA	PNGOs	PA	PNGOs	PA	PNGOs	PA	PNGOs	PA
External aid	Losses	24.4	9.1	17.1	9.1	12.2	0	9.7	9.1	9.7	9.1
	No gain/loss	24.4		9.8	9.1			4.9	9.1	17.1	27.3
	Gains	51.3	91	73.1	81.9	87.9	100	85.4	82	73.2	63.7
	Much and very much gain	34.2	72.8	46.3	63.7	65.9	81.8	34.2	45.6	24.4	18.2
PNGOs' work	Losses	14.6	9.1	9.7	0	7.3	0	9.7	0	9.7	0
	No gain/loss	9.8	9.1	17.1	18.2	4.9		7.3	9.1	17.1	9.1
	Gains	75.7	81.8	73.2	81.9	87.8	100.1	83	90.9	73.1	90.9
	Much and very much gain	51.3	54.5	43.9	36.4	65.8	91	34.2	36.4	21.9	9.1

TABLE 5. Social Payoff as a Result of External Aid and PNGOs' Work

Social payoffs as a result of	Gains/losses for:	Donors		PA		PNGOs		Target groups of PNGOs		Palestinian public	
		PNGOs	PA	PNGOs	PA	PNGOs	PA	PNGOs	PA	PNGOs	PA
External aid	Losses	4.9	9.1	19.5	27.3	7.2	0	7.2	0	9.7	0
	No gain/loss	9.8		19.5		12.2		7.3		9.8	9.1
PNGOs' work	Gains	85.4	91.0	61.0	72.8	80.5	100	85.4	100	80.5	90.9
	Much and very much gain	53.7	54.6	24.4	36.4	58.5	72.7	43.9	36.4	14.6	27.3
External aid	Losses	14.6	9.1	9.7	0	7.3	0	9.7	0	9.7	0
	No gain/loss	9.8	9.1	17.1	18.2	4.9	0	7.3	9.1	17.1	9.1
PNGOs' work	Gains	75.7	81.8	73.2	81.9	87.8	100.1	83	90.9	73.1	90.9
	Much and very much gain	51.3	54.5	43.9	36.4	65.8	91.0	34.2	36.4	21.9	9.1

TABLE 6. Political Payoff as a Result of External Aid

Gains/ losses for: Views of	Donors		PA		PNGOs		Target groups of PNGOs		Palestinian public	
	PNGOs ^a	PA	PNGOs ^a	PA	PNGOs ^a	PA	PNGOs ^a	PA	PNGOs ^a	PA
Losses		0		18.2	0		9.1			18.2
No gain/ loss					18.2		18.2			27.3
Gains		100.1		81.8	81.9		72.7			54.6
Much and very much gain		63.7		27.3	45.5		9.1			9.1

Note: ^aNot available.

the PNGOs themselves. In addition, the target groups of PNGOs and the wider public substantially gain socially.

The PNGOs could not be asked about whom they considered had gained or lost politically due to external aid to Palestine or the NGOs' work. However, the PA follows the same pattern as with how they judge the economic and social aspects. This time, however, they perceive the donors to be the biggest winners, not the PNGOs.

Table 7 summarizes the results regarding who benefits from external aid policy in general and PNGOs' work in particular in ranked order. It shows that PNGOs, donors, and the PA are the actors that have the most economic and social payoff. However, donors are the main actors that have the highest political gains, followed by the PA and then PNGOs. When it comes to moderate economic and social payoffs, the target groups become an important set of actors along with PNGOs and donors. In addition, we can note two issues. The first is that the PA seems to be losing socially, according to the perceptions of both the PNGOs and the PA. It is relatively ranked as benefiting the least socially. The second point is that despite the positive view of both the PA and the PNGOs about donors' contribution to Palestinian society, the wider public benefits the least in all terms. However, according to the summarized perceptions, there is a spillover socio-economic positive effect that reaches the public, although it is relatively modest.

TABLE 7. Ranking Payoffs/Winners from External Aid Policy in General and PNGOs' Work in Particular

Payoff	In view of	On a scale:	Ranking winners: Who gains the most?					
			1	2	3	4	5	
Economic	PNGOs	External aid	PNGOs	PA	Target groups and donors	Wider public		
		Much gain	External aid	PNGOs	PA	Target groups	Wider public	
		Gains	External aid	PNGOs and target groups	Donors	PA	Target groups	Wider public
			External aid	PNGOs	PA and wider public	Donors		
			External aid	PNGOs	Target groups	Donors	PA and wider public	
			External aid	PNGOs	Donors	PA	Target groups	Wider public
			External aid	PNGOs	Donors	PA and target groups	Wider public	
			External aid	PNGOs	Donors	PA and target groups	Wider public	
			External aid	PNGOs	Target groups and wider public	Donors and PA		
			External aid	PNGOs	Donors	Target groups	PA	Wider public
Social	PNGOs	Much gain	External aid	PNGOs	Donors	Target groups	PA	Wider public
		Gains	External aid	Target groups and donors	PNGOs and wider public	PA	Target groups	Wider public
			External aid	PNGOs	Target groups	Donors	PA and wider public	

(continued)

TABLE 7. (continued)

Payoff	In view of	On a scale:	Ranking winners: Who gains the most?				
			As a result of	1	2	3	4
PA	Much gain	External aid	PNGOs	Donors	PA and target groups	Wider public	
		NGOs' work	PNGOs	Donors	PA and target groups	Wider public	
	Gains	External aid	PNGOs and target groups	Donors and wider public	PA		
		NGOs' work	PNGOs	Target groups and wider public	Donors and PA		
Political	No data were collected from PNGOs						
PA	Much gain	External aid	Donors	PNGOs	PA	Target groups and wider public	
		Gains	External aid	Donors	PA & PNGOs	Target groups	Wider public

The Palestinian public's evaluation of actors' payoffs Tables 8–10 present the results regarding the public's evaluation of the various actors' gains/losses economically, socially, and politically because of external aid and the funding schemes of PNGOs. Table II summarizes the results of public perceptions regarding who benefits from external aid policy in general and PNGOs' work in particular, in ranked order.

TABLE 8. Economic Payoff as a Result of External Aid and PNGOs' Work

Economic payoff as a result of		Donors	PA	NGOs	Target groups	Wider public	Israeli occupation	Private sector
External aid	Much gain	43.90	53.60	30.80	20.10	8.60	48.90	17.30
	Gains	67.50	82.80	84.70	71.60	60.30	58.10	67.90
	No gain/loss	25.00	8.30	10.80	22.80	24.70	34.20	22.90
	Losses	7.50	8.90	4.40	5.60	15.00	7.70	9.20
PNGOs' work	Much gain	29.70	36.10	28.40	14.20	7.00	39.80	15.00
	Gains	68.00	79.20	83.30	73.70	52.40	56.20	68.80
	No gain/loss	25.60	12.80	14.80	22.10	33.40	35.10	24.50
	Losses	6.40	8.00	1.90	4.20	14.20	8.70	6.70

TABLE 9. Social Payoff as a Result of External Aid and PNGOs' Work

Social payoff as a result of		Donors	PA	NGOs	Target groups	Wider public	Israeli occupation	Private sector
External aid	Much gain	37.80	23.30	18.60	11.90	6.40	29.20	11.40
	Gains	63.10	58.30	67.80	51.30	43.90	41.40	53.60
	No gain/loss	27.20	17.20	23.10	37.80	39.70	46.40	40.80
	Losses	9.70	24.50	9.10	10.80	16.40	12.20	5.50
PNGOs' work	Much gain	25.80	20.70	22.50	10.30	3.90	27.80	8.90
	Gains	55.50	59.00	73.10	58.10	40.60	40.00	46.80
	No gain/loss	39.40	23.70	16.70	29.40	44.40	48.90	46.50
	Losses	5.00	17.30	10.30	12.50	15.00	11.10	6.70

TABLE 10. Political Payoff as a Result of External Aid and NGOs' Work

Political payoff as a result of		Donors	PA	NGOs	Target groups	Wider public	Israeli occupation	Private sector
External aid	Much gain	41.10	40.80	29.20	11.40	6.90	48.30	17.30
	Gains	70.30	64.70	61.70	53.50	42.20	60.00	52.70
	No gain/loss	21.10	17.20	28.90	36.80	36.90	27.50	37.00
	Losses	8.60	18.10	9.40	9.80	20.80	12.50	10.30
NGOs' work	Much gain	34.40	35.00	30.60	14.20	4.40	40.70	15.30
	Gains	70.00	65.80	68.90	59.20	46.90	54.10	55.60
	No gain/loss	24.40	18.90	20.00	30.80	36.40	34.80	37.80
	Losses	5.60	15.20	11.10	10.00	16.60	11.10	6.70

The public perceptions are different from those presented above for PNGOs and PA institutions. The Israeli occupying state, donors, the PA, and PNGOs are the actors that have most political, economic, and social payoffs, followed by the target groups and private sector, in which the wider public is often ranked at the end of the scale.

When it comes to moderate economic and social payoffs, the PNGOs, the PA, donors, and target groups become an important set of actors along with the private sector that gain to a certain extent economically and socially. In terms of political payoff, according to the public, donors, PNGOs, the PA, and the Israeli occupying state have the upper hand. The wider public benefits the least and is ranked at the end of the scale in terms of political, social, and economic gains. Again, despite the public perceptions of being the least to benefit from this social setting, results show that there is a spillover positive economic effect of the aiding policy that reaches the public, although it is relatively modest.

DISCUSSION

The empirical insights into the two main questions of this article, in terms of social outcomes of the PNGO sector's work and external aid and payoffs of key actors, are now discussed and triangulated in relation to previous research.

Societal outcomes

There are common perceptions among societal actors of the NGO sector, but also discrepancies between the PNGOs and the PA, on one hand, and the wider public, on the other. The public is relatively negative when regarding

TABLE 11. Ranking Payoffs/Winners from External Aid Policy in General and PNGOs' Work in Particular

Payoff	On a scale	Ranking winners: Who gains the most?							
		As a result of	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Economic	Much gain	External aid	PA	Israeli occupying state	Donors	PNGOs	Target groups	Private sector	Wider public
		NGOs' work	Israeli occupying state	PA	Donors	PNGOs	Private sector	Target groups	Wider public
	Gains	External aid	PNGOs	PA	Target groups	Donors and private sector	Wider public	Israeli occupying state	Wider public
Social	Much gain	External aid	Donors	Israeli occupying state	PA	PNGOs	Target groups and private sector	Wider public	Wider public
		NGOs' work	Israeli occupying state	Donors	PNGOs	PA	Target groups	Private sector	Wider public
	Gains	External aid	PNGOs	Donors	PA	Private sector	Target groups	Wider public	Israeli occupying state
		NGOs' work	PNGOs	PA	Target groups	Donors	Private sector	Wider public and Israeli occupying state	

(continued)

TABLE II. (continued)

Payoff	On a scale	Ranking winners: Who gains the most?							
		As a result of	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Political	Many gains	External aid	Israeli occupying state	Donors	PA	PNGOs	Private sector	Target groups	Wider public
		NGOs' work	Israeli occupying state	Donors and PA	PNGOs	Private sector	Target groups	Wider public	
	Gains	External aid	Donors	PA	PNGOs	Israeli occupying state	Target groups	Private sector	Wider public
		NGOs' work	Donors	PNGOs	PA	Target groups	Private sector	Israeli occupying state	Wider public

almost all the social aspects addressed by the study, and is more critical than both the PNGOs and the PA institutions. This issue can be understood because they need to rationalize and legitimize their roles and undertakings in what donors misguidedly circulate as a post-conflict socio-political structure, despite the continued occupation and colonization, and the lack of sovereignty, control over natural resources, border crossings, trade, or freedom of movement (Hilal 2015; Turner 2017).

What is clearly in common is that none of the social actors, including the public, believes that the work of NGOs has generated a positive impact on common societal trust and thus constrained corruption norms and practices. While the PA's and PNGOs' perceptions range from slightly negative to neutral and polarized, the public perceive that both aspects are negatively affected by the work of PNGOs.

Furthermore, it is unclear from the study if the work of the NGO sector or aid in general have a significant negative impact on societal solidarity at the micro-societal level. Even for the public, the impact is neither positive nor negative. The most positive view of this particular social aspect is held by the NGOs, which can be understood. Although their formation is driven by donors' agendas, PNGOs see themselves as popular "formal" actors in the societal sphere, as we also find in the study, that give support to societal members and groups. Their official roles have been to provide social services, expose human rights violations despite the lack of political measures to prevent them, and, for those who could escape from the conditionality of donors, provide critical reporting and public insights on the donors' projects, programs, and societal consequences (Azzam 2014; Pitner 2000).

Public views, however, distinguish between the no-impact of the NGO sector's work on societal solidarity and the rather negative impact on national unity and cohesion, on the macro-societal level. Most of the critical research addressed social divide in terms of the emergence of a wealthy capitalized middle class attached to the PA and PNGOs (Dana 2019b; Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Hilal 2010; Jad 2007; Nakhleh 2012; Turner 2017). Yet, it is important to understand how the critical research understands the social divides in relation to social solidarity and mutual support among people in their daily lives.

The findings on national aspirations and goals/social unity and cohesion reveal discrepancies between the PNGOs and PA, and the public. Even though PNGOs are more critical than the PA, both have positive views, while the public's view is bleak. In the view of the public, the work of NGOs and aid policy has created social divides at the "macro-societal level," a finding

that falls in line with most of the critical literature on the political outcomes of donors' post-Oslo interventionist policies. Nevertheless, in the post-Oslo political structure in which donor-funded NGOs and the PA are key players, the general positive perceptions of both NGOs and the PA versus the rather negative public views on national/social unity and cohesion, and the achievement of common social aspirations and goals, is to rationalize and legitimize their key roles and undertakings.

In contrast with other findings of the study, mainly regarding corruption and common social trust, all societal actors believe the work of the PNGO sector has achieved positive impacts on liberal democratic values ranging from significantly positive (the PA) to positive (PNGOs) to slightly positive (the public). This is obviously a paradoxical finding. It does not align with many other studies that argue, since Oslo, international aid has undermined substantive democracy in Palestine due to political corruption, clientelism and rent-seeking, widespread bureaucratic corruption in PA institutions, and authoritarian political leadership (Farsakh 2016; Hilal 2003, 2010; Jamal 2007; Khan 2004; Kouttab and Toaldo 2013; Leech 2016; Tartir and Seidel 2019). In addition, this finding contrasts with the well-known realities of undemocratic ambience and fracturing Palestinian politics that have prevented parliamentary elections since 2006. The international community refused to recognize the results of the election, denying peoples' quest for democracy and dismantling national representative democratic institutions (Dana 2019b; Hilal 2015; Turner 2006).

Indeed, this issue uncovers one limitation of the questionnaire/survey that addressed societal actors wherein the principal investigators could ask respondents to demonstrate examples of liberal democratic improvements that they had experienced. Thus, the question could be asked; how do the different societal actors understand liberal democratic values and can this finding be interpreted within the advancement of individualism and liberal values associated with neoliberal policy (Hamdan 2011; Hilal 2015; Sbeih 2011)? Therefore, further investigation is needed into how we can interpret the common views of the progress of democratic values, liberal or otherwise, in the Palestinian context.

Payoff: winners and losers

The findings on actors' payoffs reveal important insights that align with previous research. The results, however, uncover other interesting insights.

There is a difference between the public's perceptions and the PA's and the PNGOs' views regarding who gains the most in socio-economic terms. In the view of latter, the PNGOs are principal winners, but according to the

former, donors, the occupying state, and the PA comes before the PNGOs as the biggest economic winner, although in a wider sense, all of them, including target groups, do gain considerably.

The PNGOs' and the PA's views are negative on the PA's social benefits in terms of social image, reputation, and legitimacy as a political representative authority (table 7). According to the perceptions of both the PNGOs and the PA, the latter is relatively ranked as benefiting the least socially. Apparently, both are aware of the negative socio-political outcomes of the dependency of the PA on conditional external aid, the lack of popular sovereignty, loss of legitimacy, and the stark failure of the PA to address the aspirations of the Palestinians (Hilal 2015; Koultab and Toaldo 2013; Le More 2008; Tartir 2015; Tartir and Seidel 2019; Turner 2017). This brings us to the third important remark.

Neither the PA nor the public believes the Oslo era has brought political gains to Palestinians, which is a conclusion that was also stressed by most of the previous research. From the point of view of the PA, the donors are the political winners, followed by the PNGOs and then the PA; from the point of view of the public, the occupying state and donors are the political winners, followed by the PA and PNGOs. Here we have to pay attention to a few points, although a thorough and nuanced analysis of this finding is beyond the scope of the study.

First, if the occupying state and donors are the biggest political winners in a nation that is still under occupation, this implies that its political liberalism is subverted and occupation goes on unabated, an implication that has been stressed in most of the research. A substantial body of the literature describes how the post-Oslo Western aid policy toolbox of liberal peace and state-building, and the promotion of neoliberal-based economic development is designed to achieve particular political objectives and rationalities. According to these studies, the donors' interventionist policies have consolidated occupation and dispossession, settler colonization, and PA authoritarianism, subverting social movements for political liberation (Dana 2019a; Hilal 2015; Khalidi and Samour 2011; Leech 2016; Le More 2008; Nabulsi 2004; Nakhleh 2012; Springer 2015; Tocci 2005, 2011; Tartir 2015; Tartir and Seidel 2019; Zomlot 2010). Turner (2017) overtly argues the policy toolbox acts as one layer of counterinsurgency and pacification techniques to secure the Palestinians and ensure acquiescence in the face of the enduring process of dispossession.

Second, in the Palestinian social context, the implication of the PA being a relatively big political winner does not necessarily mean this goes back to political gains to the occupied society. Within a context of a factionalized political landscape, lack of genuine and independent political representation, and

corruption, it practically implies the support of the ruling party “Fatah,” in opposition to other political parties (Paragi 2013; Springer 2015). As emphasized by scholars, the elite manipulation tools used to support the ruling party while marginalizing others have further entrenched geographical and political fragmentation and led to the loss of unified political leadership and the support of PA repression and authoritarianism (Dana 2019b; Hilal 2015; Leech 2016; Springer 2015; Tartir and Seidel 2019; Turner 2006). It is here that we can understand why the PA’s views are perhaps more biased and claim a significant positive impact of the aid and PNGOs’ work on societal unity and cohesion and common social aspirations and goals, when the PNGOs and the public perceive such impacts as slightly positive or negative, respectively.

Third, the distinction between political and socio-economic gains/winners reveals another significant insight. In line with what the literature would expect, the work of the PNGO sector, in particular and aid in general, has brought political gains to the Israeli occupying state, donors, and the PA and socio-economic benefits mainly to PNGOs and their target groups, donors, the PA, the business class and the Israeli occupying state, although to different extents. Even though the public benefits the least on all levels, the aid has also a spillover socioeconomic positive effect that does reach the Palestinian people. These findings have theoretical underpinnings that argue the economic spillover effect is deliberate in order to secure particular political rationalities.

Studies that explain the political gains of mainly donors and the Israeli occupying state, as opposed to economic benefits for the Palestinians, argue the desired peace by donors, which the aid policy rests upon, synergizes with the advocated Israeli version of so called “economic peace” (Dana 2015b; Leech 2016). Through the promotion of neoliberal discourse and agendas, the economic peace has sought the improvement of Palestinians’ economic conditions as opposed to Palestinians’ concessions of their political rights and liberation (Challand 2008a, 2009; Dana 2014, 2015b; Hilal 2010; Khalidi and Samour 2011; Nabulsi 2004; Sbeih 2011; Zomlot 2010). This idea is based on the logic that economics predicate political advances and citizens relinquish political rights for economic security (Dana 2015b; Hanafi 2010; Nakhleh 1989; Zomlot 2010).

In addition, humanitarian and development aid has been designed to achieve spillover economic benefits because the alternative is regarded as being much worse. Insurgency and the emergence of popular political movement and/or extreme poverty and political instability is the last thing that the Israeli occupying power and Western donors want (Turner 2017). It is within this context that we can understand why Mahmoud Abbas, the PA

president, pledged himself to prevent the eruption of a third intifada (Hilal 2015; Turner 2017). Hence, we can also understand why Palestinians relate foreign aid to human dignity. Accepting politicized aid has forced them to surrender domestic notions of “justice” and “national aspirations” and betray their national goals that further deteriorated their collective and individual self-esteem (Paragi 2013; Tartir 2015). Palestinians also understand that the socio-economic benefits are not sustainable (Tartir and Seidel 2019). These benefits are controlled by occupation and power structures that are inherently vulnerable to local social contingences, geopolitical factors, volatility of external aid, and the interplay and dynamics among all these factors.

Fourth, from what has been discussed, we can understand why the Palestinian public is the main loser in either absolute or relative terms and in all societal aspects, which is a key finding of the study that aligns with other research. Scholars asserted how the aid industry to PNGOs and PA within the Oslo period has subverted the development model that people under occupation need to take root and expand. Donors’ agencies and transnational NGOs developmental agendas have worked in complete contradiction to the model needed (Nakhleh 2012). The rationales—motives, objectives, and effects—of foreign aid are political, albeit to a greater or lesser extent, and promoted with a defined principal goal of “economic development and welfare” (Le More 2008; Turner 2017). It has created different societal layers of dependency, subduing national movement, and has systematically worked to feed into a process of de-development, adjustment to Israeli policies of occupation and dispossession (Dana 2019a; Hilal 2015; Le More 2008; Nakhleh 2012; Roy 2006; Springer 2015; Tartir and Seidel 2019). Succinctly, despite billions of dollars of aid to PA and PNGOs during the Oslo period, the aid failed to produce tangible gains for Palestinians in terms of peacebuilding, development, and democracy.

CONCLUSIONS

This article paraphrases the aid policy to PNGOs in the Post-Oslo period through game theory and reinterprets previous research against the backdrop of the game theory framework. It applies the framework to understand the composite picture of aid support of donors to NGOs but also the aid policy in general. The study captures the perceptions of PNGOs, PA institutions, and the Palestinian public on the social outcomes of the PNGOs’ work and external aid in general, payoffs/costs of the Post-Oslo players, and asks who are the winners and losers in political and socioeconomic terms.

The key findings of the study converge around what Le More (2005) uses as the title of a piece of her scholarly work “Killing with kindness: funding the demise of a Palestinian State.” The aid looks good but has done a lot of harm. The donors’ post-Oslo aid policies to PNGOs and the PA has failed to fulfil common societal aspirations of the Palestinian people for political liberation, failed to produce a democratic political system and a development model that fits their needs under occupation and popular sovereignty. In contrast, donors’ policies (rules/institutions) that rest on neo-liberal ideology and practices have served the political agendas of the occupying power, donor countries, and the PA, being loyal to the Oslo process, and conversely subverted development, suppressed the national movement, and has fed into a process of de-development, adjustment to Israeli policies of occupation and dispossession.

The immediate short-term future, as Turner (2016) argues, is likely to be bleak. However, this does not mean that the entire society is left with a destiny of de-politicization, de-mobilization and fragmentation. The societal space may simultaneously be open to other emerging variable(s) that might interfere in this aid-dependent, authoritarian, and politically corrupt context, and change the rules of the existing game. There is a space for other interests of local or global collective clusters that might open up new forms of politics as shown by Kouttab and Toaldo (2013).

Finally, this study has uncovered two blind spots in empirical research. The first is the need for in-depth research regarding how Palestinians understand and perceive democratic values and practices in their context. The second is the need to pay greater attention to the role, payoffs/costs, and social interactions of the target groups of the PNGOs. Target groups of the PNGOs, as has emerged from the study, have been accessible to considerable socio-economic benefits, competing with PNGOs, donors, the PA, and private sector actors but receive little attention.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was produced as part of the research project “Understanding the Rationales of Donor-Funded Civil Society in Developing Countries: A Game Theory Approach,” funded by the Swedish Research Council (grant number U-Forsk 2013–6331). The author acknowledges that parts of the methodological model in this article were developed jointly with Dr Michael Schulz. The author is most grateful for the helpful comments of two anonymous reviewers. ■

LINA SULEIMAN is at the Division of Regional Studies, Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden.
Email: lina.suleiman@abc.kth.se

REFERENCES

- Abdel Rahman, H. 2009. "The State and Civil Society in Africa: A North African Perspective." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3 (2): 66–76.
- Abdel Shafi, S. 2004. *Civil Society and Political Elites in Palestine and the Role of International Donors: A Palestinian View* (EuroMeSCo Paper No. 33). Lisbon: EuroMeSCo Secretariat.
- Abdo, N. 2010. "Imperialism, the State, and NGOs: Middle Eastern Contexts and Contestations." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 30 (2): 238–49. doi:10.1215/1089201X-2010-010
- Awashreh, R. 2020. "Palestinian Perspectives on Foreign Aid." *International Journal of Research—Granthaalayah*, 8 (6): 236–51.
- Azzam, Fateh. 2014. "NGOs vs. Grassroots Movements: A False Dichotomy." *Al-Shabaka, the Palestinian Policy Network*. Accessed February 15, 2021. <https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/ngos-vs-grassroots-movements-a-false-dichotomy/>
- Bouillon, M. E. 2004. *The Peace Business. Money and Power in the Palestine–Israel Conflict*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Brynen, R. 2000. *A Very Political Economy. Peace Building and Foreign Aid in the West Bank and Gaza*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Carothers, T. 2000. "Think Again: Civil Society." *Foreign Policy Magazine* Winter.
- Challand, B. 2008a. "The Evolution of Western Aid for Palestinian Civil Society: Bypassing Local Knowledge and Resources." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 44 (3): 397–417.
- . 2008b. "A *Nahda* of Charitable Organizations? Health Service Provision and the Politics of Aid in Palestine." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 40 (2): 227–47. doi:10.2307/30069611
- . 2009. *Palestinian Civil Society: Foreign Donors and the Power to Promote and Exclude*. London: Routledge.
- . 2011. "Coming too Late? The EU's Mixed Approaches to Transforming the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict through Civil Society." In *The European Union, Civil Society and Conflict*, edited by N. Tocci, 96–125. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Costantini, G. J., J. Atamneh, K. Ayeshe and F. Al Hussein. 2011. *Mapping Study of Civil Society Organisations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (Final Report of a Project Funded by the European Commission and Implemented by SOGES, May). Accessed February 15, 2021. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full%20Report_50.pdf
- Dana, T. 2014. "Disconnecting Civil Society from its Historical Extension: NGOs and Neoliberalism in Palestine." In *Human Rights, Human Security, and State Security: The Intersection*, edited by S. Takahashi, 117–38. Santa Barbara: Praeger.
- . 2015a. "The Structural Transformation of Palestinian Civil Society: Key Paradigm Shifts." *Middle East Critique*, 24 (2): 191–210. doi:10.1080/19436149.2015.1017968
- . 2015b. "The Symbiosis between Palestinian 'Fayyadism' and Israeli 'economic Peace': The Political Economy of Capitalist Peace in the Context of Colonisation."

- Conflict, Security & Development* 15 (5): 455–77. doi:10.1080/14678802.2015.1100013
- . 2019a. “The Prolonged Decay of the Palestinian National Movement.” *National Identities* 21 (1): 39–55. doi:10.1080/14608944.2017.1343813
- . 2019b. “Crony Capitalism in the Palestinian Authority: A Deal Among Friends.” *Third World Quarterly* 41 (92): 247–63. doi:10.1080/01436597.2019.1618705
- De Voir, J., and A. Tartir. 2009. *Tracking External Donor Funding to Palestinian Non Governmental Organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip 1999–2008*. Jerusalem: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS).
- Dixit, A., and B. Nalebuff. 2010. *The Art of Strategy: A Game Theorist’s Guide to Success in Business and Life*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Durac, V., and F. Cavatorta. 2009. “Strengthening Authoritarian Rule through Democracy Promotion? Examining the Paradox of the US and EU Security Strategies: The Case of Bin Ali’s Tunisia.” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36 (1): 3–19. doi:10.1080/13530190902749523
- Farsakh, L. 2016. “Undermining Democracy in Palestine: The Politics of International Aid since Oslo.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 45 (4): 48–63. doi:10.1525/jps.2016.45.4.48
- Haddad, T. 2016. *Palestine Ltd. Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Hamdan, A. 2011. *Foreign Aid and the Moulding of the Palestinian Space*. Ramallah: Bisan Center for Research and Development.
- Hammami, R. 1995. “NGOs: The professionalisation of Politics.” *Race & Class* 37 (2): 51–63. doi:10.1177/030639689503700206
- . 2000. *Palestinian NGOs since Oslo: From NGO Politics to Social Movements?* (Middle East Report No. 16–48). Chicago: Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP).
- Hanafi, S. 2010. “Framing Arab Socio-Political Space: State Governmentality, Governance and Non-Institutional Protestation.” *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 3 (2): 148–62. doi:10.1080/17550911003729387
- , and L. Tabar. 2003. “The Intifada and the Aid Industry: The Impact of the New Liberal Agenda on Palestinian NGOs.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23: 205–14.
- , and L. Tabar. 2004. “Donor Assistance, Rent-Seeking and Elite Formation.” In *State Formation in Palestine: Viability and Governance during a Social Transformation*, edited by I. Amundsen, M. H. Khan and G. Giacaman, 215–238. London: Routledge Curzon.
- Harriss, J., and P. Renzio. 1997. “Policy Arena: ‘Missing link’ or Analytically Missing?: The Concept of Social Capital.” *Journal of International Development* 9 (7): 919–37.
- Hilal, J. 2003. “Problematizing Democracy in Palestine.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23 (1–2): 163–72. doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-23-1-2-163
- . 2010. “Civil Society in Palestine; A Literature Review.” Paper presented at the Regional Conference on “Research on Civil Society Organizations; Status and Prospects,” Jordan.

- . 2015. "Rethinking Palestine: Settler-Colonialism, Neo-Liberalism and Individualism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 8 (3): 351–62.
- Hooghe, M., and D. Stolle. 2003. *Generating Social Capital, Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jad, I. 2007. "NGOs: Between Buzzwords and Social Movements." *Development in Practice* 17 (4/5): 622–29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25548261>
- Jamal, A. A. 2007. *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab world*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jamal, M. A. 2013. "Western Donor Assistance and Gender Empowerment in the Palestinian Territories and Beyond." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 17 (2): 232–52. doi:10.1080/14616742.2013.849966
- Jesse, M. 2011. "After Oslo: Palestinian NGOs and the Peace Process." MA Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.
- Jonathan, F. 1997. "Policy Arena: The World Bank and Social Capital: Contesting the Concept in Practice." *Journal of International Development* 9 (7): 963–71.
- Khalidi, R., and Samour, S. 2011. "Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40 (2): 6–25.
- Khan, M. H., ed. 2004. *State Formation in Palestine: Viability and Governance during a Social Transformation*. London: Routledge.
- Le More, A. 2005. "Killing with Kindness: Funding the Demise of a Palestinian State." *International Affairs* 81 (5): 981–999. <https://doi.org/10.1111>
- . 2008. *International Assistance to the Palestinians after Oslo: Political Guilt, Wasted Money*. London: Routledge.
- Leech, P. 2016. *The State of Palestine: A Critical Analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Kouttab, K., and M. Toaldo. 2013. *In Search of Legitimacy: The Palestinian National Movement 20 Years after Oslo*. London: ECFR.
- Meinzer, M. 2019. "Solidarity Donors and Popular Education in the West Bank." In *Palestine and Rule of Power. Local Dissent vs. International Governance*, edited by A. Tartir and T. Seidel, 175–202. Cham: Springer/Palgrave Macmillan UK. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-05949-1
- Muslih, M. 1995. "Palestinian Civil Society." In *Civil Society in the Middle East*, edited by A. R. Norton, 243–68. Leiden: Brill.
- Nabulsi, K. 2004. "The Peace Process and the Palestinians: A Road Map to Mars." *International Affairs* 80 (2): 221–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3569239>
- Nakhleh, K. 1989. "Non-Governmental Organizations and Palestine: The Politics of Money." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2 (1): 113–24. doi:10.1093/jrs/2.1.113
- (trans.). 2004. *The Myth of Palestinian Development*. The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA).
- . 2012. *Globalized Palestine: The National Sell-Out of a Homeland*. Trenton: Red Sea.
- Norton, A. R., ed. 1995. *Civil Society in the Middle East, Volumes 1 and 2*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Ostrom, E. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Paragi, Beáta. 2013. "First Impressions and Perceived Roles: Palestinian Perceptions on Foreign Aid." *Society and Economy* 35 (3): 389–410. <https://doi.org/10.1556/socec.2012.0006>
- Pitner, J. 2000. "NGOs' Dilemmas." In *Critiquing NGOs: Assessing the Last Decade Spring* (Middle East Report No. 214), 34–37. Tacoma: Middle East Research and Information Project, Inc. (MERIP).
- Putnam, R. D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Raiffa, H., J. Richardson and D. Metcalfe. 2002. *Negotiation Analysis—The Science and Art of Collaborative Decision Making*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press.
- Rothstein, B. 2005. *Social Traps and the Problem of Trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2011. "Anti-Corruption: The Indirect 'Big Bang' Approach." *Review of International Political Economy* 18 (2): 228–50. doi:10.1080/09692291003607834
- Roy, S. 2006. *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian–Israeli Conflict*. London: Pluto.
- Sbeih, S. 2011. *Problematic of Development Proponents: Between Mythical Application and Discourses' Dogmatic Illustration*. Ramallah: Bisan Center for Research and Development.
- Schulz, M. 2012. "Palestinian Civil Society." In *The Routledge Handbook on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, edited by J. Peters and D. Newman, ch. 21. London: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203079553.ch21
- Somers, M. R. 1995. "Narrating and Naturalizing Civil Society and Citizenship Theory: The Place of Political Culture and the Public Sphere." *Sociological Theory* 13 (3): 229–74.
- Shubik, M. 1982. *Game Theory in the Social Sciences, Vol. 1: Concepts and Solutions*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Springer, J. E. 2015. "Assessing Donor-Driven Reforms in the Palestinian Authority: Building the State or Sustaining Status Quo?" *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 10 (2): 1–19. doi:10.1080/15423166.2015.1050796
- Tartir, A. 2015. "Securitized Development and Palestinian Authoritarianism under Fayyadism." *Conflict, Security & Development* 15 (5): 479–502. doi:10.1080/14678802.2015.1100016
- , and T. Seidel, eds. 2019. *Palestine and Rule of Power. Local Dissent vs. International Governance*. Cham: Springer/Palgrave Macmillan UK. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-05949-1
- Tocci, N. 2005. *The Widening Gap between Rhetoric and Reality in EU Policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Working Document No. 217). Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS).
- . 2011. *The European Union, Civil Society and Conflict*. London: Routledge.
- Turner, M. 2006. Building Democracy in Palestine: Liberal Peace Theory and the Election of Hamas. *Democratization* 13 (5): 739–755. doi:10.1080/13510340601010628
- . 2016 "Killing the Zombie Peace and Building a New Movement." *Mediterranean Politics* 21 (3): 437–41. doi:10.1080/13629395.2015.1126393

———. 2017. “The Peacebuilding–Counterinsurgency Nexus in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” In *Reconfiguring Intervention*, edited by L. Moe and M. M. Müller, 97–118. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58877-7_5

Turocy, T. L., and Bernhard von Stengel. 2002. “Game Theory.” In *Encyclopedia of Information Systems*, edited by Hossein Bidgoli, 403–20. New York: Elsevier. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B0122272404000769>

Zomlot, H. S. 2010. “Building a State under Occupation: The Palestinians and the Living Legacy of Oslo.” *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 3 (2): 180–92. doi:10.1080/17550911003743917

APPENDIX A

The raw results (percentages) regarding the social outcomes of the work of PNGOs from the point of view of the PNGOs themselves and the PA.

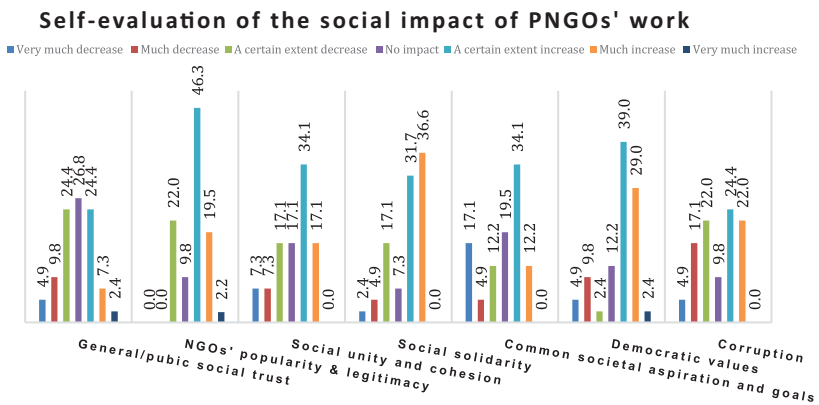


FIGURE A1. Self-Evaluation of the Social Impact of PNGOs' Work

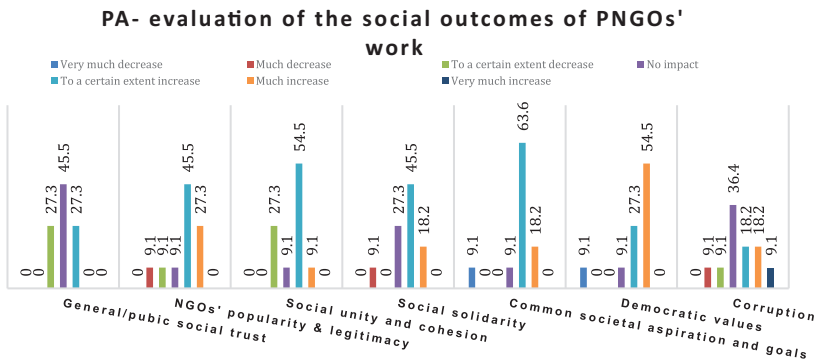


FIGURE A2. PA evaluation of the Social Outcomes of PNGOs' Work

APPENDIX B

The raw results regarding the public’s perceptions of the social outcomes of NGOs’ work and sector, including the PA and donors.

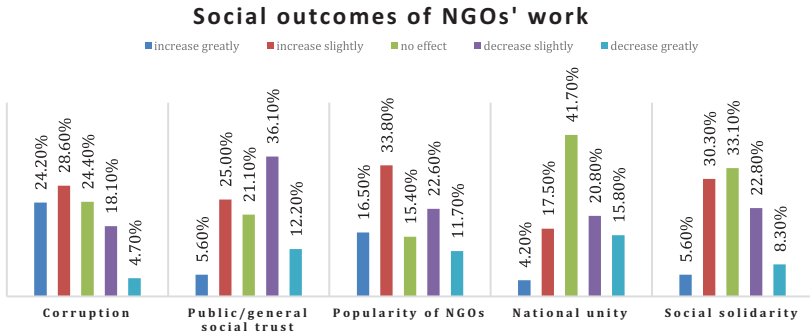


FIGURE B1. Public Perceptions of the Social Outcomes of NGOs’ Work

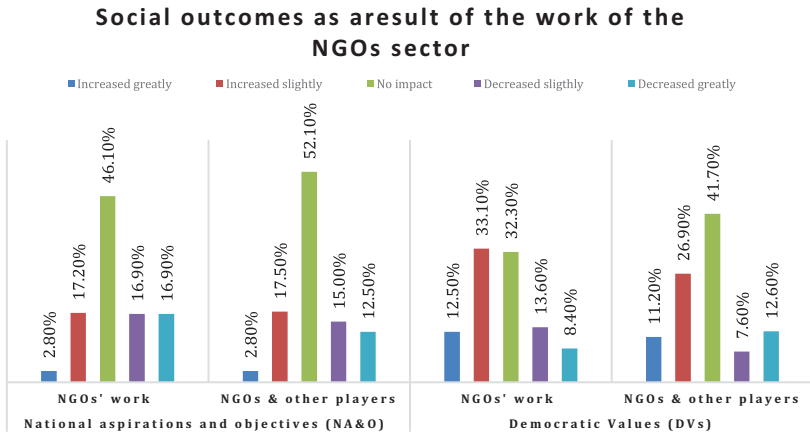


FIGURE B2. Social Outcomes as a Result of the Work of the NGO Sector (Including the PA and Donors)

APPENDICES C-E: PAYOFFS—WINNERS AND LOSERS

Appendix C presents the raw results regarding the views of PNGOs and PA institutions on how they perceive various actors’ gains/losses economically because of the external aid and funding schemes of PNGOs.

Economic pay-off as a result of external aid

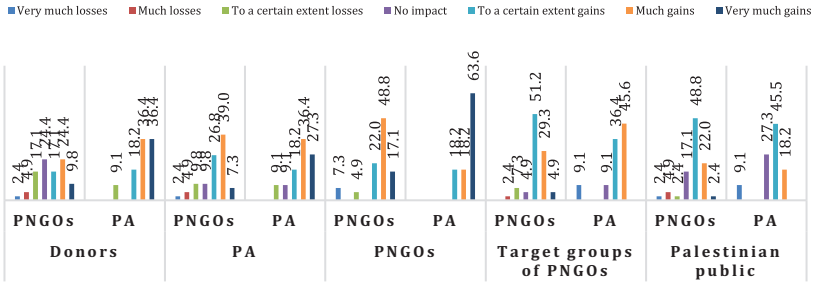


FIGURE C1. Economic Payoff as a Result of External Aid

Economic pay-off as a result of NGOs' work

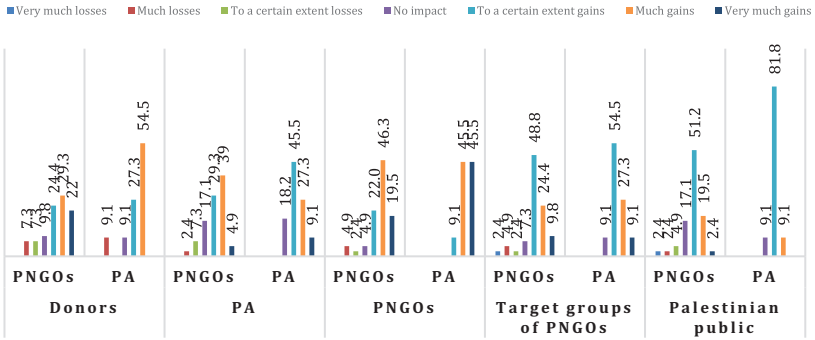


FIGURE C2. Economic Payoffs as a Result of PNGOs' Work

Appendix D presents the raw results regarding the views of PNGOs and PA institutions on how they perceive various actors' gains/losses socially because of the external aid and funding schemes of PNGOs.

Social pay-off as a result of external aid

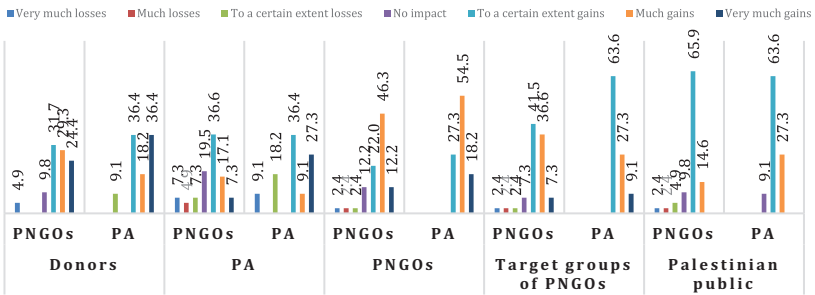


FIGURE D1. Social Payoff as a Result of External Aid

Social payoff as a result of NGOs' work

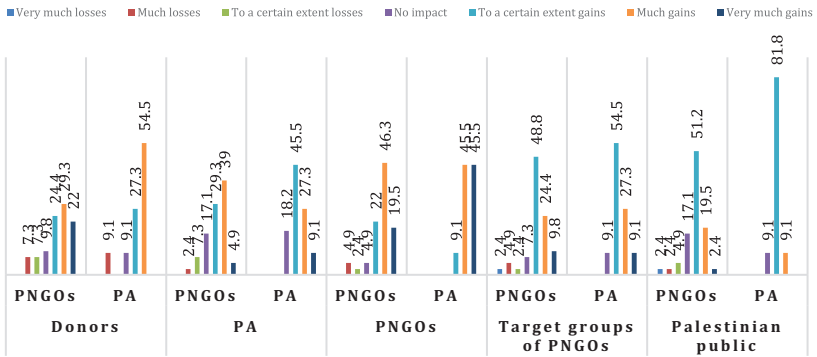


FIGURE D2. Social Payoff as a Result of NGOs' Work

Appendix E presents the raw results regarding the views of PA institutions on how they perceive various actors' gains/losses politically because of the external aid.

Political pay-off as a result of external aid

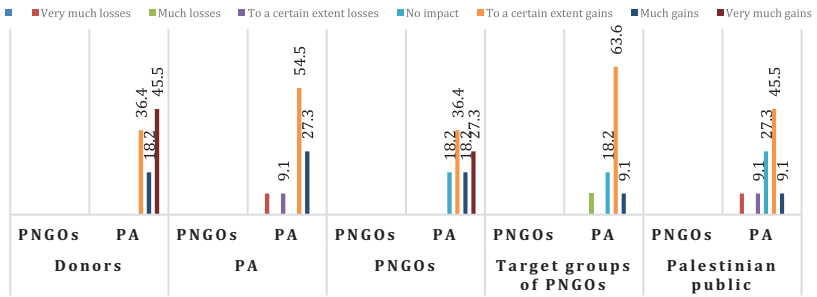


FIGURE E1. Political Payoff as a Result of External Aid

APPENDICES F-H: THE PALESTINIAN PUBLIC'S EVALUATION OF ACTORS' PAYOFFS—WINNERS AND LOSERS

Appendix F presents the raw results regarding the public's evaluation of the various actors' gains/losses economically because of external aid and the funding schemes of PNGOs.

Economic pay-off as a result of external aid

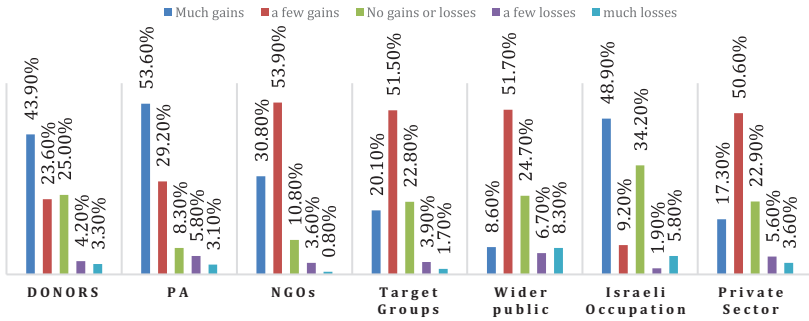


FIGURE F1. Economic Payoff as a Result of External Aid

Economic pay-off as a result of NGOs' work

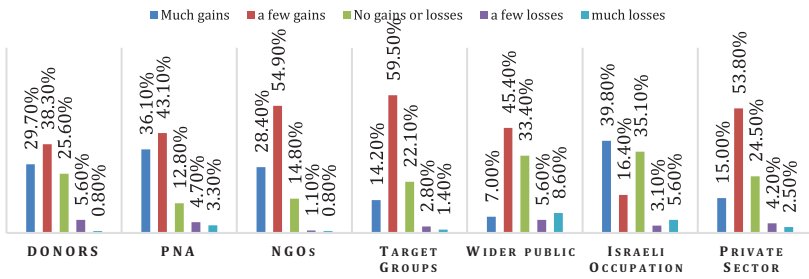


FIGURE F2. Economic Payoff as a Result of NGOs' Work

Appendix G presents the results regarding the public's evaluation of the various actors' gains/losses socially because of external aid and the funding schemes of PNGOs.

Social pay-off as a result of external aid

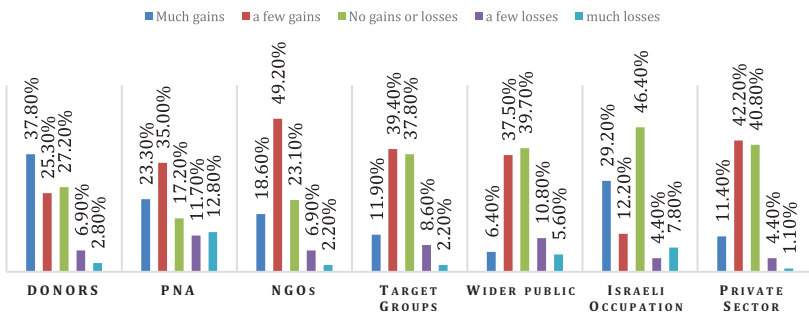


FIGURE G1. Social Payoff as a Result of External Aid

Social pay-off as a result of NGOs' work

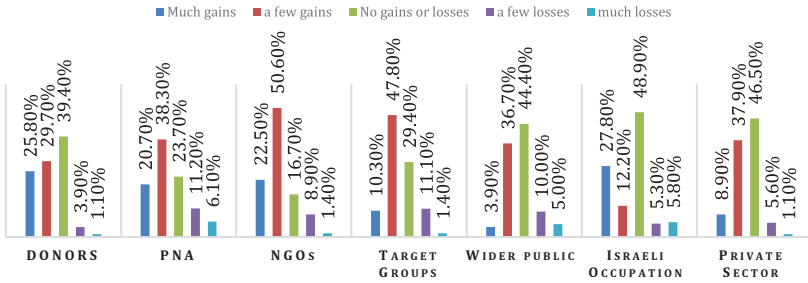


FIGURE G2. Social Payoff as a Result of NGOs' Work

Appendix H presents the results regarding the public's evaluation of the various actors' gains/losses politically because of external aid and the funding schemes of PNGOs.

Political pay-off as a result of external aid

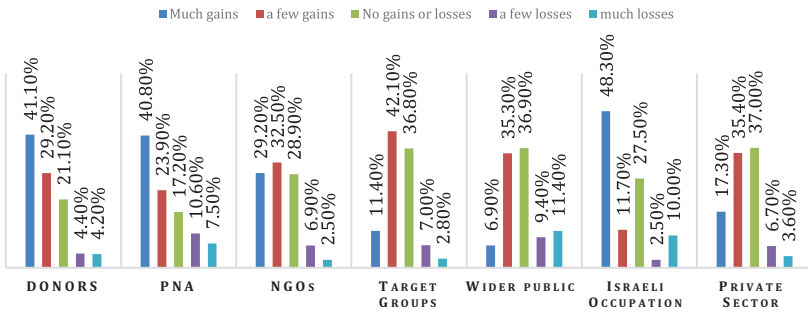


FIGURE H1. Political Payoff as a Result of External Aid

Political pay-off as a result of NGOs' work

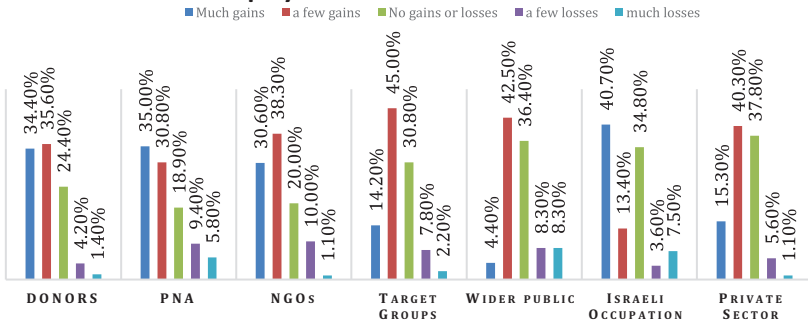


FIGURE H2. Political Payoff as a Result of NGOs' Work