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## Collective development projects in Palestine: Propagation of the neoliberal vulgate and normalisation of domination

### Abstract

In the aftermath of the creation of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, a multitude of actors began to carry out collective projects for cooperation in development under the aegis of international donors. The analysis of a World Bank-funded project illustrates how the scheme became a power network, producing both the managerial standards and the mechanisms needed to apply them among aid recipients. This contributed to transfiguring development into a dominant belief, based on a neoliberal and post-conflict reading of Palestinian society. In the name of coordination for "good governance", this network-building process constitutes the framework for interaction of aid recipients, while building a new social space: the "world of development". While the adherence of local actors to this belief has resulted in their internalisation of rational norms, it has also led to a new way of perceiving social reality. As a result, a new value system was established. A new social hierarchy was created in the "Palestine of Donors", with international donors at the top of the ladder. While the article is based on the Palestinian case, it addresses a global theme, that of instrumentalisation of "civil society" by international organisations whose purpose it is to establish a market economy in countries dependent upon development aid.

Keywords: project, governance, network, development aid, NGOs, Palestine.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The political conditions, priorities and criteria imposed by some donors<sup>2</sup> in selecting local Palestinian beneficiaries are responsible for the negative perception of the inhabitants of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) – occupied since 1967 – with regards to donors and their local "partners". The donors' selectivity in the choice of beneficiaries seems all the more severe as the Palestinian Authority (PA), as well as the NGOs, depend more and more on international aid to ensure the sustainability of their structures.

Faced with this situation, some donors have set up collective development projects, the implementation of which involves multiple participants: the PA, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and businesses. They view these projects as an economic necessity to reduce unemployment and poverty. Moreover, by following the "less State" model inspired by the free market economic theory and the paradigm of governance<sup>3</sup>, they view the collective execution of these projects as a strategy to improve the performance of international aid and create greater coordination between local actors entangled in power struggles. Donors consider that these projects help to transform power struggles and competition – between NGOs themselves, on the one hand, and NGOs and the PA on the other – into a partnership that ensures better distribution of international aid, thus making it possible to head in the direction of development or even democracy.

For all that, international aid can be analysed as an instrument of domination in the Weberian sense, which is to say, as "the possibility of compelling other people to influence their behavior according to one's own will"<sup>4</sup>. The donation thus introduces a relationship of superiority and constitutes an act of "violence disguised as a selfless gesture"<sup>5</sup>.

The symbolic and financial power of the donor community was consolidated in a colonial situation in which "state building" was undertaken in a context for which the PA and Palestinian NGOs were structurally dependent on international aid. Their "post-conflict"<sup>6</sup> perception of social reality - that is, the reification of the 1993 Oslo Accords as a historic break in which Israeli-Palestinian antagonisms gave way to a partnership in view of the peace process – imposed itself on local aid beneficiaries as an objective for the "promotion of peace

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<sup>2</sup> If the Palestinians refuse direct negotiations with Israel "the United States will limit its assistance to the PA". See: *Radio France Internationale*, "Direct Negotiations with Israel: Barack Obama's Warning to Mahmoud Abbas," *Radio France Internationale*, August 1, 2010, available at: <http://www.rfi.fr/moyen-orient/20100801-negotiations-directes-israel-avertissement-barack-obama-mahmoud-abbas> [accessed in August 2017]. The same threats were made by some European leaders.

<sup>3</sup> International organisations view governance as a prerequisite for development and the fight against corruption. See among others: Laëtitia Atlani-Duault, "Les ONG à l'heure de la 'bonne gouvernance'" (NGOs at the time of "good governance"), *Autrepart*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2005, Vol. 35 (3), p. 5, available at: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-autrepart-2005-3-p-3.htm> [accessed on August 22, 2017].

<sup>4</sup> Max Weber, *La domination* (Domination), Paris, Discovery, 2013, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Godelier, *L'énigme du don* (The enigma of the gift), Paris, Fayard, 1996, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Sari Hanafi and Linda Tabar, *Buruz al-nukhba al-falastiniya al-mu'awlama: al-manihun, wa al-munazzamat al-dawliya, wa al-munazzamat gheir al-hukumiya al-mahaliya*, Ramallah, Muwatin, 2006, p. 219.

and development"<sup>7</sup>. In this sense, the dominant discourse of international donors obscured the reality of Palestinian colonial tutelage in favor of a "virtual reality"<sup>8</sup>, according to which the establishment of the PA would be a culmination of Palestinian sovereignty.

Moreover, through its neoliberal economic program, the purpose of this argument was to "challenge all the collective structures which stood in the way of pure market logic"<sup>9</sup> including the nation, trade unions and political organisations. Indeed, since the Washington Consensus in 1989, international intervention for development in Southern countries has been governed by a neoliberal reading that reduces society to the trinomial "public sector, civil society, market". That is how the neoliberal reclamation of "civil society" was heightened<sup>10</sup>. The NGOs are the pillars of the neoliberal civil society. Their role is, first, to limit public intervention in the market economy, and second, oppose a hegemonic public power, generally considered as corrupt<sup>11</sup>. The emphasis is more on economic rationality based on the perception of a calculating, rational individual.

Nevertheless, the "neutralisation of the context"<sup>12</sup> implied by the universal development discourse overlooks local peculiarities, such as the Israeli colonisation, the structural impotence of the PA and the fragmentation of the Occupied Territory. Thus, although this discourse integrates a dimension of "colonising reality"<sup>13</sup>, and reconfigures the balance of power and local player hierarchies under the aegis of the donors, it presents development in the Occupied Territories, just like in other countries, as a "universal" humanitarian project, based on a set of technical measures, including economic, and implicitly located "outside the political debate."<sup>14</sup> Such a neoliberal representation of the social world conceives the political sphere as serving the market economy. As a result, the role of technocrats is idealised<sup>15</sup> unlike any national political reading or claim to struggle for liberation.

This article aims to demonstrate how the implementation of collective development projects in the Occupied Territories helps to legitimise the domination of international donors and

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<sup>7</sup> See: World Bank, "Developing the Occupied Territories (1993), An Investment in Peace," Washington DC, World Bank, 1993, available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/1993/09/6988671developing-occupied-territories-investment-peace-vol-1-6-overview> [accessed in September 2016]. In the name of peace and development, the intervention of the international powers in the Third World becomes a "right" according to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Paris, 10-18, 2004, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Gilbert Rist, *Le développement, histoire d'une croyance occidentale*, Paris, Presses de Sciences-Po, 2001, p. 342, 370-376. (English title : *The History of Development, From Western Origins to Global Faith*)

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Contre-feux. Propos pour servir à la résistance contre l'invasion néo-libérale* (Firing back. Resistance against the neo-liberal invasion), Paris, Raisons d'Agir, 1998, p. 107-109

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, *La naissance de la biopolitique* (The birth of biopolitics). Collège de France Course, 1978-1979, Paris, Gallimard, 2004, p. 299; Catherine Audard, *Qu'est-ce que le libéralisme ? Ethique, politique, société* (What is liberalism? Ethics, politics, society), Paris, Gallimard, 2009, p. 171

<sup>11</sup> Laetitia Atlani-Duault, *op. cit.* p. 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, "Sur les ruses de la raison impérialiste" (On the cunning of imperialist reason), *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, Paris, Seuil, 1998, Vol. 121-122, p. 109-118.

<sup>13</sup> That is to say, a discourse making certain theoretical representation which become the basis for describing and constructing social reality, hence the importance of analysing development as discourse in the Foucauldian sense to emphasise the domination it embodies. See: Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 5-6, 21-54.

<sup>14</sup> Gilbert Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 129-130.

<sup>15</sup> To go further, see: Sbeih Sbeih, *La professionnalisation des ONG en Palestine : entre pression des bailleurs de fonds et logique d'engagement*, (The professionalisation of NGOs in Palestine: between pressure from donors and logic of commitment), Doctoral Thesis, Guyancourt, University of Versailles St-Quentin-en-Yvelines, 2014, available on: <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01220122> [accessed on September 22, 2017].

their perception of reality. Such collective projects will be apprehended as apparatus (devices), in the Foucauldian sense of the term, in which relations of domination are hidden<sup>16</sup>. Hypothetically, the implementation of such projects helps to build a shared belief in development by both donors and NGOs receiving the international aid. This belief is followed by a new political configuration and new power relations, which are legitimised by new values. Development soon comes to define the action programs of both NGOs and aid recipients. By reconfiguring the value system that gives meaning to their action and legitimises their hierarchy, the aid process also modifies the social framework of their interactions. In this sense, the article aims to show how these collective projects consolidate this belief and the rationality that results from it. Although it is based on the Palestinian case, the article deals with a global phenomenon in the era of neoliberal globalisation and concerns all countries who are "beneficiaries" of international aid. It will no doubt resonate with the Lebanese case.

To demonstrate this, we studied the concrete case of "The Palestinian NGOs" project set up in the Occupied Territories in 1997 and financed by the World Bank (WB). The analysis turned out to be heuristic for several reasons. First, this project embodies the paradigm of governance and associates the three main actors dear to the neoliberal reading of society: the public sector, the private sector and civil society. While *Ta'awun* – Welfare Association, a foundation created in 1983 in Geneva by Palestinian capitalists<sup>17</sup> before moving to Ramallah in the 1990s – is responsible for the project, it mainly finances the three main community networks in the West Bank<sup>18</sup> namely: the Palestinian Network of NGOs (PNGO, created in 1994), the Palestinian General Union of Charitable Societies (PGUCS, formed in 1958) and the Palestinian National Institute of NGOs (PNIN, founded in 1997). The Association's purpose is to strengthen the coordination and *networking*<sup>19</sup> among these networks, which are prone to power struggles as a result of their different political positions vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority.

Second, the World Bank (WB) funding for this project attracts attention as it is unusual for WB to fund NGOs without going through the local official authority, namely the PA. The World Bank justifies this exception by highlighting the importance of NGOs in the Palestinian economy. The bank views this project as a pilot project and plans to extend the experience, if successful, to other developing countries<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Luc Boltanski, *De la critique : précis de sociologie de l'émancipation* (On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation), Paris, Gallimard, 2009, p. 16-17.

<sup>17</sup> Khalil Nakhleh, *Filistin: Wattan Lilbai'*, Ramallah, Rosa Luxembourg, 2011, p. 204.

<sup>18</sup> If the project integrates other associative networks in Gaza, the blockade imposed by the Israeli occupier on this area has restricted the author's field research - carried out between 2007 and 2014 as part of his thesis of sociology (Sbeih, *op. cit.*) - to the West Bank. It is important to note that in addition to the reports quoted, this article is based on thirty or so interviews conducted with the associative networks to which the NGOs studied in the West Bank and the employees of the WB project belong.

<sup>19</sup> During the fieldwork, the author was able to notice the intensive use of the term *networking* and the weight that the respondents gave to the associative network in the Palestinian associative configuration.

<sup>20</sup> World Bank, "Supporting Non-Governmental Organizations," Website, World Bank, available at: <http://go.worldbank.org/NOQS15EWN0> [accessed September 2016]; World Bank, "Implantation Completion Report: Palestinian NGO Project," Washington DC, World Bank, 2003, available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/362041468780571316/pdf/262520WBG0ICR.pdf> [accessed in September 2016].

Finally, the way in which the project evolved, itself reveals a process of institutionalisation of a power network in the Occupied Territories. At first established for a mere three years, it has benefited from several extensions (a Phase II from 2001 to 2006) that led in 2007, during phase III, to the creation of the NGO Development Center, the NDC. Since then, it has been registered as an association with the PA and continues to benefit from the help of new donors. Despite its importance, the NDC maintained a very low profile, that is, until 2011 when Khalil Nakhleh published his book<sup>21</sup> criticising the NDC and the *Ta'awun* (Welfare) Foundation.

In what follows, we first present the configuration of the three associative networks mentioned above, and then evaluate their integration into the project and the institutionalisation of the project as an NGO, the NDC. This will allow us to demonstrate how, since its creation, it has begun to produce management standards and to impose their application through evaluation mechanisms. We will then demonstrate how the implementation of collective projects gives rise to a new social space governed by managerial spirit we characterise as "the development world". Finally, our analysis will focus on the role of criticism in transforming development into a belief system governing associative networks and collective actors within this universe.

### **Power struggles and the funding of three community networks**

The history of the formation of the PNGO, the PGUCS and the PNIN allows us to better understand the power struggles in which they are entangled as well as the different nature of their relations with the donor community.

To describe their configuration, Jamal Salem, one of the founders of an agricultural NGO affiliated with the People's Party (the former Communist Party), and former member of the PNGO Coordinating Committee explains:

"The difference among these networks is essentially political [...] the *World Bank*<sup>22</sup> created a trust fund, which we know today as the *NDC*, to support these networks [...] the *PNGO* was very strong. Shadid [WB project director, between 1996 and 2006 and former executive director of the *Ta'awun* Foundation] did not want to limit the *NGOs* to a single cast and wanted to integrate everyone. With this project [...], he encouraged the Fatah Movement [National Liberation Movement of Palestine] to create their own organ: *PNIN*, and revived the PGUCS, to compete with the *PNGO*. In the end, he was providing *capacity building* for all three networks."<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, in the 1990s and especially after the first Iraq war and the fall of the Soviet Union, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and its political factions experienced a financial shortfall. International aid became a central resource for these organisations. While those on the leftwing provided jobs for activists through affiliated NGOs, the PA specifically

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<sup>21</sup> Khalil Nakhleh, *op. cit.*, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Author's note: The words in English and the management concepts will be underlined (in italics) as they were pronounced during the interviews conducted in Arabic or written in the reports studied.

<sup>23</sup> Author's interview with Jamal Salem, co-founder of an agricultural NGO and former member of the PNGO Coordination Committee, Ramallah, August 18, 2009.

Author's note: Unless otherwise noted, the names of the interlocutors have been changed.

employed Fatah activists. In their partisan rivalry, both parties used aid to leverage political power. As a result, their strategies focused on integration into the "chain of international aid"<sup>24</sup>.

Beginning in 1993, directors of leftwing NGOs – in particular, the People's Party and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)<sup>25</sup> – joined efforts and founded the PNGO, a political coalition in the name of "civil society" against the nascent PA – who, at the time qualified NGOs as "fat cats"<sup>26</sup> – and to gain autonomy while guaranteeing its members access to international aid. The conflict further escalated when the PNGO mobilised Palestinian parliamentarians and some donors against the draft law on associations proposed in 1995. The draft law contained registration procedures which would have allowed the PA to exercise considerable financial and political control over associative action.

Faced with this lobbying, the PA supported the creation of an associative network of Fatah NGOs, the PNIN (1997), before founding the Ministry of NGO Affairs in 1999. By doing so, the PA hoped to defuse donor criticism of corruption, authoritarianism and "bad governance"<sup>27</sup>, using the same language as the donors, i.e., that of a Fatah dominated "civil society", which would defend the PA against an opposition "civil society" dominated by the leftwing. The support of donors and several European countries in favor of the NGOs and the collective PNGO obliged the PA to finally propose a new law,<sup>28</sup> which would be promulgated in 2000. The PA ministry itself was transformed into a commission without any real role.

The PNGO (which represents some hundred NGOs) continues to be preferred by international donors compared to the other two networks. Between 1998 and 2003, *core funding* from the Ford Foundation in Egypt, enabled the PNGO to recruit a few employees and a project coordinator, following which significant cash shortfalls led to an incapacity to pay the network's employees<sup>29</sup>. It was in this context that the PNGO began accepting funding through the NDC in 2006 and 2007.

The PNIN was created in 1997 to counterbalance the weight of the PNGO, as well as to channel international aid in support of associations aligned with Fatah associations.<sup>30</sup> Although the PNIN was able to benefit from President Yasser Arafat's office before his death in 2004, the main funding of the association came from the WB project and later from the

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<sup>24</sup> Sari Hanafi and Linda Tabar, *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> The members of the PFLP are more radically opposed to the Oslo Accords and the PA than the leaders of the People's Party.

<sup>26</sup> Rema Hammami, "NGO's the professionalization of politics", *Race and Class*, London, SAGE Publications, 1995, Vol. 37 (2), p. 51-63.

<sup>27</sup> In the name of "good governance", some donors were imposing political conditions on Yasser Arafat to control his expenses, especially those in favor of resistance. Their use of this notion has been analogous to corruption in discrediting its "bad governance". Following the outbreak of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada, this argument was then used to justify the international boycott of the PA.

<sup>28</sup> Sari Hanafi and Linda Tabar, *op. cit.*, p. 16, 42, 239.

<sup>29</sup> Interviews conducted by the author with Hatem, former director of the PNGO project, Ramallah, June 23, 2009 and Paris, June 23, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Jamal Salem *op. cit.*

NDC. The PNIN remains however, much smaller than the PNGO even though it numbered some 400 members in 2009<sup>31</sup>.

The PGUCS was formed in 1958 under the Jordanian administration of the West Bank. It depended financially on Jordanian-Palestinian committees and the Jordanian Union of Charitable Associations. This funding was interrupted in 1988 following the Jordanian disengagement from the West Bank and it has not been replaced by neither the PA nor the international donors. The heavily impaired PGUCS was unable to continue paying the salaries of its four employees and it was arranged for the PA to pay these wages in the form of assistance to the unemployed.<sup>32</sup> The PGUCS, which includes around 400 organisations, remains out of the conflict between the NGOs and the PA. Moreover, not having any relation with the donor community, it has been marginalised in the Palestinian association landscape since Oslo. However, the officials of the PUGCS have also started to benefit from NDC assistance since 2008-2009.

Thus, regardless of the context of their creation, the three associative networks begin to benefit from the help of the NDC. Their relationship with this structure however, is not limited to financing, as they have progressively been inserted into the NDC board of directors.

### **The project: Establishment of World Bank dominance in the interest of coordination**

In 1997, the WB put a *trust fund* at the disposal of the *Ta'awun* Welfare Association Consortium, to launch the Palestinian NGO project<sup>33</sup>. The *policy manager* at the NDC, Sophie, explained that the goal of this project was to provide services to the "marginalised and poor" through sub-projects carried out by NGOs designated as *delivery mechanism*<sup>34</sup>. The implementation and mode of functioning of this project, the arrival of new actors and the ousting of old ones, have all led to the emergence of a network of power and new associative hierarchy presided by the WB. By fighting against poverty, the organisation was able to establish precedence over the various other actors involved in the project.

In addition to the newly established *Ta'awun* Foundation in Ramallah, two British institutions joined to form a consortium to manage phases I and II of a new project (1997 to 2006). While *Ta'awun* was responsible for carrying out on-site activities, the two British institutions were responsible for *technical assistance (consultancy and capacity building)*. According to NDC coordinator, Sophie, the three organisations constitute together the *Project Management Office*. Sophie went on to say that, in order to escape the competitive context between the

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<sup>31</sup> Author's interview with Salem Salem, former PNIN president, Palestinian academic and NDC board member, Nablus, August 16, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> Interview conducted by the author with Fadi Jameel, the president of the PGUCS at the national level, August 17, 2009; interview conducted by the author with Sami, the president of the PGUCS, Hebron region, August 17, 2009; interview conducted by the author with the secretary of the PGUCS, Hebron, August 17, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Khalil Nakhleh, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 217.

<sup>34</sup> Interview conducted by the author with Sophie, NDC policy manager, Ramallah, August 10, 2009; WB websites, *op. cit.*



NGOs and the PA and reinforce the coordination between them, the WB and the consortium formed a *steering committee* which included representatives of the public sector - selected among employees of either the Ministry of Planning or the Ministry of NGOs, depending on the time period - and the "civil society" represented by members of the three association networks: the PNGO, the PGUCS and the PNIN. In 2003, a few Palestinian businessmen and academic figures joined this committee with the emergence of the project under a new objective during the second phase: strengthening partnerships with the private sector. Thus, the neoliberal triangle "civil society, private sector and public sector" was cemented in the steering committee, in addition to academics whose integration was intended to give the network a degree of academic legitimacy.

However, although the main task of the steering committee, now known as the "supervisory board", was to study and validate grant requests from NGOs, the decision ultimately depended on the WB. The president of the PGUCS<sup>35</sup>, a member of the committee since its inception, noted that even if neither the WB nor the PA had a vote on committee deliberations, it was in fact the World Bank whose opinion mattered and retained ultimate decision-making power. Subsidies voted by the committee had to be validated by the WB. He added that early in the decade, the bank had occasionally objected<sup>36</sup>. Salem Salem, speaking as a representative of the PNIN, explained that he and representatives of PNGO and the PGUCS had threatened to withdraw from a project if the WB refused to fund Palestinian NGOs in Jerusalem<sup>37</sup>. According to Salem Salem, World Bank representatives in the Occupied Territories red-lined Jerusalem-based NGOs for "political reasons" related to the status of Jerusalem. Faced with this lobbying, the WB agreed to support these NGOs, but with the provision that funds for such projects be drawn from Arab sources and not from the World Bank.

In 2006, the project was restructured. In an evaluation report, the World Bank noted that during the first two phases, the project contributed to poverty reduction as 500 NGOs benefited from World Bank funding<sup>38</sup>. The report, however, remained "ambiguous" and linked the weaknesses of the project to external factors without specifying which ones<sup>39</sup>. The report stressed that the project had not resulted in capacity building for the NGOs involved. To remedy this, the WB along with *Ta'awun* recommended the extension of the project into a third phase, creating a new supra-organisation, the NGO Development Center (NDC). This organisation would take the role of management and coordination of NGO activities and replace the *Ta'awun* consortium<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Fadi Jameel, *op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> After receiving a grant during phase I of the project, the NGO ARIJ has not been able to obtain others since. According to the Israeli NGO *NGO monitor*, ARIJ was deprived of these grants because it had adopted a *political biased approach to its research*, that is to say, it had used ecological issues as a pretext for criticising Israel. See: *NGO Monitor*, "World Bank - PNGO Project," Website, NGO Monitor, available at: [www.ngo-monitor.org/article/world\\_bank\\_pngo\\_project0](http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/world_bank_pngo_project0) [accessed March 2013]. The author wishes to point out that the opinion of the Israeli NGO *NGO monitor* influences some European donors especially when it comes to their support for Palestinian NGOs. See: interview conducted by the author with Fayeze Jad, former NDC employee, Ramallah, September 7, 2009.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Salem Salem, *op. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Sophie *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Having not obtained this report, the author relied on Nakhleh's analysis: Khalil Nakhleh, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 172.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Sophie, *op. cit.*

Former members of the *Ta'awun* steering committee would simply become members of the NDC board of directors which could then be expanded over time. The project chairman (former head of the *Ta'awun* Foundation) was replaced by the director of the Ramallah Coca Cola Bottling Company<sup>41</sup>, revealing the growing influence of the private sector in the orientation of the associative action for development. The Palestinian Authority was also excluded: "*We do not need government* in a non-governmental structure" explained Sophie.

The new distribution of power seemed to be pressed by a desire to exclude the Palestinian government formed by Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement). Following its electoral victory in 2006, Hamas was boycotted by donors who considered the political movement a "terrorist" group, and blamed Hamas' failure to recognise the state of Israel. Unable to pay PA salaries, in 2007 Hamas forcibly took control of the Gaza Strip from Fatah, whose legitimacy would be limited henceforth to the West Bank<sup>42</sup>. In 2007, Salam Fayyad, a former World Bank<sup>43</sup> employee supported by international donors, formed his ministerial cabinet of technocrats to replace that of Hamas. At that time Fayyad set up a neoliberal-inspired<sup>44</sup> development program for the West Bank. Islamic charity associations close to Hamas at the time were increasingly targeted by both the Israeli army and PA security forces in the West Bank. The latter in 2007 forced the closure and reorganisation of a hundred associations with reapportionment of their boards of directors. In addition, directors of a few of the associations, particularly members of the PGUCS, were arrested by the PA acting with the Israeli army<sup>45</sup>. Contrary to its stated goals for NGOs and their role in development, the NDC failed to stand up for these groups. This failure was exacerbated by the NDC's decision to exclude Hamas representation from its structure. In the end, the NDC found itself supporting the political orientations established in the name of development which served primarily to legitimise Salam Fayyad's entry into politics despite his weak electoral weight.

The NDC thus formed a network of power whose financial capacity would grow steadily. In 2008, the NDC's 30 employees<sup>46</sup> were active in *fundraising* activities to collect new project funds<sup>47</sup>. The expansion of NDC activities was supported by donors such as the French Development Agency, a consortium of Swiss donors, various European governments, Saudi

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<sup>41</sup> Khalil Nakhleh, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 173, 224.

<sup>42</sup> This period marks the birth of what has since come to be called the "Palestinian division" *al-Inqisam al-falastini*.

<sup>43</sup> After working at the WB in Washington, Fayyad represented the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the West Bank.

<sup>44</sup> See: Palestinian National Authority, "Building a Palestinian State: Towards Peace and Prosperity," Paris, Palestinian National Authority, 2007, available at: <https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/PRDPFinal.pdf> [accessed August 24, 2017]. This neoliberal thinking is also outlined in Plan II in 2008. See: Ministry of Planning (MoP) and Ministry of Finance (MoF), "Palestinian Reform and Development Plan 2008-2010 (PRDP)," Palestinian National Authority, available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/PRDP08-10.pdf> [accessed August 24, 2017].

<sup>45</sup> The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), *Freedom of association in the Palestinian-Controlled Territory 2008*, Ramallah, ICHR, 2008, p. 13-25 ; Sbeih, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> During the interview (interview with Sophie, supra), Sophie indicated that the NDC employed about 30 employees. However, the "NDC Staff" section of the NDC website did not mention a single employee, and indeed was content-free. See: NGO Development Center, Website, *NGO Development Center*, available at: [www.ndc.ps](http://www.ndc.ps) [accessed September 29, 2017].

<sup>47</sup> Khalil Nakhleh, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 172-174; interview with Sophie *op. cit.*

Arabia, and the Islamic Development Bank<sup>48</sup>. Due to its politically "correct" character under the banner of peace promotion, the project attracted donors who had boycotted, for political reasons, the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat, who was besieged in Ramallah between 2001 and 2003, and the Hamas government in 2006. In addition, NDC employees were able to mobilise Arab donors to finance projects by NGOs in Jerusalem<sup>49</sup>. The implementation of international aid doxa by the NDC, and especially the empowerment of the role of "civil society", reveals the involvement of other donors.

For international donors, the NDC would become the keystone for their *networking* efforts for development. The project budget thus increased from about \$ 5 million a year during the first two phases to about \$ 20 million a year beginning in 2006, with the third phase<sup>50</sup>.

This allowed the World Bank to coordinate aid from different donors and homogenise it according to bank norms for directing international funds and *channeling the international funds*<sup>51</sup>. For example, the aid by Arab donors in the 1980s, as part of *Sumud* (which means to hold on while economically resisting the Israeli occupation), was carried out in coordination with various committees (including Jordanian-Palestinian committees) run in part by the PLO and its political factions. This aid now goes through international channels and serves to legitimise the intervention of the WB and its perception of Palestinian reality, as was the case with the *Ta'awun* Foundation. Created first to support the strategy of economic resistance in coordination with the PLO (*Sumud*), the NDC has become an intermediary structure between the WB, NGOs and Palestinian community networks. It has changed from being a donor (as a foundation) to being a World Bank funds manager.

By the same token, this network of power legitimises the new hierarchy within the associative field. Indeed, the large associative structures and associative networks constitute the first target of the NDC. It finances them primarily to help them develop their "internal governance" and financial management. Subsidies granted by the NDC therefore go through associative networks such as PNGO and PNIN, which in turn subsidise smaller NGOs. The NDC supports *capacity building* among these large structures, which in turn, do the same for the smaller structures<sup>52</sup>, making it possible to extend the associative networks while establishing new associative hierarchies. In other words, the associative networks as well as the big NGOs hold positions of power compared to the smaller networks such that the NDC becomes the leader of the associative set (the *NGO Community*, according to the language of the NDC literature). This hierarchy is reflected, for example, in a certain salary grid that is favorable to NDC employees compared to employees of local NGOs<sup>53</sup>. Finally, it is the donors and especially the WB who are at the helm of this aid chain. The NDC, meanwhile,

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<sup>48</sup> NGO Development Center (NDC), "Building a more capable and responsive NGO Sector," Ramallah, *NGO Development Center*, 2007, available at: [http://ndc.ps/sites/default/files/English\\_Annual\\_Option%20%282007%29.pdf](http://ndc.ps/sites/default/files/English_Annual_Option%20%282007%29.pdf) [accessed August 22, 2017]; NGO Development Center (NDC), "Empowering the Palestinian NGO Sector," Ramallah, *NGO Development Center*, available at: <http://ndc.ps/sites/default/files/NDC%202008%20English%20Annual%20Report%281%29.pdf> [accessed August 22, 2017]; Khalil Nakhleh, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 171-173, 216-223.

<sup>49</sup> Khalil Nakhleh, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 213.

<sup>50</sup> Interview conducted by the author with an employee and NDC project manager. Ramallah, August 10, 2009; interview with Sophie, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Expression used by Sophie (interview with Sophie, *op. cit.*).

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Sophie, *op. cit.*

<sup>53</sup> Interviews with Fayeze Jad and Sophie and another NDC employee, *op. cit.*

restructures the balance of power between these actors, including local beneficiaries of aid, entangled in power struggles (associative networks and the PA alongside companies, within its board of directors), and excluding other actors for political reasons.

Being the result of a project aimed at reducing poverty and establishing coordination, the NDC is becoming a structure that helps to restructure the associative universe. Its aim is to normalise the new developmentalist perception among donors and beneficiaries. Although the NDC networks a diversity of local and international actors with the help of the symbolic and financial power of the World Bank, it derives its strength from its image as a professional NGO for development. In other words, its power is also based on its ability to submit its domination to "justification requirements"<sup>54</sup>. It is through the production and dissemination of managerial devices and rational standards that it legitimises its exercise of power in the name of development.

### Production of management norms and evaluation system

The WB highlights "Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction"<sup>55</sup> as a mission for the NDC, as well as improving the labor market and civic participation. The NDC has thus endeavored to introduce a system of norms - the operation of which can be assimilated to Foucault's idea of discipline and his system of "punishment and reward"<sup>56</sup> – which aims to homogenise associative action. On the one hand, the NDC has begun to produce benchmarks of "good governance" for development. On the other hand, it has set up an ongoing process of evaluation which, through monitoring and control tools, aims to ensure the application of these standards by beneficiary NGOs.

A group of experts<sup>57</sup> put in place a strategy in 2006 defining the strategy guiding the modality of action of NDC as well as the strategy for all Palestinian NGOs. While the Israeli occupation and the weakness of the NGOs are listed as the *key findings*, the *primary concerns* on which the strategy is based are described in terms of the *weak governance* of the PA and the *inefficiency of the NGOs*. The five objectives proposed are thus expressed in managerial language associated with the neoliberal development paradigm: "*increase effectiveness and efficiency, improve governance, strengthen civil society and democracy, promote community empowerment and promote NGO sustainability*"<sup>58</sup>. These objectives will, in turn, constitute the criteria by which the NDC will evaluate the performance of community networks (see below).

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<sup>54</sup> Holders of power (the dominant ones) claim the legitimacy of their exercise of power by invoking its "rationality", that is to say its submission to "requirements of justification". Luc Boltanski, *op. cit.*, p. 16-17.

<sup>55</sup> WB websites on the NDC, *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir, Naissance de la prison*, Paris, Gallimard, 2002, p. 159, 212, 264. (translated as *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* Random House 1995)

<sup>57</sup> Danilo Songco, Kahlil Nijem, and Majed El Farra, "Proposed Strategy for the Development of the Palestinian NGO Sector," Ramallah, NGO Development Center, 2006, available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Majed\\_El-Farra/publication/237477636\\_Proposed\\_Strategy\\_for\\_the\\_Development\\_of\\_the\\_Palestinian\\_NGO\\_Sector/links/53f4a95b0cf2888a7491121c/Proposed-Strategy-for-the-Development-of-the-Palestinian-NGO-Sector.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Majed_El-Farra/publication/237477636_Proposed_Strategy_for_the_Development_of_the_Palestinian_NGO_Sector/links/53f4a95b0cf2888a7491121c/Proposed-Strategy-for-the-Development-of-the-Palestinian-NGO-Sector.pdf) [accessed August 22, 2017]. This strategy was established by a group chaired by Danilo Songco, international expert for development agencies and a graduate in Business Administration.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2, 3-4, 7.

In order to identify the challenges and weaknesses of the voluntary sector, the strategy described above is based on the comments of development *stakeholders*, namely "government, private sector, donor agencies, local and international NGOs, CBOs, and intellectuals in the academe"<sup>59</sup>. Although this category of *stakeholders* includes actors who occupy different social and political positions, their remarks are introduced into this strategy regardless of their balance of power or status (donor, beneficiary, government, NGOs ...). This reveals a characteristic of the managerial and neoliberal reading of society adopted by the authors of the strategy. Development *stakeholders* thus become interchangeable partners without hierarchy and holding the same weight, both in decision-making and in carrying out the development activities. The study mentions that some *stakeholders*, without mentioning names, may be used to explain the success of Hamas in the 2006 elections by its instrumentalisation of NGOs. They consider this "politicisation of NGOs and development" as a counter-productive phenomenon for development and a sap to NGOs<sup>60</sup>, whence the importance of "neutrality" of development in this managerial thinking.

In order to present a responsible image and present a schema for understanding reality on the ground, the NDC published a number of documents in 2008, including "*The Palestinian NGOs Code of Conduct*". This code defines a "developmentalist role" for NGOs by highlighting twelve principles of governance and management<sup>61</sup> to be respected by NGOs in the manner of companies working in a "free market". Hundreds of Palestinian NGOs signed the code in 2008, as it was published in order to meet NDC funding requirements. Thousands of small booklets of this code in Arabic and English were subsequently published and distributed, as well as calendars in which each month was associated with one of these principles. In addition, the NDC published in 2008 a *Resource Kit*<sup>62</sup>, a set of resource guides for management, financial and managerial planning that NGOs must refer to if they wish to ensure their *capacity building* and properly fulfill their development role. The *Kit* also contained orientation guides on international law, especially on the rights and privileges of individuals and/or social groups. It was hoped that associations would reduce their political claims in favor of advocacy based on this legal language instead of on their collective demands in the name of national liberation.

The role of the NDC was thus to disseminate management standards for development among NGOs through community networks. Each NDC-funded project included a budget for training NGO teams in capacity building and funds management (*fund raising, proposals' writing*). Similarly, NGO teams had to be able to showcase their activities through the

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>61</sup> The principles are: *Compliance with Covenants and Laws, Priorities of Development, Participation, Networking and Coordination, Transparency, Accountability, Equality and Inclusiveness, Good Governance, Prevent Conflict of Interest, Influence and Effectiveness, NGO's Integrity, Dispute Resolution*. The Code of Conduct Coalition, "The Palestinian NGOs Code of Conduct," Website, *NGO Development Center*, 2008, available at: <http://ndc.ps/sites/default/files/1204355297.pdf> [accessed August 22, 2017].

<sup>62</sup> During the author's 2009 survey, he obtained the Resource Kit that the NDC published in Arabic. The NDC defines this Kit as: "*The Resource Kit serves as a tool for NGOs and provides them with strategic procedures in the areas of board governance, finance and administration, and strategic planning*." See: NGO Development Center (NDC), "Terms of Reference Palestinian NGO IV Project NGO Sector Development: AFD-C-29 B," Website, *NGO Development Center*, available at: <http://www.ndc.ps/sites/default/files/ToR-review-resource-kit.PDF> [accessed September 20, 2017].

publication of *success stories* and annual and financial reports that relayed project models and keywords<sup>63</sup>.

To legitimise these norms (their appropriation, and *ownership* by local actors), the NDC highlighted their production within the framework of a so-called participative approach which included all the local actors, in particular the three associative networks. The latter thus appeared as "partners" of the WB and lenders, in other words of *stakeholders*. In order to establish the criteria for evaluating the performance of community networks, the NDC organised a "Network Performance Standards" workshop<sup>64</sup> in October 2007 during which the discussion among community networks was based on the program objectives that had been elaborated in the 2006<sup>65</sup> strategy (presented above). The following table lists the evaluation criteria used by the NDC.

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<sup>63</sup> Interviews with Sophie and Jamal Salem, *op. cit.*

<sup>64</sup> NGO Development Center (NDC), "'Report' of the Network Performance Standards Workshop, 20-21 October 2007," *NGO Development Center*, Best Eastern Hotel, Ramallah, obtained in 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Danilo Songco, Kahlil Nijem, and Majed El Farra, *op. cit.*

Table I: Evaluation Criteria for three Palestinian association networks linked through the NDC<sup>66</sup>

Evaluation Criterion	Indicators
Purpose and organisation of the network (15 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Membership level in the association network (5 points);</li> <li>- Value added of the network;</li> <li>- Internal policies</li> </ul>
Governance (20 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organisational chart and decision making (10 points);</li> <li>- Enforcement of a <i>code of conduct</i></li> </ul>
Management (20 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive office (5 points);</li> <li>- Planning and program implementation;</li> <li>- Fundraising and financial management;</li> <li>- Follow-up and evaluation</li> </ul>
Sustainability (10 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial stability (5 points);</li> <li>- Strategic vision;</li> </ul>
Network performance on its designated roles (30 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobilisation and awareness raising to influence public policies (5 points);</li> <li>- Development of <i>capacity building</i> of members in pursuit of efficacy and efficiency<sup>67</sup> ;</li> <li>- Information management and production of knowledge to the role of NGOs and their participation in development;</li> <li>- Empowerment of coordination and cooperation among members;</li> <li>- Empowerment of <i>accountability</i> among the network, its members and beneficiaries;</li> <li>- Strengthening members' solidarity with the Palestinian people against occupation</li> </ul>
Overall satisfaction with performance (5 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total degree of satisfaction with performance</li> </ul>

Among these criteria, the political question appears only marginally more precisely twice: once to measure the associative networks' influence on the PA's "public policies" and a second time, in measuring the role of networks in "*strengthening members' solidarity with the people in promoting steadfastness against occupation*"<sup>68</sup>. The weight of politics is marginalised and the struggle against occupation seems blurred - associative networks appear to the people as foreign structures and convey a message of "solidarity", appearing as one

<sup>66</sup> NGO Development Center (NDC), "NDC Internal Excel Table: Umbrella Network Assessment Results," *NGO Development Center*, 2009, obtained in 2009.

<sup>67</sup> Efficiency means efficacy at the lowest cost. (Marie Benedetto-Meyer, Serge Maugeri, and Jean-Luc Metzger, *L'emprise de la gestion : la société au risque des violences gestionnaires*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2011, p. 13).

<sup>68</sup> NGO Development Center (NDC), "'Report' of the Network Performance Standards Workshop, 20-21 October 2007, » *op. cit.*

minor element among many others. The focus remains on the NGO actors' capacity for action and freedom, while excluding any reference to the domination and structural constraints which influence their "choices" and actions. In the event of failure, the evaluation points out to the poor performance of the actors benefiting from the aid or the lack of coordination between the *stakeholders*.

In short, the evaluation follows a post-conflict representation of the reality of the Palestinian Occupied Territories (POT) and embodies the neoliberal paradigm and the hegemony of management and its norms. It reflects the domination of donors and the associative orientation of their actions, while concealing this domination in management systems. The actions carried out, and thus evaluated, then rely upon an alternative reality, built upon managerial thinking. It consists of reproducing relations of domination, dressing them as a partnership between *stakeholders*. The involvement of the latter in politics however, especially when these are concerned with the anti-colonial struggle, represents a lack of professionalism and an obstacle to development since it is antithetical to a basic tenet of development aid: neutrality.

### **Construction of the world of development and compliance with its norms**

The compliance of actors to the imposed standards and the integration of the rational devices of development guarantee them access to financing as well as a place in the "world of development". This is indeed the social space built by the implementation of collective projects and *networking* under the auspices of donors. It is close to the "city by project": a city modeled on management literature, based on "organisation by project" and the proliferation of networks<sup>69</sup>. In this world, managerial reasoning is the normative point of support that makes it possible for actors to collaborate (here: the PA, associative networks, NGOs and companies) under the responsibility of international organisations.

Within this framework NGOs, such as AMAN,<sup>70</sup> are created whose main task is to evaluate other NGOs and grant them "transparency certificates" according to their compliance with financial and professional standards. This also results in a ranking of NGOs according to their "merit" and legitimacy to receive assistance as well as their ability to manage international funds. Stakeholder compliance with these standards thus becomes an expression of their professionalism, essential for their inclusion in the world of development.

In this world, the use of a management language, usually English is considered synonymous with professionalism. This is especially true for actors who occupy important positions, as demonstrated by some passages – highlighted in italics in this article – interviews conducted

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<sup>69</sup> Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* (The New Spirit of Capitalism), Paris, Gallimard, 1999, p. 157-158.

<sup>70</sup> The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN), "About Us," Website, The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity, available at: <https://www.aman-palestine.org/en/about-aman/about-organization> [accessed September 25, 2017].



in Arabic with employees of the NDC. The majority of these individuals are management graduates and have a perfect command of English, especially since some of them come from development agencies (for example from the United Nations Development Program, UNDP, as was the case of the NDC Director since 2006)<sup>71</sup> and from the private sector.

Conversely, the non-use of this language and the inability to integrate *fundraising* employees into its structure are both seen as signs of incompetence. The case of the PGUCS, illustrated below by an excerpt from a collective interview with its managers, confirms this:

They call us "the traditionals", we are not on-trend, we do not take money to pay for our travel, it seems outdated to them [...] We have no budget to travel abroad [to explain the insufficiency of external relations], and our brothers at the PNGO ... their reach is greater than ours, they have external relations and their senior executive ("*cadres*") can write in a foreign language and therefore communicate<sup>72</sup>.

Not only do international donors not consider the PGUCS to be an associative network adapted for development, but NDC and PNGO employees view the PGUCS with derision as the author discovered while researching in the field between 2007 and 2014. The impact of management standards on its structure, particularly its section in Jerusalem, is revealing. The reports published by the latter show its commitment to the application of the standards of "good governance" and its promotion of training in project management and networking. The creation of websites in English<sup>73</sup>, the use of the language of civil society and development as well as the new strategy of action around advocacy are all revealing examples of these transformations. After a period of marginalisation, the PGUCS went from the status of "representative of member associations" to that of an associative network of coordination and execution of development projects, despite the mistrust of its leaders.

These transformations also apply to the other two associative networks. The PNGO is currently responsible for *capacity building* activities of NGO members, *legal campaigns* and *social and economic rights*. A representative of the NDC participates in the elections of its coordinating committee to testify to this essential process for any possible financing<sup>74</sup>. Contrary to its discourse highlighting its relationship with political organisations to face the PA in the 1990s, the PNGO begins to insist on its apoliticism<sup>75</sup>. Its leaders perceive it as a spokesperson for civil society vis-à-vis the public sector, in this case the PA. The network

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<sup>71</sup> Interviews conducted by the author with Ghaleb Kassem, the NDC director, as well as a project manager employee. Ramallah, August 10, 2009.

<sup>72</sup> Interviewed by the author in a collective interview with Fadi Jameel, president of the PGUCS at the national level, during his discussions with Sami, president of the PGUCS in the Hebron region, Hebron, August 17, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> For an example of an NGO site in English, see: Union of the Charitable Societies - Jerusalem, "Welcome in UCS," Website, Union of the Charitable Societies-Jerusalem, available at: <http://ucs-pal.org/english/> [accessed September 2016].

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Fayez Jad, *op. cit.*

<sup>75</sup> Sari Hanafi and Linda Tabar, *op. cit.*, p. 370-372.

aims to strengthen coordination among member NGOs<sup>76</sup> and promote a partnership according to the paradigm of governance. Its NGO members are mainly dependent on international aid and define themselves as development NGOs. The PNIN also becomes a "collective player of development", even though it remains a political instrument at the service of the PA.

In short, the entry of these three networks into the world of development results in the collective promotion of the code of conduct developed by the NDC (presented above), the internalisation of its norms and language, and their commitment to disseminate them. They are now actors of development. They adopt the international legal language and the managerial spirit, and we observe the homogenisation of the language used in annual reports towards the rhetoric and terminology used in the world of development.

That said, the evolution of collective development actors cannot be explained solely by the opportunist or economic dimension, despite its importance. Nor does it mean the establishment of coordination without hierarchy and without competition. Moreover, the intervention of the WB through the NDC – as well as other collective projects funded by international organisations<sup>77</sup> – certainly does not undermine the power struggle and the balance of power between the actors receiving aid. However, it reconfigures the power structures in which the actors are located and thus the logic of insertion and exclusion of the political configuration. International donors are becoming essential actors in the OPT. Their norms form the basis of "consensus", of belief<sup>78</sup>, which now defines both the way in which the actors benefiting from aid are situated in relation to each other, but also their perception of reality and their *modus operandi*.

International intervention thus transforms the political struggle of the latter - their position in relation to the Oslo Accords or their involvement in the Palestinian national struggle against the occupation - into a matter of competition for obtaining international aid according to perceived professionalism. Success in obtaining aid reflects the extent to which the aid recipient obeys management standards and thus, its submission to the new value system, which in turn determines its position within the world of development. Exclusion means marginalisation, as was the case of the PGUCS, the oldest association network. In short, occupying a place in the world of development becomes the stepping stone to the power field of the "Palestine of the donors", that is to say, Palestine as it is understood in the discourse of the donor community and as it is constituted through donor planning and action. Adherence to development standards by local actors thus becomes a structural constraint on community

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<sup>76</sup> See also Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO), "Mission & Vision," Website, Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network, available at: <http://www.pngo.net/mission-vision/> [accessed September 2016].

<sup>77</sup> The author investigated a joint development project in the West Bank by UNDP (see Sbeih, supra). In a similar way to the WB project, it was launched in 1997 for two years before being renewed several times until 2013. Agricultural NGOs also compete for help to run projects following the same model, designed on the basis of the establishment of networks to disseminate the neoliberal vulgate.

<sup>78</sup> André Tosel, "La presse comme appareil d'hégémonie selon Gramsci" (The press as a device of hegemony according to Gramsci) *Quaderni*, Paris, Editions de la MSH, 2005, Vol. 57 (1), p. 61, available at: [http://www.persee.fr/doc/quad\\_0987-1381\\_2005\\_num\\_57\\_1\\_1661](http://www.persee.fr/doc/quad_0987-1381_2005_num_57_1_1661) [accessed August 22, 2017].

networks. Refusing these norms is synonymous with being deprived of help, but it is also the beginning of stigmatisation, in short, of political exclusion.

The relationship between donors and local actors is not limited to a financial issue but also refers to issues of perception of social reality, legitimacy, power and hierarchy in the world of development. It is nurtured in managerial logic, conceived as the "set of principles of action presented as rationally founded", which makes it possible "to consider that one can 'manage' [...] all the activities and social relations [...]"<sup>79</sup>. These norms and reasoning constitute the rational belief in development. To consolidate this, the NDC produces rhetoric in its favor while aiming to monopolise the field of criticism of the other.

### **The monopoly of criticism and the production of beliefs**

In order to justify this new belief and the resulting hierarchy and policies, the NDC aims to monopolise the field of criticism while embracing the international doxa of development. Let us first specify that we distinguish two types of criticism: on the one hand, the critique that challenges the social order established by the Oslo Accords; on the other hand, the evaluative (or corrective) criticism that builds on the order which is the foundation of the right of international intervention for development. This second criticism aims at correcting the behavior, strategies and public pronouncements of the actors involved in development so that they conform to this new belief. It also aims to improve their image and hold them accountable. The evolution of this criticism and its dynamic relation to the first criticism reveal the way in which this belief has come about.

Indeed, since the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, protest criticism of the colonial dimension of affairs in Palestine has proliferated. Several works<sup>80</sup> fault the order which underlies the foundation of international intervention, thus questioning more or less directly the basis for the Oslo Accords. After working for several years with *Ta'awun* and other European organisations, Khalil Nakhleh drawing on his experience, his archives and his data denounced the policies of this foundation, the NDC and the international donor community in Palestine<sup>81</sup>. He called the development experts working in Palestine mercenaries and demonstrated how Palestinian capitalists accepted aid from *Sumud* in the 1980s, and aid from international donors in the 1990s to dominate the Palestinian market of the Occupied Territories following the Oslo Accords<sup>82</sup>. This dominance was articulated progressively with the *business* of peace as evoked by other researchers<sup>83</sup>. It is in this sense that international aid is perceived as support for Israel and its practices in that it shifts the costs of Israeli occupation to the

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<sup>79</sup> Marie Benedetto-Meyer, Serge Maugeri, and Jean-Luc Metzger, *op.cit.*, 2011, p. 12-13.

<sup>80</sup> Among others, see: Adel Samara, *Munazzamat gheir hukumiyah 'am qawa'id lil'akhar? NGOs!*, Ramallah, Al-Shuruq Center, 2003; Khalil Nakhleh, *Usturat al-tanmia fi falastin, al-da'm al-siyassi wal murawagha al-mustadima*, Ramallah, Muwatin / PASSIA, 2004.

<sup>81</sup> Khalil Nakhleh, *op. cit.*, 2011.

<sup>82</sup> Khalil Nakhleh, *op. cit.*, 2004.

<sup>83</sup> Markus Bouillon, *The Peace Business: Palestine-Israel Conflict*, London / New York, I.B./Tauris, 2004.

Western powers: health services and education for the inhabitants of the OPT, especially as this aid is spent within an economic structure which is de facto integrated into the dominant economy.

Faced with such criticism, the donor community together with the NDC have produced alternative literature intended to set the record straight and to defuse a direct challenge to the aid system and the overall politico-economic project. In their reports, both the WB and the UNDP justify the deterioration of the economic situation in the OPT as the perverse effects of the aid, including the large number of donors, competition and the lack of coordination among them – as outlined by Salam Fayyad (already cited) and the De Voir and Tartir Study,<sup>84</sup> funded and published by the NDC. Some researchers have contributed their efforts and work from a consultative perspective of recommendation and ‘do no harm’<sup>85</sup>, adopting an expert posture<sup>86</sup>. This type of work confers upon corrective criticism as well as the action plans resulting from it a certain scientific aura.

This corrective rhetoric constitutes a referential frame which allows the NDC to rationally base its development strategy and justify its evolution. The NDC refers the readers of its guides to the websites of international organisations for further information and at the same time, introduces UNDP human development reports<sup>87</sup>. These set out its evolution from a poverty reduction project to a structure that aims to strengthen the partnership between civil society, government and the private sector, addressing the 8<sup>th</sup> goal of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)<sup>88</sup>. Similarly, NDC employees justify their request that NGOs list their actions in the development plans of the Fayyad government (of neoliberal inspiration as presented above) in the name of the partnership for development.

However, its structure and rhetorical production evolve by reference only to the corrective criticisms of international organisations. They ignore contentious criticism that challenges the neoliberal paradigm of development and the way reality is represented. This concerns in particular the issue of occupation as illustrated by the example of the report on human development in the Arab world in 2009. UNDP officials removed from the cited report analyses on the effects of the occupation in Iraq and in Palestine, as well as a chapter written by the Marxist economist Samir Amin<sup>89</sup>. In the name of technical "neutrality" and professionalism, the international institutions downplay the occupation influence and exclude

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<sup>84</sup> Joseph De Voir and Alaa Tartir, West Bank and Gaza Strip 1999-2008, Ramallah, NDC / MAS, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Mary Anderson, "Do No Harm: The Impact of International Assistance to the occupied Palestinian Territory?", in Michael Keating, Anne Le More, and Robert Lowe (eds.), *Aid Diplomacy and Facts on the Ground, The Case of Palestine*, London, Chatham House, 2005, p. 144-147.

<sup>86</sup> In the sense that knowledge is produced to "be part of the decision process". Philippe Roqueplo, *Entre Savoir et décision, l'expertise scientifique*, Paris, National Institute of Agricultural Research (INRA), 1997, p. 15.

<sup>87</sup> NGO Development Center (NDC), *The Guide to Economic and Social Development and NGO Priorities, Resource Kit*, Ramallah, NGO Development Center, 2008, p. 8-20.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid* also interviews with NDC employees, *op. cit.*

<sup>89</sup> Chief Consultant Mustapha El-Sayyid, principal author of the report felt embarrassed by the omission and made this information public upon release of the publication. See: Al-Jazeera, "*Katib Taqrir Al-tannia yatabara 'menh* [in Arabic]," Al-jazeera, July 18, 2009, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/ebusiness/2009/7/18/> / منه يتبرأ العربية-التممية تقرير-كاتب [accessed September 22, 2017].

criticism as ideological and irrational. The exclusion of the Hamas-led government in 2006 from the NDC board of directors, and the refusal to fund NGOs judged "political" is an integral part of this discourse: the "neutrality" of development requires the exclusion of all references to "politics". The only accepted policy is one which serves the objective of "promoting peace", and which favors the neoliberal economy and corresponds to its reading of society.

NDC employees and development actors thus refer to corrective criticism – which now defines for many their categories of perception – to justify their action. It is in this sense that they consider that the NDC itself was founded to harmonise and channel aid. For them, this structure is a response to critics who have emphasised the duplication of activities financed by donors and carried out by the various local actors (PA, NGOs). It also embodies the theme of *networking* which occupies an important place in the rhetoric produced by the NDC.

Through the production of critical studies, the NDC seeks to monopolise the field of criticism addressed to NGOs and development actors, while limiting itself to corrective criticism. It aims to respond to corrective criticism of development programs and their failure to achieve stated objectives. The evolution of its objectives is in fact a process of adjustment to criticism,<sup>90</sup> and this is done without considering protest criticism. The objectives displayed by development agencies become the reference on which development projects "must" be evaluated, analysed and even criticised. These evaluations, even when critical, help to legitimise and reinforce the order established by international intervention and to ignore national or local particularities. As a result, NDC projects are based on reality as it is conceived in the universal discourse of development, and not as perceived by local actors.

The NDC thus stands out as a think tank, in the sense given to this term by Bourdieu, namely as the product of an "organised intellectual work" and a real enterprise of production and dissemination of the "neoliberal vulgate"<sup>91</sup> and its reading of reality. The development of self-criticism by theorists and officials of international organisations aims to legitimise international intervention without making any reference to the centrality of development domination and the resulting cognitive structures.

In other words, it is through the "monopoly of reason"<sup>92</sup> that the new universal belief centered on development is established. Self-criticism tends to improve the image of donors, including responsibility, ability to recognise their mistakes and willingness to remedy them. As for local actors, these find arguments that justify or even give meaning to their action and interaction with international organisations and especially to their transformation. This monopoly consists in producing a belief in development even if the stated objectives are not achieved or despite their contradiction with the reality on the ground. According to this belief, to improve

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<sup>90</sup> The author draws inspiration here from the works of Boltanski and Chiapello, who demonstrate how capitalism develops thanks to its ability to defuse criticism directed at it. See: Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *op. cit.*

<sup>91</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Contre-feux 2. Pour un mouvement social européen* (Firing back 2 : for a European social movement), Paris, Raisons d'Agir, 2001, p. 7-8.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, p 25.

the performance of aid, it is enough to coordinate the action of the donors, to rationalise the actions and discourses of the local actors.

The neoliberal vulgate becomes the reference par excellence for the local actors of the world of development. It nourishes their belief and gives social and political meaning to their action.

## Conclusion

The WB project was thus extended by constituting a "superstructure"<sup>93</sup> of control of associative networks and NGOs in the Occupied Territories. These were institutionalised by giving rise to the NDC (NGO Development Center) whose structure includes a multiplicity of actors. In the name of development co-ordination, the NDC excludes some local actors by forming a network of power. This network is based on diversified links among holders of different types of social capital: those who hold important positions in the World Bank, the *Ta'awun* Foundation, the PA (Fatah), various network associations (the PNGO, the PNIN and the PGUCS), businesses and universities. At the top of this network is the World Bank.

By creating its own network, this project began to produce and disseminate the rational and managerial standards of the vulgate of international organisations. Their production in a so-called collective and participative approach, contributes to the constitution of a belief, to which the collective actors of development adhere. The hegemony of the economic model equates NGOs to companies for which management and economic rationality are the best guarantees of a good conduct of their action. Their role derives from the normative representation of social and political reality, which in turn, requires the absence of any political involvement in the sense of the anti-colonial struggle. After having been involved in political power struggles, community networks are now competing for international aid.

Compliance with management standards is the first criterion for selecting a player, for it is he who conditions his right of entry into the world of development and in the end, takes credit for occupying such a position. Collective work brings about a gradual transformation of local actors who adjust to these norms in their interactions with donors while building networks that further allow these norms to spread. The implementation of development schemes legitimises the dominance of donor groups over aid recipients and evolves in such a way as to reconfigure the value system favorable to the new belief and to impose their criticism. When corrective criticism highlights weak coordination between development actors and the duplication of their work, mechanisms that are favorable to *networking* and collective projects are put in place in such a way as to shut out protest criticism.

In this sense, Palestine is considered a sovereign state whose "civil society's" principal role is to work in complementarity with the "public" and "private" sectors to promote development.

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<sup>93</sup> In the Marxist sense of the term, which refers to the political and ideological organisation, even symbolic, and is based on economic power.

This division of labor stems from the neoliberal political order established in the "Palestine of the donors", an experimental laboratory for a universal mode of "governance" in the absence of a state. The neoliberal discourse derives its strength from the fact that it is "rooted in a system of beliefs and values and a moral vision of the world, in short, a *common economic sense* linked to social and cognitive structures of a particular order [that of the American economy]"<sup>94</sup>. The universalisation of this order in the name of development overthrows the locally established social order (in Palestine) and normalises the one based on the Oslo Accords and donor intervention. The world of development thus makes it possible to establish the domination of these and the resulting cognitive structures through the implication (conscious or not, by constraint or conviction) of those who are the first to suffer from its effects. As Israeli colonies spread through the OPT and the socio-economic situation continues to deteriorate, the rhetoric of development forms the basis of the consensus or a shared sense to which the actors (the *stakeholders*) of the "Palestine of donors" tend to refer.

In short, the "right" of donor intervention and their domination is normalised through the implementation of collective projects. By producing rational norms, the collective development promoters and their projects introduce development as a belief. Founded on universal managerial "reason", this belief is sustained by a corrective critical literature whose aim is to defuse any criticism of the political and local context. If the financial power of the donors is the substance of the world of development in the Palestine of donors, it is the faith in development that shapes its spirit.

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<sup>94</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, 2001, p. 26.

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## LIST OF ACCRONYMS

PA	Palestinian Authority
WB	World Bank
Fatah	Palestine National Liberation Movement
IMF	International Monetary Fund
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
HAMAS	Islamic Resistance Movement
NDC	NGO Development Center
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPGAI	Occupied Palestine and Syrian Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative
PGUCS	Palestinian General Union of Charitable Societies
PNGO	Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations Network
PNIN	Palestine National Institute for NGOs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
PRDP	Palestinian Reform and Development Plan
POT	Palestinian Occupied Territories