Sensitive to Conflict?

Development Cooperation and Peacebuilding
in the Palestinian Context

Neda Noraie-Kia

Notes on the Author:

Neda Noraie-Kia, M.A.
Neda Noraie-Kia earned her Bachelor degree in Social Sciences at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf and her MA in International Relations and Development Policy at University of Duisburg-Essen. She has worked as an election campaign manager and political advisor to the Green Party in Düsseldorf. Prior work experience also includes research on climate change and environmental governance with the Hong Kong based think tank "civic exchange" and the development of a conflict management online course for GIZ. Since 2012 Noraie-Kia is working as an advisor with the GIZ in the occupied Palestinian territories. Her major research interests include development policy and critical peace and conflict studies as well as contemporary developments in the Middle East.

Contact: neda.noraie-kia@mail.de

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Abstract

Development organisations face numerous challenges in the context of violent conflict. Development cooperation has to be sensitive to conflict in order to be effective and do no harm. PCIA as developed by Kenneth Bush is one approach among others to ensure conflict sensitivity for development and peacebuilding efforts. This working paper applies Bush's concept of PCIA to the Palestinian case in order to analyse benefits, limitations and potential improvements of his approach. His specific method will be discussed critically based on a literature review and expert interviews conducted with practitioners from the most relevant state and multilateral development agencies. Considering the specific challenges in the Palestinian context this study aims to contribute to the debate on conflict sensitive development cooperation. The analysis of the Palestinian case eventually should help to identify gaps and potential fields for future research.

Keywords: PCIA, conflict sensitivity, critical peace studies, development cooperation, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, occupied Palestinian territories, multilateral development organizations, expert interview

Zusammenfassung

Akteure der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (EZ) stehen in Kontexten, die von Gewaltkonflikten geprägt sind, vor besonderen Herausforderungen. EZ muss, wenn sie effektiv sein und nicht schaden will, konfliktsensitiv sein. PCIA nach Kenneth Bush ist einer von vielen Ansätzen, die dazu dienen, EZ und Friedensförderung im Kontext von Gewaltkonflikten konfliktsensitiv zu gestalten. Das vorliegende Working Paper fragt nach dem Potenzial sowie nach den Grenzen und möglichen Verbesserungen dieses Ansatzes. Hierzu wird das von Bush entwickelte Konzept auf das Fallbeispiel Palästina angewendet. Unter Einbeziehung des aktuellen Forschungsstandes sowie mittels einer empirischen Erhebung, die Vertreter der wichtigsten staatlichen und multilateralen Entwicklungsagenturen in Palästina nach ihren Erfahrungen befragt, wird der von Bush entwickelte PCIA Ansatz kritisch reflektiert. Unter Berücksichtigung der spezifischen Anforderungen im palästinensischen Kontext soll die Untersuchung einen Beitrag zur Debatte um Konfliktsensitivität leisten und weitere Forschungsbedarfe sowie offene Fragen eruieren.

Schlüsselwörter: PCIA, Konfliktsensibilität, kritische Friedensforschung, Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, humanitäre Hilfe, Peacebuilding, besetzte palästinensische Gebiete, multilaterale Entwicklungsorganisationen, Experteninterview

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AECID	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo
AHLC	Ad Hoc Liaison Office
BDS	Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions
CDA	The Collaborative for Development Action, Inc.
CSPM	Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management
CSA	Conflict-sensitive approaches
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DANIDA	Denmark's development cooperation
EU	European Union
GIZ	Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit
GNI	Gross National Income
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JLC	Joint Liaison Committee
LACC	Local Aid Coordination Committee
LACS	Local Aid Coordination Secretariat
MOPAD	Ministry of Planning and Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
oPt	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PA	Palestinian Authority
PACBI	Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
PCA	Peace and Conflict Assessment
PCIA	Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment
PNA	Peacebuilding Needs and Impact Assessment
MAS	Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute

SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TFPI	Task Force on Project Implementation
TIM	Temporary International Mechanism
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Work Agency
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. Introduction

1.1. Conflict Sensitivity and PCIA

"Aid is not like water, which sprayed on the flames or embers of conflict invariably helps to extinguish them. Indeed, it can be like oil. Appropriate aid can diminish the risks of conflict, but inappropriate aid can fuel it."[1] This quote drastically illustrates the dilemma of developmental actors in the context of conflict. A development measure carried out in a conflict-ridden area might be successful in terms of its narrow developmental indicators and objectives, but yet have an overall negative impact on the conflict situation.[2] Hence, development assistance needs to be sensitive to conflict in order to at least "do no harm."[3] This issue has gained growing attention since the mid-1990s.[4] The international community's failure to forecast and prevent the genocide in Rwanda, a country which had been the centre of developmental efforts for decades, led to a self-critical reflection of the lack of impact or potentially negative role of development assistance in conflict.[5] This growing awareness resulted in the on-going trend towards the merging of peacebuilding and developmental efforts on the one hand.[6] On the other hand, this contributed to the search for innovative approaches, concepts, and tools to understand the relationship between engagement and conflict, and to meet the need for aid to be conflict-sensitive.[7] Kenneth Bush aptly describes the key focus of this process, which is the problem that "[w]e can evaluate the developmental impact of a project, but we do not have the means of understanding or measuring peace and conflict impacts in a comprehensive or systematic way."[8] He continues, stating that "Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) is a response to this problem."[9] Indeed, PCIA is one approach amongst many which have evolved in the last two decades as "a means of anticipating, monitoring, and evaluating the ways in which an intervention may affect, or has affected, the dynamics of peace or conflict in a conflict-prone region."[10] In fact, a vast field of concepts and approaches revolving around questions of conflict-sensitive aid has emerged by now. The on-going debate has thereby created a lot of terminological confusion: "Depending on the view or definition of PCIA and CSA [Conflict-Sensitive Approaches] to which one subscribes, it is possible to see PCIA as either a method to achieve 'conflict sensitivity,' or alternatively, to see 'conflict sensitivity' as an aspect of PCIA."[11] While concepts and respective terminologies are contested, the need for further engagement in this field of

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1 Boyce 2000: 367.
2 Bush 1998: 6.
3 Anderson 1999.
4 Africa Peace Forum et al. 2004: 1.
5 Kirschner 2007: 20.
6 Körppen 2007: 28.
7 Africa Peace Forum et al. 2004: 1.
8 Bush 2003: 3.
9 Bush 2003: 3.
10 Bush 2003: 3.
11 Barbolet et al. 2005a: 3.

research is undisputed. In fact many international as well as local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and development agencies are involved in the development and research on questions of conflict sensitivity, which proves their factual importance in the field. Amongst them are CDA, which was founded by Mary B. Anderson and has developed the *Do No Harm* concept, the *Resource Pack* or the *Conflict Sensitivity Consortium*.[12] This study intends to follow up on this debate by discussing a specific concept of conflict sensitivity, namely PCIA, as developed by Kenneth Bush. His concept will be critically assessed based on a concrete case study – the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt).

1.2. Concept and Definitions

Before Palestinian case is addressed or the idea of PCIA is presented, some terms need to be clarified. International assistance in the context of conflict can take different forms. Depending on the context, assistance can aim at humanitarian aspects, development, or peacebuilding. In fact, in the Palestinian case, international assistance covers all these three forms of engagement, albeit with varying scope and efforts.

The following section will provide an overview of these different fields of intervention, showing differences, as well as areas of overlap. In addition, operational definitions of the relevant terms will be given to provide the ground for further discussion.

Humanitarian assistance is defined by the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as: "Aid that seeks to save lives and alleviate suffering of a crisis-affected population."[13] By delivering immediate aid in the form of food, shelter, and medical assistance for instance, humanitarian action provides relief to those that are affected by disaster, whether natural (such as flood, famine, or earthquake) or man-made (most notably war).[14] Furthermore, this specific form of assistance is supposed to "be provided in accordance with the basic humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, and neutrality […]".[15] In addition to the UN and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, many other intergovernmental and various nongovernmental agencies and organisations are involved in humanitarian assistance all over the world. Their number, as well as the overall scope of global humanitarian assistance, has been growing since the beginning of the 1990s as a result of an increase in both natural disasters and violent conflicts.[16]

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12 http://www.cdacollaborative.org; http://www.conflictsensitivity.org; Africa Peace Forum et al. 2004.
13 OCHA 2003: 13.
14 Brynen 2000: 17 f.
15 OCHA 2003: 13.
16 Ludermann and Reinhardt 2006: 247.

Development assistance, in contrast to humanitarian aid, focuses less on relief in crises, but rather aims at the "promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries," as defined by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC).[17] Within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) the DAC is an organ which is responsible for all questions concerning international development assistance. The committee sets the criteria upon which aid is classified as Official Development Assistance (ODA). These criteria contain the concessional character of assistance or the selection of recipient countries. A list of all development countries which are potential ODA recipients is compiled by the DAC every three years.[18] The question as to whether assistance can be defined as ODA is relevant for all donor countries, since they have to comply with ODA budget rates according to international agreements and declarations.[19] Unlike humanitarian assistance, development assistance aims at long term, sustainable results and hence "requires a substantial degree of project planning, feasibility analysis, and environmental and social impact assessment."[20] Furthermore, development aid is characterised by "a greater degree of complexity, greater interagency and stakeholder cooperation, and longer project cycles, particularly with integrated and multi-sector programs."[21]

Peacebuilding is the most disputed among the three terms. Compared to humanitarian or development assistance, peacebuilding is a relatively new field which has developed and gone through major changes since the mid-1990s.[22] The term can be traced back to the 1970s when Johan Galtung wrote about the meaning of peace and peacebuilding.[23] The concept then gained further attention in 1992 when former United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG), Boutros Boutros-Ghali, wrote about "peace-building," besides "peacemaking" and "peace-keeping," in his famous "Agenda for Peace."[24] Ever since the idea was developed, peacebuilding mandates, as well as the expectations towards them, have broadened significantly.[25] Today, we are confronted with different understandings and definitions of peacebuilding. Furthermore, there is a broad variety of terms such as "conflict management, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, conflict resolution, conflict prevention, peacemaking, or reconciliation"[26] which reflect varying concepts and ideas of how to act in the context of conflict in order to promote peace. The UN Peacebuilding Support Office published an orientation in 2010 explaining: "Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing, or relapsing, into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict

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17 OECD: "Official Development Assistance – Definition and Coverage".
18 OECD: "History of DAC Lists of aid recipient countries".
19 Klingebiel 2013: 6.
20 Brynen 2000: 18.
21 Brynen 2000: 18.
22 Smith 2004:10.
23 Galtung 1976.
24 Boutros-Ghali 1992.
25 Smith 2004: 10.
26 Anderson 2003: 8.

management and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development."[27]

It is crucial to bear in mind that these terminologies are neither final nor static, but rather reflect actual practice and as such are exposed to shifting trends. However, for the purpose of this study, it is important to have in mind an operational understanding of these fields which is customised to their practical equivalent in the Palestinian context.

The approach to humanitarian assistance, for example, has changed over the years despite the impartiality and neutrality imperative and the fact that "funds are not fungible – that is, emergency funds, because of agency mandates or donor preferences, cannot be used for anything but emergency aid[28]." The authors of the Resource Pack diagnose a remarkable increase in politicisation of humanitarian work in general, which they regard with great scepticism.[29] Anne Le More in this context notes that "[f]rom being an end in itself, humanitarian assistance became a means to foster developmental and peacebuilding goals as part of the overall 'coherence' strategy."[30]

The trend of an increasing overlap between these three fields is a general phenomenon, particularly with regard to development assistance and peacebuilding, not least because of the described increase in importance of the latter.[31] This trend poses severe challenges to practitioners in terms of design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of measures in the context of conflict. However, with regard to the Palestinian case, due to conditions which will be elaborated later on in this study, the dividing lines between humanitarian aid, development assistance, and peacebuilding are blurred even more. The actual confusion of ideas indeed creates the "need to refine the definition of peacebuilding and conceptualize it inductively."[32] For the Palestinian case, an inductive definition derives from the fact that donors' main motive for all developmental efforts was the support of the peace process.[33] In fact, the interrelation of peacebuilding and development assistance is manifold in the Palestinian context: as a direct support to the peace process through "classical" peacebuilding measures, such as dialogue measures and encounters, on the one hand, and through classical development projects across all sectors on the other hand. The latter are related to peace in different ways. The support of the Palestinian economy, for instance, aims at stability and economic development and is intended to improve the living conditions of Palestinians, who in turn are intended to be more inclined to support the peace process. Assistance directed towards the governance sector has the objective of developing PA institutions in

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27 United Nations 2010: 5.
28 Weiss / Collins 1996: 114.
29 Africa Peace Forum et al. 2004.
30 Le More 2008:22.
31 Körppen 2007: 28.
32 Le More 2008:22.
33 Le More 2005: 992.

order to enhance state-building as a step towards a peaceful settlement and a two-state solution to the conflict.[34]

While an overview of the most relevant basic information regarding development assistance to the Palestinians will be subject of the second chapter of this study, the examples cited above should give an idea of the degree of interconnectedness of aid and peace in the given case. Hence, in the following the term, development assistance in the Palestinian context will always, unless it is explicitly noted otherwise, also imply peacebuilding efforts.

1.3. Research Objective

There have been quite a few attempts in the past to discuss conflict sensitivity in concrete conflict contexts. Cases such as Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and some African countries have been analysed and discussed by different researchers.[35] Regarding the Palestinian context, the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project has published a "Cumulative Impact Case Study," which deals with Israel-Palestine in the period between 1993 and 2008.[36] The authors, Isabella Jean and Everett Mendelsohn, concentrate on peacebuilding without including development assistance. In 2010, Susanna Krüger and Julia Steets carried out an evaluation of the cluster approach in the Palestinian territories and its humanitarian impact.[37] In 2004 Mary B. Anderson did a Do No Harm analysis of international humanitarian and development assistance in the occupied Palestinian territories.[38] In the same year, Kenneth Bush published an article on "The Role of Local Government in Peacebuilding" for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which illustrated the developmental potential of the municipal level from a PCIA perspective, with Palestine as one case study among others.[39] However, a comprehensive study of the Palestinian case involving development assistance and peacebuilding efforts, as a practical example of PCIA, is still missing. This study aims at filling this gap. Analysing experiences from the Palestinian case can contribute to a better understanding of PCIA as an approach to conflict sensitivity.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is one of the longest-running, and probably also the most complex, of today's existing conflicts. It is therefore not surprising that it is also "one of the most analyzed and reported upon in history."[40] Not just the conflict and many single aspects of it have been extensively analysed, but also development assistance to the Palestinians has been subject of numerous studies. For many years now, especially since the signing of the Oslo Accords[41]

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34 Le More 2004: 17.
35 see *inter alia* Bornstein 2010; Bush 2001.
36 Jean / Mendelsohn 2008.
37 Krüger / Steets 2010.
38 Anderson 2004.
39 Bush 2004.
40 Brand Jacobsen 2010: 10.
41 officially: "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements" (Oslo I) and "Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip" (Oslo II) for a comprehensive analysis of the Oslo Accords see Watson 2000.

in 1993, a significant amount of international assistance has been delivered to the Palestinians.[42] At the same time, looking at the actual economic figures, the success of these efforts is rather questionable. Many scholars, Palestinian as well as international, have tried to explain the failures of the international community. Researchers such as Anne Le More, Rex Brynen, or more recently Sahar Taghdisi-Rad have carried out comprehensive analyses of various aspects of foreign aid and peacebuilding in the occupied Palestinian territories. So why another study on aid in Palestine? Because conflict sensitivity in the Palestinian context has so far barely been discussed. The fact that development assistance in this case is directly linked to peacebuilding efforts, as described above, does not necessarily mean that aid is conflict-sensitive. On the contrary, the authors of the *Resource Pack* have shown that actors working on peacebuilding "find it particularly difficult to acknowledge the need to be conflict sensitive."[43] In view of the highly disputed results of developmental and peacebuilding efforts in the Palestinian context, the question arises whether a lack of conflict sensitivity might possibly be a relevant cause. However, this study does not aim at explaining why aid has, until today, achieved so little in Palestine or giving recommendations on how development assistance or peacebuilding should look like in this context. The purpose is rather to show the potentials and limitations of PCIA, as a concept of conflict sensitivity, in the context of this particular conflict environment. The application of PCIA to the Palestinian case should allow recommendations on potential modifications and adjustments of this framework and hence contribute to the overall debate about conflict sensitivity. Hereby it is clear that experiences from the Palestinian case cannot always be transferred to other conflict contexts, especially given the specific and complex constellation of Israel and Palestine. However while each context is different, the international actors engaged in development and peacebuilding as well as many of their structural and organisational issues are not. Therefore one can carefully draw conclusions from the Palestinian case, as an example of a conflict context, regarding developmental actors' different approaches and concepts of conflict sensitivity.

1.4. Research Design and Methodology

The focus of this study will lie on bilateral and multilateral state-led development assistance, including peacebuilding efforts, as explained above. In order to gain knowledge on the practicability of PCIA as a concept, practitioners working in the field of development cooperation in Palestine were asked to talk about their experiences. All major donor agencies which work in the Palestinian territories, and are listed by the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS),[44] were contacted personally, via telephone or via email, in order to inquire whether

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42 Brynen / Awartani / Woodcraft 2000: 209.
43 Africa Peace Forum et al. 2004: 9.
44 The Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS, http://www.lacs.ps) regularly publishes a list of contacts of donors and international organisations in the oPt. This list is for internal use only and is available at the LACS upon request. The latest version of this list was updated in June 2013 and contains 36 donor countries and their respective aid organisations and 25 international bodies.

they would be willing to talk about their experiences. Given the focus of this study, the sample consists of bilateral donor organisations, as well as interstate agencies such as UNDP, rather than civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations, which in fact do play an important role, especially in the field of "classical" peacebuilding.[45] In view of the vast field of non-governmental work in the Palestinian context, an assessment of their efforts would have to be subject of further research and analysis.

The idea of this study is to conduct qualitative expert interviews which can be used as empirical material to analyse the practicability of PCIA.[46] It has to be considered that each interview partner will only represent his or her personal, and not the organisation's, perspective and that these personal perspectives are naturally limited. Since the selection of interview partners within an organisation is random and only follows certain selection criteria, their experiences and opinions on PCIA might not be representative of the organisation or their employees as a whole. Hence, the interviews serve as a selective insight into practitioners' work experiences without being transferable to all actors in the field and without allowing for comprehensive data on the practice of assistance and peacebuilding in the occupied Palestinian territories. The research is not designed in a way which allows final empirical conclusions on the overall usage of PCIA in practice. The discussion of the practicability of the concept for this specific case study will be based on a review of the existing literature within the scope of accessible research in English or German language and will be supplemented by the analysis of practical experiences. Several aspects have to be taken into consideration regarding the motivation and willingness of practitioners to talk about their working experiences and their organisations' approaches in Palestine. First of all, the strong politicisation of assistance in this context and the political sensitivity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, most probably, have a negative impact on many practitioners' willingness to give an interview or to talk openly about their experiences and views. Furthermore, international engagement in Palestine is subject to much criticism and it is likely that most practitioners are aware of this and therefore hesitate to provide insights on their work and thereby expose it to potentially harsh criticism. Finally, the remarkably high number of different actors and organisations working in the oPt creates a competitive atmosphere which might lead to less openness as well. "The refusal of some donors"[47] to talk about their organisations' work and policies in Palestine has been experienced before and described as being difficult by researchers such as Nassar Ibrahim.[48] Therefore, a wide range of organisations will be contacted in order to identify as many potential interview partners and gain as much empirical material as possible.

An expert, for the purpose of this study, should be a person who is involved in the organisation's programmatic work. It should not be someone who is

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45 On civil society peacebuilding in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict see *inter alia* Kaufman et al. 2006.
46 On the methodology of expert interviews see *inter alia* Bogner et al. 2005.
47 Ibrahim 2011: 12.
48 Ibrahim 2011: 12.

specialised in issues of conflict sensitivity, if there is such an employee in the organisation at all. The idea is to rather talk to practitioners who have a decisive role in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating programmes. Their experiences, and their usage and knowledge of conflict sensitivity in general and PCIA in particular, are of interest for this study. The practitioners will give assessments of some general aspects of development cooperation and peacebuilding in the Palestinian context. Furthermore, they will be asked whether they know about conflict sensitivity at all, whether they use PCIA or any other concept, and why. The interviews will aim at revealing what kinds of concepts are being used and how they are assessed by those who apply them in practice. Thereby the interviews should serve as an empirical foundation to supplement the theory and literature-based findings from the previous chapters. The main purpose is to allow a critical discussion and assessment of PCIA as a concept of conflict sensitivity focusing on the following key questions:

- What are potential benefits and limitations of PCIA according to Bush in the Palestinian context, and how would this concept probably have to be modified and adjusted to suit the Palestinian context?
- What can be learned from the Palestinian case for the overall discussion on conflict sensitivity and what might be potential fields of future research and analysis?

1.5. Outline and Structure

Before addressing these questions, this study will provide a brief analysis of the current status of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The development and present structure of aid and peacebuilding will be presented subsequently with a focus on the conflict's implications and specific challenges. Some light will be shed on the critical debate on aid in the Palestinian context in order to provide a comprehensive picture of relevant issues and aspects in the context of development and peacebuilding in Palestine.

The following chapter will be dedicated to conflict sensitivity and the concept of Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment, as developed by Kenneth Bush. First, an overview on the current state of debate in the field of conflict sensitivity will be given before looking at PCIA as a specific framework. After these two theoretical sections, which will provide the foundation for assessment and analysis, chapter four will present the empirical results based on the qualitative expert interviews. A critical discussion of PCIA as a specific framework will follow subsequently which will analyse potential and limitations, and possible adjustments. Finally, there will be a concluding chapter summing up the results and pointing out potential aspects for future research.

2. The Palestinian Case: The Conflict Situation in Palestine and its Implications and Challenges for Development Cooperation and Peacebuilding

An analysis of conflict sensitivity of assistance to the Palestinians requires a closer look at the Palestinian context, the conflict situation, and potential impacts on development. What is the current status of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? How does the structure of international assistance to the Palestinians look and in which way is it influenced by the conflict and vice versa? And ultimately, what are specific challenges for development and peacebuilding in Palestine?

2.1. Overview of the Conflict Situation

In 2004 in the midst of the second Intifada, Charlotte Dunn, a development practitioner working in the Palestinian territories, described the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as being "characterized by political instability, violence, intense international attention and media scrutiny, and unprecedented amounts of aid."[49] Almost a decade later and more than 20 years after the start of the Oslo accords this characterisation is still up-to-date. The latest attempt to revive the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians by US Secretary of State John Kerry did not aim for more than a framework agreement as a basis for further negotiations, but failed nevertheless.[50] During the nine-month long initiative the conflict actually further deteriorated and the latest escalation beginning in June 2014 ultimately led to the "Operation Protective Edge". This most recent Gaza war was the third within the last six years and the most brutal and violent, causing the highest number of casualties and massive destruction.[51]

While the overall conflict situation since the beginning of the peace process has been constantly deteriorating, the main issues at stake basically remained the same: the status of Jerusalem, the final borders of Israel and a future Palestinian state, the Israeli settlements, a fair distribution of water resources, the problem of Palestinian refugees and their right to return. Most analysts, such as Brand Jacobsen paint a bleak picture of the status quo, stating the:

> substantial expansion of Israeli occupation – "facts on the ground" – of the Occupied
> Palestinian Territories (OPT) worsening violence and human rights violations, and the
> intensifying militarization, demonization and polarization, expanding settlements and road

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49 Charlotte Dunn 2004: 21.
50 On the reasons for the failure of the Kerry negotiations see On the Kerry negotiations see Khalidi et al.: 2014.
51 OCHA 2014.

construction, and entrenching policies, conflict attitudes, behaviors and strategies fuelling escalation and intensification.[52]

The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK) annually publishes the so-called Conflict Barometer which gives a global overview of intra- and interstate political conflicts, explaining each in brief and showing trends and developments. Each conflict is rated in terms of its intensity, on a scale from one to five, indicating "dispute, non-violent crisis, violent crisis, limited war or war."[53] In the latest HIIK publication, covering the year 2013, the conflict between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority "centering on the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state," was rated to be a "violent crisis," which corresponds to the third out of five intensity levels. "Secession, system / ideology, and resources" were identified as the relevant conflict items and the start of the conflict dates back to the year 1948, showing no significant change in the level of escalation in 2013 compared to the previous years.[54]

2.2. Development Assistance and Peacebuilding in Palestine

The "unprecedented amounts of aid"[55] flowing to the oPt were already mentioned. This section provides a brief overview and some statistics on the actual state of international development assistance to the Palestinians. Besides information on donors, amounts, and sectors, the structures of international assistance, the aid architecture and its development over the last 20 years starting with the Oslo process will be outlined.

Shortly after the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993, a group of representatives from more than 40 countries met in Washington D.C. to discuss how to support the breakthrough in negotiations with development assistance to the Palestinians.[56] They agreed on an amount of approximately 2.4 billion US Dollars to be invested over the next five years.[57] What motivated donors to pledge such high amounts of financial assistance? Le More identifies three objectives: First, international assistance aimed at directly supporting and sustaining the peace process itself. Furthermore, aid was supposed to push the Palestinian economy and its development which, through the so-called peace dividend, should ultimately contribute to peace as well. Finally, development assistance should contribute to Palestinian institution-building in order to prepare the ground for a future Palestinian state.[58]

From the aftermath of the Oslo process up to the year 2006, a total amount of 5.4 billion US Dollars was disbursed to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by

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52 Brand-Jacobsen 2010: 12.
53 HIIK Conflict Barometer 2014: 8.
54 HIIK Conflict Barometer 2014: 138.
55 Charlotte Dunn 2004: 21.
56 Brynen / Awartani / Woodcraft 2000: 205.
57 Forman and Patrick 2000:6.
58 Le More 2004: 17.

different donor countries and institutions such as the World Bank and UN organisations.[59] The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimated the per capita Gross National Income (GNI) for the Palestinian territories to be 2,669.70 US Dollars in 2011.[60] For the same year the OECD calculated the net ODA to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to be 2 444 Million US Dollars, which would make 611 US Dollars per capita.[61] This high amount of assistance equals roughly one fifth (22.9 per cent) of the overall per capita income. Brynen states that "on a per capita basis, Palestine receives perhaps the third or fourth highest level of aid in the world and almost ten times the average for developing countries as a whole."[62] While the United States leads the list of donors, the European Union (EU) and some member states such as Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom are amongst the top ten. Furthermore, some Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, have contributed big amounts.[63] However, looking at the amounts relative to a country's GNP, the US and other geographically more distant states are less strong, while Norway and its European neighbouring countries are providing rather high amounts. Arab countries, even the less wealthy ones like Egypt or Jordan, give the most relative to their income.[64] However, the total number of countries involved in assistance to the Palestinians is impressive and the structure of international engagement hence is quite complex and "involves more than forty countries, over two dozen UN and other multilateral agencies, a score of Palestinian ministries, and hundreds of Palestinian and international NGOs."[65]

In response to this complexity, the donor community developed an aid coordination structure which aims to manage and organise the many actors and efforts. This structure in itself is highly complex and as Le More analyses "embodies […] the way aid and diplomacy have been inextricably linked."[66] The most relevant in terms of decision-making is the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHCL) which was among others created at the very beginning of the post-Oslo period and which is responsible for the overall aid strategy.[67] In 1994, the AHLC decided to set up the Local Aid Coordination Committee (LACC), which was later changed into the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS), in order to enhance regular coordination on the local level.[68] Two more bodies were added on the local level: the Joint Liaison Committee (JLC), which is intended to arbitrate between donors, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Government of Israel, as well as the Task Force on Project Implementation (TFPI), which has a

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59 Taghdisi-Rad 2011: 68 Table 3.
60 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2012.
61 OECD: "West Bank and Gaza Strip".
62 Brynen 2000a: 209.
63 Taghdisi-Rad 2011: 67.
64 Brynen / Awartani / Woodcraft 2000: 209 f.
65 Brynen 2000:87.
66 Le More 2004:18.
67 Brynen / Awartani / Woodcraft 2000: 211.
68 Brynen 2000: 89.

similar task, with a focus on access and other implementation issues in relation with the Israelis.[69] The latter has not met since 2007.

In their meeting in late 2005, the AHLC members decided on a new aid coordination structure in order to improve effectiveness of assistance and cooperation.[70] At present, this structure, in addition to the groups mentioned, comprises four so-called Strategy Groups responsible for the sectors Infrastructure, Economic Policy, Governance, and Social Development, with each of them having four to five sub-groups. They are co-chaired by a Palestinian ministry and an international donor or institution, and their performance is described by Brynen to be "uneven,"[71] depending on the complexity of the sector and the motivation of the people involved in. The overall quality of donor coordination in the Palestinian territories is disputed.

While authors, such as Anne Le More, remain very critical, pointing at the politicisation of coordination, Brynen draws a mixed picture, concluding: "If donor coordination has been less than some have hoped for, it has still been better than many have feared."[72] However, the fact that such a complex system of coordination is in place marks the uniqueness of the international engagement in Palestine.[73] Not only the amount and coordination structure of aid are remarkable in this context, but also the question what assistance is being spent on. The disbursement of funds to the Palestinians has shifted several times in terms of targeted sectors and recipients due to the political situation.[74]

In the beginning of the post-Oslo period, the main goal of aid was the support of the peace process and hence most of the assistance was delivered to the newly created PA and spent on the building of institutions and later on, job creation.[75] This phase was characterised by slow delivery of financial assistance and a discrepancy between pledges and actual disbursements due to a lack of political will and coordination from the donor's side, and a lack of resources and capacity from the PA side.[76] Only ten percent of what was pledged in 1993 for the coming five years had been provided by the end of 1994.[77] However, by the end of 1999, the ratio between commitments and actual disbursements had improved significantly.[78]

With the beginning of the second Intifada in the year 2000, donor policies in the Palestinian territories made a strong shift "from development and infrastructural

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69 Le More 2004:18.
70 www.lacs.ps.
71 Brynen 2000: 105.
72 Brynen / Awartani / Woodcraft 2000: 220.
73 Barsalou 2003:51.
74 Barsalou 2003:50.
75 Le More 2004: 19.
76 Brynen 1996: 79 f.
77 Forman and Patrick 2000:6.
78 Barsalou 2003: 49.

towards humanitarian and capacity-building-activities."[79] As a response to the suddenly emerging humanitarian needs, donors doubled aid budgets to around 1 billion US Dollars per year and increased emergency aid ten-fold, while cutting development assistance by 70 per cent.[80] This cut was the opposite of what was needed for a successful development process considering the sectorial needs of the Palestinian economy.[81] Furthermore, much of what the donor community had invested in infrastructure up to the year 2000 was destroyed in the years of the Second Intifada, which "made donors reluctant to reinvest in this sector."[82]

Another remarkable change regarding assistance to the Palestinians took place in the aftermath of the 2006 Parliamentary elections when the "West imposed an embargo on the democratically elected government."[83] Hamas, officially labelled a terrorist organisation by both the US administration and the EU, had won the elections, gaining 76 of 132 seats in the Legislative Council (Palestinian Parliament).[84] In order to stay engaged, while bypassing the newly elected Palestinian government, the Quartet members set up the so called TIM (Temporary International Mechanism), an international funding mechanism which would ensure direct delivery of assistance to those organisations and institutions not directly controlled by the Hamas government. In doing so, the donor community was officially seeking to "boost the role of the President's Office so as to disempower the authority of the office of the Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh."[85] After the violent escalation of the rivalry between Hamas and Fatah, and the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, international donors got back to funding the PA in the West Bank, while further boycotting the Hamas authority in Gaza.[86] In fact, the international community bypasses the Hamas government and delivers assistance to the Gaza Strip which is crucial given the Israeli siege and the aid-dependency and isolation of Gaza's population.[87] However, this approach creates severe problems with regard to coordination, ownership, and transparency. In the aftermath of the 2014 Gaza war again high amounts of humanitarian and reconstruction aid are expected to be delivered to the Gaza strip by the international community. Whether or not this will happen through the PA or the Hamas government and whether there will be a lasting political arrangement remains to be seen.

2.3. The Critical Aid Discourse in Palestine

Much criticism has been raised by Palestinian as well as international scholars and analysts regarding international assistance to the Palestinians. A brief

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79 Taghdisi-Rad 2011: 86.
80 Shearer 2004: 3.
81 Taghdisi-Rad 2011: 86.
82 Le More 2004: 19.
83 Le More 2008: 168.
84 Sayigh 2007: 13.
85 Le More 2008: 175.
86 Quarmout and Béland 2012: 33.
87 Quarmout and Béland 2012: 33.

overview of the actual debate and some main arguments will be provided in this section to allow a better understanding of the challenges of aid and peacebuilding in the oPt. This debate considers different aspects. Many scholars, such as Rex Brynen or more recently Nassar Ibrahim, have critically assessed the motives of the donor community and the politicisation of assistance to the Palestinians.[88] Anne Le More states that "the international aid agenda for the [oPt] has been determined less by Palestinian development needs than by the competing political agendas of the main donors – in particular the United States and the European Union […]."[89] Le More, among other researchers, has described these political agendas of donors to be characterised by competition over political and diplomatic influence on the Middle East Peace Process and the desire to "remain part of the process."[90] In addition, donors' interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is shaped by strong bilateral ties with Israel, especially in the case of the United States,[91] as well as by the geo-strategic relevance of the Middle East and the concern "for political stability in the region."[92] Arguments against aid being strongly motivated by donor interests have been raised even more after the donor community's withdrawal from PA funding after the elections in 2006. "The donors' withdrawal from the Hamas-led PA, and the subsequent isolation of Palestinian municipalities, directly and indirectly governed by Hamas, leading to isolation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, has been one of the clearest examples of donors' double standards in any conflict-affected country," writes Taghdisi-Rad.[93] Sayigh has critically characterised the boycott as transforming "the nature of the international sanctions imposed on the authority, marking a transition from legitimate aid conditionality to active inducement of state failure."[94]

The relationship of international donors with Israel has been subject to much criticism. International actors are blamed for "subsidising" the occupation – according to international law the government of Israel would be responsible for paying for humanitarian costs in the occupied territories – while at the same time not challenging Israeli policies on the ground and avoiding any political confrontation.[95]

Furthermore, outcomes of aid, the failure of peacebuilding efforts, and the overall negative impact of aid on the conflict situation have been critically assessed. Brand Jacobsen acknowledges the "significant engagement by a broad spectrum of actors to 'transform the conflict/build peace in Israel-Palestine" with many successes on a small scale.[96] At the same time, he

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88 Brynen 2000; Ibrahim 2011.
89 Le More 2004: 18.
90 Le More 2008: 85 ff.
91 Le More 2008: 86 f.
92 Hanafi and Tabar 2004: 216.
93 Taghdisi-Rad 2011: 173.
94 Sayigh 2007:18.
95 Sayigh 2007: 22.
96 Brand Jacobsen 2010:12.

diagnoses the absence of a "strategic transformation of the conflict" on a larger scale and consequently an overall worsening of the situation.[97] Sahar Taghdisi-Rad similarly states that aid "contributed to the continuation of the conflict" because it "tried to act as a substitute for politics."[98]

With regard to developmental goals, the overall assessment of international engagement is not much more positive. Barsalou claims that "it has fallen far short of meeting the development aspirations of both donors and recipients."[99] Barsalou's assessment is one of the more moderate. Other analysts dismiss the international engagement much more radically. Sara Roy coined the term "de-development"[100] in the mid-1990s to describe the economic development in the Gaza strip. In her analysis of the overall Palestinian society and economy in 1999, she explains the term, stating that unlike underdevelopment, "de-development not only distorts the development process but undermines it entirely."[101] In her point of view, before the Oslo process, Palestine was underdeveloped, while post-Oslo Palestine, basically due to "[c]losure, the sealing off of the territories from Israel, from other external markets, and from each other," is characterised by "de-development."[102] Sahar Taghdisi-Rad shares the assessment of de-development with regard to the Palestinian post-Oslo economy in general and the trade sector in particular and states that "after more than 15 years of massive aid flows, donor assistance has failed to achieve any viable developmental outcomes, leaving the Palestinian economy in a constant state of crisis and collapse."[103]

Similarly, Khalil Nakhleh in his books, "The Myth of Palestinian Development"[104] and "Globalized Palestine: The National Sell-Out of a Homeland"[105], uses the term "un-development". Having had many years of work experience with international development organisations in the Palestinian context himself, Nakhleh harshly criticises the international engagement, claiming it to be driven by political motives and a "sustainable deceit."[106] Yezid Sayigh blames the donor community for having "induced a failed state."[107] He criticises financial assistance to the Palestinians, saying that it is falsely invested in humanitarian relief, rather than in development, and blames the donor community for having created a collapsed, aid-dependent PA instead of contributing to a viable two-state solution.[108]

In Palestine the Center for Development Studies at Birzeit University and its scholars such as Samia Al-Bothme and Linda Tabar have researched and

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97 Brand Jacobsen 2010:12.
98 Taghdisi-Rad 2011: 201.
99 Barsalou 2003: 48.
100 Roy 1995.
101 Roy 1999:65.
102 Roy 1999:68.
103 Taghdisi-Rad 2011: 17 f.
104 Nakhleh 2004.
105 Nakhleh 2012.
106 Nakhleh 2004
107 Sayigh 2007.
108 Sayigh 2007 7f.

published much on the critical role of foreign assistance to the Palestinians.[109] But not only foreign aid as such is being criticised, but also economic policies of the PA, especially the so-called Fayyadism[110] and its interdependency with aid.[111]

Besides criticism on the political and economic impacts of the international engagement, "[c]oncerns about the health of the NGO sector" and the overall societal impact of aid have been raised by some analysts.[112] Sari Hanafi and Linda Tabar have researched this aspect comprehensively, showing the interrelations between donor funding and the emergence of a "Palestinian Globalised NGO elite"[113] replacing a vibrant civil society. With regard to the international engagement in the territories since the beginning of the Oslo process, they state, "while donors sought to empower Palestinian society, the outcome was that society, already weakened by the occupation, became even more fragmented during this period."[114]

After all, it has to be taken into consideration that some of what has been researched and published on aid critique in the Palestinian context is only available in Arabic. Institutes such as Bisan Center for Research and Development, the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy (Muwatin), or the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) have been working on this topic for many years and have carried out broad research and in-depth analyses.[115]

In this context part of what has been argued and published derives from a critical perspective towards neo-liberal forms of economic development. Other arguments can be specifically assigned to critical perspectives on liberal peacebuilding. Among them are Jason Franks[116] or Mandy Turner, for instance, who fundamentally question the international peacebuilding efforts in the Palestinian context. Turner blames the international community for imposing their liberal development policies on the Palestinians and thereby enhancing Israel's "colonial practices."[117] By comparing modern peacebuilding to a *mission civilisatrice* she goes so far as to not only question the outcomes of peacebuilding attempts, but rather radically question peacebuilding actors' intentions and legitimacy in the first place.[118]

109The Birzeit University recently, at the 23rd and 24th of September together with the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation hosted a conference on "Alternatives to Neo-Liberal Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories – Critical Perspectives".
110 The term is used to describe the neo-liberal policies of the former Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad, who sought to enhance Palestinian state-building through economic development.
111 Tartir 2012.
112 Brynen 1996: 90, Dana 2013 and Giacaman 2013.
113 Hanafi and Tabar 2005.
114 Hanafi and Tabar 2004:215.
115 www.bisan.org, www.muwatin.org, www.mas.ps.
116 Franks 2009.
117 Turner 2012: 503.
118 Turner 2012: 498.

2.4. Specific Challenges to Development and Peacebuilding in the Palestinian Context

Having portrayed the aid architecture and some criticism against it, the following section will present the specific conditions under which this structure has to function. In order to be able to analyse the conflict sensitivity of assistance, it is crucial to have an idea of the conflict-related issues and questions which, in addition to general challenges in development cooperation, have a relevant impact on development in Palestine. Many of the characteristics of aid in Palestine which have been critically assessed, as shown above, are related to the specific political context and its challenges and pitfalls.

"Does the continuation of aid prolong the conflict? How can aid be sustainable if there is no long-term perspective? How can agencies maintain a development outlook if needs are primarily humanitarian?"[119] These questions, raised by Charlotte Dunn, a practitioner working in development assistance in Palestine, express some of the doubts and dilemmas which the aid community in the oPt has to cope with. In fact, the prolonged conflict situation and Israeli occupation create many challenges for Palestinian development and those who are involved in it.

First of all, every organisation working in development assistance in Palestine is confronted with the dilemma that "[a]id is meeting the humanitarian needs of Palestinians in a conflict where the responsibility for these people, under international humanitarian law, lies with Israel as the Occupying Power."[120] A Do No Harm analysis of development cooperation in the oPt, carried out by Mary B. Anderson, reveals that this dilemma is critically assessed by a high number of practitioners working in the field of development in Palestine.[121] In fact, "foreign donors are essentially footing the bill for the continued Israeli occupation of most of the West Bank and Gaza."[122] However, similar to the general problem of fungibility within development assistance,[123] there is no way out of this dilemma without the severe "political and humanitarian consequences that would follow a suspension of aid."[124]

Furthermore, in relation to Israel the challenge for the international community is twofold: on the one hand the government-supported expansion of Israeli settlements and related infrastructure in the West Bank "transformed the landscape of the occupied territories since 2000, if not 1993."[125] This created facts on the ground, against international law, making a two-state solution increasingly difficult, if not impossible. On the other hand, organisations have to coordinate their assistance to the Palestinians with the Israeli government and

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119 Dunn 2004: 21.
120 Shearer 2004: 2.
121 Anderson: 2004: 3.
122 Barsalou 2003: 55.
123 Klingebiel 2013:66.
124 Sayigh 2007:23.
125 Sayigh 2007:22.

thus depend on its cooperation and goodwill. Anne Le More aptly describes Israel as the "aid community's 'host'", since crucial practical aspects of work in the oPt, such as staff mobility, work visas, or transportation of goods have to be arranged with, and agreed by, the Israeli government.[126] "The underlying political reality is that control over the delivery and use of foreign aid by international donors and Palestinian recipients is mediated through the Israeli occupation."[127]

This dependency becomes very evident in Area C and East Jerusalem, where the Israeli administration is in exclusive control of the usage of and access to territory and natural resources. According to the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the West Bank is divided into three areas: A, B, and C. That which was agreed on between Israel and the PLO in the 1990s as an interim solution until a final status agreement would follow within five years, is the remaining structure until today. "In Area C, Israel retained full control over security and planning and zoning, as well as other aspects related to 'territory'."[128] This area constitutes more than 60 percent of the West Bank.[129] Here, every action that is considered as construction work requires permission from the Israeli authority, which is why agencies have tended to concentrate their efforts on the cities in area A.[130]

The situation is similarly difficult in East Jerusalem which is unilaterally annexed by Israel as a result of the 1967 War. Palestinian Jerusalem residents suffer under a discriminatory legal status as residents, not citizens. They live under the constant risk of losing their residency status and being deprived of their right to live in Jerusalem by the Israeli administration.[131] Furthermore, similar to Area C, "[o]nly 13 per cent of the total East Jerusalem area is available for Palestinian construction, and much of this is already built-up."

Due to the siege and the restricted access, limitations are even much worse in Gaza. These territorial issues give a clear example of how the conflict with Israel has a direct impact on developmental efforts in the Palestinian territories. In addition, Israeli policies on the ground – the closure policy and the "expansion into the occupied territory through settlement growth, road and infrastructure construction, and the building of the separation barrier in the West Bank" have transformed the territories into "a collection of isolated regions and enclaves."[132] Some researchers speak of Bantustans, referring to Apartheid South Africa.[133]

Besides the territorial fragmentation, there is a severe societal fragmentation within Palestine which poses challenges for everyone who is engaged in the

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126 Le More 2004: 18.
127 Barsalou 2003: 55.
128 OCHA 2011: 5.
129 OCHA 2013: 26.
130 Le More 2004: 18.
131 OCHA 2013: 33.
132 Le More 2004: 18.
133 Taghdisi-Rad: 2011: 9.

Palestinian context.[134] Among them is the deep inner-Palestinian divide between Hamas and Fatah. Most analysts agree on the negative role of the international donor community in exacerbating "the power struggle between the two movements" through boycotting the Hamas-led government while boosting Fatah and the President's office.[135] As described by Le More, "this resulted in ever more armed violence between the two clans, the collapse of the national unity government, and the effective seizure by Hamas in June 2007, while the centre of power in the West Bank remained controlled by Fatah."[136] Many analysts have assessed an inner-Palestinian reconciliation and a reunification as an essential first step towards any kind of peace settlement with the Israelis. [137] Whether or not the current unity government is a step towards a substantial and sustainable reunification of Palestinians, at least with regard to this specific fracture, remains to be seen.[138]

Another societal issue which has to be taken into consideration is the role of refugees. More than six decades ago, the Israeli-Arab War of 1948 – remembered by Palestinians as the "Nakba" – forced millions of Palestinians into exile.[139] Today, there are some five million registered refugees, one third of whom are living in "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East" (UNRWA) camps in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, or Lebanon.[140] While refugees play a crucial role for the Palestinian struggle, they are marginalised in the neighbouring countries, as well as within Palestine.[141] Furthermore, around 20 percent of all Israeli citizens are of Palestinian origin.[142] This group is often neglected because "the Palestinians", in many cases, are defined to be only those living in the occupied territories.[143] However, the issue of refugees and Palestinians inside Israel poses a core challenge in terms of their specific role, identity, inclusion, and rights.[144] Brand Jacobsen, listing the obstacles to an Israeli-Palestinian peace process, rightly argues that this issue, while being difficult to address, "must be resolved fairly for any meaningful resolution."[145]

But the societal gaps are even more complex and multi-dimensional. In fact, they spread across the whole Palestinian society in terms of the distribution of resources, income, and power, and with regard to identity and social cohesion. These gaps are necessarily of prime importance for development organisations when it comes to finding the right partners and beneficiaries. Hilal and Khan have shown the high degree of fragmentation within the Palestinian middle

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134 Brand Jacobsen 2010:18.
135 Le More 2010: 176.
136 Le More 2010: 176.
137 Knudsen and Ezbidi 2007: 206.
138 On the Palestinian unity government see inter alia Sayigh 2014.
139 Ging 2011: 334.
140 UNRWA 2012: 2.
141 Ging 2011: 336.
142 On the specific situation of Palestinian citizens of Israel see Sultany 2012.
143 Brand Jacobsen 2010: 24 f.
144 Kouttab and Toaldo 2013: 3 f.
145 Brand Jacobsen 2010: 24 f.

class and how access to privileges and resources is based on clientelistic structures.[146] In fact, corruption and mismanagement of public funds within the PA and affiliated public and private monopolies are major problems which donors need to take into consideration when deciding how to spend ODA funds in the Palestinian context.[147] But development cooperation with the PA is challenging in several aspects. While on the one hand the PA is the preferred partner for cooperation, as part of the overall approach to strengthen Palestinian state- and institution-building, the PA increasingly faces questions of legitimacy and public support.[148] Since the breakup of the short-lived unity government in 2007, the actual government ruling the West Bank is lacking democratic legitimacy. President Abbas' cabinet is not constitutionally approved by the Palestinian Legislative Council since the Parliament and its committees are inoperable, and new elections have been overdue since 2010.[149] The PA's repressive approach towards free speech and attacks on critical activists and journalists add to the erosion of its legitimacy.[150] An opinion poll carried out by a Norwegian research institute in 2011 revealed that three-quarters of people in the West Bank and in Gaza assessed the state of democracy and the general situation of human rights and public freedoms in the oPt to be poor or very poor.[151] However, stopping cooperation with the PA is not an easy way out of this dilemma. On the other hand, Anderson has convincingly argued that the refusal to directly support the PA, which is the approach adopted by one of the major donors, inevitably supports the Israeli side's argument "that there is no partner for peace."[152]

Regarding cooperation with the civil society and NGOs, the situation is similarly complex. Many analysts, such as Hilal and Khan, have described the "'professionalization' and the attendant transformation of organizational structures and agendas (…) necessitated by the requirements of international donors."[153] Hanafi and Tabar have shown the negative impact of international assistance by creating an "NGO elite" which follows rent-seeking structures instead of public political interests and visions.[154]

In addition to these general issues, some other issues are specifically relevant in the context of peacebuilding efforts. The most striking challenge in the Palestinian context is the lack of an overall peacebuilding strategy. "However, at no point, including the present, has the overall international response to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict been influenced by an integrated policy framework in which aid and political actors pursue a mutually supportive peace strategy."[155] Brand Jacobsen similarly deplores "the lack of a coherent, shared analysis

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146 Hilal and Khan 2004: 94.
147 Le More 2011: 69 ff.
148 Kouttab and Toaldo 2013.
149 Sayigh 2011: 4 ff.
150 Mertes / Knocha 2012, amnesty international report Septmeber 23, 2013.
151 Tiltnes et all. 2011: 14.
152 Anderson 2004: 4 f.
153 Hilal / Khan 2004: 98.
154 Hanafi / Tabar 2005.
155 Le More 2004: 17.

amongst a critical mass of key stakeholders involved in peacebuilding" leading to "fragmented, often contradictory efforts and engagements."[156] He identifies this state as being caused by a lack of comprehensive and adequate conflict analysis on the one hand, and biased identification with one of the conflict parties on the other hand.[157] Jean and Mendelsohn, in the framework of their contribution to the global "Reflecting on Peace Practice" (RPP) project, have analysed peacebuilding efforts in the years from the Oslo process up to 2008. They similarly identified "many actors and constituencies, but no shared vision."[158]

Besides this strategic deficit, there is another difficulty which practitioners aiming at peacebuilding in the Palestinian context have to deal with. The duration of the conflict is protracted, in the absence of both a realistic peace vision and serious political attempts to reach a common ground. On both the Palestinian and Israeli sides this has led to disappointment and a kind of "peacebuilding-fatigue." Anat Biletzki provides an illustrative example of how peacebuilding efforts over time can lose effectiveness and even meaning because of the lack of "real peace."

> "In the 1990's, during the "Oslo years" of the Middle East, when it seemed that the Oslo accords had seen the beginning of a real "peace process" dialogue became a popular activity for those in the business of peace. (…) This was the epitome of positivism and optimism, where one could naively believe that dialogue would be an efficacious part of a (road to a) real peace. What could be wrong with such activity in such an atmosphere? Two things: first, it soon became a boon of satire and joke to talk of dialogue – "dialogue, schmialogue" – in the Israeli general public, not to mention comedians and intellectuals, deriving ironic pleasure from the perceived futility of dialogue as a substitute for real peace; "dialogue" literally in laugh-quotes, became a specific language-game in substitution for real peace-talk."[159]

On the Palestinian side, Brand Jacobsen identifies people as being tired and frustrated with peace "as a promise they do not see."[160] This tiredness has also resulted in the boycott, as well as, in the anti-normalisation movements. The "Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel" (PACBI), a group of Palestinian intellectuals, politicians, and activists who are leading this movement and the anti-normalisation discourse, offer the following definition for normalisation in the Palestinian context:

> "[t]he participation in any project, initiative, or activity in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions) without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli

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156 Brand Jacobsen 2010: 10.
157 Brand Jacobsen 2010: 10.
158 Jean and Mendelsohn 2008: 30.
159 Biletzki 2007: 352.
160 Brand Jacobsen 2010: 21.

occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people."[161]

The Palestinian "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions" (BDS) movement, which was initiated in the year 2005 and has been growing since with international scope and support, endorses this definition and works with similar means for the Palestinian "struggle for justice" and "against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights."[162] These movements are relatively new and still in the process of developing and Brand Jacobsen is right when he notes that there is still a lack of a clear and common understanding of what normalisation actually means in practice.[163] In fact, the term is also being used to "destroy programs/people/activities rather than to clearly distinguish between work that can legitimately contribute to change and work that may re-enforce occupation."[164] Either way, the inner-Palestinian criticism on programmes and initiatives needs to be taken seriously and the anti-normalisation discourse has to be taken into account when working on peacebuilding measures in the oPt. Otherwise, these measures can be harmful both to the organisations or individuals involved and to the overall goal of peacebuilding.

While the above-mentioned aspects give an idea of the challenges in the Palestinian context, it should be noted that such a list is hardly exhaustive. In fact, the situation on the ground is never static but constantly undergoing changes and developments. However, this brief overview should have made clear how much the socio-political situation in Palestine is influenced by the conflict and vice versa. Every practitioner working in the territories has to keep that in mind, and be conflict-sensitive, in order do "Do No Harm," but to *do good*. David Shearer, a practitioner, who served as Head of Office of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Jerusalem, summed it up:

"Contrary to most perceptions, aid is neither necessarily positive nor benign. Pouring this magnitude of aid into a conflict without either the structure of a peace agreement or a solid analysis of its impact is comparable to speeding along a road at night without headlights. Continued aid in the absence of a serious examination of donor responsibilities, the obligations of the occupier, and aid's overall impact could undermine the prospects for a peace agreement in the future. It is time for donors to examine how $1bn a year might be more effectively used as a lever for peace rather than simply picking up the pieces of a conflict that shows no sign of abating."[165]

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161 www.pacbi.org.
162 www.bdsmovement.net, on BDS see e.g. Lim 2012.
163 Brand Jacobsen 2010: 21.
164 Brand Jacobsen 2010: 21.
165 Shearer 2004: 4.

3. PCIA as a Concept of Conflict Sensitivity

3.1. Concepts of Conflict Sensitivity – the State of Art

From the middle of the 1990s up to now, the development of conflict sensitivity can be divided into three phases. The first phase was characterised by the newly-awakened critical consciousness of the international community and developmental actors after the genocide in Rwanda.[166] The growing self-critical debate on the role of development assistance, in the context of violent conflict, led to the development of concepts such as *Do No Harm*, which was introduced By Mary B. Anderson in 1999, or PCIA, which Bush developed from 1996 onwards.[167] While these attempts focused on the project level of development cooperation, the OECD/DAC and the European Union in parallel worked on methods and tools for assessments on the macro-policy level.[168]

The debate continued in a second phase from the late 1990s until 2003/04.[169] While approaches which were developed in the previous phase were implemented and tested, at the same time a variety of new frameworks, tools, and methods was developed, fuelling the still on-going confusion about names and terminology. The more the general idea of conflict sensitivity became integrated into the field of development cooperation, the more approaches were created according to the specific needs and wishes of numerous donors, implementing agencies, and organisations.[170]

The third phase, which started in 2003/04 and lasts to date, is characterised by a further development into three different directions, which makes it even harder to define PCIA since there are so many competing answers by now to the question of what the concept means.[171] On the one hand, the term PCIA has been replaced by other terms such as "conflict-sensitive development,"[172] indicating a shift in the focus of the approaches. On the other hand, approaches which already came up during the first phase have been further refined and developed, offering comprehensive and concrete step-by-step methodological frameworks, as with Bush's *Hands-On PCIA*.[173] A third trend is marked by the recent debates on how to specifically measure the effectiveness of peacebuilding measures, following up on critical questions being raised in the previous phases. Overall, a further merge of the areas of development cooperation and peacebuilding can be observed, which has serious implications for evaluation and monitoring.[174]

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166 Kirschner 2007: 20.
167 Paffenholz 2005: 3.
168 Paffenholz 2005: 3.
169 Paffenholz 2005: 3.
170 Paffenholz 2005: 4.
171 Paffenholz 2005: 4.
172 Africa Peace Forum et al. 2004.
173 Bush 2003.
174 Körppen 2007: 28.

While on the one hand, "the term PCIA covers [instead] a wide range of different approaches, not all of them building on the original concept,"[175] on the other hand a broad field of new frameworks and tools with a variety of new terms and names has been developed which are equivalent to the original PCIA.[176] As early as in 2003, Leonhardt lists the

> "methodologies that agencies have developed over the last years called PCIA (CIDA/IDRC), Conflict Impact Assessment Systems (CIAS) (Reychler & EC), peace and conflict analysis (Oxfam), conflict prognosis (Clingendael), conflict vulnerability analysis (USAID), strategic conflict assessment (DFID), benefit-harms analysis (CARE), and Do No Harm (LCPP) among others."[177]

This list has certainly grown over the last few years up to now. Two years later, Beatrix Schmelzle notes that "a myriad of organisations – development agencies, government departments, [and] conflict resolution organisations – are engaged, albeit at different levels and with varying commitment to 'mainstreaming,' in activities to identify appropriate ways to evaluate and improve their work."[178] Accordingly, Daniela Körppen assesses PCIA as being just a "utopia of a consistent methodology".[179]

Table 1: The Development of Concepts of Conflict Sensitivity

Phases	Dates	Trends	Conceptual Developments	
1st phase	Mid-1990s – late 1990s	Newly awakened critical consciousness of the international community	Micro-project level	• Kenneth Bush in 1996: PCIA • Mary B. Anderson in 1999: Do No Harm
			Macro-policy level	• OECD/DAC and the European Union: development of own tools and methods
2nd phase	Late 1990s - 2003/04	Mainstreaming of the idea of conflict sensitivity	• Implementation and testing of existing methods and concepts • Development of new frameworks, tools and methods • More approaches created, according to the specific needs of various organisations	

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175 Paffenholz 2005:3.
176 Fischer / Wils 2003: 3.
177 Leonhardt 2003: 55.
178 Schmelzle 2005: 4.
179 Körppen 2007.

3rd phase	2003/4 - present	"Utopia of a consistent methodology" and terminological confusion Merge of the fields of development assistance and peacebuilding	• PCIA replaced by various new terms indicating shifts in focus • Further refinement and development of approaches which emerged during the first phase such as Bush's "Hands-On PCIA" • Debates on how to measure the effectiveness of specific peacebuilding measures

Own compilation

The following section will summarise different approaches according to a number of possible categories of differentiations for the current debate. There are concepts dedicated to development cooperation projects and others designed for peacebuilding measures, while some, such as Bush's PCIA approach, can be used for both. Körppen distinguishes between top-down and bottom-up approaches,[180] while Paffenholz adds further possible criteria such as planning versus evaluating purposes and comprehensive versus single functional approaches.[181] Hoffman works out three different relevant approaches: "those that deploy standard donor evaluation criteria; those that develop methodologies for assessing the peace and conflict impact of development and humanitarian programming by multi-mandate organisations; and those that focus explicitly on interventions by NGOs with specific conflict resolution and peacebuilding aims."[182] Neufeld offers another interesting way of categorising the debate by differentiating between "Logical Frameworkers" and "Complex Circlers." The former is used to describe practitioners that tend to plan, monitor, and evaluate peacebuilding projects in a linear, causal chain oriented way while the latter think and act more flexibly and more oriented towards specific cases and contexts.[183] However, each of these ways and approaches of structuring the PCIA debate in itself represents a certain perspective and position within this debate. Hofmann, for instance, makes his division along methodological aspects and asks for a unified methodology and hereby reveals a quite technocratic perspective.[184] Neufeld, on the other hand, indicates a different focus and less emphasis on technocratic questions by naming his article "Frameworkers and Circlers." Besides all these differences, Thania Paffenholz is right when she states that nonetheless

"all PCIA approaches do have in common the thorough analysis of the conflict situation and the formulation of recommendations for coping with the situation, e.g. for reducing possible negative effects of an intervention on violent conflict and for enhancing its

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180 Körppen 2007: 29.
181 Paffenholz 2005: 4.
182 Hofmann 2003: 3 f.
183 Neufeldt 2007.
184 Hofmann 2003.

contribution to peacebuilding."

However, given the sheer number of different PCIA frameworks, it seems impossible to analyse the benefits and limitations of PCIA as such without specifying a concrete approach. This study will analyse and focus on PCIA as developed by Kenneth Bush. Besides the fact that most concepts share a basic understanding of conflict sensitivity, in fact approaches and concept differ in terms of how to concretely ensure conflict sensitivity for different measures in conflict contexts. Bush's PCIA is characterised by some specific features which will be presented in the following chapter. These characteristics are core to his understanding of conflict sensitivity and have been further sharpened and developed over the years and throughout the process of refinement of his approach. Chapter 3.2. will, in a first step, give an overview of Bush's concept with an emphasis on these specific characteristics, followed by a presentation of some discussions on and criticism against these ideas in Chapter 3.3. Thereby, chapter three should provide an understanding of Bush's PCIA and, together with the practice experiences in the subsequent section, allow a critical discussion of this framework in relation to the Palestinian case in Chapter five.

3.2. PCIA as Developed by Kenneth Bush

The term Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment, or PCIA, can be traced back to the year 1996 when Kenneth Bush published "Good Practices for the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of Development Projects" for an OECD Task Force.[185] Two years later, as a "result of over a hundred interviews and meandering conversations in the field,"[186] he further developed and refined this concept in the framework of his widely received article "A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of Development Projects in Conflict Zones."[187] Following up on this, he published a first version of "Hands-on PCIA" in 2003,[188] and "Aid for Peace" in 2009, both refinements of the original concept into more comprehensive, step-by-step approaches.[189]

The core idea behind PCIA was to "develop an argument and framework for the systematic consideration of the positive and negative impacts of development projects in conflict-prone regions."[190] A key aspect of the framework is that peacebuilding should be understood as an impact rather than a specific activity. Instead of limiting aspects of peace and conflict solely to peacebuilding projects, all kind of measures, whether developmental or peace-oriented, should be assessed with view to their peace and conflict impact.[191] Therefore, Kenneth Bush provides working definitions of peace and conflict impact.

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185 Bush 1996.
186 Bush 2003a: 38.
187 Bush 1998.
188 Bush 2003.
189 Paffenholz 2003: 4.
190 Bush 1998: 6.
191 Bush 1998: 1 f.

Before going into the details of Bush's concept, it is worth asking what the potential impact of concrete initiatives and projects could be. Daniela Körppen gives a clear overview of the differences between the *output, outcome*, and *impact* of a project.[192] The lowest level of a project's effect is its *output*. This is the easiest to measure since it stands for direct short-term results of an activity. In the example of a project bringing together business people from different conflict parties, aiming at trade enhancement and peacebuilding, this could be the number of participants. Whereas the *outcome* of such an encounter would be a more qualitative and long-term result of this encounter project such as an increase in trade between businesses from both sides due to the project-induced ties. A project's *impact*, however, is the most difficult to measure since it represents the ultimate effect of a measure in a broad sense. In the example of the business people encounter the intended peace impact would be the mutual trust between the two business communities and their willingness to engage in peaceful cooperation with the other conflict party beyond business and trade. However, a rather unintended conflict impact could be a marginalisation of the project participants within their own communities and them being blamed for cooperating with "the other" side." In fact, in spite of the difficulties of measuring it, it is the project's impact on peace and conflict which according to PCIA standards should be assessed and analysed. Bush himself differentiates between peace and conflict impact, defining peace impact to be

> "understood to include those outcomes that foster and support those sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation, of violent conflict. "Peace" is not the absence of conflict, but the absence of the use of violence to resolve both the positive and negative forms of conflict that arise naturally in any society."[193]

Conflict impact however is "understood to include all outcomes that increase the likelihood that conflict will be dealt with through violent means."[194]

Applicability

These two kinds of impact should no longer only be taken into consideration related to specific "peace measurements" but should, similar to gender, be considered as crosscutting aspects of all developmental cooperation which is carried out in the context of conflict.[195] Consequently, the right criterion to decide whether a PCIA is necessary or not is not the type of measure but the location and context, being either "characterized by latent or manifest violent conflict"[196] or in a "territory which is contested or politically and legally ambiguous."[197] Hence, Bush's approach, in contrast to others that are designed

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192 Körppen 2007: 27.
193 Bush 1998: 33.
194 Bush 1998: 33.
195 Bush 1998: 6.
196 Bush 1998: 10.
197 Bush 1998: 11.

specifically and exclusively for either development or peacebuilding measures, can be applied to all kinds of measures carried out in the context of conflict.

Bush furthermore explains the difference between more general methods of evaluation and PCIA by giving examples of projects that are successful in terms of their limited developmental goals without having any positive impact in terms of peacebuilding at all and vice versa.[198] Hence, the assessment should go beyond regular evaluation and monitoring by capturing each activity's broad scope of impact, whether aimed and planned or not.[199] In *A Measure of Peace,* in addition to these explanations on the purpose and the practitioners' use of PCIA, Bush provides concrete steps for carrying out a PCIA. Thereby he differentiates between two phases, pre-project and post-project considerations.

As part of necessary *pre-project considerations* in a conflict zone, one should ask whether location, timing, political context, and other relevant factors make the project reasonable at all.[200] At this early stage, one should look for the impact which the conflict could have on the project itself and carry out a risk assessment. Here contextual factors need to be considered, as well as the capacities of the project and finally the compatibility of both. Contextual factors could be the political and legal security structure in a country or simply the physical infrastructure. The project itself should be analysed with regard to questions of resources, capacity, and personnel. Finally, concrete aspects such as the degree of trust and ownership within the community and support from authorities and leaders should be taken into consideration. Another relevant aspect regarding the compatibility of the project and the contextual conditions is the question of sustainability. After having gone through these questions thoroughly one should define the right indicators for measuring the actual impact of the project. At this stage, Bush aims at providing more concrete suggestions on how to "operationalize a tool which is effective and efficient".[201]

Local Ownership and Participation

At the same time, he highly emphasises the role of ownership and local wisdom. "Ideally, a PCIA would be used by all development actors involved in decision making in conflict-prone regions."[202] He criticises conventional evaluation methods which usually for the sake of better comparability formulate indicators a priori.[203] According to him these indicators might be useful for organisational purposes but not proper tools for mapping a project's real impact. Instead, one would have to ask a broad range of stakeholders which are involved in the project to critically discuss, and thereby identify, useful and significant indicators. Bush himself suggests some indicator patterns without claiming that any of these should be universally applied. He mentions Security

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198 Bush 1998: 7.
199 Bush 1998: 7.
200 Bush 1998: 12 ff.
201 Bush 1998: 19.
202 Bush 1998: 9.
203 Bush 1998: 20.

Indicators, Psychological Indicators, Social Indicators, Political Indicators, and Judicial Indicators.[204] But he also stresses the urge for creativity to find new innovative indicators and to involve conflict-affected communities in further work in this field.

With regard to the *post-project phase of PCIA*, Bush asks for the type of impact one might see "as a result of undertaking development interventions in environments of potential or open conflict."[205] Here again he provides the reader with examples of potential areas of projects' impact such as a significant change in access to resources – individual or collective resources like water, land, and food but also non-material resources such as social status, information, and legitimacy.[206] Another relevant aspect which should be paid more attention is the question whether any of the measures taken create or exacerbate any socio-economic tension.[207] Since most of the development projects, if carried out successfully, challenge the socio-economic status quo, one must carefully observe the risk of potentially creating tension. Similarly, issues like food security should be of concrete concern when looking at project's impacts. Bush emphasises the importance of the material basis of economic sustenance in a society and another potential conflict exacerbation factor which is the control over existing societal systems.

Finally, Bush suggests five concrete areas of potential impact which should be analysed and looked at before, during, and after implementing a project: Institutional Capacity to Manage/Resolve Violent Conflict & to Promote Tolerance and Build Peace, Military and Human Security, Political Structures and Processes, Economic Structures and Processes, and Social Reconstruction and Empowerment. Furthermore, he gives examples of relevant sample questions which should be asked to capture each of these areas.

Openness

Bush, while offering these potential areas of impact, stresses that these areas should only be seen as a suggestion and serve as a stimulation for discussions among those involved in projects. Since every project has its individual relevant aspects, different sets of questions and fields of impact need to be identified for each specific case.[208] Bush makes proposals rather than offering fixed indicators in order to keep the openness and flexible applicability of his concept. This is why "A Measure for Peace" "is winding down at the point it should be picking up,"[209] as Bush describes in his conclusion, because a useful

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204 Bush 1998: 21.
205 Bush 1998: 22.
206 Bush 1998: 22.
207 Bush 1998: 23.
208 Bush 1998 31.
209 Bush 1998: 32.

PCIA has "to be the product of the interaction and synergies of the full spectrum of the peacebuilding community."[210]

Following up on this work, Bush refined his approach a few years later. The result was the manual "Hands-on PCIA" which he published as a first draft in 2003. While the original idea of PCIA remains pretty much the same, Bush gives more concrete guidance and instructions for practitioners by creating this "PCIA for Dummies" format.[211] The handbook is meant to serve as a working document for practical use in the field. While Bush reflects and builds on many experiences he had in the field himself, he also openly invites readers and users of his handbook to comment on it and to give feedback according to their own experiences. Accordingly, a revised version was published in 2007.[212] Compared to his previous work, the "Hands-On" document offers more condensed instructions by describing PCIA as a 5-step-process beginning with an assessment of first the project environment and second the risks and opportunities. The next three steps contain the assessment of potential peace and conflict impacts before, during, and after the implementation of a project.[213]

Table 2: PCIA according to Bush

	Phase	Task	Main Concerns	Areas of observation
1	Pre-project	Assessing the environment	Is the environment in which the project is planned affected by conflict?	• Conflict Stakeholders • Peace Stakeholders
2		Completing a risk and opportunity assessment	How may the peace and conflict environment affect the project or initiative?	• Location • Timing • Political context • Military Context • Socio-economic Issues • Partners/ Stakeholders • Other relevant factors
3		Assessing potential peace and conflict impacts during project design	How should the project be planned and designed in view of potential peace and conflict impacts?	

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210 Bush 1998: 31.
211 Bush 2003: 3.
212 Bush 2007
213 Bush 2003: 10.

4	In-project	Assessing potential peace and conflict impacts during project implementation	What immediate impacts can be monitored? Does the project's design and direction have to be modified?	
		Regular repetition of risk and opportunity assessment		4. Conflict Management Capacities 5. Military and Human Security,
5	Post-project	Assessing potential peace and conflict impacts as part of post-project evaluation	How should the next phase be planned in view of evaluated impacts so far? What can we learn from the previous phase?	6. Political Structures and Processes, 7. Economic Structures and Processes 8. Social Impacts and Empowerment

Own compilation based on Bush

Despite these further developments of the concept, the core features of Bush's PCIA remain the same. Besides the understanding of peace as an impact, aspects such as the emphasis of local participation and ownership, the openness of the concept, and the application on the project level rank amongst the most relevant characteristics of Bush's concept until now. They are also among the most disputed aspects of his approach and have caused much criticism in the academic discourse on conflict sensitivity. The following section will provide a look at this discourse by describing some of the critical voices on Bush's approach to PCIA.

3.3. Criticism of Bush's Methodology

In fact, the openness of Bush's PCIA concept is one of its most significant features. This openness contrasts with attempts to mainstream PCIA into the logics and operating procedures of institutions and organisations[214] and has generated much criticism by other researchers and practitioners.

In the framework of a dialogue on PCIA initiated by the Berghof Conflict Research Centre, Mark Hoffman for instance challenged Bush's approach. He gives an overview of three different PCIA approaches, Bush's and two others, comparing them in terms of methodological aspects and giving suggestions for improvement of each of them. Hoffman criticises the openness of Bush's approach, stating that "it may well hinder the ability of donors, implementing

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214 Schmelzle 2005: 8.

agencies, stakeholder, participants, or external evaluators to effectively operationalise such a PCIA framework."[215] Similarly, Marc Ross argues: "By suggesting to project implementers that everything matters and that all domains are interconnected, PCIA, as Bush presents it, can be disempowering and produce frustration."[216]

Bush himself critically asks with regard to Hoffman's article: "Where are the politics?" and explains that PCIA was meant to be political and have an empowering impact and therefore should not be discussed in such a "technocratic" way.[217] Bush continues defending the openness of his approach, which was never intended to be "a full-blown kitbag of PCIA tools," but rather "an invitation to enter into an open-ended and on-going conversation."[218] Bush notes with great concern the attempts of the "Development Industry",[219] as he critically calls organisations and agencies working in this field, to mainstream PCIA in an apolitical way. This would undermine the original idea of the concept as an "original organic Southern-led learning process."[220] He continues on the adaption of PCIA by Northern donors and NGOs explaining: "The ultimate result in most cases was the limitation, rather than the expansion of PCIA, as it was forced into constrained pre-existing bureaucratic structures and made to fit the standard operating procedures of the Development Industry."[221]

Bush's concern about these kinds of standardisation processes is shared by other researchers in the field, such as Reina C. Neufeldt[222] or Gsänger and Feyen, who argue for "avoiding linear cause-effect thinking such as the log-frame mindset."[223] Others, such as Manuela Leonhardt, on the one hand notes with regard to a mainstreamed PCIA that "there is a justifiable worry that it will become a fig leaf for agencies that in the end are not prepared to change any of their basic ways of operation".[224] But at the same time, she stresses the potential of mainstreaming PCIA as one out of several available tools in order to reflect on interventions and agencies' role in conflict situations.[225] The discussion about mainstreaming PCIA versus the openness of the process is related to another issue which is of great relevance for Bush's PCIA approach, namely the participation and ownership of people. Bush's argumentation reveals that openness is not a value per se, but a means for the purpose of ensuring local ownership.

Bush regards local ownership to be crucial for PCIA, which according to him is supposed to be "organic, process-oriented, community-controlled, responsive,

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215 Hoffman 2003: 10.
216 Ross 2003: 79.
217 Bush 2003a: 37.
218 Bush 2003a: 39.
219 Bush 2003a: 39.
220 Bush 2003a: 39.
221 Bush 2003a: 39.
222 Neufeldt 2007.
223 Gsänger and Feyen 2003: 75.
224 Leonhardt 2003: 54.
225 Leonhardt 2003: 65.

and non-linear."[226] Hence, *A measure for Peace* was meant to be a platform for Southerners to engage in the development of user-friendly tools for their own projects. Gsänger and Feyen also stress the importance of local ownership and participation,[227] as well as Lisa Bornstein, who conducted a field study on PCIA in post-civil war Mozambique and who identifies the participation of a variety of stakeholders including local communities as being a key factor for projects' success.[228] Many authors, such as Leonhardt, stress that "more could be done, for example, to hand over PCIA to civil society organisations, particularly those from the South, as a part of capacity building in management and advocacy."[229]

However, some oppose the call for more ownership. Thania Paffenholz, while not questioning the importance of local communities' participation in general, warns with regard to Kenneth Bush's specific approach that "we should be careful not to paint the picture of the "wonderful Southerners" and the "evil Northerners."[230] Barbolet et al. furthermore critically question whether local communities really could be as influential on agencies and organisations in terms of decision-making as has often been declared.[231] They raise doubts with regard to local capacities and call for more realism and less ideological ethos on this subject.[232] Finally, Anderson and Olson describe the negative influence local stakeholders can have when functioning as gatekeepers who try to monopolise foreign funds and power for their own purposes.[233] Ultimately, the issue of ownership remains disputed, and is one of the core aspects which distinguishes Bush's concept of PCIA from others. Yet another controversial question within the PCIA debate, which in a way is related to the issue of mainstreaming, is the question of the level of application. *A Measure of Peace,* similar to *Do No Harm,* concentrates on the project level of development, rather than on the programme or policy level. This has been criticised by Paffenholz, among others, who call for more macro-oriented peace and conflict assessments.[234]

4. Practitioners' Assessments of the Palestinian Context and their Specific Experiences with PCIA or other Concepts of Conflict Sensitivity

This chapter will present the main findings of the interviews conducted with practitioners who work in the context of development and peacebuilding in

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226 Bush 2003b: 50.
227 Gsänger and Feyen 2003: 75.
228 Bornstein 2010: 173.
229 Leonhardt 2003: 64.
230 Paffenholz 2005b: 2.
231 Barbolet et all. 2005b: 4.
232 Barbolet et all. 2005b: 4.
233 Anderson / Olsen 2003: 41.
234 Paffenholz 2005: 16.

Palestine. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights into the practice of development cooperation and peacebuilding in the oPt with a focus on the key question of practitioners' experiences with and approaches to PCIA or other concepts of conflict sensitivity. Chapter 4.1. will clarify some further methodological aspects regarding the interviews, and the subsequent section will be dedicated to main findings and results.

4.1. The Expert Interviews

The expert interviews were conducted between 1st July 2013 and 26th September 2013. During, as well as prior to this phase, numerous attempts were made to reach out to development practitioners in Palestine, by phone, by mail, and personally, in order to include as many interviewees as possible.

The difficulties of finding practitioners who agree to speak about their professional experiences in the oPt and their organisations' approaches to conflict sensitivity were already mentioned. Despite these factors, ten representatives of different development agencies were willing to conduct an interview, either face-to-face or via video conference.[235] The list of participants comprised the following organisations:

- Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID)
- Denmark's Development Cooperation (DANIDA)
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- Italian Development Cooperation
- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
- Netherlands Representative Office to the Palestinian Authority
- Representative Office Of Norway
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

In order to gain insights into practical experiences with conflict sensitivity, it was important to approach practitioners who have programmatic responsibility and do not only work on the implementation level. At the time when the interviews were conducted, each of the interviewed experts fulfilled the criterion of being responsible for at least one of their organisations' programmes. In two cases, the interview was conducted with the organisations' deputy director/representative and in one case with the director/representative. Furthermore, the interviewees were chosen from a range of various sectors. Since PCIA is meant to serve as a framework for all kinds of different measures carried out in the context of conflict, the selection of experts represents different development sectors and programmes and is not limited to peacebuilding

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235 The author wishes to express her gratitude for those practitioners who agreed to conduct interviews and allowed this highly appreciated insight into their work

efforts. This sample, while certainly not representing development assistance to the Palestinians as a whole, represents a diverse range of different fields. This diversity of fields was intentionally selected in order to avoid a focus on any single sector or field which might differ from others in terms of conflict sensitivity.

Besides the three directors, who are responsible for all kind of sectors, the interviewed practitioners represented the following sectors and fields:

- human rights and justice
- socio-cultural assistance to refugees
- agricultural development
- civil society
- private sector development
- municipal development
- water and sanitation.

Out of respect for the interviewees' request, the following results will not be assigned to concrete persons or organisations. In view of the interview questions and the fact that they reveal insights into sensitive topics of each organisation's practice, the condition set by the interviewees that they would like to remain anonymous is understandable. In any case, as mentioned above, the interview results are supposed to serve as a sample providing insight into practitioners' work in the oPt. For the purpose of this study, which follows a qualitative approach, they do not need to be linked to the specific organisations or the donor countries.

4.2. Interview Results

The interviews were conducted as expert interviews[236] in an open way not following a strict pattern in order to allow the practitioners to openly share and elaborate on their assessments and experiences. The following sections will cluster and structure their explanations, showing commonalities as well as differences in order to generate relevant findings and results as an empirical basis for the discussion on PCIA.

Before tackling the practice of conflict sensitivity, the practitioners' assessments of the characteristics of development assistance to the Palestinians were inquired, such as context-specific obstacles and challenges or the overall performance of assistance and the degree of coordination and harmonisation.

On the one hand, these assessments, in addition to the analysis provided in chapter 2, should feed into the analysis of Palestine as a case study. On the other hand the practitioners' perspectives on the specific characteristics and

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236 See chapter 1.4. on "Research Design and Methodology"

challenges of this context are important to understand before asking for their specific approaches and methodologies in order to critically discuss PCIA.

In a second step, the interviewees were asked to explain whether or not they know about and use any concept of conflict sensitivity. Those who apply PCIA or other methodologies were asked to elaborate on their respective concepts and their experiences in terms of its applicability, gaps, and limitations.

4.2.1. Specific Characteristics of the Palestinian Context

Peacebuilding versus Development Cooperation

First, each of the interview partners was asked to introduce his or her work in the oPt, and to give a brief overview of their organisations' missions and goals. Hereby, they were specifically asked to explain whether their work aims at development or peacebuilding and whether they differentiate between these two objectives at all. Interestingly, all of the interviewees responded that their work, regardless of the differences in terms of sectors, programs, and projects, ultimately aimed at preparing or supporting a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This confirms the assumption that both fields are constantly merging and that it is increasingly difficult to differentiate between them, particularly in the Palestinian context. All interviewed experts, despite differences in main objectives and goals, rated the conflict to be very relevant for their work. However, there are differences in the formulation of priorities between the different organisations. Some of the interview partners rated peacebuilding as their ultimate objective and developmental measures as a means to achieve peace. "The conflict is the reason why I am here,"[237] said one of the interviewees and being asked about other developmental goals beside peacebuilding another explained: "No, it's all under the umbrella of peacebuilding."[238] Other organisations rather concentrate on Palestinian development while acknowledging peace as an important, if not crucial, aspect of development in Palestine. "We are a development agency so all our projects are development projects, but of course we incorporate the aspect of peacebuilding when we formulate and conduct a project."[239]

Perceived Challenges and Obstacles

Being asked about core characteristics or specific features of the Palestinian case compared to other developmental work contexts – and in fact each of them had gained experience working in other contexts before – the interviewees expressed different positions. However, they all underlined the relevance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the occupation as one the main characteristics of the Palestinian context. "I don't think there is any other conflict in the world with the complexity of this one. […]

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237 Interview 8.
238 Interview 3.
239 Interview 1.

"These different layers and the complexity make it hard,"[240] said one of them, while another stressed the length of the conflict and the severe restrictions due to the Israeli occupation.[241] Three different persons used the term "stalemate" to describe the conflict's status. In addition, the political dimension of aid was stressed: "absolutely everything, the air you breathe, is politics here."[242] While there is consensus on this assessment, it does not say anything about the practitioners' willingness and ability to incorporate a conflict-sensitive approach into their work context.

Each interview partner was asked to specify the main characteristics of the situation in Palestine with regard to the most relevant obstacles for their work's success and what they think would be most urgently needed in order to improve development and peacebuilding in Palestine. Here the respondents' answers can be basically linked to two aspects: The conflict and the occupation and all related restrictions on the one hand and the weakness of the PA and local actors on the other.

The challenges related to the occupation were mentioned repeatedly, with much emphasis on concrete restrictions such as "lack of freedom, lack of sovereignty,"[243] or the lack of mobility as well as access to territory and natural resources.[244] One of the interviewed experts furthermore deplored "the dilemma of the international community of subsidising Israel, who does not meet international humanitarian law obligations."[245]

One of the interviewees described the conflict's impact in their work as following:

> "You have an agreement between a country and a "to-be-country" that governs political, economic, and other relations. At the same time, you have tensions all the time, you have so many powers and entities with no clear authority and who's controlling what? That's why a development agency without any political affiliations wouldn't be able to implement projects. You have to have that political angle, to go and push the Israelis sometimes, push the Palestinians also. In other contexts, you go and you do your own development work without worrying, am I crossing from Area B to Area C, am I allowed using this water. These different layers and the complexity make it hard to do development work here."[246]

The same practitioner however was one of the two who identified the weakness of the PA to be the most relevant obstacle to development and peacebuilding in the territories.[247] "You need a strong host country government for the success of your programmes," said one of them while further examining "stronger, meaning

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240 Interview 2.
241 Interview 1.
242 Interview 5.
243 Interview 5.
244 Interviews 3, 5, 9.
245 Interview 6.
246 Interview 2.
247 Interviews 2 and 3.

more strategic."[248] Similarly the need for more Palestinian ownership and leadership was expressed by two more.[249]

Assessment of Aid Performance

Furthermore, each interviewee was asked to assess the overall success of development and peacebuilding efforts in the oPt. Here again, the answers were diverse but everyone expressed room for improvement. "Is donor money always invested in the right place? Definitely not, but due to different reasons,"[250] said one of the experts, emphasising the differences between the donors. The varieties in donor agendas and approaches were mentioned several times. "At the end of the day, each state has its own agenda," said one practitioner and another explained that "all countries get their briefings from their home countries and headquarters and they bring their packages here and want to implement them here."[251] The same practitioner continued describing the top-down structures in terms of decision-making between their organisation's headquarters and its field office in the Palestinian territories.[252] The question of how independently from its respective government each donor agency can act was raised in each of the interviews. The answers were quite similar in the sense that the governments' policies were said to play a crucial role. This assessment is consistent with the previously discussed high degree of politicisation of development cooperation in the Palestinian context. In this context one of the practitioners was quite open and self-critical, stating: "There are competing actors. I wish everybody who is here would be supporting the Palestinian statehood, that's the main purpose. But often you will find competing actors."[253] Self-criticism was also raised with regard to the organisations' aims: "We're focusing too much on institutions," said another interviewee, "it has to be about people's ideas and their goals."[254]

Assessment of Donor Coordination and Harmonisation

Accordingly, practitioners were requested to rate the degree of cooperation and harmonisation between the donors in the Palestinian territories. With regard to development assistance in general, most respondents rated coordination and harmonisation to be quite extensive.

> "Compared to other countries [coordination is quite extensive] because the mechanisms on cooperation are very developed in this country. We have the LACS here and such a kind of mechanism is very active and well developed here. We have donor meetings and we have the chance to discuss with other donors and we avoid duplicating efforts."[255]

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248 Interview 2.
249 Interviews 6 and 10.
250 Interview 2.
251 Interview 5.
252 Interview 5.
253 Interview 10.
254 Interview 8.
255 Interview 1.

Nonetheless the effectiveness of LACS and the overall coordination was assessed differently. One of the interviewees criticised LACS in general for doing work which should be done by the Palestinian Ministry of Planning and Development.[256] This practitioner also questioned the need for more coordination, mentioning the many meetings which already take place and the amount of effort which is already put into this issue. "What would be the added value of more coordination,"[257] was this respondent's critical question. Another practitioner argued that the PA and its ministries should be more involved in coordination in order to allow more Palestinian ownership and leadership.[258] Contrary to the assessment above, this respondent stressed the great importance of coordination and the need for it to be further extended and developed.[259] However, both were rather critical towards the existing structures and stressed the contrasts in the degree of effective coordination and harmonisation between the different sectors. Differences in donors' political positions and agendas were mentioned by several experts as the most relevant factors for a coordination deficit.

Another two of the respondents – the same who assessed the weakness of the PA as the most relevant obstacle to their works' success – while acknowledging the extent of coordination, assessed its outcomes as rather negative because of shortcomings in the PA's performance.[260] Coordination was not as lively now as it used to be before said one of the experts while explaining this decline of coordination with the PA's financial problems. Due to this financial problems, the PA had to use international funds to pay their own employees and would not be able to spend much on development programmes on their own anymore. "As an effect, the coordination maybe wasn't that dynamic and vital as in the days when more PA funds went into development cooperation." Another respondent critically assessed "a lot of replications, donors doing the same" and explained further:

> I wouldn't say that this is a donor problem – it's mainly a PA problem. The PA sometimes tries to over-control donors and then sometimes they just stay away from it. So there is an institutional problem within the PA itself. We tried to solve it many times with the MOPAD, with the sector working groups, but still it's not maximising efficiency of donors' money.[261]

In terms of coordination and harmonisation of explicit peacebuilding efforts in particular, all of the interviewed experts agreed on an overall lack of strategic coordination or harmonisation. This lack was explained differently throughout the ten interviews. While one of the respondents related it to the fact that many donors would simply not work in this field,[262] another interpreted this lack as a

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256 Interview 5.
257 Interview 5.
258 Interview 6.
259 Interview 6.
260 Interviews 2 and 3.
261 Interview 2.
262 Interview 4.

potential result of politicisation of this field of effort and the differences in donors' political positions. Coordination might rather happen rhetorically.[263] Another interviewee mentioned the difficulties of measuring and assessing peacebuilding outputs in contrast to developmental goals.[264] Peacebuilding was mainly carried out by governments on the diplomatic level.[265] Another practitioner related this lack of coordination to political issues, focusing on the normalisation[266] discourse:

> Peacebuilding is a sensitive topic and not everybody has the mandate to dive into it in depth. You don't want to be seen as normalising the conflict, so a lot of people act extremely carefully when it comes to that.[267]

It is striking that the interviewees agree on most aspects related to the overall assessment of the state of development assistance and peacebuilding. There is not much disagreement with respect to the political sensitivity of aid in Palestine and the challenges of the Palestinian context. However, when it comes to explanatory approaches or concrete conclusions, the interviews reveal significant differences between the practitioners' assessments and evaluations.

4.2.2. Practitioners' Experiences with PCIA and other Concepts of Conflict Sensitivity

First, each of the interviewees was asked whether he or she uses any framework or concept of conflict sensitivity. As mentioned above, all of the interviewed practitioners rated the conflict's relevance for their work to be very high and accordingly each of them would claim generally to work in a conflict-sensitive way. However, the ideas of what conflict sensitivity actually means varied a lot.

Application and Awareness of Conflict Sensitivity

When asked whether they use any specific framework or tools of conflict sensitivity, such as PCIA, Do No Harm or anything similar, two of the practitioners gave extensive explanations on their methodologies and projects without tackling the issue of conflict-sensitive planning, implementing, or monitoring at all.[268] Obviously, there was no clear understanding of what the specific term Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment actually means. Another interviewee responded, "I am not quite sure if I understand what you mean. Here you have to be conflict-sensitive all the time. You don't need to think of any checklist because it's on the mind."[269] Another practitioner answered in a similar way. Hence five of the overall ten interviewees, according to their own

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263 Interview 6.
264 Interview 2.
265 Interview 5.
266 On the anti-normalisation discourse see chapter 2.4.
267 Interview 10.
268 Interviews 2 and
269 Interview 3.

explanations, do not apply PCIA or make use of any comparable methodology. Two out of these five at least seemed to know about existing tools and methodologies, one of them only after a brief explanation.[270] Being asked for a reason why they do not make use of such a concept, one of these two responded that it might be applied for peacebuilding projects, "but with the technical portfolios, economic growth, health, or infrastructure, the peacebuilding angle is not there."[271] Similarly, the other explained: "Not because I don't believe in these tools. We are a technical programme. We don't do peacebuilding officially. We don't work on the political level. If we would, we would lose credibility."[272]

One of those who did not know about PCIA approaches or a concrete framework for conflict sensitivity seemed quite open to the idea after being introduced to it. "Probably we should have an expert in conflict […], an expert to assess the quality of interventions and donor assistance, taking the delicate aspects in this situation of conflict into account."[273] However, this expert, when asked for a personal assessment of what the biggest obstacle to development and peacebuilding was, answered: "The Palestinians are too dependent on Israel and they rely too much on donors and aid money."[274] Similarly, none of the other practitioners who do not use PCIA identified a lack of conflict sensitivity as an obstacle to their efforts' success. Two more mentioned Israeli restrictions and the Palestinians' lack of access to their own resources among the most relevant aspects which would have to be changed in order to improve developmental outcomes. Another obstacle, which was named by three out of these five interviewees, is the weakness of the PA in terms of planning and management capacities.

However, five out of the ten experts interviewed gave a positive response to the question of whether they use a concept for conflict sensitivity.[275] Each of them was further asked to name their concept and to elaborate on its features. While they all claimed to work in a conflict-sensitive way, their explanations revealed huge differences in their understanding of what conflict sensitivity means. Furthermore, all the respondents who do use a concept, neither use PCIA as developed by Bush, nor any other already existing approach on a one-to-one. Interestingly, each of the five development agencies which these respondents were representing, has either adapted existing concepts or tailored and developed its own system from scratch.

Applied Concepts of Conflict Sensitivity in the Palestinian Context

One of the interviewees illustrated how they carried out an assessment every four years together with the PA and members of the Palestinian civil society in

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270 Interviews 2 and 8.
271 Interview 2.
272 Interview 8.
273 Interview 9.
274 Interview 9.
275 Interviews 1, 4, 6, 7 and 10.

order to ensure ownership.[276] In the framework of this assessment, they had developed general master plans. This organisation's last assessment had been carried out in 2008 and had resulted in a strategic shift of their work away from "people to people" peacebuilding encounters which they had assessed to be not very effective in the Palestinian context. Furthermore, this respondent explained how their conflict assessment was based on a conflict analysis which the organisation had not renewed since the year 2006. The interviewee was aware of the fact that such an outdated conflict analysis could not serve as a valid basis for a conflict impact assessment. Finally, this respondent revealed how their organisation was going through a major process of change due to severe budget cuts and therefore, at the time when the interview was conducted, the organisation was in a state of transformation and uncertainty over the future. Apart from this information, the interviewee was rather hesitant to speak about further methodological and practical details of their work. Another respondent gave the following explanation:

> "We have a very strong monitoring and evaluation system in place that is being audited constantly. We have the Result Based Monitoring System that is being set in place and that includes Do No Harm for all our programmes. […] Whatever we do, whether it's poverty reduction or a government portfolio, everything revolves around ensuring that the overall peacebuilding is there."[277]

The three others named the following concepts: Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management (CSPM),[278] Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA),[279] and Peacebuilding Needs and Impact Assessment (PNA).[280] Regarding the development of their concept one of the respondents explained: "When we prepared our document [their conflict sensitivity guidelines], we researched these tools, which were made up by other donors […] We researched how they do their analyses and after studying their tools we made up our own one."[281] Another respondent explained how their organisation had invested quite a lot at an early stage of the discussion on PCIA between the years 2002 and 2004 in the development of their framework. At that time, they had engaged Thania Paffenholz as a consultant who had helped to develop their PCA concept, which is in use until today.[282]

Subsequently, the interviewees were asked to describe their respective concepts and to outline its main features and characteristics. One of the people who worked with PNA explained this tool as following:

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276 Interview 4.
277 Interview 10.
278 Interview 6.
279 Interview 7.
280 Interview 1.
281 Interview 1.
282 Interview 7.

"In the preparation phase of all our projects, we do a five criteria evaluation, like the sustainability and the impact or efficiency. So, in addition to that we conduct a PNA, if the project is implemented in a post-conflict country.

In case of my own experience in the Philippines for example, when I developed a new project, I did a project level PNA. Based on the results of this PNA we decided on target areas, beneficiaries, and also on the implementation structure. And also we ensure what can be a positive impact of the project and what are negative impacts we can avoid. We say "Do No Harm" and also "Do Maximal Good.""

The interviewee continued elaborating that they usually carry out a PNA on the country level in the first period of a post-conflict phase. Project PNA focuses on the question of how a concrete project impacts the target groups and their beneficiaries, as well as the overall situation, in a positive or negative way. The respondent further explained that they try to avoid negative impacts and that they maintain monitoring, with the help of project-level PNA, during the implementation of projects. The PNA further helps with the formulation and identification of the right targets, the timing of assistance, the projects' content, target areas and beneficiaries, as well as implementation structures. Especially in a post-conflict country, the capacities of the government would be rather weak and it would be an important task to find a good counterpart and to select the best government institution to work with. In that way, the results of the project-level PNA are utilised to analyse the whole implementation structure of each project.

PCA was described as a process containing four phases: a conflict analysis, the identification of Peacebuilding Needs, conflict-sensitive monitoring, and evaluation.[283]

"Context first" however was described to be the main idea of CSPM.[284] With regard to this concept, the respective interviewee explained that it contained comprehensive analyses of the context which are always important, but particularly in conflict contexts. Under the umbrella of such conflict relevant analyses, CSPM contains a mix of tools and instruments such as risk analyses, actors and power analyses, but also the development of scenarios. In addition to conflict-sensitive planning, conflict sensitivity within monitoring and evaluation was mentioned to be crucial in order to not only *Do No Harm,* but also to *Do Good.*

In a next step, practitioners were asked to explain their personal experiences with these concepts. With regard to PCA, the respective interviewee explained that their organisation had carried out an assessment for the Palestinian context on a country level for the first time in 2008.[285] However, it was stated that at that time the assessment was "shelved" due to the fact that the country director had

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283 Interview 7.
284 Interview 6.
285 Interview 7.

not been committed to integrating a conflict sensitivity approach. However, in 2012 this organisation had carried out a renewed PCA which was described to be much more comprehensive and included a broader analysis of the field of relevant actors. Thereby, three scenarios were developed and one of them was chosen to be the most probable. According to this scenario, peacebuilding needs had been identified and the different sectors and programmes were checked accordingly. Building on this assessment, focus groups were formed which meet regularly and discuss the programmes' progress. In addition to this portfolio-level PCA, the interviewee who is head of a programme had carried out a PCA on the programme level. This assessment had been realised together with their main cooperation partner in the framework of a five-day workshop. Within this workshop, they had carried out a very detailed conflict analysis and starting from this analysis they had deduced strategies and focal points for their programme. It was mentioned that it was very important to them not to just deliver assistance "with the watering can," but to rather have a clear focus following a clear strategy.[286]

Being asked whether they had carried out this workshop together with their partner in order to ensure ownership, the respondent continued by explaining the importance of local ownership:

> "Whoever else are the experts on the ground? Those are only our partners, the local people who live here. That deep knowledge, that is something that you cannot acquire through literature, you have this knowledge when you are in this conflict, yourself. That is why it is crucial for us to carry out this analysis with the people involved."[287]

The interviewee continued explaining that they had adopted tools from their organisation's PCA toolkit. But they had also added some other tools, which the practitioner had brought from previous experiences gained in fifteen years of work in the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

The respondent who worked with CSPM explained that their organisations' country offices were organised differently but that conflict sensitivity was a transversal issue.[288] This respondent stressed the necessity for action on the organisational management level in order to train employees and expatriate and local staff, and to sensitise each of them to the relevance of this issue. The interviewee continued by naming one of their organisation's tools, which is "monitoring changes relevant for development".[289] This tool was used in a participative way together with local actors to ensure that their work is adapted to the context and that they react in a flexible way to changes.

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286 Interview 7.
287 Interview 7.
288 Interview 6.
289 Interview 6.

Assessment of Different Concepts' Practicability

Furthermore, those interview partners who have experiences with the application of a concept of conflict sensitivity were asked whether they assess their concept to be helpful in their day-to-day work or rather some kind of a burden.

One of the interviewees admitted that applying their model of conflict sensitivity would clearly increase efforts, but at the same time this person rated these efforts to be necessary in order to maximise effectiveness and to avoid harm.[290] Similarly, another respondent explained:

> Well, initially when you embark on a programme and you're a fresh project manager, yes, it is something that can be cumbersome. But in time, as you get used to it, it's quite helpful. It saves a lot of time. It promotes better communication between you and your partners and stakeholders. It prevents you from falling into undesired traps.[291]

Another practitioner assessed their conflict sensitivity framework to be too important to be a burden.[292]

Identified Gaps and Limitations of Concepts

Finally, each of the interviewees using a conflict sensitivity concept was asked to list weaknesses or missing aspects within the concepts they use and issues for improvement. Again, the practitioners gave quite differing answers, but each of them saw room for improvement of concepts and their application.

One interviewee stated that he was satisfied with existing tools and ideas but at the same time raised doubts about their concrete application. This practitioner's organisation had not renewed a conflict assessment in the last six years although they would usually revise their analyses depending on the dynamics of the political situation and their needs in terms of developing new projects. While in other contexts this could happen as often as every three to four months, in the Palestinian case the last update dated back to 2007 and the interviewee judged this period to be far too long.[293]

Another practitioner believed existing tools and methodologies to be not only sufficient, but sometimes even too much. It was not the tools which were lacking but their application in every phase of a project, not only during the planning, but also during implementation and evaluation.[294]

One more interviewee similarly suggested discussing more openly "what went wrong". Lessons learned, instead of best practices only, were important to

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290 Interview 6.
291 Interview 10.
292 Interview 1.
293 Interview 1.
294 Interview 6.

communicate for the practical learning experience.[295] This expert also complained about the inner-organisational extent of bureaucracy. Finally the same practitioner expressed the need for more local staff and local experiences to be included in the organisation's analyses and assessments: both to include their knowledge in a meaningful way and at the same time to further strengthen local capacities.

Another respondent identified yet another problem, which is the fact that colleagues who are not specifically educated in the field of peace and conflict could barely handle their organisation's complex and comprehensive PCA framework.[296] Hence, the idea of how to create a "light" version of the PCA had been discussed within their organisation in recent years. Furthermore, this respondent explained that, in general, each project within their organisation was rated in terms of conflict relevance and when a project reaches a certain rating on the conflict scale, the responsible project manager is obliged to carry out a PCA and to monitor in a conflict-sensitive way. Therefore, up to then, they had applied PCA mostly on the programme level, while recently more and more efforts had been made to carry out assessments on a country and more holistic portfolio level, which this expert rated as being very important. The respondent further elaborated that after all the application and usage of PCA depended on individuals who are in charge of programmes and that there were still some within their organisation who acted insensitively towards conflicts in general and who rejected dealing with these issues and methods.[297]

5. Bush's Concept of PCIA – a Critical Analysis with Regard to Practical Experiences and Specific Challenges in the Palestinian Context

Having looked at the Palestinian conflict context and the theoretical potential of PCIA, as well as at empirical material on the experiences of practitioners, the following section will focus on a critical discussion of Bush's approach to PCIA. What are the benefits and limitations of PCIA in the Palestinian context? And how would this concept have to be modified and adjusted to suit the Palestinian context? What can be learned from the Palestinian case for the overall discussion on conflict sensitivity and what might be potential fields for future research and analysis? These questions will be dealt with in the following chapter based on the research literature on the Palestinian case as well as the interviews with practitioners in the field.

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295 Interview 10.
296Interview 7.
297 Interview 7.

5.1. Benefits of PCIA as a Concept of Conflict Sensitivity in the Palestinian Context

Before looking at potential benefits of PCIA in the Palestinian context, first it should be asked whether development assistance as a whole in Palestine meets the criteria which Kenneth Bush has established for the application of PCIA.[298] The answer is certainly yes. Even if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not in a constant condition of "war," it does fulfil the criterion of a violent conflict on a medium-high level of intensity.[299] According to Bush, PCIA should be applied in a "settings characterized by latent or manifest violent conflict."[300] Hence, the Palestinian context clearly ranks among those which require a PCIA.

In order to further discuss the potential benefits of PCIA when working in Palestine, it is helpful to look at concrete features of Bush's concept. The applicability and openness, as well as the strong emphasis on local ownership and participation, are identified to be core features of Bush's PCIA and will be discussed in the following in light of the specific challenges which the Palestinian conflict context brings for those involved in development and peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding as an Impact

The analysis of the Palestinian case has shown that all development assistance in this context aims at peacebuilding, whether implicitly through state-building and economic measures aiming at a peace dividend, or explicitly through trilateral cooperation programmes with Israel for instance.[301] Hence, the Palestinian context clearly indicates the strong interrelation or potential congruency of development and peacebuilding efforts. This interrelation was further confirmed through the interviews. Each of the ten interviewed practitioners works for developmental agencies and in the field of development while at the same time they all described how their work was intended to contribute to peace in Palestine. Peace was either amongst the direct objectives or a supposed by-product of their developmental efforts.

This characteristic of international assistance to the Palestinians supports Bush's approach of defining peacebuilding as an impact rather than a certain activity. With regard to the Palestinian case, his definition clearly seems to meet the realities on the ground. Bush has been criticised for not distinguishing between development projects with a peacebuilding potential and "explicit peacebuilding activities."[302] In fact, there are other approaches, such as the RPP project, which solely focuses on peacebuilding projects. However, with regard to the close interrelation between the peacebuilding angle and developmental efforts in the Palestinian case, a distinction between the two

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298 Bush 1998: 10 f.
299 HIIK Conflict Barometer 2014: 138.
300 Bush 1998: 10.
301 Le More 2004: 17.
302 Hoffman 2003: 10.

fields does not seem to be practical. One of the interviewees, working in the field of private sector development, described a vivid project example. The respondent's organisation is involved in a project which brings Palestinian and Israeli business people together to foster trade relations between them. The formulated objective of this initiative was the support of the Palestinian private sector and its trade relations on the one hand. On the other hand, the project was supposed to have a peace impact by bringing together Palestinians and Israelis and enhancing peaceful cooperation between both sides. How would such a project be categorised? In this case, the benefit of having *one* approach to measure and to evaluate peace and conflict impacts, regardless of a classification of the initiative as peacebuilding or developmental, is obvious. With regard to the Palestinian context, the call for separate frameworks does not reflect the practical experience of assistance, and the needs in the field, and a distinction between development and peacebuilding concepts would raise the problem of not knowing which one to apply.

Openness

Another core characteristic of Bush's PCIA is the openness of his concept. This aspect has been criticised by other researchers who assess the lack of specification as an obstacle for those who want to apply this concept.[303]

However, the experiences of practitioners in the Palestinian context reveal quite the contrary. Five out of ten interviewees explained that they used a concept for conflict sensitivity. Being asked to elaborate on their respective concepts, none of these five referred to Bush's or any other pre-developed concept. Instead, each of them illustrated how their organisations had developed their own concepts and tools. These organisations have tailored their individual concepts according to their own needs even though they could have picked one out of a broad range of existing ready-made methodologies. One can question the benefit of a more detailed approach when, in fact, users develop their own concepts anyway. In fact, it seems rather helpful to provide basic guidelines and assumptions which can be handled more flexibly and feed into individual frameworks. Another argument for Bush's open concept was given by one of the respondents who explained about their organisation's efforts to develop a "PCA light version" approach. This idea resulted from the failure of too many of that organisation's employees to handle their complex and comprehensive PCA framework. This example illustrates how a detailed prescriptive framework can be rather cumbersome than helpful.

Hence, the concern that PCIA, as developed by Bush, could be too unspecific and "disempowering and produce frustration"[304] is not borne out in the Palestinian case.

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303 Hoffman 2003: 10.
304 Ross 2003: 79.

Ownership

Besides the openness of Bush's PCIA approach, one of the core aspects of his framework is its emphasis on local ownership and participation. Again, this issue is disputed among researchers, and Bush's strong emphasis on ownership has caused some criticism.[305]

However, envisioning the challenges for anyone working in the field of development assistance and peacebuilding in the occupied Palestinian territories, the important role of ownership appears as a clear benefit of Bush's concept.

One of the most striking aspects in the Palestinian context is the issue of fragmentation. As mentioned above, this challenge is twofold: On the one hand there is the territorial fragmentation, caused by the Israeli occupation, the division between West Bank and the Gaza Strip, growing settlements expansion, and related infrastructure and the construction of the separation wall; on the other hand Palestinian society is characterised by deep internal fragmentation as well. There is the inner-Palestinian divide between Hamas and Fatah and the many other societal cleavages, such as between refugees and non-refugees, between Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East-Jerusalem, Israel and abroad, the divide between inhabitants of the urban centres in Area A and the rural periphery in Area C, the huge income gaps enhanced through corruption and clientelism and finally the problematic role of the PA with its lack of democratic legitimacy. It is this societal fragmentation in particular which gives enough reasons to do a PCIA before even considering any kind of developmental or peacebuilding projects.

Much of what has been said in criticism of aid is related to donors' choices of targets and beneficiaries, which has often further contributed to the societal fragmentation and related tensions. International donors have been criticised for boycotting Hamas and supporting a PA president who lacks legitimacy, and hence provoking further escalation of the conflict between the two main Palestinian parties.[306] Another example is the donors' support for Palestinian civil society organisations which allegedly turned Palestinian civil society into a Palestinian "Globalised NGO elite."[307] However, not only the selection of the right beneficiaries and target groups is relevant for development assistance in the Palestinian context, but also the selection of the content and objectives of particular projects. Especially in view of the high degree of complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the overall political situation, local ownership and participation can be a crucial element for development practitioners to design and develop engagement strategies. This is even more relevant regarding the criticism against donors' engagement and the disputed legitimacy of international efforts.

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305 See *inter alia* Paffenholz 2005:4; Anderson / Olsen 2003: 41.
306 Taghdisi-Rad 2011: 173.
307 Hanafi / Tabar 2005.

For instance, the Palestinian anti-normalisation movement and the growing criticism against peacebuilding efforts that are designed as people-to-people or civil society dialogue encounters without taking into account existing power asymmetries have made some of the donors reluctant to further engage in this field. However, others are still actively promoting these kinds of initiatives in the framework of peacebuilding.

The following excerpt from one of the interviews conducted gives an illustrative example of how development assistance is sometimes carried out without taking into account conflict sensitivity, as well as local participation and ownership. One of the interview respondents, a practitioner who said that he had not used any conflict sensitivity tools before, mentioned "normalisation" among their organisation's goals and objectives.[308] Being asked to elaborate on what normalisation means the interviewee explained:

> "Normalisation is breaking isolation and confidence building. Breaking isolation is very important to keep the dialogue between civil societies when political dialogue is stocking. Different actors and different layers of society have to continue on the dialogue, for the future friendly neighbouring states."[309]

The interviewee's definition and usage of the term "normalisation" reveals a striking lack of awareness of the political discourse on the ground and totally disregards the whole inner-Palestinian debate on this issue. Being asked whether this practitioner had ever heard about the Palestinian anti-normalisation movement and whether this had any effect on their work, the respondent continued elaborating:

> "At first I would think about the academic boycott. That comes the closest to our work. When it comes to trilateral cooperation, we analyse who would be interested in doing so. So far it's only the Al Quds and the Bethlehem universities. The others don't cooperate with Israelis. It's a pity, but it's their choice. So that narrows the market with this regard. The other boycott is BDS I would think, boycotting Israeli products and I would say, that that does not affect my work."[310]

The same practitioner was asked about their organisation's approach to political analysis and how they handled the conflict context. The respondent listed the EU platforms which monitor the political situation and frequent dialogues with the Palestinian ministries, as well as the Office of the Quartet Representative and summed up: "Attending multilateral dialogues and being involved – I think those are the keys to be updated on the political situation and adjusting your policy towards that."[311]

Many studies and analyses have shown the poor results of projects which aim at peacebuilding through encounters and cooperation, such as the above

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308 Interview 5.
309 Interview 5.
310 Interview 5.
311 Interview 5.

described trilateral education project.[312] Given the critical stance of many local stakeholders towards them, such projects can even exacerbate conflict. At the same time, such a project would have been rather unlikely if local stakeholders – in this case a range of people and institutions that are involved in education in Palestine – had been involved in its planning and conceptualising.

Furthermore, another interview example reveals that the fact that a conflict sensitivity concept is applied does not necessarily mean that peace and conflict assessments are undertaken in a participative manner. With regard to the question whether they do their assessment together with their counterparts, an interviewee explained:

> "Most of the time, the result of the PNA [the organisation's peace and conflict assessment] can be a little bit sensitive to the counterpart. So we do not open this sometimes, but sometimes we share its result. Usually, we do it ourselves but sometimes we share it with our counterparts so that the counterparts also can understand the situation well."[313]

This interview extract vividly illustrates how the issue of ownership is not yet sufficiently considered in practice and that Bush's concern is clearly merited, even amongst those practitioners who claim to assess peace and conflict impacts and to be conflict-sensitive.

Interestingly, two of the interview partners mentioned ownership as being the thing most needed for an overall improvement of the outcome of development and peacebuilding efforts.[314] Both of these were working with organisations which conduct rather comprehensive peace and conflict assessments. On the other hand, three out of five that do not conduct peace and conflict assessments identified the weakness of the PA to be among the most relevant obstacles towards an overall improvement of development and peacebuilding results.[315] This is interesting as it indicates a link between being more self-critical and conflict-sensitive as a development practitioner and valuing ownership as an important aspect.

Finally, in view of the many sceptical voices on Bush's strong emphasis on ownership, some aspects will be looked at more closely. One often-heard criticism is related to the role of gatekeepers in aid recipient countries, especially in the context of conflict.[316] While it is true that stakeholders can function as gatekeepers within their respective community, this does not exonerate the donor community from its obligation to include local people. It rather poses the challenge of finding solutions which allow real ownership. This is certainly not an easy task, in particular with regard to both the time and the budget resources which would have to be invested for the purpose of a real

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312 see *inter alia* Jean / Mendelsohn 2008
313 Interview 1.
314 Interviews 6 and 10.
315 Interviews 2, 3 and 5.
316 *inter alia* Smith 2004: 26 ff.

participatory process. One of the interview partners mentioned time pressure as being one of the main challenges of her work, explaining:

> "I think one of the challenges I am personally witnessing is that there is more support for short-term projects and less for long-term programmes. If a programme is going to take five years to show results, donors are less willing to support it."[317]

But as Schmelzle aptly summarises, "[t]here is no shortcut way to deal with these complexities but to engage the reality one intervenes in carefully, critically and openly,"[318] not least since donors have committed themselves to more ownership [...] years ago in the framework of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.[319]

5.2. Limitations and Recommended Modifications of PCIA in the Palestinian Context

Besides the discussed potential benefits of Bush's PCIA framework in the Palestinian context, there are certain limitations in terms of its usability and effectiveness. Here again, it is helpful to take a closer look at the concept's core features.

Micro-Level of Assessment

One important characteristic of PCIA is the fact that it focuses on assessments on the project level. While Kenneth Bush does not explicitly limit PCIA to the micro-level, he simply does not include the portfolio or policy level at any point of his work on PCIA. He rather sticks to the terminology of the micro-level, referring to either "projects" or "interventions."[320]

Given the three different levels of assistance, the *micro* project level, the *meso* programme, and the *macro* portfolio or policy level, it appears questionable why one should only focus on one of these levels. In the Palestinian case in particular, this question appears even more pressing, first of all because of the often-mentioned high degree of politicisation of assistance in the Palestinian context. When the most relevant essential decisions on assistance are not being taken on the project level, but rather on the very political, national level, then the benefit of doing a PCIA with regard to a single project is very limited. In fact, it seems that Kenneth Bush underrates the top-down structures of development policies. This issue of decision-making structures was raised by several of the practitioners interviewed as well. One of them explained: "And of course at the end of the day, each state has its an own agenda."[321] And another practitioner, being asked about the degree of harmonisation of aid in Palestine added: "Each country gets their briefing from their home countries and

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317 Interview 10.
318 Schmelzle 2005: 6.
319 OECD 2008.
320 Bush 2003: 5.
321 Interview 9.

headquarters and they bring their package here and want to implement them here."[322] One could argue in favour of Kenneth Bush that his approach is not specifically designed for governmental development agencies, which he is generally critical of, but rather for NGOs and civil society organisations. On the other hand, Bush claims to offer a methodology which "may be applied to the full range of development activities in conflict-prone regions."[323]

Recommended Modification

PCIA has to be designed to be applicable to all levels of intervention. However, Körppen assesses the project perspective of Bush's approach as a requirement for the participation and inclusion of local actors and the specific context.[324] This is not the case because the one level does not have to necessarily exclude the other levels. One of the interviewees clearly illustrated this by explaining how their organisation's methodology of assessing peace and conflict impacts over the years had developed from project to country portfolio level. This interviewed expert assessed the recent focus on the macro level as being very important and helpful.

Furthermore, it is a striking fact that while all interviewees rated the relevance of the conflict to be very high for their work, five out of ten interviewees stated that they did not use any concept of conflict sensitivity. Two out of these five related this to the fact that their projects were more of a technical kind and that they were not involved in issues related to peace and conflict. These statements reveal exactly the attitude which Bush criticises and opposes, namely the idea of undertaking PCIA depending on the type of a project rather than its location. These examples from the field reveal another benefit of conducting PCIA on the macro level. An assessment on this level would have the advantage of affecting all respective programmes and individual projects independent of their specific sector and whether they directly relate to peacebuilding or not.

Moreover, the benefit of the macro-level perspective was shown by Dan Smith in the framework of his comprehensive comparative "Utstein" study on peacebuilding. Smith shows the strategic deficits of peacebuilding and argues for efforts to be planned and assessed at the country level and on a broad scale including all donors and relevant stakeholders.[325] While he agrees with Bush on the need to focus on initiatives' impact, rather than on their outputs, he totally contradicts Bush's approach to PCIA by stating that "impact assessment at the project level is not proving to be viable."[326] Smith's evaluation of the lack of strategic peacebuilding conforms to the Palestinian case, as already mentioned in chapter 2.4. and it was furthermore also reflected in some of the interviews.

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322 Interview 5.
323 Bush 1998: 6.
324 Körppen 2007: 30.
325 Smith 2004: 11 ff.
326 Smith 2004: 14.

The previously noted extensive system of aid coordination which is in place does not explicitly tackle the issue of peacebuilding. As one of the interview respondents described, "[p]eacebuilding is being done, but behind closed doors and with very careful and counted steps. We have working groups on security and justice but nothing on peacebuilding."[327]

While it would go too far to see only PCIA as a cause for this strategic lack, an expansion from the project level to a macro level perspective would be an important first step towards more strategic orientation and harmonisation. With this regard, concepts such as the *Aid for Peace* Approach, developed by Thania Paffenholz and Luc Reychler, which are designed for all three levels of intervention, have an advantage compared to Bush's concept.[328]

6. Conclusions

6.1. Lessons Learned from the Palestinian Case

This study seeks to contribute to the debate on conflict-sensitive aid by discussing PCIA, as developed by Kenneth Bush, with Palestine as a case study. Therefore, in addition to a review of the relevant literature, qualitative expert interviews were conducted with practitioners working with governmental development organisations in order to inquire about their experiences with concepts of conflict sensitivity.

In order to make a discussion of PCIA in the Palestinian context possible, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was outlined in brief, as well as the international aid architecture and subsequently the challenges which the conflict context entails for development practitioners. It was revealed that assistance to the Palestinians is inseparably linked to the conflict as peacebuilding is its overall goal. The Palestinian case was furthermore identified to be characterised by exceptionally high amounts of international assistance and a strong politicisation of aid, high foreign aid dependency, and an overall poor performance of donors so far which is subject to much criticism. Subsequently, this study discussed the manifold challenges for everyone engaged in development and peacebuilding in the oPt, showing that a conflict-sensitive approach is of highest relevance in this context.

Chapter three was devoted first to an overview of the current state of concepts of conflict sensitivity, and second to PCIA, according to Bush, as a specific concept. This section concludes with an outline of the most distinctive aspects of Bush's approach and critical voices from other researchers on these aspects.

Subsequently, chapter four presented the results of the interviews which were carried out with development practitioners in the field. These interviews

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327 Interview 10.
328 Paffenholz / Reychler 2007.

revealed quite a mixed picture with regard to the actual usage of PCIA and the overall relevance of conflict sensitivity in the practice of development assistance in the oPt.

While five out of a total ten respondents explained that they used a conflict sensitivity methodology, only three of these five apply a concept which reasonably meets the standards of Bush's idea of conflict sensitivity. Even though each of the interviewed practitioners assessed the conflict to be very relevant for their work, this assessment led to quite different consequences regarding their respective work approaches. However, the interviews gave an insight into the approaches to conflict sensitivity in developmental practice which, together with the literature on the Palestinian context, was used to critically discuss PCIA as a concept in particular.

Thereby benefits, as well as the limitation of Bush's approach, were identified. In view of the specific challenges of the Palestinian case, as identified through both the literature review and the interviews, Bush's concept of PCIA features a range of advantages compared to other approaches to conflict sensitivity. The definition of peacebuilding as an impact proves useful in the Palestinian context which is characterised by a far-reaching overlap of developmental assistance and peacebuilding efforts. Furthermore, the openness of Bush's approach, as well as the strong emphasis on local participation and ownership, were revealed to be valuable aspects with regard to the specific challenges of the Palestinian context. Especially the latter appears as an important aspect, given the high degree of inner-Palestinian fragmentation and the overall highly complex situation regarding societal, economic, and political issues. Nonetheless, a weakness within PCIA could be identified, namely its focus on the project level rather than on all levels of interventions. Researchers such as Dan Smith or Thania Paffenholz have reasonably argued for an expansion of assessments to the macro-level. The repeatedly stated lack of an overall strategy with regard to peacebuilding in the Palestinian case in fact proves this expansion to be key for an improvement of peacebuilding approaches. It can be concluded that while PCIA, as developed by Bush, offers important features for the assessment of peace and conflict impacts, it lacks linkage to the macro level and hence needs to be further refined and developed in order to meet the challenges of aid practice. Finally one has to bear in mind that as mentioned earlier experiences generated in Palestine are not always transferable to other contexts. In fact this limitation is true for every case study, because each context has its own specific characteristics and one has to be modest with regard to "lessons learned". Especially the Palestinian conflict context is a specific one, as explained above with regard to the conflict's duration and intractability for instance and the specific constellation of the Israeli occupation. However this conflict is also one which has been in the focus of international attention for decades now and the fact that the international community has invested such high amounts for peacebuilding and development to the Palestinians makes this case interesting to study. One certainly has to be careful when transferring any lessons from this case to another. However one can assume that some of the structural issues

and challenges which development and peacebuilding actors have to face in Palestine are relevant in any other context as well.

6.2. Remaining Questions and Critical Voices

In light of the high degree of politicisation of aid to the Palestinians, one could critically question the relevance of PCIA and conflict sensitivity concepts in general. Political and geo-strategic agendas and interests were repeatedly identified as playing a major role for the donor communities' approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Against this background, authors belonging to a more critical school of thought, such as Oliver Richmond, challenge the legitimacy of liberal peacebuilding as an approach to peace at all.[329]

Newman et al differentiate the criticism against peacebuilding as either criticism against "the values and assumptions that underpin it or […] its "performance".[330] They continue stating that [t]hus, some analysts focus on improving sequencing (for example, establishing institutions before liberalisation) or increasing "local ownership", participation and consultation, whereas others focus on more fundamental questions about the suitability of liberal political and economic values in different contexts."[331] While Bush obviously represents the first group of those who are critical, but seek to improve peacebuilding outcomes, Mandy Turner, for instance, who does not limit her criticism of peacebuilding efforts in the Palestinian context to questions of performance, clearly belongs to the latter. [332] With regard to these positions, one could question whether Bush is asking the right questions and if PCIA is of relevance at all. While it is clear that Bush's approach is quite critical towards the "Development Industry,"[333] and that he does not "defend the model of liberal peacebuilding"[334] his PCIA concept still remains within the discourse on how to improve outcomes of development and peacebuilding initiatives rather than fully opposing international peacebuilding. Bush himself explains: "The harsh critique of the development industry […] should not lead to the conclusion that attention should be directed exclusively to communities in conflict zones. If the development industry is a part of the problem, it must be a part of the solution."[335] As a matter of fact, the oPt are economically highly vulnerable and a cut in international assistance at this stage would have severe political and humanitarian consequences.

Anderson, in the framework of a study of international assistance to the oPt, conducted numerous interviews in the field and identified a high level of discontent with the fact that aid reinforces and maintains the Israeli

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329 see *inter alia* Richmond / Mitchell: 2012.
330 Newman / Paris / Richmond: 2009: 13.
331 Newman / Paris / Richmond: 2009: 13.
332 Turner 2012: 503.
333 Bush 2003a: 39.
334 Chadwick / Debiel / Gadinger 2013: 8.
335 Bush 2005: 4.

occupation.[336] However, none of the Palestinians whom she interviewed assessed a withdrawal of aid as an option. Anderson was given four different reasons why a withdrawal was the least desired choice. Besides the simple fact that a cut in support would let people suffer under potential physical costs, the respondents mentioned the loss of both solidarity and international people to witness events in the territories.[337] Finally, the "loss of hope by conveying the sense that the international community considers the situation hopeless" was mentioned as a reason why donors should not withdraw from the oPt.[338] In light of these statements, it becomes clear that not being involved is not a simple solution to the challenges either. If withdrawal is not an option and the current attempts are lacking the desired results, more efforts have to be invested in the improvement of practices. Newman et al. even plead for "more hybridized forms of peacebuilding that involve a mixture of conventionally liberal and local practices and models".[339] PCIA, as developed by Bush, while certainly not being a perfect concept, offers valuable ideas for practitioners how to measure peace and conflict impacts of their assistance in order to be sensitive to the conflict. However, more efforts are needed in order to improve PCIA. The Palestinian case clearly proves the need for more research to be invested on this issue.

6.3. Outlook and the Need for Future Research

Further Methodological Development

Much effort has so far been put into the development of new and the amendment and refinement of existing frameworks and methodologies related to conflict sensitivity. The assessment of peace and conflict impacts of development assistance and peacebuilding has been discussed among practitioners and researchers alike. This study was devoted to the discussion of Kenneth Bush's PCIA approach, applied to the Palestinian case in particular. The analysis revealed that while Bush's concept has some strong aspects, it lacks applicability to the portfolio level. Then again, there have been attempts to study issues of conflict sensitivity and development and peacebuilding efforts from a macro-perspective without considering the project level. While there are concepts such as the *Aid for Peace* approach which are designed to cover all levels of intervention, the interconnections of micro-, meso-, and macro-level still pose a challenge to researchers and practitioners alike and need to be looked at more carefully. This is especially the case regarding the combination of a focus on strong local participation and ownership on the one hand, and a strategic assessment of peace and conflict impacts on the portfolio level on the other hand. While researching this issue is a challenging task, it is crucial nevertheless with a view to the demand for more coherence within development assistance. How can we ask for more coordination and coherence among

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336 Anderson 2004: 3.
337 Anderson 2004: 3.
338 Anderson 2004: 3.
339 Newman / Paris / Richmond: 2009: 14.

different donors if we do not even know how to manage to link the different levels of intervention within one organisation?

Furthermore, while the interviews revealed wide differences in the use of conflict sensitivity tools and methodology, they also revealed huge differences in the respondents' level of information about conflict sensitivity. While some appeared very knowledgeable and experienced with regard to different approaches, others had never heard of any and explained that they had had no prior experience in the field of peace and conflict before coming to Palestine either. In fact, the level of knowledge appeared to correlate with the actual application of methodologies and tools such as PCIA. This gap reveals how much the practice of assistance actually depends on individuals. Nicole Ball has described this paradox:

> "High-calibre, experienced individuals are crucial for the success of peace-building. The right people can often overcome significant institutional and organizational deficits. At the same time, too much continues to depend on individuals. The failure to institutionalize good practice is undermining the international community's efforts to support the transition from war to peace in many parts of the world."[340]

Hence, while more research is needed on the improvement of PCIA, there is also an urgent need for a transfer of knowledge to the practical level and for the academia to work towards bridging the gap to practitioners. Stephan Klingebiel already identified this need for practitioners' education on peace and conflict issues at a quite early stage of the discourse on conflict-sensitive aid.[341]

After all, one has to bear in mind that PCIA, as a concept of conflict sensitivity, will be always applied by a range of individual practitioners with varying experiences and ambitions.

Further Research

Another relevant issue for future research is related to the practice of PCIA in the field as well. The protagonists of the on-going debate have used numerous concrete experiences from the field, either as best-practice or negative examples, illustrating and supporting their respective arguments and perspectives. While these individual "field notes"[342] and experiences without doubt add value to the debate, they cannot serve as a systematic overview of the empiricism regarding PCIA. It is a striking fact that an overall investigation of how PCIA, or conflict sensitivity in general, is being used and applied on a broad scale is missing. We do not have any comprehensive overview of whether existing methodologies are being used in the field and, more importantly, why they are used or not. One of the interviewees, who had explained that she used a comprehensive self-developed methodology for

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340 Ball 2002: 52.
341 Klingebiel 1999: 44.
342 See *inter alia* Bush 2005; Paffenholz 2005b.

assessing peace and conflict impacts, when asked what were the missing aspects within this methodology stated that she did not see any lack of tools.[343] On the contrary, she assessed the tools to be more than sufficient, but their application and integration into work processes to be rather challenging, especially for those who are new in the field. Furthermore, this practitioner added:

> "Maybe it's not about the tools that much. What I personally often miss is an honest report of what went wrong. Errors. Often worked is done with best practices only. More frank communication and learning from mistakes – that would be useful for me."[344]

Besides investing more into the refinement and improvement of existing concepts, or even developing new methodologies, it seems rather useful to comprehensively investigate what the practice of conflict sensitivity in the field looks like. In fact, there is much to be learned from practical experiences. It can be assumed that not every development practitioner will appreciate the disclosure of errors and mistakes as mentioned above. Stewart Patrick is right in his assessment that "there are few incentives within aid agencies to conduct self-critical evaluations of aid impact. As in most bureaucracies, officials in these institutions are likely to be constrained by concern of self-preservation."[345] Nevertheless, these concerns need to be tackled and overcome in order to avoid repetition of mistakes and make further progress in the field of applied development assistance and peacebuilding. This study only presents a first step with a limited scope of empirical data. While the focus was on governmental and interstate development organisations, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study focusing on other relevant actors in the field such as NGOs. Furthermore, the Palestinian case was often assessed as being unique with regard to the long duration and complexity of the conflict or regarding the international attention in it and strategic interest it has. However, each conflict has its own challenges and a concept of conflict sensitivity needs to be designed in a way that suits different kinds of contexts. Systematic comparative research is needed to create solid evidence on more universal aspects of conflict sensitivity. Such future research endeavours will have to be ambitious, not least regarding the obstacles to field research and data collection in conflict zones. However, the limited and disputed success of the practice of development aid and peacebuilding in the Palestinian case shows that there is much need for methodological improvement and that the search for a better conflict-sensitivity approach still has a long way to go.

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343 Interview 6.
344 Interview 6.
345 Patrick 2000: 60.

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