Governing Through Patronage: The Rise of NGOs and the Fall of Civil Society in Palestine and Morocco

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Abstract This article examines foreign aid and government funding to NGOs as forms of patronage and explores the impact of such funding on the nature and role of civil society. Using qualitative research from Palestine and Morocco, we argue that patronage transforms NGOs into apparatuses of governing. NGOs become key sites for the exercise of productive power through the technologies of professionalization, bureaucratization, and upward accountability. The article explores how this transformation of NGOs depoliticizes their work while undermining their role as change agents within civil society. The findings have implications for understanding the transformation of NGOs, the relationship between patrons and their grantees, and, finally, for exploring the limitations of NGOs as vehicles for social change in sensitive political environments.

Keywords Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) · Civil society · Governing · Patronage · Palestine · Morocco

Introduction

In the past few decades, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have taken center stage for their theorized role as the sine qua non of civil society (Carapico 2012). A global consensus emerged that celebrated NGOs as less bureaucratic than government agencies, more connected to the populations served, and thus better able to implement development solutions and advocate for social change (Bebbington 1997; Clark 1995; Howell and Pearce 2001). However, as NGOs came to rely on external funding streams, their role within civil society changed; in certain cases, they became depoliticized and disconnected from the grassroots communities they purported to represent.

Examining both government and foreign aid to NGOs as patronage (defined below), we argue that under systems of patronage, NGOs function as apparatuses of governing. We use governing to connote the instrumentalization of power "to shape actions, processes and outcomes in desired directions" (Rose 1999, p. 4). By governing, patrons do not "crush the capacity" of NGOs to act but rather "acknowledge it and to utilize it for [the patron's] own objectives" (Rose 1999, p. 4). The networks between patrons and grantees are often diffuse, with "no one centralized nucleus of authority that controls political access" (Jamal 2007, pp. 14–15). Rather, power is disturbed among a variety of actors, who deploy technologies of governing through diverse channels of influence that inhibit organizations "capacity for autonomous action" (Devine 2006, p. 93). We assert that patrons govern through technologies of professionalization, bureaucratization, and increased upward accountability. Collectively, the impact of these technologies is the depoliticization of NGO agendas, diluting activism and prioritizing service provision. This new function of NGOs challenges the normative assumptions that they operate as key vehicles for the development of civil society. Furthermore, we argue that NGOs become key sites for the exercise of power; this form of productive power limits NGOs' sustainability, legitimacy, and effectiveness as change agents within civil society.

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We use the term "patronage" to describe an unequal power relationship between NGOs and their funders, one marked by dependence and mutual accountability. Both the funder (patron) and grant recipient (NGO) benefit from being in an exchange relationship with the other (Nownes 1995). The benefit to the patron is the advancement or achievement of a policy goal, which is obtained through the work of the NGO (Goss 2007; Reckhow 2016; Walker 1983). The patron's priorities prevail, as the funder treats the grantee as its agent and the grantee implements the donor's agenda (Brulle and Jenkins 2005; Lowry 1999; Nownes 1995; Walker 1983). As patrons wield influence through their funding, organizations professionalize and shift their accountability from members to funders (Brulle and Jenkins 2005; Jenkins and Eckert 1986; Lowry 1999). The NGO benefits from the financial resources offered by the patron, which are crucial to the organization's survival. NGOs express loyalty to the patron and its agenda in order to obtain funding (Lowry 1999; Schatzmiller 2001). The link between the funder and the grant recipient is hierarchical and "reinforce(s) vertical linkages" between patrons and grantees, at the expense of "horizontal linkages among associations" and between associations and their members (Jamal 2007, p. 14; see also Papakostas 2012; Skocpol 2003). Relationships of patronage occur when organizations lose their autonomy, become dependent on their funders, and increasingly implement their funders' agendas.

In our two case studies, Palestine and Morocco, the NGO sectors witnessed rapid growth since the introduction of patronage as the main source of funding for NGOs. In Palestine, the patronage came from foreign aid, and in Morocco, it was government funding. Prior to patronage, NGOs were less professional, more accountable to communities, and inclined to take up controversial agendas (Bergh 2012; Challand 2009; Hammami 2000). In both cases, as a result of patronage, NGOs witnessed rapid professionalization, experienced increased regulation and surveillance, and were held accountable to donors instead of communities. We refer to these as technologies of governing and demonstrate how they led to the depoliticization of the NGO sectors and to crises of sustainability and legitimacy. After patronage, NGOs felt restrained by what they could say and do politically and were reticent to engage in contentious collective action. Rather than providing the bedrock for a citizen-owned, change-oriented civil society, patron-driven NGO sectors became tools of their donors.

Data and Methods

Our research design followed a comparative case study method. We gathered primary data through fieldwork in Morocco and Palestine between 2014 and 2016. Fieldwork in Morocco took place from September to December 2014; March to August 2015; and May to December 2016. Fieldwork in Palestine occurred from May to August 2016. We draw primarily from 50 semi-structured interviews conducted in-country with leaders of 45 local NGOs mainly based in the capital cities of Ramallah, Palestine and Rabat, Morocco. We also conducted field visits, observed meetings, and conferences of civil society actors and reviewed primary documents such as annual reports, funding proposals, progress reports and Web sites. We reviewed secondary literature including news reports, research publications, and conference proceedings.

Contacts were made using snowball sampling through personal contacts and social networks, opening doors that would otherwise remain closed in sensitive political contexts. We recognize the selection bias inherent in nonrandom sampling. However, in both contexts, there is no centralized NGO database that would permit random sampling. To minimize bias, we deliberately included a variety of organizations—service, advocacy, and hybrid. While these categories do not fully capture the breadth of work conducted by the NGOs, we included organizations working across a wide spectrum of topics including education, housing, environmental protection, human rights, economic development, social/human development, arts and culture, women, youth, and healthcare provision. While organizations conscientiously and selectively present themselves to donors in particular ways that might lead to grants, because of our positionality and embeddedness in broader networks throughout the research process, we are confident that our interview findings do not suffer from this bias. We also triangulate our interview findings with ethnographic participant observation and conversations with in-country experts.

Interviews ranged in structure and length and were not recorded. Most were prearranged, semi-structured, lasted for approximately 1 h and were conducted in the interviewees' offices or cafes. Others were less structured, occurred spontaneously, and bled into day-long field visits. We deployed open-ended questions to encourage interviewees to freely expound upon their organizations' goals, operations, membership bases, sources of funding, and relationships with funders and their broader views on local civil society. We also asked NGO representatives about their career backgrounds, their organizations' histories, and their views of the local government, foreign aid, and the broader regional context.

In sectors marked by fear, intimidation, and strong security apparatuses, recording devices would almost certainly have led to self-censorship and limited our access. Furthermore, given the political contexts of our cases, interviews were conducted with oral consent. All interviews were anonymized to protect the identities of our interlocutors and in compliance with Institutional Review Board requirements at both authors' institutions. Interviews in Palestine were conducted solely in English, while interviews in Morocco were conducted in Arabic, French, and English, and occasionally in Tashlehit (a local dialect) with a translator. Notes were transcribed and translated into English immediately after the interview.

While the research in-country was completed individually by the researchers, the analysis of data was completed collectively. We coded and annotated the field notes thematically. Once a set of concepts and themes emerged, we then analyzed and organized the observations according to the themes, which enabled us to examine the data from Morocco and Palestine concurrently. Using an abductive approach, we iteratively compared the findings from the data to existing theories, creating a steady "dialogue" between the two (Ragin 1987).

The Cases

We chose Palestine and Morocco as comparative cases because of their changing NGO landscapes. Each country experienced rapid and expansive NGO growth fueled by patronage. Whereas growth of an NGO sector is often described in the literature as positive because it signifies a strengthening of civil society (Bratton 1989; Diamond 1994; Fisher 1998; Putnam 1993, 2000), in contrast, the growth of the NGO sectors in our cases was described to us as bloating, connoting that the growth had a negative impact. We were intrigued that both sectors bloated under different sources of patronage—foreign aid in the case of Palestine and government funding in the case of Morocco—and wanted to further investigate the nuanced effects of these two different forms of patronage.

There are approximately 3000 NGOs operating in Palestine and 116,000 in Morocco. Rather than arising organically from the grass roots, NGO sector growth in both contexts has been largely patron driven. Prior to the Oslo Accords, which in 1993 created the Palestinian Authority that today governs the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinian civil society organizations and activists engaged in a political struggle for self-determination (Challand 2009; Hammami 2000). Palestine's NGO sector grew rapidly after the signing of the Oslo Accords, which introduced an influx of foreign aid. Since Oslo, foreign donors have directed funds to NGOs under the rubric of civil society building and democracy promotion, doubling donations from \$112 million in 1999 to \$223.6 million in 2006 (Turner 2014). Foreign donors channeled funds to NGOs as the Palestinian Authority struggled to govern and as the Israeli occupation became further entrenched (Challand 2009; Turner 2014). As one interlocutor told us, the NGO sector ballooned "because of the occupation. There is no government so NGOs had to take care of what the government didn't do. The number of NGOs in Palestine is the highest per capita" (author interview, Beit Sahour, June 20, 2016).

Since the death of Morocco's first post-colonial King, Hassan II, Mohammed VI's transition to power in 1999 was marked by a rapid period of liberalization that created some space for active associational life. While the 2002 revision of the country's Decree on the Right to Establish Associations liberalized the legal environment for NGOs, the Kingdom still maintains control over the sector and those working on sensitive issues face repression (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2016). In response to international criticism of Morocco's vast regional inequalities, the King initiated the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) in 2005 (Bergh 2012). NGOs grew exponentially as a slew of funds went to support infrastructure and human development projects implemented by local NGOs, "The problem of bloating of the NGO sector is that some 30-40 per cent of NGOs in Morocco today were created for the INDH. But the INDH has no strategy. It just gives money out" (author interview, Rabat, October 27, 2014). Another NGO leader stated, "In Morocco today we have 100,000 associations. Imagine, and the majority of them were created as a result of INDH. Forty per cent of associations were formed without any purpose other than to benefit from the INDH funds" (author interview, Rabat, October 24, 2014). Between 2011 and 2015, the INDH funneled \$1.7 billion to NGOs and led to a spike in the number of NGOs registered in the country (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2016). In both contexts, Palestine and Morocco, NGO growth was spurred by the presence of a patron, fundamentally changing the role of NGOs within civil society.

NGOs' Changing Role in Civil Society

The dominant literature on NGOs frames them as hallmarks of a vibrant civil society and a liberalized state. Scholars narrate NGOs as key sites of collective empowerment where citizens come together to express a plurality of interests and mobilize to promote change (Diamond 1994; Putnam 1993; Tocqueville (1835) 2003). According to this narrative, NGOs cultivate tolerance, respect, and civic participation among members, serve as watchdogs

over the state, and act as vehicles through which citizens advance their interests in policy arenas (Berry and Arons 2003). Through their efforts to safeguard and promote the interests of marginalized groups, pluralize the public sphere, and check state power, NGOs are seen as part and parcel of a healthy civil society (Carapico 2012).

Since the 1980s, NGOs have also been heralded as more efficient and effective service providers than state agencies (Bebbington 1997). Their programs are thought to be more cost-effective, innovative, and participatory than those provided by bulky government agencies, leading to an explosion in the number of NGOs (Hulme and Edwards 1996). Across the Global South, bilateral aid and multilateral institutions shifted their funding away from states and toward NGOs. Grants for projects related to poverty alleviation, social welfare, human rights, and democracy building went directly to NGOs rather than to government bodies (AbouAssi 2013; Clarke 1998; Fowler 1991). In the wake of neoliberalism and structural adjustment, many governments also encouraged the growth of NGOs as they privatized their economies, rolled back the welfare state, and delegated service provision to contractors. In the name of development and civil society building, both foreign aid and governments bankrolled NGO sectors (Atia 2013; Cox 2009; Rose 2011).

The associational revolution has not worked out as planned. Disparate literatures use the phrase "NGO-ization" to connote the negative impacts of on the one hand, foreign aid, and on the other, government patronage (Banks et al. 2015; Chahim and Prakash 2014; Jad 2003). Scholars have found that both are correlated with the professionalization, depoliticization, and upward accountability of NGOs, rather than bolstering grassroots organizations with politicized missions and ultimate accountability to their beneficiaries (Bano 2008; Chahim and Prakash 2014; Suárez and Gugerty 2016; Wiktorowicz 2000). These negative impacts are observed regardless of the source of funding (foreign aid or government funds). Bringing both types of patrons together in the same study, we theorize the effects of patronage and argue that regardless of the source of funds, patronage significantly diminishes NGOs' role in building and sustaining civil society.

We turn to Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality to analyze the productive power of patronage because "political power is exercised today through a profusion of shifting alliances between diverse authorities in projects to govern a multitude of facets of economic activity, social life and individual conduct" (Rose and Miller 2008, p. 53). Governmentality "offers a lens to understand how power is exercised in society through varied social relations, institutions, and 'bodies' that do not automatically fit under the rubric of the 'state'. It enables us to see how rule is secured, sometimes in tenuous ways, through a variety of not

necessarily coordinated methods and by a web of institutional and social arrangements" (Sharma and Gupta 2006, p. 25). We argue that patronage works as a form of productive power, and governing occurs through political rationalities and governmental technologies. Political rationalities are "the changing discursive fields within which the exercise of power is conceptualized, the moral justifications for particular ways of exercising power by diverse authorities, notions of the appropriate forms, objects and limits of politics, and conceptions of the proper distribution of such tasks," while government technologies are "the complex of mundane programmes, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents and procedures through which authorities seek to embody and give effect to governmental ambitions" (Rose and Miller 2008, p. 55). Political rationalities and governmental technologies enable governing "at a distance" (Rose and Miller 2008, p. 34).

Governing at a distance occurs through a diversity of actors. In our cases, patronage enables funders to govern through NGOs. It is worth noting that while in the Moroccan case, the government is directly involved in governing through this network of NGOs, in the Palestinian case, we take governing to mean foreign funders' exercise of power and authority to wield influence over Palestinian NGOs. In both cases, though, we argue that political power is exercised through NGOs and enforced and made durable through a patronage system. The patronage system works as a form of governing in dispersed and subtle ways.

Technologies of Governing

We conceptualize NGO patronage as a form of governmentality invoking three technologies of governing: professionalization, bureaucratization, and upward accountability. Professionalization results from complex application procedures and reporting requirements that require grantees to quantify the results of their work. In order to meet application and reporting demands, NGOs are forced to hire highly trained staff with technical and language skills and situate themselves in modern, high-tech offices. Professionalization in turn transforms NGO sectors into highly lucrative industries. The monitoring and reporting requirements that accompany funding from patrons impose multiple layers of bureaucracy on NGOs. Organizations must adapt their practices, dedicating staff time, and resources to filling out regular reports and adjusting their approach to be able to demonstrate quantifiable results. Frequent monitoring and reporting also provides the patron with a window into, and ongoing influence over, organizations' work. Unequal power relations lead NGOs to shift their accountabilities from citizens

to their donors. In order to secure the funding they need to survive, organizations adopt, or at minimum adhere to, the priorities of their donors. This often results in mission drift. In the following section, we present the literature's conceptualization of professionalization, bureaucratization, and upward accountability and deploy evidence from our interviews to argue that these served as technologies of governing in both Palestine and Morocco.

Professionalization

In order to apply for funding, NGOs must be highly professionalized (Alexander et al. 2004; Bratton 1989; Suárez and Gugerty 2016). Professionalization is cultivated through practices of development (i.e., proposals, projects, monitoring, and evaluation) as well as particular forms of knowledge production (i.e., quantification, technical knowledge, and language skills). In order to secure funding, NGOs must develop project-based proposals that are structured like business plans. Applicants must clearly summarize the proposed scope of work, lay out a strategic plan, detail a budget, and build a logic model that identifies causal links between inputs and outputs (Bebbington 1997; Bornstein 2003; Stiles 2002). Organizations must also specify how they will measure progress toward their goals using quantitative metrics and prove efficient use of resources (AbouAssi 2013; Ebrahim 2005).

Monitoring and evaluation practices require data acquisition and measurement, leading to an over-reliance on quantification. In order to manage grants, NGOs must hire staff with mastery of the technical vernacular of the development, business, industrial complex (Bano 2008; Bornstein 2003; Suárez and Gugerty 2016). Staff members must also be conversant in the language of funders, often English (Elbers and Arts 2011; Henderson 2003; Jad 2007). The combination of practices of development and particular forms of knowledge production turn the sector into a lucrative industry. Jobs in such professionalized NGOs tend to be high paying and offer other perks such as modern, high-tech, air-conditioned offices, access to vehicles, and receptions at fancy hotels (Chahim and Prakash 2014; Hammami 2000; Hanafi and Tabar 2003).

Evidence from our cases confirms professionalization of Palestine's and Morocco's NGO sectors. Rather than supporting NGOs' general missions, patrons funded projects, "There is a supermarket of projects, and organizations must see which fits best with their work. Also [grants] last from 3 months to at most 1 year. One year is long. Three to 6 months is common" (author interview, East Jerusalem, July 21, 2016). NGO staff also indicated that the application processes require a lot of resources and technical knowledge, "There is a really annoying part of an aid application called a 'log frame.' Applicants must list activities, indicators of success, measurement, results, and offer to provide photos and press releases. This is a total waste of time, money, and effort. It makes us more dependent to learn the whole process" (author interview, East Jerusalem, July 21, 2016). Receipt of funding requires the "ability to monitor the efficiency of programs, and produce viable projects and discounts consideration of local dynamics" (author interview, Rabat, October 19, 2014).

Some indicated that impact of their work was also limited by an over-reliance on quantification, "INDH favors quantitative and replicable projects. They favor scaling up, they see, 'Oh this worked here in Rabat, let's implement 40,000 of them all over the country.' This is not a strategy, you can't just plop a project down somewhere and expect it to work" (author interview, Rabat, October 27, 2014). This emphasis on quantitative metrics measured outputs, not outcomes, "Another problem with the aid system is that success is not about the number of participants in workshops. If anything should be measured it is the number of kids in jail" (author interview, East Jerusalem, July 21, 2016). Discussing the exclusion of grassroots NGOs, one evaluation specialist argued that these "NGOs, because they lack the knowhow, expertise, experience and ability to collect quantitative data," were not competitive for funding (author interview, Rabat, September 29, 2014). Organizations saw the limits of focusing solely on quantitative metrics, "How does one measure impact? I've been reflecting on this. We have never done an impact study, it is high time that we try…Financial return is fantastic but worries me. Social change should be at the heart" (author interview, Ramallah, June 18, 2016).

The emphasis on development practices and technical knowledge turned the NGO sectors not only into industries but lucrative industries; individuals often sought employment in the sector as a well-paying job, "People are quitting their jobs in the private sector and going to the NGO sector because they pay higher salaries. The incentive is financial, there is money in it" (author interview, Ramallah, June 16, 2016). Interlocutors suggested that individuals were drawn to NGO work because "one must create an association in order to benefit [financially]" (author's focus group, Tinghir, September 1, 2016). They were motivated by both financial returns and prestige, "There is high unemployment. There are no opportunities here, people cannot travel, so they open an NGO in order to have status" (author interview, Ramallah, July 21, 2016). Or, as another NGO leader put it, "People want to be in the NGO system because they want better jobs" (author interview, Ramallah, May 31, 2016). We were told numerous times that the NGO sector was one of the better paying opportunities for employment and that many saw the sector as a career

boost, "The NGO sector in Palestine is a career ladder. If you want to get to an international NGO you go through a national NGO" (author interview, Ramallah, March 16, 2015). Another noted, "Contractors, bankers, and civil society directors are people connected to aid…Most NGO work is based upon materialistic incentives. They hold events in fancy hotels, people joke about it" (author interview, Ramallah, June 16, 2016).

Bureaucratization

Bureaucratization is related to professionalization but entails a plethora of reporting and surveillance techniques that patrons use to monitor their grantees. As Feldman argues, "rather than measuring practice against policy—whether to judge the degree of perfection in its enactment or to highlight the failures of ideal types in capturing bureaucratic complexity…we need to consider this practice itself productive of governing form, intent and direction" (Feldman 2008, p. 14). While bureaucratic requirements are often seen as tedious and procedural, these practices require organizations to transform their organizational structure and operations in order to comply. In effect, then, bureaucracy is a key apparatus of governing. Patrons require frequent, regular, and detailed reporting on all aspects of organizational governance, operations, and finances (Bebbington 1997; Herrold 2016; Wiktorowicz 2000). Such monitoring is often extensive and intrusive, requiring significant staff time. Bureaucratization restrains grantees and gives patrons a window into, and influence over, all aspects of a funded project as well as more general organizational operations (Bornstein 2003).

Our interlocutors frequently recounted stories of how monitoring required "significant time investments" and "visible evidence of outputs" (author interview, East Jerusalem, July 21, 2016). One NGO leader lamented the over-valuing of procedural accountability imposed by patrons, pointing out that patrons, "roll out huge amounts of money but also require [grantees] to follow certain rules and regulations. The end result is that many NGOs, I can't generalize because many are still good, but many NGOs lost their objectives as they became bureaucratized…Directors became obsessed with, and required to follow, bureaucracy" (author interview, Rabat, October 2, 2014).

While patrons directly required grantees to bureaucratize, the government, through the Ministries of Interior, facilitated the bureaucratization of NGOs by monitoring and interfering in the work of the sector. As one Palestinian NGO leader put it, "there is more oversight than before from the government, (and) it is increasing. One needs to answer question from the intelligence agency to register and board meeting minutes must be given to the Ministry

of the Interior" (author interview, Ramallah, May 31, 2016). Another concurred, "The Ministry of the Interior is increasingly interfering. They have a list of NGOs and attend Board of Governors annual meetings" (author interview, Beit Sahour, June 20, 2016).

In Morocco, the patron is the government and the strategic placement of INDH within the Ministry of Interior had particular salience, "it created an entire civil society attached to the Ministry of Interior" (author interview, Rabat, October 27, 2014). Interviewees questioned the relationship between human development and the state security apparatus, "Let's look at the scope and impact of INDH. Even ONDH [National Observatory for Human Development] found that the impact was limited, and that it was mostly a matter of governance, everything goes through the Ministry of Interior. This begs the question, what does the Ministry of the Interior know about development? It is about control, instrumentation, controlling the population" (author interview, Rabat, November 5, 2014).

Upward Accountability

NGOs that are heavily dependent on external resources become locked into unequal relationships in which the patron wields power over the NGO (AbouAssi and Trent 2016; Bornstein 2003; Elbers and Arts 2011; Habib and Taylor 1999). NGOs respond by adopting and fulfilling their funders' development priorities (Porter 2003). In order to earn funding, NGOs shift their accountability away from their beneficiaries and upward toward the patron (Chahim and Prakash 2014; Ebrahim 2005; Suárez and Gugerty 2016). In doing so, they often become "memberless organizations" (Papakostas 2012, p. 146), small shops heavily subsidized by patrons and providing a particular service to beneficiaries. Organizational resources, and the mandate that comes from those resources, are provided not by members but by external patrons. They also potentially fall prey to mission drift (Bebbington 1997; Bornstein 2003). The results are patron/grantee relations marked by dependence and through which patrons extract loyalty and advance their objectives (Cox 2009; Elyachar 2005; Jamal 2007). Meanwhile, NGOs lose not only their independence but also their capacity to represent the public and champion beneficiaries' interests (Jad 2003; Stacher 2012).

The NGOs in our study indicated that the unequal power relations inherent in patronage forced them to cater to donor priorities rather than adhere to their own missions. As one interlocutor said, "Donors use money to get you to implement their agenda. We battle hard not to do that" (author interview, Ramallah, March 16, 2015). Another added, "Donors come with political agendas that needy

Palestinian organizations have to accept and adopt. Not only political agendas, but also definitions of what development is. Aid is top-down. We believe in bottom-up work. With top-down we must use their language and do their projects" (author interview, Ramallah, June 16, 2016). They felt that patron-funded projects "don't draw on local wisdom. The little money that is good—that does do good locally—comes as a tag-on to all of the bad" (author interview, Ramallah, March 16, 2015).

NGOs felt they could not argue with the agendas imposed upon them, "It was a top-down project, it was not open to discussion, it was always centralized…this took money away from those who were really working on [grassroots] initiatives" (author interview, Rabat, October 24, 2014). Others shared the sentiment that grassroots initiatives were crowded out, "The private sector and international donors cannot do community-led work. They can do community work but not community-led work, because they cannot give up control" (author interview, Ramallah, March 16, 2015). Some felt that the larger the NGO, the less accountable they were to constituents, "Large NGOs don't lack money but they lack accountability. They don't have local support. They are better at communicating with donors than with [us]" (author interview, Ramallah, March 16, 2015).

Patrons demanded loyalty and compliance with their agendas. One NGO described a political tit for tat, "It is well known that the presidents of communes were creating associations to benefit them politically, and that there were rounds of politics and a political game to benefiting from the INDH money. It was entirely oriented towards clientelism" (author interview, Rabat, November 15, 2014). Patronage created a power relationship in which grantees either put up or shut up; an NGO told us, "A European Union (EU) funder required us to partner with an Israeli organization. We said no, this is normalization. The EU told us to partner with a Palestinian organization in Israel and they would look the other way. We said no, the EU should cancel this program…We have been broke since then" (author interview, East Jerusalem, July 21, 2016). Loyalty was awarded, and disloyalty punished, "if you are not in good relations with the commune president, you will not benefit from any INDH funding for associations" (author focus group, Tinghir, October 15, 2016).

Depoliticizing the NGO Sector

Scholars have argued that foreign aid and government funding depoliticize NGOs (Chahim and Prakash 2014; Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Jad 2007). Professionalization, bureaucratization, and upward accountability to donors draw NGOs away from politically sensitive topics and toward service provision (Stiles 2002). We analyze how the deployment of technologies of governing (professionalization, bureaucratization, and upward accountability) contributes to this depoliticization.

The development of project-based proposals with logic models and measurable outcomes channels organizations' work into discrete, short-term projects with immediately visible results, leaving little room for the creativity, flexibility, and long time horizons required to mobilize grassroots constituencies or engage in sustained collective action (Bornstein 2003). Funding for general operations and grassroots advocacy is rarely provided (Chahim and Prakash 2014; Elbers and Arts 2011). As organizations increasingly rely on these short-term, project-based funding streams, they lose the organizational capacity to pursue transformative change initiatives (Ebrahim 2005). Reporting, monitoring, and surveillance requirements imposed by foreign aid and government funding depoliticizes NGOs, as the time and resources required to remain in compliance take away from the passion and mandate of organizations (Hammami 2000).

Upward accountability also accelerates NGO depoliticization (Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Stiles 2002). Through subtle and not-so-subtle messages from the patron, NGOs understand that taking on political work jeopardizes their funding (Herrold and Atia 2016). Fear of biting the hand that feeds them leads NGOs to cooperate with the patron's agenda, rather than challenging prevailing power structures (Allard 2014; Smith and Lipsky 1993). NGOs move "from protest to proposal" (Regulska 1999, p. 65) as they realize that funding is more easily secured when they work in collaboration with the patron.

Our interlocutors discussed the ways in which their work was depoliticized—they were encouraged to prioritize humanitarian work and service delivery over advocacy and de-radicalize their agendas. NGOs told us that patrons encourage humanitarian and service-oriented NGO work rather than political organizing or advocacy, "More and more the aid is humanitarian. This is dangerous because it is transforming how the Palestinian case is dealt with. It becomes humanitarian rather than political. It absolves Israel from responsibility…post Oslo, 80 per cent of aid was development and 20 per cent was humanitarian. Today, it is the reverse. The language being used in requests for proposals is depoliticized—e.g. poor, vulnerable. There is no political context" (author interview, Ramallah, June 16, 2016). In a focus group with Moroccan NGO leaders, they echoed the sense that INDH funded depoliticized projects, "The government contributed more to management of canal irrigation and road building than to [empowering] participatory development projects" (author focus group, Tinghir, November 5, 2016).

NGO leaders felt that patrons forced depoliticized agendas, "The West won't fund groups that are rebellious, revolutionary, and think about how to change the status quo. Instead they ameliorate the status quo. They make it easier to live under occupation, but not free from occupation" (author interview, Beit Sahour, June 20, 2016). They clearly asserted that funding streams were deliberately directed to undermine radical agendas, in the case of Morocco, call for democratization and/or autonomy, in the case of Palestine, call for an end to the occupation.

Many Moroccan activists believed that the INDH funding deliberately crowded out associations that were critical of the government, "There was a huge change to the state of the civil society after the INDH; they were able to dispose of civil society, to create their own organizations in the name of civil society that are registered as NGOs, but that are actually agents of the state. This is very different from the militant activism that dominated civil society before, and it was also a way to delegitimize the NGO sector" (author interview, Rabat, November 5, 2014). This was a marked change from a previous era, "Before in the 1970s, civil society was dominated by militant activists. Now we see local authorities working to create associations. So, this is diluting the work of militants" (author interview, Rabat, November 5, 2014).

The leader of a Palestinian NGO saw patronage as "hushing money, to maintain the status quo rather than solve the situation…But the occupation is still a major obstacle…aid fragments issues and topics. We need aid because of the occupation, however aid's focus on women, disabled, etc. misses the main point. Palestinians pay the price of fragmentation. It puts the occupation into parts" (author interview, Ramallah, June 16, 2016). Aid directly transformed the activist orientation of the NGO sector, "The NGO community was very strong and preserved Palestine before Oslo. It used to be powerful. In the last 5 years, it became weak because of donor driven issues" (author interview, Ramallah, July 21, 2016).

Donors diluted resistance to the occupation in part through conditionality, "USAID asked them [an NGO] to sign a document that indicated they would comply with the US policy on contracts with terrorist organizations (to not work with terrorist organizations). This is impossible. It includes almost every Palestinian organization working on resistance. Most people belong to these factions" (author interview, Beit Sahour, June 20, 2016). In order to attain funding, NGOs had to be willing to work with Israelis, "We get requests for proposals all the time from bilateral aid groups to work with Israeli organizations. No thank you, that is normalization" (author interview, Beit Sahour, June 20, 2016). Another organization recounted the cost of noncompliance, "Some NGOs are suffering because they have values and don't sign the US anti-terrorism policy and

don't cooperate with Israel. There is a lot of money available for these projects but the organizations won't and can't take it" (author interview, Ramallah, July 21, 2016).

Impotent Organs of Civil Society

In the eyes of our interlocutors, patronage led to crises of sustainability and undermined the legitimacy of the NGO sector. As a result, NGO leaders were self-critical of the sector, suggesting that it had become an impotent organ of civil society, "My hunch is that everyone sees that NGO-ization doesn't work. As Palestinians, we are angry. It has changed our state of mind from community organizing, creativity, and independence to dependence and always expecting help" (author interview, East Jerusalem, July 21, 2016). The cost of a patron-driven NGO sector was a weakened and docile civil society, "What we lost in the process is a free, truly free civil society, cultural, social, human rights. The other problem is that it created an entire civil society attached to the Ministry of the Interior, that can serve the Ministry for whatever purpose—that, in actuality, is not a civil society at all" (author interview, Rabat, October 27, 2014).

Patron-driven NGOs became so financially dependent upon their funders that they feared this dependency threatened the long-term sustainability of the sector. Patrons are notoriously fickle, frequently changing their agendas and funding priorities (Henderson 2002). Organizations worried that when the money disappeared so would they. NGOs recounted their dependence upon the funding stream of the patron, "We began in 2011 and the grant ended in June 2014. We still had salaries for about six to 7 months after the grant ended. Since then, no more salaries. Most money goes to rent" (author interview, East Jerusalem, July 21, 2016). There was also the sense that NGOs set up to benefit from patrons were less dedicated and therefore more disposable, as one NGO director put it, "The ones that were set up by aid will die" (author interview, Ramallah, May 31, 2016).

NGOs attributed the crisis of sustainability explicitly to donors, "They (international donors) are creating our problems…We have excellent people here but they are frustrated by the occupation and by donors. Donors ask us about sustainability and I want to ask, 'Are you sustainable in Palestine?' They come for 2 years and leave. This is a fiasco all over the world in conflict zone areas. NGOs are flourishing" (author interview, Ramallah, July 21, 2016). Thus, NGOs saw dependence on the patron as a liability for civil society, "NGOs in Palestine are dependent upon international aid and this creates distortions" (author interview, Ramallah, March 16, 2015). Patronage kept the sector dependent on its lifeline, "most income is from

foreign aid. Aid is 'consumed' but not 'invested'" (author interview, Ramallah, June 16, 2016). Rather than propelling the sector forward, it created fragility—if the patron pulled the plug on the lifeline, the sector would unravel.

Patronage reduced NGOs' legitimacy by undermining their role as change agents within civil society, "Overall if we look at INDH, it has had a negative impact on civil society because it has created a huge number of associations that aren't really interested in civil society" (author interview, Rabat, November 5, 2014). NGOs saw patronage as a broken system and were pessimistic about it changing, "Aid is not working, it is destructive, we need to shift. But I doubt that donors are thinking this way" (author interview, East Jerusalem, July 21, 2016). Rather than empowering citizens, "Aid offers Band-Aids, not a cure, for example aid for homeless shelters versus stopping demolitions" (author interview, East Jerusalem, July 21, 2016).

Our interviewees were skeptical that patronage did any good, "We don't have any real impact studies of INDH. But it is very much needed" (author interview, Rabat, October 24, 2014). Many argued that it did great harm, "As a sector the NGOs effectiveness changed dramatically after the INDH. For one, it became a much larger sector, there were far fewer NGOs before, and now there are many, and second, many lost their militancy, their mandate, their original goals, and became corrupted by the influx of funds into the sector. So, I believe that the efficacy of the sector has declined dramatically" (author interview, Rabat, October 2, 2014).

Conclusion

NGOs are thought to operate as sites of citizen empowerment, operating in a public sphere between society and the state. Yet, as many scholars have argued, they often fail to realize their theorized role as the bedrock of an active, engaged, and accountable civil society. In cases where NGOs have become reliant on patronage, NGO sectors have experienced bloating and a systematic change in their role within civil society. There are numerous cases worldwide where NGOs have become beholden to their patrons, to the detriment of local civil society and social change. This is neither a Middle East phenomenon nor simply a Global South phenomenon but has been observed by researchers in Western contexts (Alexander et al. 2004; Eikenberry and Kluver 2004; Ferris 1993; Smith and Lipsky 1993).

Using the cases of Palestine and Morocco, we argue that under patronage and via three key technologies of governing—professionalization, bureaucratization, and upward accountability—NGOs became an apparatus of governing.

Playing new roles as agents of governing limited their ability to act as agents of change. Patronage depoliticized NGOs, ultimately threatening their long-term legitimacy and sustainability.

These findings have implications for understanding the transformation of NGOs, the relationship between patrons and their grantees, and finally for exploring the limitations of NGOs as vehicles for social change in sensitive political environments. While much of the literature attributes the negative impacts of patronage to the *source* of patronage—foreign or tied to the government—we assert that the changed role of NGOs as apparatuses of governing is just as important as the identity of the patron and is manifested no matter what the identity of the patron. While foreign aid is problematized for being foreign, Western, and imperialist, and government funding is criticized for prioritizing the interests of the state over those of citizens, our findings indicate that similar patterns of power relations emerge between patrons and NGOs regardless of the source of patronage. We find this phenomenon present in two dramatically different contexts; one NGO sector fueled by foreign aid (Palestine) and in another fueled by the government (Morocco). A diverse array of self-help groups, charitable societies, popular committees, and small informal activist networks strongly connected to their communities and working for radical social change were sidelined in favor of professional, bureaucratic, and upwardly accountable institutions. Tethered to their patrons, these organizations were increasingly alienated from local citizens and debilitated from serving as change agents of civil society.

Our research captures a particular moment in time and focuses on the relationship between patrons and NGOs. As patron interests change and political realities on the ground also transform, funding levels fluctuate and NGOs respond. Organizations morph, merge, dissolve and sometimes staff move and start their own independent organizations or even abandon formal NGOs and move into "informal and grassroots forms of civic engagement" and social activism (Jacobsson and Korolczuk 2017, p. 315). While understanding the long-term impacts of patronage on civil society requires future research, our research demonstrates the ways in which funders profoundly impact NGOs and in turn potentially change the tides within civil society.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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