

Co-operation Between Israeli and Palestinian Organisations in Civil Society

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The current study is an attempt to review the shared experience of directors of Israeli and Palestinian civil society organisations which collaborate in joint projects. The research questions relate to managers' perceptions about the experience of their partnership and their attempt to verify their difficulties and how to deal with them. The literature deals extensively with co-operation among different organisations, but only a small number of studies directly address partnership between Israeli and Palestinian organisations who want to change the reality between the two sides. The research was qualitative, and based on in-depth interviews with ten organisation directors: five Israelis and five Palestinians. The findings raised three main themes: the social legitimacy of co-operation between the organisations, the inequality of Israeli and Palestinian organisations, and power relations in co-operation in light of the socio-political context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The research findings indicate the complex experience of partnership which managers have to negotiate. It seems that the co-operation experience moves on a continuum between opposition and interest or indifference. Also there are elements of inequality and imbalance of power between the Israeli and Palestinian organisations following differences in budgets, personnel training level, restrictions in movement and language barriers. This imbalance may be reflected in the dominance of the Israeli side in joint activities and the active role that the parties may take at various stages, from project initiation to implementation. All these add to the complexity that already exists in co-operation between organisations. The study contributes new knowledge in the field of co-operating organisations working under a reality of conflict, as well as understandings about partnership between organisations from the perspective of their managers.

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