

“Green Knowledge Community, Beats for Gaza”: Transnational linkages and institutional obstacles to the diffusion of arts and permaculture-based resilience knowledge among youth in Gaza

Author(s): Ana Margarida Esteves and Majed Abusalama

Source: *Bethlehem University Journal*, 2020, Vol. 37, Youth Engagement: From National Communities to Transnational Linkages (2020), pp. 68-84

Published by: Pluto Journals

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/bethunivj.37.2020.0068>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/bethunivj.37.2020.0068?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

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

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

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



Pluto Journals is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Bethlehem University Journal*

JSTOR

"Green Knowledge Community, Beats for Gaza": Transnational linkages and institutional obstacles to the diffusion of arts and permaculture-based resilience knowledge among youth in Gaza

PALESTINE PALESTINE PALESTINE PALESTINE PALESTINE

Ana Margarida Esteves and Majed Abusalama

Abstract

This article offers insights on how the institutional and material limitations, posed by the Israeli/Egyptian blockage on Gaza, promote learning processes that impact the strategic choices of an activist collective. It uses ethnographic data to explore micro processes of reasoning and decision-making in "Green Knowledge Community, Beats for Gaza", a network of Palestinian and international group of young activists aiming to promote grassroots-level resilience to Israeli occupation in this Palestinian territory. It analyses the shift from an initial focus on building an arts therapy school, which turned out to be unfeasible due to limitations both of the ground and among potential international donors, to a focus on permaculture, regarded as a strategy that could circumvent those limitations by mobilizing endogenous resources. The collective became progressively aware of the need to direct transnational knowledge diffusion to the support of the struggle for food sovereignty and grassroots economic self-determination through the localizing of agricultural production. This was due to the circumstances of the Israeli military occupation, Israeli/Egyptian blockage and the inclusion of a significant amount of arable land in the Gaza/Israel buffer, as well as to strategic choices of international donors, as well as the Hamas government.

Keywords: Community-level resilience, Knowledge diffusion, Transnational networks, Permaculture, Gaza

Disclaimer: The opinions and views expressed in this article do not represent the opinions of the Journal's editorial board and staff of the Dean of Research at Bethlehem University. The accuracy of the material and any errors in this publication are the sole responsibility of the author

«مجتمع المعرفة الخضراء: إيقاعات من أجل غزة»: شبكات عالمية وعوائق مؤسسية لانتشار الفنون وتعزيز الصلابة على مستوى الجذور بين الشباب في غزة

انا مارجريدا استيفز وماجد ابو سلامة

ملخص

تقدم هذه الدراسة رؤية حول نجاح القيود المؤسسية والمادية، التي يفرضها الحصار الإسرائيلي / المصري على غزة في تعزيز العمليات التعليمية التي تؤثر على الخيارات الاستراتيجية لمجموعة من الناشطين. تستخدم الدراسة البيانات الاثنوجرافية لاستكشاف العمليات الجزئية للاستدلال واتخاذ القرار في «مجتمع المعرفة الخضراء: إيقاعات من أجل غزة»، وهي شبكة من مجموعة فلسطينية ودولية من الناشطاء الشباب تهدف إلى تعزيز الصلابة في مقاومة الاحتلال الإسرائيلي على مستوى الجذور. (في هذه الأراضي الفلسطينية). تحلل الدراسة التحول من الهدف الأولي لبناء مدرسة للعلاج بالفن، والتي تبين أنها غير مجدية بسبب القيود القائمة على الأرض والقيود التي يفرضها المانحين الدوليين المحتملين، إلى التركيز على الزراعة المستدامة (permaculture) التي تعتبر استراتيجية قادرة على التغلب على تلك القيود من خلال استغلال الموارد الذاتية. وقد أدركت المجموعة بشكل تدريجي الحاجة إلى توجيه نشر المعرفة الدولية لدعم النضال من أجل السيادة الغذائية وتقرير المصير الاقتصادي على مستوى الجذور من خلال توطين الإنتاج الزراعي. وقد نتج ذلك عن الظروف التي يفرضها الاحتلال العسكري الإسرائيلي والحصار الإسرائيلي / المصري، وإدراج مساحة كبيرة من الأراضي الصالحة للزراعة في المنطقة العازلة بين غزة وإسرائيل، إضافة إلى الخيارات الاستراتيجية للمانحين الدوليين وحكومة حماس.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصلابة المجتمعية، نشر المعرفة، الشبكات العالمية، الزراعة المستدامة، غزة

لا تعبر الأفكار الواردة في المخطوطة عن أفكار هيئة تحرير المجلة أو عمادة البحث العلمي في جامعة بيت لحم. يعتبر المؤلف المسؤول الوحيد عن مضمون المخطوطة أو أية أخطاء فيها.

Introduction

This piece of exploratory research uses a dialogical, auto-ethnographic method to offer insights into microprocesses of reasoning and decision-making, among a youth activist collective regarding strategies for the promotion of community-level resilience. Resilience is hereby understood as “depending on complex adaptive systems that are continually interacting and transforming” (Aitcheson, AbuBader, Howell, & Elbedour, 2017).

The collective is “Green Knowledge Community, Beats for Gaza”, a network founded in 2009 that promotes a “regenerative” approach to peacebuilding. Its purpose is to raise international awareness about the situation in Gaza and support grassroots-level efforts through networking, media work and protest performance. It has shifted from an initial focus on music as an instrument for peacebuilding to the diffusion of permaculture-based resilience knowledge.

During its initial period, the network aimed to build an arts therapy school, with support from international donors. This project turned out to be unfeasible, given institutional and physical limitations resulting from the Israeli/Egyptian blockade of Gaza. The need to circumvent those obstacles and mobilize indigenous resources led to a shift of focus to the promotion of permaculture. The goal was to apply such knowledge in support of the capacity of grassroots resistance initiatives to resist the occupation. Nevertheless, the network experienced substantial obstacles, as attested by a violent clash between members of the project and the Israeli army. This happened during a protest in which the activists used agricultural knowledge performatively to raise public awareness of the military occupation of arable lands in the buffer zone “no-go zone area.”¹

The relevance of the Gaza Strip for this kind of analysis stems from the multiple attacks it has suffered in recent history which highlighted its capacity for resilience has experienced. These attacks include three Israeli bombardments, the Israeli/Egyptian blockade and continuous agricultural land invasions. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Israel has imposed movement restrictions on the Gaza Strip since the early 1990’s. These restrictions “intensified in June 2007, following the takeover by Hamas, when Israel imposed a land, sea and air blockade, citing security concerns” (OCHA, 2020). Since then, the entire northern and eastern perimeters of Gaza, which are adjacent to the borders with Israel, became a buffer zone, ranging from 300 metres up to 2 kilometres in some parts of the Gaza strip, that

Palestinians are not allowed to access and where many get injured when walking in its periphery. This buffer zone encompasses an estimated 30% - 40% of Gaza's agricultural land and a significant number of water wells (Alhaq, 2011). Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon visited the Gaza Strip on 29th of June 2016, having witnessed the destruction of a large part of the local infrastructure. Ban Ki-moon told reporters that "[t]he closure of Gaza suffocates its people, stifles its economy and impedes reconstruction efforts; it is a collective punishment for which there must be accountability" ("UN Chief", 2016).

On permaculture and "deep ecology"

Permaculture can be regarded as a whole-systems approach that uses integrative design with the purpose of minimizing ecological footprints and developing sustainable human settlements by internalizing production and consumption processes (Lockyer & Veteto, 2013, p.15). It is a prefigurative methodology which aims to "mitigate the antagonism between humans and nature" (Ergas & Clement, 2015, p. 1195) by "putting bioregional thought [...] in practice at the community level" (Lockyer & Veteto, 2013, p.15).

It is based on a "deep ecology" approach that de-commodifies nature through a re-framing of the common good as a sustainable interrelatedness between the human and non-human world, as well as a reintegration of human culture in natural patterns (Devall & Sessions, 1985; Naess, 1989; Frodemann, 1992; Scheid, 2016; Taylor, 2001a). It is founded upon an "integrative rationality," which frames social and biological phenomena according to perceived natural patterns of symbiosis, cyclical flow and (re)integration (Esteves, 2017). It promotes an "experiential" approach to research and learning, embedded in everyday community life and based on collective self-reflexivity. This represents a "biocentric" approach to the scaling and institutionalization of economic practices based on the management of common-pool resources, in contrast to more "institutionalist approaches" on the analysis of property regimes and governance mechanisms of the "natural commons" (Ostrom, 2007).

Permaculture is generally associated with "regenerative development", which focuses on the promotion of synergies between communities and the resources of their territories, with the goal of improving the resilience of social and natural systems (Cretney & Bond, 2017, Piani et al., 2019). Its strategies are based on the application of biomimicry-based, holistic sets of design principles, with the purpose of promoting ecosystem regeneration through decarbonization of

energy supply, restoration of natural cycles and relocalization of supply chains (Henfrey & Kenrick, 2015; Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2017). It is also to redraw economic and political borders along “bioregional” lines, according to principles of decentralization, participatory democracy and cooperation within and among political units (Henfrey & Kenrick, 2015; Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2017). These goals are promoted through the weaving of cross-sector, multi-stakeholder collaborations for the regeneration of ecosystems (Taylor, 2012, Lockyer & Veteto, 2013). Central to this process is the re-embedment of human activities in territories and their resources through community-led Initiatives based on groups of actors “involved in sustained social interaction through commoning” to (re)produce common pool resources (De Angelis, 2017, p. 124).

Resilience and its connection to the regenerative approach to peacebuilding

The existing literature makes a distinction between “restorative” and “regenerative” approaches to peacebuilding. The former approach focuses on the post-conflict⁷ reconstruction and rehabilitation of physical, political, legal and civil society structures and institutional processes. It also promotes the resolution of the conflicts of interest which led to confrontation, with the purpose of restoring pre-war conditions (Forman, Patrick & Salomons, 2000; Pugh, 2000; Fischer, 2004). Regenerative peacebuilding, however goes a step further than the former approach in preventing a return to violent conflict, by addressing not only the political causes of conflict, but also what Pugh (2000) calls the sociocultural and psychosocial dimensions of conflict. This approach to peacebuilding aims to go beyond what Kriesberg (2011) defines as “constructive contention,” fashioning an “enduring peaceful relationship, including recovering from the destructive conflict and reducing its underlying causes” (p. 50). This perspective is part of a “restorative” approach to peacebuilding, based on establishing the “right relationship” by resolving underlying tensions between the parties and promoting justice (Llewellyn & Philpott, 2014).

The “regenerative” approach does more than addressing reconciliation as a goal in itself. It aims to promote resilience by altering the power relations which promoted conflict in the first place, and creating conditions which allow peace to become self-sustaining, specifically, by supporting those who have been affected by conflict in envisioning goals beyond their immediate survival (Llewellyn & Philpott, 2014). These goals include the overcoming of “the militarization

of social life, politics and economy” (Fischer, 2004, p. 3) and the dismantling of the war economy (Caritas Schweiz, 2000), and the overcoming of cultures of violence (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 1999; Fischer, 2004). This approach to peacebuilding takes into account the need to guarantee the material and institutional infrastructure aimed at promoting economic development, participatory governance and the non-violent resolution of future conflicts (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 1999; Fischer, 2004). It seeks, therefore, to support the transformation of social and material conditions in such a way so as to develop sustainable living and social systems. The purpose is to create the conditions for those affected by conflict to maximize their capacity to increase the quality of their life and fulfil their potential in a self-reliant way.

Promoting resilience through a “regenerative” approach to peacebuilding requires going a step further beyond the political reconciliation between the parties in conflict. It implies promoting psychosocial stability at the grassroots level by working on issues of trauma, power and identity among the parties in conflict (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 1999; Fischer, 2004). It also implies guaranteeing the functioning of the infrastructures, natural cycles and supply chains needed to guarantee well-being and quality of life for all parties in the conflict. According to de Coning (2016), the purpose is to promote the emergence, in a collaborative manner from within the expenses of those parties that were formerly engaged in conflict, of self-organizing processes aimed at building self-sustainable, resilient social institutions informed by the local socio-economic context, history and culture. The authors claim that the role of peacebuilding agents in such a process is to support communities in the development of capacities for resilience and self-organisation.

Local legitimacy and agency

It is crucial for the local grassroots movement to find donors who can work with them toward interventions that reflect the actual needs of the community. The lack of local legitimacy and collaboration brings about more destruction to the vision of peacebuilding in everyday life.

Grassroots movements are the core of every community and it is important to be given the choice to decide about the community projects. Paris Declaration on Aid effectiveness (2005) states that first, “We...resolve to take far-reaching and monitorable actions to reform the ways we deliver and manage aid.” Second, “donors commit to respect partner country leadership and help strengthen their

capacity to exercise it.” However, this does not reflect the reality on the ground. Aid practices have not changed enough especially because many donors are busy delivering aid, while forgetting to empower other sustainable local projects. We cannot deny that donors are trying to change their attitudes and practices, but the gap is still clearly seen and should be challenged to support the efforts of conflict transformation and to bring about hope to the young grassroots initiatives in Palestine. For example, Dalia Association works on *reforming aid* policies. They argue that Palestinian NGOs are dependent on international aid, and therefore, they lack self-determination in the development projects and have very little influence over how those resources are used on their behalf.

In an article published in *This Week in Palestine*, Dalia Association presents self-determination as “a fundamental principle of international law that enshrines the rights of individuals and people to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development and the obligation of all states to respect and promote the realisation of these rights in conformity with the provisions of the UN Charter” (Dalia Association, 2011; Bisan Center for Research and Development, 2013). Similarly, Beats for Gaza, a grassroots organization, faced many challenges to bring out their influence about their cultural and/or ecological “Green Knowledge Community” projects, although those projects are local, organic and by the young people of Gaza.

Methodology

Although this paper doesn’t deal directly with the experience of people who self-identify as women or queer subjects, we found it pertinent to seek inspiration from feminist methodologies, given their emphasis on producing transformative knowledge base regarding the standpoint of those who exist at the margins of hegemonic logics and institutions (Anzaldúa, 2007; Hooks, 1994; Motta & Esteves, 2014). The methodology used is based on critical modes of inquiry that value co-production and blurring the boundaries between the inquirer and the subject matter, reconfiguring research as a pedagogical and prefigurative activity (Tickner, 2006; Motta, 2011).

We chose this methodology out of a concern with an aspect of the experience of activists from crisis areas that so far has gone understudied: How do the social circumstances of exile affect information processing and decision-making at the individual level as well as in small groups, when evaluating resources and

strategies for peacebuilding in the region of origin? Does exile promote a “bird’s eye view” of how the interaction between international and local institutions affects the conditions for peacebuilding on the ground?

The standpoint used for analysis in this paper is that of the founder and coordinator of “Green Knowledge Community, Beats for Gaza,” Majed Abusalama, a young activist from the Gaza Strip currently living in Europe. Majed is a known social worker, community organizer, human rights defender and award-winning journalist who, for the last eight years, has been coordinating efforts to promote resilience through different political, cultural, artistic and media interventions in his home community. One of the projects, in which Abusalama was involved, aimed to promote peace and resilience first through music and then through permaculture knowledge. Majed’s experience contributes to understanding the reasoning behind the shift from the restorative approach implicit in “constructive contention” to regenerative peacebuilding strategies. Namely, it provides insights on how permaculture comes to be perceived as an efficient strategy for building resilience at the grassroots level, given the institutional obstacles to resource mobilization that activists like Majed, and their international network of supports, face both on the ground, from the part of political authorities in Gaza, as well as from international development aid donors. Given these obstacles, permaculture, as a form of nature-based resilience knowledge, comes to be perceived as a more effective strategy than the arts, given its capacity to mobilize indigenous resources, circumvent local and international institutional constraints, and therefore increase the capacity for grassroots self-organization and self-reliance.

The data used for this paper is based on a dialogue between its co-authors, structured with the purpose of facilitating an auto-ethnographic process. The co-authors met in July 2015 during a one-month course in Tamera – Healing Biotope I, an ecovillage and peace research centre located in Alentejo, south western Portugal, and have kept in touch since then. The regular contact included the exchange of information about a fieldwork visit that Ana Margarida Esteves carried out in the West Bank in December 2015 to visit projects supported by Tamera in Bethlehem, Jericho and Tulkarem. Although it was not possible for her to visit the Gaza strip, the visit increased her overall knowledge about the Palestinian situation, as well as her interest in using participatory action research to support Palestinian activists both in the region and abroad. This interest motivated the authors to produce this paper, with the purpose of reflecting

upon the trajectory of “Green Knowledge Community, Beats for Gaza,” and gaining insights into how to develop this project further. The goal of the analysis is to understand the micro-processes of information assessment and decision-making that promote a shift from a “restorative” to a “regenerative” approach to peacebuilding among grassroots activists. Most of the exchange took the form of question-and-answer dialogues carried out in writing via Email. The quotes included in this paper are transcribed in the format they were written.

From the intra-personal to the ecosystemic

“Beats for Gaza”: Music as a tool for “restorative” peacebuilding

Music has become a tool for “restorative” peacebuilding in crisis areas, given its centrality in human communication and cultural production, as well as its capacity to impact the psychology of individuals and groups alike. It promotes resilience by helping to facilitate processes in which people involved in conflicts that express their experiences, experience therapeutic relief and find common ground upon which to promote reconciliation (Newton, 2015). Music therapy has been effective, especially among children and adolescents, in helping to cope with trauma and subsequent feelings of grief and loss (Malchiodi, 2008, p. 78). Hence, “art is a tool that can communicate and transform the way people think and act. Arts can change the dynamic in intractable interpersonal, intercommunal, national and global conflicts” (Shank & Schirch, 2008, p. 2). According to Majed Abusalama,

Beats for Gaza was founded (...) with the dream first to create a music school or a music project for the children and teenagers in the refugee camp of Jabalia which is a refugee camp located in the north of Gaza. Moreover, it sought to provide a neutral platform for the community especially kids and teenagers away from the religious manipulative music (...) used by political parties to radicalise kids.

The idea of the music school emerged when Majed worked in Stockholm for a year in 2011. There, he met a group of young Swedish musicians, with whom he shared stories of his upbringing in a Gaza Strip refugee camp which, in his words, “(...) has no music schools and the only music school was in the Palestinian red crescent society building which was inclusive for people who live close or who

can afford to go to this school.”

Such a school was out of reach for Majed and his family, who lived far away and could not afford to attend it. The sharing of this testimony with the Swedish musicians inspired the creation of “Beats for Gaza,” which aimed to collect used musical instruments and gather funds for creating a music school in the Gaza Strip. The goal was to set up a therapeutic space where music would be used to process conflict-related trauma and promote collective resilience, especially by dealing with the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) experienced by children and adolescents. This disorder, whose symptoms are experienced by over 90% of Gaza Palestinians between the ages of 13 and 18 as a result of living through three wars with Israel, is deemed as one of the main factors undermining collective resilience. It decreases the capacity to develop the cognitive skills needed for the reproduction of participating in the economy and fully exercising citizenship. Besides, it contributes to violence by promoting enduring emotional stressors that increase the vulnerability of individuals for indoctrination into political and religious extremism. Music contributes to the processing of psychological and physiological trauma associated with conflict, by “enabling relaxation, fostering creativity and self-expression that build self-belief and better socialization” (Salzburg Report, 2014). Besides, the therapeutic dimension of music also has a political dimension, since it can also be used to direct anger constructively, transforming it into “public demands for justice” (Shank & Schirch, 2008, p. 6). The “Beats for Gaza” team also had the vision, at a later stage of the project, of expanding its set of tools by including the visual arts, drama and movement therapy.

Facing institutional obstacles from development aid donors

Given the amount of resources necessary to set up the arts therapy school, and in light of its scarcity in the Gaza Strip, the “Beats for Gaza” team applied for funding from international development aid donors. This process turned out to a learning experience for the whole team, which faced the limits posed by instrumental reasoning, predominant in the development aid milieu, that seeks to balance political support for the Palestinian people with an attitude of “entente cordiale” with the state of Israel, which implied not challenging the blockade imposed on Gaza. According to Majed:

(...) our beautiful story which looks somehow normal for all the

Beats for Gaza white Swedish team who wanted to send all these musical instruments to Gaza as quickly as they could was faced with walls and so many rejections from different organizations which did not want to carry the responsibility of transporting our dream to Gaza because Gaza is under the Israeli blockade and the borders are fully controlled by the Israeli Defence Forces.

After being in contact with different funding organizations in Sweden who have some projects in Gaza, we realized that we were not included in their annual budget or that they did not have the time or the space to support months of work which we needed to realize this project.

We felt this project was the most appropriate for the time and space; therefore, we found it to be a big problem that those people sitting in their offices in Stockholm will tell us what was appropriate or not.

The experience put an enormous strain on the team, which almost disbanded. However, Majed's leadership managed to keep the activists together and gather the motivation to circumvent the obstacles. The team got in touch with the captain of a Swedish boat called "Estelle", which agreed to transport the musical instruments to the Gaza Strip. The boat was supposed to arrive at its destination at the end of 2012, but was hijacked by the Israeli Navy. The musical instruments on board were never delivered to their destination.

"Green Knowledge Community": Promoting resilience through indigenous resources?

The obstacles experienced made the team aware of the need to minimize the use of materials that is needed from outside Gaza, so as to circumvent the Israeli security procedures and blockade. This led to a rethinking of strategic choices, based on a re-evaluation of indigenous resources, as central for the promotion of grassroots resilience:

(...) Gaza was famous for agriculture and its rich lands, which made me think of a transforming farming and highlighting this richness of land. Meanwhile, Gaza had for the last 10 years a major electricity shortage, but the mediterranean weather and the

availability of solar power/sunlight makes it possible to create some renewable energy. Ideas were thus formed to create an eco-village with an alternative setting which can fit into such unpredictable security borders and measures in Gaza. The fact that we have an agricultural faculty and school makes it easier for us to take this step.

Majed resorted to an idea that he had at the beginning of the Israeli/Egyptian blockade, which was the creation of an ecovillage, which could serve as a centre for the diffusion of permaculture-based strategies for energy, water and food autonomy. During this period, he witnessed how people circumvented the scarcity caused by dependence on fossil fuels and pharmaceuticals by digging tunnels under the Egyptian/Palestinian border to transport petrol, medicine and other materials. The electricity and water shortages made him further aware of the need to mobilize local natural resources to promote resilience through autonomy and self-reliance. After the hijacking of “Estelle,” Majed started researching renewable energy technologies and recycling online, as well as rainwater capture and conservation through the building of artificial lakes. He also found out that there was already a significant amount of local knowledge that could be mobilized, since

there are youth in Gaza who showed an exceptional resilience through creating tools to ease the life of people under the blockade, and the use of natural materials and recycling from what we have in Gaza was an important aspect of inspiration for me to look into how this all can come together and tie in together before it just staed a story in the mainstream media.

I also felt that the power of nature will solve many of Gaza’s problems and will also connect the international green political movement to the Palestinian cause as there are continuous violations against farmers and nature. For example the Israeli, recently started spraying the agriculture lands all over the areas around the Gaza border with pesticide.⁹

While searching for further knowledge and allies to develop the project, which was renamed “Green Knowledge Community,” Majed got in touch with the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), and through this network with Tamera, an ecovillage located in south western Portugal (Tamera, 2020). Following several

visits to Tamera and an ongoing exchange with its core community members, Majed learned several permaculture-related strategies for self-sustainability and resilience. However, its implementation turned out to be even more difficult than was initially anticipated, based on art therapy, given the fact that a large amount of arable lands in the Gaza Strip has been taken up by the buffer zone. A non-violent protest to raise awareness of this situation, and the power of nature-based knowledge to promote resilience, almost cost Majed his life:

Global Ecovillage Network was an inspiration for me to look more into how this could be done in Gaza with the fewer resources we have, and how we can spread information about such a solution. All this can be possible to implement if all actors can be supportive of creating such a model in a complex political context and in Gaza where most agricultural lands is close to the buffer zone and it will be dangerous to work there. I was one of those who led a nonviolent demonstration to plant olive trees in the so-called buffer zone areas, and to raise awareness about agricultural lands in Gaza, a situation which ended with me being shot in the leg by a live bullet. (Global Ecovillage Network, 2020)

Conclusion: Knowledge diffusion and the struggle for the commons

Majed and his on-the-ground and international allies went through a learning process on how to effectively promote grassroots resilience in the Gaza Strip, taking into account the circumstances of the Israeli military occupation, Israeli/Egyptian blockage and the inclusion of a significant amount of arable land in the Gaza/Israel buffer zone. However, further challenges and obstacles have to be taken into account. The Israeli Occupation was always and still is a challenge to farmers in Gaza, especially since Hamas has been in power in 2007. This led to further radicalization, as well as chaos in the public sector, which made it more difficult for people like Majed, who are not members or supporters of Hamas and do not have allies in the public sector, to reach officials and try to gain public support for his project. Majed claims that he is considered “a threat for the values of Hamas,” because he is considered a leftist and secular and not under any of Hamas’s institutions which are more supportive of their people. In addition, he aims to gather foreign support for his project, but that might increase mistrust on the part of Hamas authorities and make access to land and other necessary resources and authorizations even more difficult especially since the

projects are cultural, artistic and ecological, projects that are not what Hamas tries to support in Gaza. All these factors made Majed and his collaborators, both in Gaza and abroad, increasingly conscious of the strategic importance of access to the elements that sustain life, especially arable land and water. The political dimension of permaculture and “regenerative development” made them more aware of the need to diffuse knowledge aimed at promoting grassroots-level livelihood autonomy and self-management. The goal is to empower local populations in the struggle for the commons and increase their autonomy vis-à-vis the restrictions enforced by local authorities, the Israeli military occupation and donors who were not able to support this vision because it is not part of their annual plans or strategies.

Acknowledgments

Ana Margarida Esteves would like to gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Portuguese *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia* (Bolsa SFRH/BPD/94495/2013) which enabled her affiliation to the Centro de Estudos Internacionais ISCTE-IUL (UID/CPO/03122/2013) and allowed her to conduct the research required for this paper.

Endnotes

1. The so-called buffer zone is a military no-go area that extends along the entire Gaza Strip's border with Israel as well as at sea (Diakonia, 2020).

References

- Aitcheson, R. J., Abu-Bader, S. H., Howell, M. K., Khalil, D., & Elbedour, S. (2017). Resilience in Palestinian adolescents living in Gaza. *Psychological trauma: theory, research, practice, and policy*, 9(1), 36-43.
- Alhaq. (2011). Shifting Paradigms - Israel's Enforcement of the Buffer Zone in the Gaza Strip.
- <http://www.alhaq.org/publications/publications-index/item/shifting-paradigms-israel-s-enforcement-of-the-buffer-zone-in-the-gaza-strip>.
- Bisan Center of Research and Development. (2013). *Dirasat Naqdiya Fi Waqi' Al-Tanmiya Fi Filasteen* [Critical Studies in Development in Palestine]. Ramallah: Bisan Center for Research and Development.
- Caritas, S. (2000). 'Allianzen für den Frieden', verfasst von Thomas Gass und Geert van Dok, *Positionspapier* 8, Luzern: Caritas-Verlag.

Cretney, R.M., & Bond, S. (2017). Shifting relationships to place: a relational place-based perspective on SES resilience. *Urban Geography* 38: 8-24.

de Angelis, M. (2017). *Omnia Sunt Communia: On the Commons and Transformation to Postcapitalism*. Zed Books.

De Coning, C. (2016). From peacebuilding to sustaining peace: Implications of complexity for resilience and sustainability. *Resilience*, 4(3), 166-181.

Dalia Association. (2011). An Appeal by Palestinian Civil Society to the International Community to Respect Our Right to Self Determination in the Aid System. <http://www.dalia.ps/files/pAppealForRights.pdf>.

Devall, B., & Sessions G. (1985). *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered*. Gibbs Smith.

Diakonia. (2020). The Legality of the Land “Buffer Zone” in the Gaza Strip. <https://www.diakonia.se/en/IHL/where-we-work/Occupied-Palestinian-Territory/Administration-of-Occupation/Gaza-Blockade-Land--Sea/Land-Buffer-Zone>

Esteves, A. M. (2017). Radical Environmentalism and ‘Commoning’: Synergies Between Ecosystem Regeneration and Social Governance at Tamera Ecovillage, Portugal. *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, 49(2), 357-376. DOI: 10.1111/anti.12278.

Ergas, C. & Clement M.T. (2015). Ecovillages, Restitution, and the Political-Economic Opportunity Structure: An Urban Case Study in Mitigating the Metabolic Rift. *Critical Sociology*, 42(7-8), 1195-1211.

Fernandes-Jesus, M., Carvalho, A., Fernandes, L., & Bento, S. (2017).

“Community engagement in the Transition movement: views and practices in Portuguese initiatives.” *Local Environment*, 22(12), 1546-1562.

Fischer, M. (2004). “Recovering from Violent Conflict: Regeneration and (Re-) Integration as Elements of Peacebuilding.” In A. Austin, M. Fischer and N. Ropers (eds.). *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict: The Berghof Handbook* (pp. 373-402). Springer Fachmedien.

Forman, S., Patrick S., & Salomons D. (2000). *Recovering from Conflict: Strategy for an International Response, Paying for Essentials*, Policy Paper Series. New York University.

Frodeman, R. (1992). Radical environmentalism and the political roots of

postmodernism: Differences that make a difference. *Environmental Ethics*, 14(4), 307–319.

Global Ecovillage Network. (2020). Community for a Regenerative World. <https://ecovillage.org/>.

Henfrey, T., & Kenrick, J. (2017). Climate, Commons and Hope: The Transition Movement in Global Perspective. In T. Henfrey, G. Maschkowski, & G. Penha-Lopes. (eds.). *Resilience, Community Action and Societal Transformation* (pp. 161-190). Permanent Publications.

Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge.

Kriesberg, L. (2011). The State of the Art in Conflict Transformation. In A. Austin, M. Fischer & H. J. Giessmann (Eds.), *Advancing Conflict Transformation. The Berghof Handbook II* (pp. 49-73). Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Llewellyn, J. J., & Philpott, D. (eds.). (2014). *Restorative Justice, Reconciliation and Peacebuilding*. Oxford University Press.

Lockyer, J., & Veteto, J.R. (2013). Environmental anthropology engaging ecotopia: an introduction. In J. Lockyer & J.R. Veteto (Eds.), *Environmental anthropology engaging ecotopia. bioregionalism, permaculture, and ecovillages* (pp. 1-31). Berghahn Books.

Miall, H., Ramsbotham O., & Woodhouse, T. (1999). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*. Polity Press.

Motta, S. C. (2011). Notes Towards Prefigurative Epistemologies. In S. C. Motta & A. G. Nilsen (Eds.), *Social Movements in the Global South: Development, Dispossession and Resistance* (pp. 178–199). Palgrave Macmillan.

Motta, S. C., & Esteves, A. M. (2014). Reinventing Emancipation in the 21st Century: The Pedagogical Practices of Social Movements. *Interface: A Journal for and About Social Movements*, 6 (1), 1–24.

Malchiodi, C. A. (2008). Creative interventions and childhood trauma. *Creative interventions with traumatized children*, 3-21.

Naess A. (1989). *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*. Cambridge University Press.

OCHA. (2020). Gaza Blockade. <https://www.ochaopt.org/theme/gaza-blockade>.

Newton, C. (2015). Palestinian children live in trauma without end. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/children-live-trauma-151130111404089.html>

Ostrom, E. (2007). Collective Action and Local Development Processes. *Sociologica*, 3, 1-32.

Paris Declaration on Aid effectiveness. (2005).

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>

Piani, L., Pagani, L., Ellero, G., & Zanarotti, M. C. (2019). Empirical Evaluation of Vocation to Solidarity Economy Using Composite Indicators. *Sustainability*, 11(14), 3910.

Pugh, M. (ed.). (2000). *Regeneration of war-torn societies*. Macmillan Press.

Scheid, D. P. (2016). *The Cosmic Common Good: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics*. Oxford University Press

Shank, M., & Schirch, L. (2008). "Strategic Arts-Based peacebuilding". *Peace & Change*, 33(2), 217-242.

Tamera Peace Research & Education Center in Portugal. (2020). <https://www.tamera.org/>

Taylor, P. J. (2012). Transition towns and world cities: towards green networks of cities. *Local Environment*, 17(4), 495-508.

Tickner, J. A. (2006). "Feminism Meets International Relations: Some Methodological Issues." In B. Ackerly, M. Stern, & J. True (Eds.), *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, (pp. 19–41). Cambridge University Press.

UN chief Ban Ki-Moon calls for Israel to end 'collective punishment' blockade of Gaza. (2015). <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/ban-ki-moon-calls-for-israel-to-end-blockade-of-gaza-1.5403162>.