ALONG AN ALTERNATIVE ROAD

WOMEN, RECONCILIATION AND
THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

This Ph.D. thesis explores and documents the relationships existing between some of the foremost bodies of literature within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These are concerned with women’s feminist activism as well as with recognition and reconciliation approaches which address ethno-national contexts, and in particular the ongoing status of military occupation. In analysing their interconnections, my aim is to show their relevance to any strategies which have attempted to move beyond the current impasse towards the identification of effective peaceful political alternatives. In the course of this research, I take account of the most significant academic writing relevant to this area, and direct attention to those past and contemporary women’s initiatives which have striven to question such a reality.

I underline the Palestinian and Israeli Jewish women’s role in tackling the major arguments concerning the ways through which diverse forms of ethno-nationalism have obstructed the achievement of recognition and reconciliation in the land of Palestine. In this framework, women’s and feminist critical positions have been at the core of sociopolitical activism, reflecting on alternatives for a meaningful resolution of the conflict. By examining the relevant material and by consideration of the outcomes of my fieldwork (mostly based on semi-structured interviews), I extend my study to both the historic practical examples and the philosophical debates, which seek to deconstruct the founding pillars of both nationalisms.

Based around a critical analysis of the existing feminist literature, my research focuses on exploring viable political tools used by women activists to overcome conflicting ethno-national narratives, as well as to provide innovative approaches and practices applicable to the reconciliation process between Palestinians and Israeli Jews. Considering both parallel and joint women’s initiatives, and the internal heterogeneity within each side, my contribution seeks to highlight the importance of engaging with women’s and feminist activism in the Palestinian-Israeli background, since it can be seen as one of the few remaining political visions able to challenge the status quo. On an academic level, and also within peace-oriented movements, in spite of its difficulties and failures, the women’s feminist voice has continued to develop theoretical analyses along with practical approaches of resistance, in its attempt to counter the worsening of the ‘normalised’ reality in Palestine/Israel.
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