

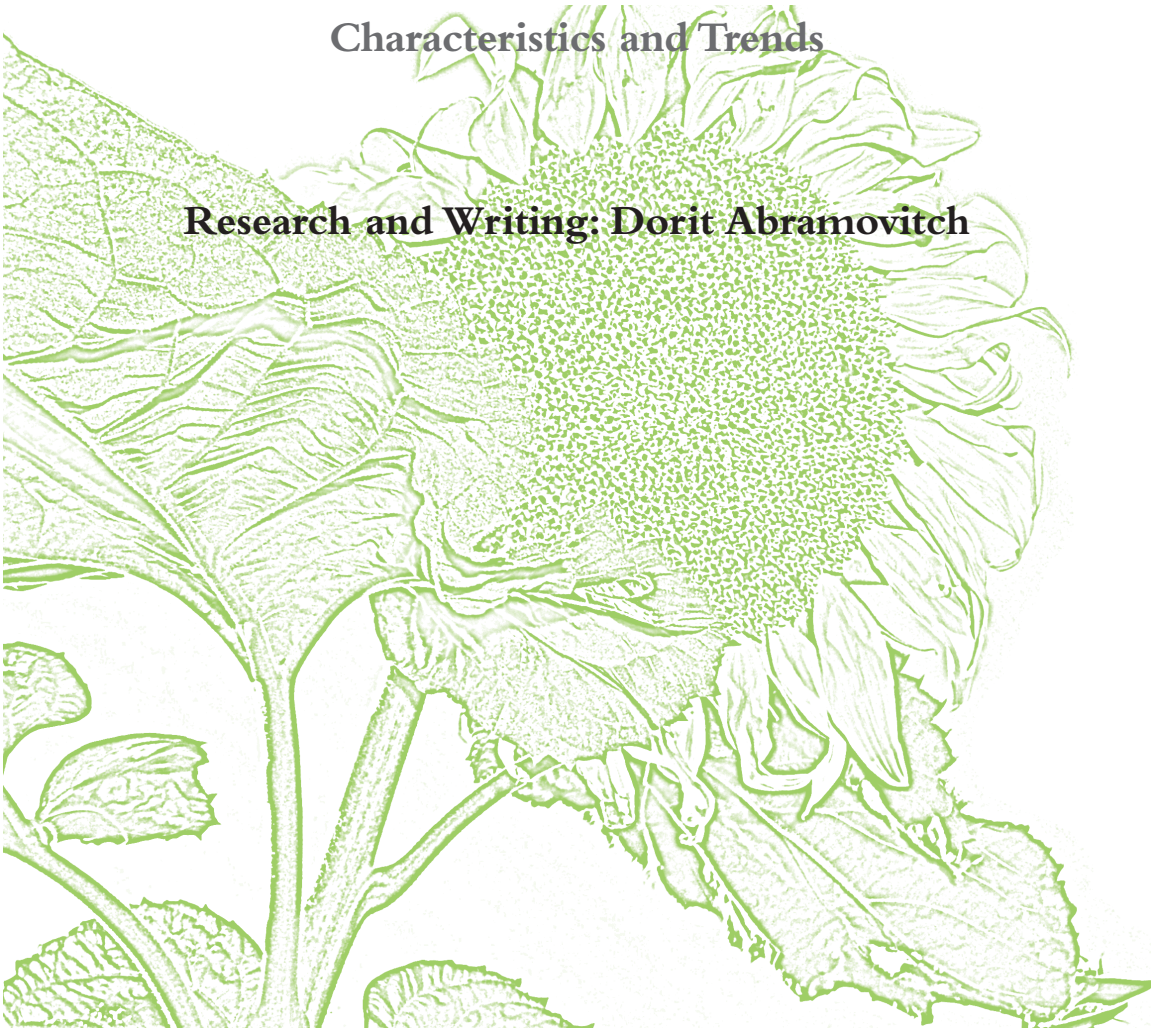


HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
ISRAEL

Jewish and Jewish-Palestinian Feminist Organizations in Israel

Characteristics and Trends

Research and Writing: Dorit Abramovitch



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Preface

The Heinrich Boell Stiftung is the foundation that is affiliated with the Green party in Germany. Heinrich Boell, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1972 and who died in 1985, was one of the most famous writers of post-war Germany. Heinrich Boell criticized German society when it was not willing to account for its crimes against humanity during the Nazi period. He sympathized with the student movement in the 60s and 70s, rejecting however attitudes negating the existence of the State of Israel, which became common in the movement after 1967. His name personifies the values the foundation stands for: defense of freedom, civic courage, tolerance and open debate. The Heinrich Boell Stiftung works in more than 60 countries worldwide with altogether 28 offices abroad. Along with the office in Tel Aviv, the foundation has additional Middle East offices in Ramallah and Beirut that operate throughout the region.

The work of the Heinrich Boell Stiftung in Israel takes place in the complex context of German-Jewish relations, German-Israeli relations and the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict. The foundation works with non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and other stakeholders in Israel to strengthen civil society and democratic participation and to enhance environmental justice and action combating climate change. It promotes efforts to deepen relations between Germany and Israel and the EU and Israel, and it collaborates with groups working for women's rights and gender democracy.

Women's rights and gender democracy have always been core issues for the foundation in its work in Germany and abroad. In Israel, our aim is to strengthen the social, legal and political position of women, and to improve their opportunities to participate in political decision making.

Partnering with various organizations in the feminist field over the years made it clear that feminist activism in Israel, encompassing different population groups and relevant to virtually every realm of life, has become one of Israel's leading social change forces. The growing number of feminist organizations along with expanded

activity and their strong influence on the Israeli public discourse and government policy have become evident.

Despite the range of activities, agendas and strategies of the feminist field, there seemed to be a need for an additional framework for the collection and documentation of its many components, trends, and collaborations. It should be noted, that an important report on the Palestinian feminist organizations in Israel was published in 2006 in Arabic by the Al-Tufula Center, and yet research covering additional organizations was still in need. This is why, when Dorit Abramovitch approached the foundation with the idea of thoroughly mapping and analyzing the field of Jewish and Jewish-Palestinian feminist non-governmental organizations in Israel, the Heinrich Boell Office in Tel Aviv immediately recognized the potential of such a report. Dorit Abramovitch, an esteemed feminist writer, lecturer, and long time campaign coordinator, planted the seeds of her idea in fertile ground.

Program coordinators Ulrike Goldenblatt and Ayana Segal-Cohen developed and accompanied the project together with Dorit Abramovitch in its early stages. After they left the foundation, the new program coordinator for the Women's Rights and Gender Democracy component, Romy Shapira, became involved. Dorit and Romy came to realize that the scope of the work needed to be expanded from the initial concept. The report developed into a multidimensional and comprehensive project that took considerable more time, effort and resources to process and finalize than was originally thought. Romy Shapira, who has been active in numerous social change initiatives in Israel for many years, became the editor of the report.

The effort made it possible to present what we consider not only a significant source of documentation, but hopefully a resource guide for the many people and organizations that were awaiting its publication. We hope very much that this report, with the information that it shares and its sensitive and sensible perspective, will play a role in promoting the achievement of women's rights and gender democracy in Israel.

Joern Boehme

Director
Heinrich Boell Stiftung, Israel

Table of Contents

Introduction:	7
Chapter 1: On the Creation of the Report and its Main Features	11
Chapter 2: Historical Review	17
Times of Establishment of Feminist Organizations in Israel	28
Chapter 3: Activity Areas of Feminist Organizations in Israel	31
Where are the Lesbian Organizations?	38
Chapter 4: Between Individual Services and Public Activism	43
Increased Professionalization	52
Chapter 5: Long Term Coalitions	63
The Challenges	74
Recommendations	78
Chapter 6: Short Term Coalitions	81
Public Campaign for the Election of a Woman President of Israel.	81
Public Campaign for the Removal of Sex Offenders from Government.	85
Chapter 7: Coalitions Between Organizations – Between Competition and Partnership	89
Recommendations	95
Summary:	99
List of References	105

Introduction

Analyzing the field of feminist organizations in Israel is a complex and challenging undertaking, especially at this time of substantial increase in the number of organizations, the extent of their activity, the means of cooperation between them and the variety of issues they address. The task of mapping and analyzing this field becomes necessary also considering the rise in visibility and centrality of the activities and perceptions of feminist organizations in the socio-political agenda in Israel. The growth in number of organizations and the expanding partnership between them bore the need to document, analyze and examine the field, so that its importance and increasing impact on the public sphere in Israel could be further recognized.

Interviews and the collection of materials for this report began in October 2007. The writing of the chapter mapping the organizations and documenting the activity of each organization by fixed categories, ended early in 2008*. Nonetheless, this section, addressing the analysis of the feminist field in Israel, refers to trends and characteristics that occurred in this field also during 2008. All organizations reviewed in the mapping identify themselves as feminist organizations. This report scarcely reviews non-institutionalized feminist organizations, but that should not detract from the importance of feminist activity not confined in the form of *Amutot* (non-profit associations), nor from the significance of feminist activity by women who do not belong to one organization or another.

Furthermore, the report as a whole documents and analyzes the field of feminist organizations, and by doing so it does not distinguish between these and women's organizations. Although, as mentioned, all reviewed organizations identify themselves as feminist organizations, there are some who claim that their decisive commonality is that most are organizations established, led and operated by women. Among the organizations there are some in which men are involved, but even in these cases men are a numeric minority. This issue raises the need for additional research to discuss the commonalities and differentiating features between the two

* The mapping chapter of this report is available in Hebrew only and is published in electronic format on the attached CD.

classifications – women's organizations and feminist organizations.

The feminist organizations reviewed in the mapping chapter, on the basis of which this document was written, are organizations that responded to the appeal disseminated in various ways asking them to be interviewed and featured in the report. Despite the lengthy efforts to reach the entirety of Jewish and Jewish-Palestinian organizations in Israel, clearly some were unintentionally omitted from this document. The accelerated growth in number of feminist organizations, the establishment of new organizations in recent years and the lack of sufficient visibility to all organizations active in this field, lead to the assumption that some organizations, despite their valuable activity, are not represented in this report. Nevertheless, this report presents, for the first time, a list of 46 organizations, some of which were not sufficiently known to most activists in the referenced field.

This document, analyzing the phenomena and trends of the field of feminist organizations, has undergone many changes during 2008, necessitated by the multiplicity of work, the expansion of discourse, new trends rising to the surface and the need for it to be as updated as possible. The point in time in which the writing of the document ended, also determines the subjects addressed, the features and trends mentioned and the issues discussed. Not only has this document no pretence of being an 'objective' analysis, but it rather emphasizes the importance in recognizing that everything written in it, including contents, the division into issues, style, language and place assigned to each of the subjects, is derived from the writer's personal-political decision and her direct involvement in this field. As a result, this report seeks to generate hereinafter additional points of view, and to expand the discussion concerning the diverse work, the abounding and fascinating discourse, the features of the field of feminist organizations and its impact on the public-political sphere in Israel.

Feminist work necessitates documentation, demands recognition and asserts influence on the public sphere. One of the premises of this report is that as the acquaintance of each organization with the others that are active in the field grows, as the information about different activities and varied communities of women of each organization expands, and as we better understand the range of perceptions and identities constituting the field in which we are active, we would then succeed in strengthening the partnership between us, expand the dialogue among all of us, and accordingly also deepen our impact on the public-political agenda in Israel. This report wishes to serve as a tool for all women involved in feminist activity, to broaden their outlook onto what is happening in the field, and at the same time be used as a means of broadening the visibility of this field to additional audiences.

The report is intended to elevate the features and trends of the contemporary feminist field to the public surface, and to serve as a layer, one of many, in the 'her-story' of the feminist movement in Israel. The analysis endeavors to describe

some of the trends and main characteristics of the field of feminist organizations and to enable further study and documentation of this field, which has developed considerably over the last decade. This document aims to portray different aspects of the present dynamic in the feminist arena: its development, main areas of activity, the growth of new organizations and inter-organizational divisions, the trends characterizing organizational and inter-organizational activity and the opportunities that arise for the women involved in this field.

The analysis is based on detailed mapping of each of the organizations, on the basis of fixed categories: year of formation, its vision, organizational identity, goals, strategies, main target audiences, central projects, achievements, staff structure and major publications. These categories enable familiarity with the main characteristics of each organization, motives leading to its establishment, achievements reached by its activities and the civil and organizational space in which it operates. One product of this mapping is, therefore, identification of the focus of activities by organizations at this time, as well as familiarizations with the main features of the whole field. The mapping is a result of interviews held with organization representatives, and corresponds in its contents with their presentation and perceptions of the organization in which they are active. Needless to mention, the fact that the report is based on the descriptions of these representatives and the abovementioned categorization, also determines the nature of the analysis and its contents.

The mapping of feminist organizations includes organizations of Jewish women and joint organizations of both Jewish and Palestinian women in Israel. Refraining from mapping and analyzing Palestinian feminist organizations in Israel, stems from commitment to the feminist value of reciprocal, and eye level discourse. Acknowledging the socio-political structural hierarchy in Israel between the Jewish public and the Palestinian public compelled me to limit the field of analysis to the space in which national power structure does not exist inherently. I acknowledge my lack of legitimization, as a Jewish woman, to analyze a civic-feminist space that the active Palestinian women in it are members of a population under political, social and economic discrimination by the Israeli-Jewish authorities, therefore preventing me from observing it without failing in a patronizing stance. Additionally, the Palestinian feminist **Altufula Centre** published an extensive report mapping and reviewing feminist-Palestinian organizations in Israel some three years ago¹. This report was published in Arabic.

I wish to address the fact that this report is written in the Hebrew language. Hebrew is generally the only way of communication between those involved in the feminist field in Israel, a fact emphasizing those absent and transparent still among us. As a Jewish woman I can make an effort and learn Arabic, yet what constitutes a choice, even a privilege, for me, is a compulsion for Palestinian women in Israel, both as they are a political minority forced to adopt the language of the political majority, and as

they would otherwise remain with no medium of expressing the oppression that they endure and which they oppose. Language is significant; it plays a role, has meaning, is limited by boundaries and is all about ideological contents emanating from its creators. Similarly, Mizrahi women in the course of their protest are constrained to make much use of the Jewish-Ashkenazi forms of the language to express their oppression, as lesbians, transgenders and other genders are forced to make their presence known, their protest heard and their pleasures present, using heterosexual language.”

In the dominant Hebrew language, Palestinians are the third person, the other, the distant, the stranger. Palestinian women are “the other” to “the one”, “them” as opposed to “us”, and they are bound by the limitation of the new Hebrew language that imposes upon them to demonstrate, oppose and describe their occupation using the very same language born of their deletion. As it is, we are strapped to a linguistic and value brace, and all we can do is undermine it, confront it and identify the narrow path it leaves us to express the hues and means of our existence and occupation.

It should be emphasized that the existence of two separate documents, one discussing Jewish and Jewish-Palestinian feminist organizations and the other addressing Palestinian feminist organizations, also reflects a tendency of separating the activity between these two feminist fields. Due to the political reality in Israel and the region that differentiates and separates the Jewish population from the population of the Palestinian political minority, according to national-geographic-economic-social aspects, most of the feminist field also acts within these boundaries. For this reason, most women active in the organizations don’t know each other, neither a personal nor a political acquaintance, and the partnership between organizations on both sides of the national and hierarchal border is meager. However, it is far from my intention to minimize the importance of existing joint feminist organizations for Jewish and Palestinian women, even if these are still a numeric minority in the organizational field as a whole.

The creation and publication of this report were made possible thanks to the support of the Heinrich Boell Foundation, which, in addition to funding the project, was a significant partner to the thought invested and great amount of work required to publish this document. The involvement of the Heinrich Boell Foundation in feminist activity in Israel and the mutual desire to broaden the influence of the feminist arena on the public-political agenda in the country, make the foundation a natural partner for this report.

I would like to especially thank Romy Shapira, who ever since joining the project invested her unique talents and her time in order to publish the report and to make it as accessible and articulate as possible. The work with Romy taught me again what feminist solidarity is.

“ The term *Mizrahi* refers to Jews originating from the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The term *Ashkenazi* refers to Jews originating from Central and Eastern Europe.

CHAPTER ONE

On the Creation of the Report and its Main Features

Over the last couple of years, a trend of increased cooperation between feminist organizations is apparent, for the purpose of managing short-term public information campaigns and joint struggles. This is in addition to the existence of long-term feminist-organizational coalitions, about which I will expand further in due course. In the Public Campaign for the Election of a Woman President of Israel, which took place from September 2006 to April 2007, 13 organizations participated, and in the Public Campaign for the Removal of Sex Offenders from Government, between February and late July 2007, initially 13 organizations took part, subsequently joined by additional 7 organizations. Organizations of a wide range of identities, perceptions and types of activity joined together for the purpose of fighting mutual battles, addressing issues that enabled agreement, overriding the difference and disputes between them. The short term coalitions of diverse organizations enabled activists to get to know each other directly, conduct ongoing dialogue, establish mechanisms for reaching agreement on actions and executing these actions, and address disagreements, large and small. This way it became possible for the organizations to mobilize together for activities, which had great public impact that derived also from the wide array of organizations partner to them. The report will examine the achievements and costs emanating from the multitude of organizations acting separately, alongside a growing trend of inter-organizational partnerships that generates the effect of a wide feminist movement, which considerably increases the public influence ability of the feminist field in Israel.

I will expand further on these public battles and the trend to form partnerships that surfaced as a result. As the Campaign for the Removal of Sex Offenders from Government ended, the activists explicitly conveyed the desire to continue and devise agreed upon issues for activity, which would enable their continued work together for the benefit of joint struggles, efforts that proved to be undoubtedly efficient. This desire was demonstrated, among other factors, by the continued joint

inter-organizational activity against the phenomenon of sex offence in government for another year following the formal completion of the campaign. During this time, the organizations succeeded in generating additional effective activities, including: the creation of a national feminist conference; a public campaign against the phenomenon of sexual harassment in higher education institutions; joint retorts to misogynistic articles and advertisements in the media, and more. This report addresses primarily broad inter-organizational coalitions that include up to dozens of organizations, but additional partnerships between fewer feminist organizations also exist in growing numbers in recent years.

The ambition to promote joint activity and the effectiveness of such work was my main motivation in examining the feminist organizations operating today, and doing so to enable all activists to get to know the entirety of factors active in this field. The premise was that familiarity with organizations active today and their areas of activity would expand the knowledge about each of them and enable the formation of a wider feminist network. Hence, one of the goals encouraging me to write this document is to make this acquaintance with the large and growing range of organizations within the feminist field, in order to facilitate widening cooperation for the purpose of deepening the effectiveness of social change processes. In doing so, I seek to identify which other issues engage the various organizations at present, issues that might in the future become foci for coalitions of joint action and mutual struggle.

It should be admitted that as the project began I was unable to count all feminist organizations active in Israel today and specify their subjects of activity. The original intent to identify and map the arenas of organized feminist activity was unraveled as an extended process of introduction to dozens of new organizations, many of which were formed during the past decade and address issues that I, much like many other activists, were not thoroughly familiar with.

The need to map feminist organizations in Israel derived, among other things, from the need to document their extensive action. In my many years of activity in the feminist field, I have noticed a shared key feature to all feminist organizations: the deficient documentation of both contemporary and historical work in this area. I believe that we, as women, in all aspects of our lives, have the tendency to invest time and effort into action, but to do little about its documentation, which could contribute to the self- as well as public recognition of the importance of our work to change the society that we live in. Despite the feminist stance protesting the lack of public recognition of the toils and contribution of women, nonetheless the feminist field, in part, sometimes falls into the patriarchal trap, as it does not sufficiently document and disseminate information concerning the work undertaken within it. Thus the sociopolitical achievements of women and the herstory might remain on the margins of awareness. Absentmindedly, we might be leaving the documentation

of the history of social change in Israel in the hands and pens of men, despite the fact that feminist activity undeniably has a significant and decisive contribution to social and political changes occurring in Israel.

The very existence of at least 46 Jewish and Jewish-Palestinian feminist organizations, and according to *Altufula*, at least 19 Palestinian feminist organizations in Israel, attests to the extent of feminist work in civil society in Israel. There is therefore no doubt that we must create a continuous feminist herstory, including the story of many years of activity, constantly expanding, by thousands of women working every day to change the patterns of discrimination and male oppression and for the creation of a just, equal, and respectful society for women.

The number of organizations presented henceforth does not profess to be final and accurate. Organizations described here have expressed their willingness to be included in this mapping and to be defined as feminist organizations. I wish to apologize to organizations not included in the mapping, despite the possibility that they might have been interested, because they were unaware of the preparation of the report. Furthermore, most of the organizations documented generally comply not only to being self-defined as feminist, but also with the formal definition of an organization registered as an *Amutah* (non-profit association), employing a permanent staff that works regularly and daily and is organizationally structured on the basis of directorship, staff, volunteers, addresses defined target audiences and is centered around vision and goals, on which its different activities and projects are based. While the mapping includes some feminist organizations not registered as *Amutot*, these are included in this document both because of their substantial impact on the feminist field as a whole, and since some of them function and work as organizations for all intents and purposes.

This document does not include un-institutionalized feminist gatherings or groups, which, while I am unable to document their quantity, have been increasing in number in recent years on both the local and national levels. These groups address the need of many women to be active in the feminist field and to influence Israeli society without necessarily establishing an *Amutah*, with all the complex bureaucracy and institutionalization involved. The activists in such groups also need not set up fundraising mechanisms, and are freed from the establishment of a staff based organization that might at times form hierarchies within the staff as well as distinctions between staff and volunteers. Furthermore, these groups sometimes enable activity unlimited by rules and instructions dictated by the foundations that support the organized NGOs. These groups can therefore devote themselves to activity which, unlike institutionalized organizations, is not required to be based on defined vision, strategy and objectives nor to be characterized by division into projects, and does not seek clear results and accomplishments. Those involved in such gatherings can suffice with sporadic activity that can be altered

ad-hoc according to specific temporary needs, and the leaders of the activity do not rely on it for their livelihood. Needless to say, in the absence of financial resources, such gatherings are constantly in danger of rapid wear-and-tear and short term and instant activity, and are dependent on the free time that can be spared by women working elsewhere. Such gatherings include, for instance, groups like **Feminist Activists** – an action and discussion group formed to generate radical field activities, and **ELLA – Harassment Free University**, formed by a group of students at the Beer Sheva and Tel Aviv Universities following a surge of publications concerning a phenomenon of sexual harassments of students by professors in higher education institutions. This group also focuses on protest activity in universities, enlisting support of students against the abuse of the power structure between teachers and students and initiating meetings with policy makers within the higher education institutions, in order to determine clear procedures for the prevention of sexual harassment acts and indictment of the individuals suspected of these acts. Among the women involved in these and other groups, are activists employed and making their living in feminist organizations or other work places.

Among the interviewees for this report, some claimed it is possible that the formation of un-institutional feminist organizations attests to opposition for the costs of establishing organizations registered as Amutot. They allege that at times pressure is exerted on the Amutot by some of the various sources of funding to professionalize, that is to determine clear allocation of roles in the organization, clear management structure, specialization and acknowledged formal education in the areas of activity, methodology, definition of ongoing activities by projects with clear objectives and time limitation, and proof of effectiveness and success in projects by means of exact and linear indicators. According to representatives of some of the organizations reviewed in the mapping chapter, professionalization means adoption and internalization of masculine and hierarchal customs and working rules, leaving no resources of time and money for process and community work, as these do not necessarily meet 'objective' indicators of success. On the other hand, other interviewees asserted that professionalization means more organized and effective work, enabling orderly pooling of resources, necessitating self reflection, preventing dispersal between non-continuous activities, and therefore not only does it not infringe on feminist values, but rather increases the effectiveness of the work and its impact of the public sphere. I will be expanding on this matter further.

The analysis of the feminist-organizational field is based on personal interviews held with representatives of the organizations and on the written information materials they have provided. For this end I have approached many organizations personally and through e-mailing lists, letting them choose whether to be incorporated in the report. The interviews included a personal meeting with a representative of the organization; most meetings have taken place in the NGO offices. During the

interview, each of the representatives presented to me her perceptions and stances concerning each of the categories characterizing the organization, and her views in relation to the feminist field in its entirety. Most interviewees equipped me with written informational material about their organizations, some of which also featured in the organizations' websites. In case I needed to complete the information available to me, I made additional contact with the interviewee. While the decision to map organizations by set categories narrows the organizational description to limited patterns, the identical criteria enable a consistent view of all organizations.

It should be emphasized that originally the report intended to map and analyze the field of women's organizations in Israel. In order to also include feminist organizations that are not distinctly women's organizations, it was decided to change the overall definition of the document. Defining an organization as feminist was subject to a decision made by each of the NGOs, and no external definition or conceptualization of feminism was dictated to them.

The analysis hereinafter does not claim to investigate all characteristics, trends and challenges of the field of feminist organizations in Israel. Its goal is to bring to light perceptions, outlooks, practices and trends that exist in this field, in the hope that the information will pave the way for more thorough research on each of the issues to be presented here. The document, therefore, does not intend to be the last word on the matter; on the contrary, it expresses a wish for the continued ongoing and intensive documentation and analysis of feminist civil society in Israel. It aims to suggest information and an overview of the feminist field in Israel and the work undertaken in the field at this time. Its perspective attempts to reduce the inter-organizational competition, to expand the field of vision to deepening inter-organizational solidarity and provide recognition of the great work that all organizations are partner to, and to the prominent position of the field of feminist NGOs in Israeli civil society. The document also expresses hope that loyalty to fundamental feminist values, joint effort, mutual empowerment, eye level activity and shared commitment, and the joint creation of a wide, dynamic and influential feminist movement, will be weighed at least equally to the commitment of each woman to the organization within which she operates and the work she does in its framework.

The analysis of this field is also affected by my many years of activity in feminist organizations and groups in Israel, and therefore does not allege to be impartial to values that emanate from my own personal-professional-ideological point of view. One of the wishes arising from this document is to dim the dichotomy distinguishing experts from regular activists; professional women from survivors; employees of the organization being openly interviewed by the media and shaded images of survivors behind them; service providers and receivers. Even if such demarcations are sometimes necessary to distinguish who the target publics are, so that effective

service can be provided and in order to generate policy change toward different populations, we must be alert to the possible cost of inadvertent exclusion from the public discourse of the populations of women most negatively affected by it. Softening the mentioned dichotomy and creating eye level partnerships between different populations of women in society and between varied political minorities in the general public, would improve the solidarity within the feminist field, expand the ability of public mobilization in this field and substantially enhance the impact of feminist civil society on the dominant discourse in Israel.

This document seeks active and continuous recognition of the fact that every woman is negatively affected by masculine perceptions and practices; that every woman is subject to some form of oppression due to her gender; that each woman stands at a different spot on the same slippery slope of sexual and gender discrimination in society. I assert that feminist solidarity amongst women, and the feminist public mobilization of women, men and other genders, can be formed and expanded by recognition of the different types of discrimination that various groups of society suffer from, and out of the awareness to the relationship between different types of oppression. This document aims to add another layer to the knowledge and acknowledgement among partners to this field.

The wish arising in the document for recognition of the range and complexity of identities and perceptions also stems from the nature of my involvement in this field. The tremendous satisfaction I experienced in the duration of the process of getting closely acquainted with the feminist-organizational work, results, among other reasons, from the fact that I am all of the following: a survivor of sexual assault, a coordinator of public campaigns – including ones focusing on the struggle against sexual violence, a lecturer, researcher and feminist-queer activist. In the field of feminist organizations in Israel I have found a place and space for a wide range of identities, both in the organizational and personal levels. In the duration of the field work on this project I have found numerous partners, at times differing by areas of activity, perceptions, faith, gender identities, and yet with each of them discourse was created, which was based on similar recognition of the need to assert the presence of feminist values and practices in the social-political arena in Israel. When years ago I took my first steps in the feminist field in Israel, I had not imagined that the sphere I chose to belong to would become so varied and abundant with action, and will include hundreds and thousands of women waking up every morning to a day of hard, active and complex work intended to change society, the very same society which sacrifices multitudes of women and other political minorities in all aspects of their lives. In light of my personal-political history and out of great faith in the ability to be released from the values and alignments that oppress us all, I take this written stage first of all to express my gratitude to all the partners sharing this space.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical Review

In order to present and analyze the contemporary state of the field of feminist organizations in Israel, the herstorical development that has brought us to this point should be described. Herstorical analysis of feminism in Israel will always be a result of the point of view of the describer, and I therefore apologize in advance should this review in its limited scope not keep in line with all existing perceptions.

I wish to reemphasize that the herstorical review refers mostly to Jewish Israeli feminist work, because, as mentioned, I believe I have no right to analyze from either a historical or contemporary point of view a Palestinian sphere that is under national-social oppression by Israel. I hope that the national hierarchy and oppression, originating, in my opinion, from masculine decisions and ideologies, and necessitating at this time a separate analysis of the two feminist spaces, the Jewish-Israeli and the Palestinian-Israeli, will in future be revoked to produce a common research, report and herstory.

I sufficed with a concise historical review that does not profess to describe all that has happened over the years in the field of feminism in Israel. Books like "Don't Wanna Be Nice Girls: The Struggle for Suffrage and New Feminism in Israel" (2006) by Dr. Hannah Safran, "Thinking Woman – On Women and Feminism in a Masculine Society" by Dr. Erella Shadmi (2007) and some of the articles in the anthology "To My Sister – Mizrahi Feminist Politics", edited by Shlomit Lir (2007), are a small part of an array of publications referring to the birth and substance of the feminist movement. I chose regretfully, yet knowingly, not to mention the names of women who led the movement and the feminist struggles throughout the years, so as not to fail in the common ideological fault that acknowledges the contributions and names of specific women, most of them Ashkenazi Jews, but at the same time obscures many other leading women. This should in no way conceal the immense credit that should be given to all those who created and expanded feminist work in Israel.

In order to tell the story of Jewish feminism in Israel, I am required to anchor the beginning of the review at the beginning of Zionism. Some might consider it a value

limitation. Others would claim that it is precisely from the inherent relationship between Zionist history and the feminist herstory in Israel, that the birth and development of the feminist movement in the country can be understood.

It is customary to begin the Jewish-feminist history in Israel at the struggle of Jewish women for their rights to elect and be elected for the World Zionist Organization. This right was recognized in 1899 and realized only twenty years later, following the activity of the **Association of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Israel**. The organization was comprised of urban, secular, educated and Ashkenazi women, who considered themselves to be a national non-partisan organization, operating under the slogan “One Law and One Ruling for Man and Woman”. Back in the 19th century, organizations of Jewish women were operating in the area, such as the **Women Workers Movement**, established before the First World War, the **Zionist Organization Hadassah** established in 1913, **WIZO – Women’s International Zionist Organization** that set up its first operating chapter here back in 1920 and **NA’AMAT – Movement of Working Women and Volunteers** established in 1921. These organizations parted into two factions: organizations that the advancement of woman in society headed their priorities, and organizations focusing on aid activity to women in distress, health services for women, establishing daycare centers for children of working women and professional training. “Despite the differences in the points of view of the different organizations... it was the Zionist ideology that was at the center of their world...”²

In addition to the organizations described, in 1948 the organization **TANDI-Movement of Democratic Women** was formed. The organization based its self definition and value demarcation on the joint activity of Arab and Jewish women in Israel. Together they set a goal for themselves of acting for equal rights for women in all walks of life and defending the rights of their children. The organization, throughout its years of activity, proclaimed its belief in a just peace between the two nations.

The development of feminist activity and awareness in Israel cannot be described without referring to the image of the “New Jew”, which the Zionist myth was based upon, and was further fortified by the various statements of the “Forefathers of Zionism”. The “New Jew” is differentiated from the image of the exiled, submissive, elderly, manipulative and greedy, pale, hunched and meek “Old Jew”. The new image was formed in defiance, both covert and open at the same time, against Jews from Eastern Europe who supposedly could not rise up and fight courageously against those seeking to obliterate them. The horrors of the Holocaust generated, on the one hand, unprecedented legitimatization for the establishment of a Jewish State, which would provide a safe home for Jewish victims of global anti-Semitism (meaning mostly the Jews of Europe), and on the other hand, formed the image of the New Jew – the hero Jew who fights for his home with valor. A feminist reading

of this character identifies in its dominant phallic elements, from which the entire Zionist ideology was weaved, from those days until the present time. The “New Jew”, the “Sabra”, the Zionist pioneer, is Israeli born, fair-haired and light-skinned, tall in stature, young, erect and muscular, his bare chest visible through his sweaty shirt, his gaze carries ahead and in his steady and fisted hand he clutches, in a vertical angle, a weapon in the image of either a long rifle or a tool for working/conquering the land.

Such an image was the foundation and product of the Zionist perception, based from its outset on values of courage, belligerence and aggression against the big enemy threatening to chase the Jews and destroy them. The enemy in this case is not only the gentile and anti-Semitic Christian, but also the Arab enemy, motivated solely by the primitive need to kill and murder any Jew crossing his path. In order to fight for existence as an independent people, unity and fusion of all personal needs, of the range of identities and ethnicities and of individual rights into one mass entirely directed at the growth of the nation, were required. Particularly essential was a comprehensive adoption of values of the myth of the New Jew, leaving only marginal space, if any, to a non-aggressive and un-masculine image.

The relationship between the “New Jew” and the “Old Jew” might be paralleled with the conventional relationship in patriarchal society between man and woman. The man (that is, the New Jew) is thus strong, tall, brave and motivated by a realistic and logical will to bravely protect his country at the risk of his own life, while the woman (namely, the Old Jew) is succinct in her maternal roles and servicing, and she is emotional, manipulative, submissive and feeble. Even if the Zionist myth hails the banner of equality for women, and women indeed participated in what was coined as the “Zionist effort”, with some among them paving roads and cultivating the land, in practice a gender disparity was formed, growing wider as years went by. It is a gap that differentiated between the model masculine figure, the leader, controlling public space with courage and wisdom, and the marginal to transparent image, who in the best case understands how to fit-in with the man’s occupations and strengthen him, serving as his helpmate (*Ezer Kenegdo*). The disparity between the image of the Zionist man and the image of the Jewish woman in Israel grew deeper with time, corresponding to the domination of the concept that there is a ruthless and inhuman enemy aiming to destroy us. The hegemonic perception commanding fear of the enemy, courage required to defeat it and the need to stand guard at all times with a loaded and cocked gun, left the women, conceived as un-participating in the war effort that takes place in the frontline, in the transparent, marginal and negligible home front.

The Zionist myth, asserting that Hebrew women in Israel benefited fully from equal rights, for a long time prevented an intrinsic discussion of the status of the public of women in the area. Following this myth, which began establishing itself at

the time of establishment of the State, and following the right of suffrage to women in Israel, the strength of women's activity in Israel was diminished – similarly to the women's movement in the United States, which was weakened following suffrage. The combination of the claim to relinquish “private” needs and rights in favor of the national-Zionist struggle and the myth of equality between men and women and suffrage for women, had weakened and narrowed the efforts of the organizations and stalled the development of a massive feminist-social movement in Israel. The assumption was that once suffrage was attained, its consequence would be a change in the position of all women in society. Without underestimating the activity of organizations that continued to operate during all of the interim years, it will nevertheless be another forty years until the 1970s, when the ‘second wave’ of the women's movement reached Israel and the term “feminism” spreads to include different varieties of organizations, perceptions and activities for women.

The women's movement developing in Israel in the early seventies was influenced by the feminist movements in Western Europe and North America, which started making their mark in the 1960s. “For the first time the popular perception among the public and academic circles was challenged, according to which, since the beginning of the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel women were equal partners in the process of constructing the new society... Only once the feminist demand to address the oppression of women in society was introduced to the public agenda, did the awareness start to slowly grow that equality between the sexes in Israel had no hold in reality and was in its entirety a myth”.³ One of the key novelties of that period was the formation of outside-the-establishment women's organizations (NGOs), and these, in accordance with a new radical feminist stance, perceived the establishment to be a masculine ruling system that begets and perpetuates the inferiority and oppression of women.

A typical activity at the beginning of this period was gathering of groups to raise feminist awareness, which ended in 1981 with the closure of *Kol Ha'Isha – Women's Voice*, an organization that was active in the three big cities, Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Women in Tel Aviv and Haifa formed the **Feminist Movement in Israel**, which, despite attempting to work in a national framework, concentrated mainly in Tel Aviv. By the late seventies, national feminist conferences were taking place, and by then lesbian women have also started forming organizations for themselves. Moreover, at this time service providing organizations started operating, such as shelters for battered women and crisis centers for survivors of sexual assault.

The radical feminist activity that began with the second wave is associated not only with some of the activists being emigrants from the United States and influenced by the radical feminism that developed there, but also with major political events that affected Israeli society. The 1973 war, the right wing's first rise to power in 1977 and the signing of Peace Accords with Egypt, stimulated diverse

civic groups to embark on protest struggles, which directed public attention to the deep rift between different population groups and fractured the founding myths of the social and national Jewish unity.

It was at this time that a civil society was born in Israel, which included also peace movements and leftist organizations that expressed opposition to the Israeli occupation and to Jewish settlements in the Palestinian Territories. That was also when meetings began, forbidden by law at the time, with representatives of the **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)**. On this setting and at the initiative of left wing activists, powerful civil protest also began to arise against the oppression and discrimination by governmental institutions, the establishment and the Ashkenazi elites against Mizrahi women and men. In 1971 the **Black Panthers** movement was founded, recruiting thousands of protestors, men and women alike. This protest linked, for the first time in Israel, between ethnic, class and national struggles. Thus the Peace Movement, the Mizrahi Protest Movement and the Feminist Movement have all started operating during the same period. Despite the coinciding time of these movements, it would take over a decade for the different issues of struggle to start merging, so that Mizrahi feminism will rise to the surface and claim its place in the mainstream feminist discourse, and for a series of feminist peace movements to be formed, in addition to **TANDI** and others, that will occupy a more visible place in public sphere.

Despite the fact that the feminist movement did not captivate masses of women in this wave of activity, its operation during the first decade laid the infrastructure for the growing support and mobilization it came to know down the road. For the first time during the seventies, women worked separately from men in the public arena, focusing on the advancement of the status and rights of women in society and in protest of their oppression. As mentioned, though women's organizations of the first wave like **WIZO**, **Emunah** and **NA'AMAT** have been operating since the 1920s, the public image formed of them at the time was generally that of philanthropic organizations dealing mostly with the operation of clubs for women, daycare and kindergartens, and less one of feminist organizations striving for social change.

Among the activities signaling the budding of feminist non-establishment awareness in Israel, were demonstrations on various issues, such as pro free abortion, equal pay for equal work, the abolition of discrimination in education, in favor of civil marriages, against beauty pageants and more. The groups in Haifa published a newspaper addressing the radical analysis of women's discrimination in Israeli-masculine society. The paper gave expression to the feminist outlook, according to which concepts of masculinity and femininity derive from prejudices, and are in principle social and cultural values that give men a push and legitimization to progress and be present in all institutes and spheres of society, but assign women a passive image leaving them the roles of childcare and attendance to others.

Feminists have also called for equal representation of women in political and economic institutions in the country and their liberation from hidden and exposed oppression that leaves them at home and in traditional service roles.

These claims came up during a time of circumstances of dire political and economic state of women in Israel. "The political participation of women was expressed almost exclusively by the minute representation of eight to ten female Members of Knesset, and since the birth of the State, only few women served as Ministers in the different governments. In government ministries, they were not being promoted to positions of General Directors, nor were they being elected as mayors. Women were 39% of all government officials, and only 9% of them were in senior positions. In other professions they were not faring much better. Only 1% of all engineers were women, 7% were legal professional women. A little more than one third of the women went to work outside their homes and their annual income was 60% of that of their fellow men".⁴

In addition to protest activities, the second wave of feminism was characterized also by differences of opinion between the women in the various organizations. A central bone of contention was the linkage between feminism and the political left. Some of the women claimed that the feminist struggle should be separated from other political efforts. Others argued that the dominant politics of the government is based on warfare and occupation of another people and on a militaristic outlook that impacts the discrimination of Jewish and Palestinian women in all aspects of their lives. Therefore, they suggested, the occupation and oppression of Palestinians and other social groups should rightfully be linked with the discrimination of women. This is where a distinction is indicated between the activity of the Jerusalemite group that insisted to link between the feminist, social and national struggles, and the Tel Aviv group with part of the Haifa group, focusing on raising feminist awareness and the struggle for equal rights and opportunities for women in Israel. Despite the desire to establish a nation-wide feminist movement united in its positions, the ideological differences prevented its full realization. Another dispute erupted between the Tel Aviv group wanting to organize as an *Amutah* and to exist as an organization with internal order, and the Haifa group that opposed regulated activity, as some of its members considered it to be assimilation into the establishment.

"It was evident throughout the seventies that feminism in Tel Aviv does not resemble the Jerusalemite feminism, not that of Haifa. Whereas the Tel Avivi feminism had a very Zionist and patriotic and possibly more right winged affinity, compared with the very leftist feminism in Jerusalem and the party neutral feminism of Haifa..."⁵

In 1974, during a period in which the feminist movement in Israel began to take shape, a feminist Member of Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) was elected on behalf

of *RATZ*, The Civil Rights and Peace Movement. Not all feminists felt partner to this achievement, and the mentioned Member of Knesset also failed, down the road, to secure personal and ideological support for her positions within her party. Some feminists maintain that the defiance she evoked with many members of the feminist movement originated from the linkage she insisted on between her radical feminist outlooks and her support of the Palestinian right for national self-determination. Despite the opposition induced, she succeeded, for the very first time, to raise the issue of violence against women onto the Knesset and public agendas, and some argue that this was her decisive contribution to the development of feminist work in Israel.

Another feminist struggle that took place during the same period of time was one for the right of free abortion. This fight united all active groups in the different cities, and they organized joint demonstrations receiving media coverage and public response. In 1977, following prolonged action, the Knesset adopted the recognition of the right for free abortion by law, and for many women it was the first experience of the impact of their own activity on the public and the political system.

In the institutionalized political arena, that same feminist MK decided to retire at the end of the eighth Knesset session. Following her retirement, in light of the failure she experienced in joining a party which she claimed feminism was not its only agenda, she and other friends started promoting the idea of establishing a Women's Party. Despite the opposition of most feminists to this initiative, due a dispute over the importance of parliamentary action, in 1977 the Women's Party was en route. The party platform stated, amongst other things: "It is clear that establishing comprehensive and sustainable peace in our region is inseparable from the construction of an egalitarian society. For this reason, the Women's Party supports any initiative that will result in the solution of the Israeli-Arab conflict, while recognizing the rights of the Palestinian people for self determination, and securing the safe existence of the State of Israel".⁶ In the elections the party received only 6,000 votes, a third of the minimum necessary for obtaining one parliamentary seat.

Toward the end of the first decade of identified feminist activity in Israel, new avenues of action began developing. These included the establishment of support centers for women abused by physical and sexual violence, national feminist conferences, formation of new organizations and activity centers. The shelter for battered women, which started operating in Haifa in 1977, produced a first model of its kind, based on nonexistence of class hierarchy in the community of women between employees and survivors, and consensus decision making. In 1978 the second shelter was opened in Herzliya. The founding of the shelters is recognized in the feminist herstory as a turning point, from a movement involved mostly in ideological struggle, to one acting also by means of providing support services to a

wide-ranging community of women. This was also the basis for hope that the public could 'digest' feminism, thus far rejected due to the radical views exhibited by the movement, and recognize its values in appreciation of the services it provides. In 1980 Crisis Centers for survivors of sexual abuse were also opened in Tel Aviv and in Haifa, and **Kol Ha'Isha** Center in Haifa was founded, addressing awareness raising, providing consultation to women and offering various classes. The activity in Haifa was a success and encouraged the establishment of similar centers in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem named **Tzenu UReina** (Go Forth and You Shall See). Due to the difficulties in fundraising in Israel and abroad, these centers worked on a voluntary basis only, and lasted very few years.

In 1978, during the First Feminist Conference, for the first time lesbian women made themselves heard together, some of whom were among the leaders of the feminist movement throughout the country. National feminist conferences continued to convene regularly once a year until 1986, and one of their goals was to also include women from the geographical-political-economic periphery in the feminist discourse and activity. In the third conference, held in 1980, the profound controversy characterizing the movement in Israel once again came into play. Some of the participants asked that the conference would accept a resolution determining that they "express solidarity with our Palestinian sisters in the Occupied Territories in their struggle as women for social equality and as Palestinians against the occupying regime..."⁷ The opposition to this statement was overwhelming and loud, and the conference was dispersed.

"At the same time as the women centers that operated during the late seventies and early eighties were shutting down, more and more women began to be active in organizations that provided assistance to women suffering from violence directed against them. The radical feminism which sprouted in the seventies in Israel, made way to the liberal feminism of the eighties and the women's Peace Movement that started forming in 1982, as the Lebanon War started".⁸

The arguments that existed then and are also present today in the feminist movement in Israel might, in generalization, be classified into three categories. A central ideological dispute revolved around the relationship with official politics and the issue of activity external to the establishment or rather from within it. In another political level, the disagreement had to do with the attitude towards Israeli occupation of the Territories and the discrimination of the Palestinian people. An additional argument referred to the attitude toward lesbian women and their position in the feminist movement.

During the 1990s, and more forcefully in the late nineties, Mizrahi feminism began sounding its clear voice, challenging the then conventional feminist definitions based on the identity of a uniform universal feminine identity. The Mizrahi feminists suggested that the main focus of the feminist field in Israel should

be routed from promoting empowered women to senior positions in politics and business, to activity with and for weakened women from the geographic, ethnic, economic and social periphery in Israel. Mizrahi feminism changed the outlook of most of the feminist field. While until then the vision turned mostly upward, to the glass ceiling barring the progress of women, it was now turning sideways, to the women being marginalized. These are the women who face lives of economic deprivation, unemployment, low waged employment devoid of social benefits and who cave under the burden of cultural-national-ethnic-economic occupation in all aspects of their lives. The Mizrahi feminism therefore claimed visibility to this immense public of women, who, according to its outlook, are transparent in the eyes of both the public and the feminist field.

“Mizrahi feminism is a phrase that the use of which is constantly spreading to describe the aspirations of Mizrahi women to broaden the Israeli feminist discourse. Mizrahi feminism considers Israeli feminism to be a faction promoting gender equality and human rights for all women from a universal point of view. According to this approach, there is no distinction between women, and they all share one common denominator – that of being women. Class and economic distinctions or cultural differences disappear by this point of view, also erasing the relationship of hegemony and oppression derived from such differences. On this background, Mizrahi feminism aspires to expand the feminist struggle for the empowerment of Mizrahi women and women who live and work in contexts of Israeli cultures and environment”.⁹

Alongside the demand for recognition of different fundamental feminist identities, of varied life realities of women and of the oppression also rooted in the public of women itself, especially directed from Ashkenazi women toward Mizrahi, immigrant and Palestinian women, in both the theoretical and practical levels a different feminism evolved, rejecting the inherent division of defined identity structures and opposing the politics of identities. These perceptions maintain that there are, in fact, no identities, that fundamental identities are fictitious as we are all complex, changing, flexible, and devoid of one distinguished or pronounced sexuality. This discourse continues today in the feminist, academic and organizational fields as one, and some crown it queer or post-modernist.

The third wave of feminism, which started in the 1990s in Israel, has been trying from its onset to challenge and refrain from the intrinsic definitions the second wave had for “femininity”. These definitions, according to the third wave, mostly assume a uniform universal feminine identity and over-emphasize the experience of the middle-upper class white woman. Post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality is central to the ideology of the third wave. Third wave theories usually include queer theories, awareness of black women, post colonial theories, critique theories, cross national theories, ecological feminism and new feminist thought.

Since the mid-nineties, then, a fight against Eurocentrism (the hegemony of European culture) and Orientalism (the stereotypical image of the “black” oriental as was fixated in Western cultures in general and in Zionism in particular) was added. Following the initiative of Mizrahi, Palestinian and lesbian feminists in Israel, the “Quarters System” was introduced at this time, meant to ensure appropriate representation to the different sectors: Mizrahi, Palestinian-citizens of Israel, Lesbian and Ashkenazi women. The Quarters System, relying on the narrative coined “Politics of Identities”, continues to exist in part in the feminist field, despite the claim of many feminists that it should become extinct, as it excludes many and complex other identities of women in the country and the region. This issue continues to occupy the inter-organizational debate and the discussion between active women in the field.

During the nineties, following the outbreak of the first Intifada in 1988, alongside the establishment of additional women’s organizations working to advance women in politics and assist survivors of violence, feminist peace organizations and joint organizations of Jewish and Palestinian women started operating. The active involvement of Mizrahi, Palestinian and lesbian feminism in the struggle for recognition of the different streams and the entire population of women in the country and the region, succeeded in prioritizing the need to assert the presence of women from all variety of ethnicities, classes, nationalities and cultures in feminist work and leadership and to provide them with representation. Some claim that this recognition remains partial even today. They maintain that many of the women in feminist organizations operating today continue to stand for “feminine unity” and “feminist universalism”, and that heterosexual-Ashkenazi women hold a central presence in the different organizations. Furthermore, some activists in the service providing organization consider the founding of a feminist peace movement a primary reason to the split that occurred between organizations and in the feminist movement as a whole. Some of them suggest that the feminists active in the peace movement prioritize the oppression of Palestinian women foremost, the occupied Palestinian people in the Territories and the Palestinian public enduring oppression and discrimination within Israel, rather than the entire public of women in the country.

The areas of agreement and dispute among different feminist branches, the range of activities both historical and contemporary, and the varied and rich discourse – I find all these also attest to the advantages of the feminist work in Israel. Feminist perceptions favor the multiplicity of narratives versus the singular masculine narrative; promote variety and a range of perceptions and activities, as opposed to the patriarchal value structure based on single value standard and on concentrated and unified power and discourse. Consequently, the conflicts described can also be read as proof of the historic as well as contemporary existence of a dynamic and

fertile feminist field, which insists on expanding and deepening all the time.

Much research was and is being conducted concerning the state of women in Israel today, in the political-economic-social context, and feminist literature in Israel is abundant with such studies. The description of the status of women in Israel today intends to give a general and succinct idea only of the challenges feminist organizations are facing. It should be emphasized that the following data reflects only a partial image of discrimination against women in Israel, does not distinguish between different populations of women nor indicates gaps in all aspects of life between varied groups of women in the population of Israel, but might provide an overall view of the inferior position of women in employment and education as a reflection of the discrimination against them in many aspects of life.

“At the beginning of 2007, 2,616,400 women aged 15 and older were living in Israel. They are 51.3% of the entire population in this age range... Women continue to work more in occupations defined as “feminine” and characterized by low wages. These are professions such as teaching elementary schools and kindergartens, clerical, sales and cleaning positions. In each of these occupations, women are a majority of more than 70% of the work force. A woman earns in average about 63% of the wage of a man. In 2007, 86.2 thousand women worked in hi-tech industries, some 33.8% of all employees in the field... The data tells us that Israeli women are more educated than men: 15.0% of women over 18 finished high school without matriculating, as compared with 20.4% of the men. The difference in favor of women continues in the academic arena, 15.1% of women hold a Bachelors degree compared to 12.3% of men. And women’s advantage continues: 8.0% of women hold a Masters Degree against 7.4% of men. When we reach the doctoral degrees the trend overturns and 0.7% of the women achieve a PhD compared with 1.3% of the men. 3.8% of women aged 18 and higher never studied, in comparison to 1.5% of the men”.¹⁰

Times of Establishment of Feminist Organizations in Israel

The mapping of Jewish feminist organizations and joint Jewish and Palestinian feminist organizations enables the reader to examine closely the development of the feminist field in its entirety, the inter-organizational division, what is common and what is distinctive between organizations and the transformations that transpired in the feminist field since before statehood until today. The review of the organizational field, reflected in the mapping chapter of the report, illuminates the Israeli feminist story, including its development, features, central issues and trends that characterize it during each period.

Before I expand on the central features of the feminist-organizational field in Israel today, and following the brief historical review that described the development of feminism in Israel, I should present the dates in which active organizations were founded. Noting the establishment dates of the organizations will enable the reader, even preceding the analysis, to start investigating the expansion and modification of feminist activity in Israel.

Feminist Organizations Founded Before Statehood

WIZO – Women’s International Zionist Organization, movement of volunteer women for the betterment of society in Israel – 1921

NA’AMAT – Movement of Working Women and Volunteers – 1921

Emunah – National Religious Women’s Organization– 1935

TANDI – Movement of Jewish and Arab Democratic Women for Israel – 1948

Second Wave Feminist Organizations

L. O. – Combat Violence against Women – 1977

Shelters for Battered Women – starting from 1977

Rape Crisis Centers in Israel – starting from 1978

Isha L’Isha – Haifa Feminist Center – 1983

The Israel Women’s Network – 1984

LACHEN – For the Promotion of Women’s Basketball and Sports – 1985

Women in Black – To End Israeli Occupation of the Territories – 1988

Women’s Organization for Political Prisoners – 1988

The Counseling Center for Women – 1988

SHIN – The Israeli Movement for Equal Representation of Women – 1989

Third Wave Feminist Organizations

The distinction between the second and third wave is for the purposes of this report, while other divisions no less valid are possible. It should be emphasized that the distinction between organizations by year of establishment and the sharp

chronological division between the second wave and organizations founded during the third wave, since 1990, might not do justice with the goals and contents of previously founded organizations.

There are organizations among those established in the first and second wave that changed or expanded their activities. As an example, some organizations of the second wave were involved mostly in the promotion of women to senior positions in institutionalized politics and expanded their activity to include economic empowerment of women in the periphery, work with youth at risk and more. In comparison, some organizations formed in the first or second wave focused mostly on community work and field activity, and in recent years have expanded their endeavors to include provision of individual services. These shall be elaborated on further.

Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel – 1990

Nisan – Young Women Leaders, To Promote Leadership among Jewish and Arab Girls and Women – 1994

Bat Shalom: Women with a Vision for a Just Peace – 1994

Kol Ha'Isha – The Jerusalem Women's Center – 1994

One in Nine – Women for Women with Cancer – 1994

Mavoi Satum (Dead End) – For *Agunot* and *Mesoravot Get* (women whose husbands are unable or unwilling to grant them a Jewish divorce) – 1995

Yad L'Isha – The Max Morrison Legal Aid Center and Hotline for Women – 1995

Economic Empowerment for Women – 1997

Kolech (Your Voice) – Religious Women's Forum – 1998

New Family – Advancing Family Rights in Israel – 1998

New Profile – Movement for the Civil-ization of Society in Israel – 1998

Achoti (My Sister) Movement for Women in Israel – 1998

Women's Parliament – for Discussion and Debate between Different Groups of Women - 1999

Machon Toda'a – Awareness Center – Research of Prostitution and Human Trafficking in Israel and Worldwide – 2000

GRANIT – Association for Aid to Women Before, During and After Divorce Proceedings – 2000

WE Power – Women's Electoral Power – 2000

Coalition of Women for Peace – To End Occupation and for Economic-Social-Gender Justice – 2000

Itach-Ma'aki (With You) – Women Lawyers for Social Justice – 2001

Rackman Center – The Ruth and Emanuel Rackman Center for the Advancement of Women's Status – 2001

Machsom Watch – Women against Occupation and For Human Rights – 2001

Community of Learning Women – To Construct a Feminist Jewish-Palestinian

Community in the Periphery – 2002

Task Force on Human Trafficking – 2002

The Women's Court – Space for the Empowerment of Weakened Arab, Immigrant and Jewish Girls – 2003

Supportive Community – Women's Business Development Center – 2003

El Halev (To the Heart) – Israel Women's Martial Arts Federation – 2003

Center for Women's Justice – To Find Solutions for Jewish Women Seeking Divorce – 2004

The International Women's Commission – For a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace – 2005

Mahut (Essence) Center – Information, Guidance and Employment for Women – 2005

Feminist House – Space for Discussion and Learning for Women – 2005

Women and Their Bodies – Publishing Alternative Medical information on Women's Health and Bodies – 2005

NETTA – Women Advancing their Career – To Promote the Advancement of Women in the Workplace to Managerial Positions – 2006

Bat Zafon – For Peace and Equality – To Eliminate Discrimination against Palestinians – 2007

Women's Spirit – Financial Independence for Women Victims of Violence – 2007

Tmura – The Antidiscrimination Legal Center – 2007

The chapter of the report which maps the feminist organizations, also includes the **Masorti (Conservative) Movement in Israel**, which, although established in 1979, I ascribe its activity for the advancement and equality of women in religion to the third wave, due to the significant expansion of its activity on this issue in recent years.

CHAPTER THREE

Activity Areas of Feminist Organizations in Israel

Detailing the years of establishment of feminist organizations reflects the significant increase in number of organizations and the extent of activity in this field. Before I go into the analysis of goals and activity features of the organizations, I will point out that the significant growth in number attests to the expansion into new domains of action, as well as more diversity in feminist perceptions and practices. The substantial rise further indicates a growing demand of the feminist field to respond to the needs of a broader population of women, from a variety of nationalities, classes, ethnicities, cultures and identities. The third wave, therefore, is primarily characterized by the acknowledgement of many feminists that there are differences in features, needs, goals and desires of groups of women in the population, and that one of the roles of the field is to address this variety and to amplify the visibility of different populations of women and the awareness to their existence and needs.

“Feminism in Israel was never a diagnosed and defined movement, but rather a collection of organizations, activities, coalitions and ideas... The struggle for social change is multidimensional and complex, and should not only consider one type of oppression. Much work was done throughout the years within the women’s movements in the feminist organizations, which enabled a process of understanding the complexities and social struggles. Feminism is a broad and winding concept that allows for many types of insights. Therefore it was important for all of us to insist on providing the tools that will lead to the recognition of the presence and meaning of the different types of oppression. It is no longer enough to just be women; women can also be part of an oppressive group. We can suffer ourselves from oppression and belong to an oppressive group at the same time. The situation had to be dismantled in order to create a new reality.”¹¹

“The word ‘we’ has a long history in the feminist movement in the West, and in the sixties and seventies it had a revolutionary meaning... Many of the participants in awareness raising groups realized that they had similar experiences, and thus had

the insight that the 'personal is political'. Experiences that society and environment define as personal are in fact a political expression of our condition as women in a patriarchal society. The 'personal is political' generated a sense of sisterhood, which was supposed to serve as an opposing strategy to the patriarchal 'divide and rule', and the term "Sisterhood is Powerful" was coined. During the seventies in the United States, a charter was written by the Women's Movement (which was also translated into Hebrew), in which every sentence opened with the words 'Because we are women'... and continued in describing situations that are familiar to many women, such as: 'we make less money than men', 'we get raped' and so forth.

But what is that 'we'? "...In the process of our talking and writing together, we could see that the differences between us do not allow us to speak in one voice... There is no symmetry between the types of 'we', because there are power disparities between the women. ...The concept 'women', much like the word 'we', is general, and ignores an existing situation in which relationships between women from different groups are structured in a hierarchal manner and are defined by a balance of powers".¹²

The shift from perception and activity based mainly on universal feminism, to different perceptions, identities, goals and activity areas, therefore characterizes the third wave of feminism in Israel. Even if some might argue that there is still Jewish Ashkenazi hegemony in the feminist field in Israel, which claims feminine unity and asserts the necessity of unity between women in fighting the general-masculine oppression, then the dramatic increase in the number of organizations, the differences between them and the increasing visibility of the critique against the claim for uniformity of action, values and lingo, attest to the shift that has transpired in this field.

The characteristics and activities of the organizations may be categorized as follows (presented in the Hebrew alphabetical order)*:

Violence Against Women

Main activities: assistance to survivors of violence; promotion of legislation; judicial battles; and on-the-field activity against the phenomenon. Organizations focusing on this issue are: the Association of Rape Crisis Centers (which incorporates 9 Crisis Centers across the country), L.O. – Combat Violence against Women, Counseling Center for Women and 14 Shelters for Battered Women. Organizations with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity: Achoti Movement, Itach-Ma'aki, Emunah, Isha L'Isha, WIZO, Tmura Center, NA'AMAT, Women and Their Bodies, Women's Parliament, Coalition of Women for Peace, Kol Ha'Isha, Kolech, Women's Spirit, the Israel Women's Network.

* Translator's note: The categories in this section and the names of organizations within them were listed in the original Hebrew document by alphabetical order. The original order was kept in the English version.

Ethnic-Class Based Discrimination

Main activities: legal assistance; personal and economic empowerment; joint community activity for weakened women from different population groups; and active protest against racial discrimination in Israel. Organizations that focus on the issue: Achoti, Tmura Center. Organizations with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity: Isha L'Isha, Women's Court, Community of Learning Women, Coalition of Women for Peace, Kol Ha'Isha.

Body, Health and Women's Sports

Main activities: mental support for women with breast cancer; gathering and dissemination of alternative information about the bodies and health of women; promotion of women's sports and amplification of its media visibility; and conveying self defense skills to women. Organizations focusing on the issue: One in Nine, El Halev, LACHEN, Women and Their Bodies. Organizations with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity: Isha L'Isha, Feminist House.

Raising Feminist Awareness

Main activities: creation and operation of spaces for women to study; mutual empowerment and sharing of distresses, ideas and initiatives to establish a local and national feminist community. Organizations focusing on the issue: Feminist House. Organizations with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity: Achoti, Isha L'Isha, Women' Parliament, Community of Learning Women, Coalition of Women for Peace, Kol Ha'Isha, The Israel Women's Network.

Economic Empowerment of Women

Main activities: personal and collective economic empowerment in aspects of development, operation and accompaniment of small businesses; placement of paid employment; acquiring education and professional skills. The activity is mostly undertaken with and for women from the geographic-economic-social periphery, including Palestinian, Mizrahi, immigrant and violence surviving girls and women. There are organizations that focus on populations of strengthened women in the center in order to promote them to senior managerial positions or to advance them economically to the middle class and upward. Organizations focusing on economic empowerment of women: Economic Empowerment for Women, Mahut Center, Netta, Supportive Community, Women's Spirit. Organizations with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity: Itach-Ma'aki, Achoti, Isha L'Isha, Women's Court, WIZO, Rackman Center, NA'AMAT, Community of studying Women, Kol Ha'Isha, Women's Network.

Empowerment of Young Women

Main activities: joint community work with young Palestinian and Jewish women, economic empowerment for weakened young women and acquiring tools and work skills. Organizations focusing on the issue: Women's Court, Nisan.

Prostitution and Trafficking in Women

Main activities: individual and legal assistance to victims; collection and dissemination of information about the phenomenon in Israel and exerting public pressure on decision making levels in Israel and around the world to eradicate the phenomenon, including the promotion of legislation on the issue. Organizations focusing on the issue: Machon Toda'a, Task Force on Human Trafficking. Organizations with this issue as one of their aspects of activity: Achoti, Isha L'Isha, Women's Parliament, The Israel Women's Network.

Occupation and Militarism

Main activities: individual and legal assistance to youth before their army conscription and support of conscientious objectors; activity to end Israeli occupation of the Territories and eradication of discrimination against the Palestinian population in Israel and the Territories; feminization of the Peace Movement in Israel; raising awareness to the fight against occupation amongst youth; struggle against the violation of human rights of Palestinians in roadblocks and military courts and of female political prisoners; exerting pressure on decision making levels in Israel and around the world to include women in peace negotiations; attaining just peace, based on egalitarian-feminist values. Organizations focusing on the issue: Bat Shalom, Bat Zafon, Machsom Watch, The International Women's Commission, Women in Black, Women's Organization for Political Prisoners, New Profile, Coalition of Women for Peace. Organizations with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity: Achoti, Isha L'Isha, Nisan, Community of Learning Women, TANDI.

Leadership and Women's Representation in Politics

Main activities: supporting women and promoting them to position of public influence; social-political leadership workshops for Jewish and Palestinian girls and women in Israel; public parliament for speakers from different communities, identities and population groups. Organizations focusing on the issue: WE Power, Women's Parliament, SHIN. Organization with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity (mostly not actively promoting women for political institutions, but rather advancing the leadership of community women): Achoti, Itach-Ma'aki, Emunah, Isha L'Isha, WIZO, NA'AMAT, The International Women's Commission, The Israel Women's Network.

Women's Status and Rights in Jewish Religion an Law (*Halacha*)

Main activities: individual, mental and legal assistance to women in the process of divorce, *Agunot and Mesoravot Get* (refused a Jewish divorce decree); active legal battle against the control of rabbinical courts on the issue of divorce in Israel; collection and distribution of ongoing information about the legal status of women in Jewish Law (*Halacha*) and decisions made by rabbinical courts harming women; lobbying the Knesset; raising awareness to the existence of “new families” and distribution of legal information on the possibilities of starting families in structures unacceptable by Jewish Law; raising feminist awareness among religions women and their promotion to positions of influence; fighting violence against women in the religious community. Organizations focusing on the issue: Emunah, Granit, The Masorti (Conservative) Movement in Israel, Yad L'Isha, Mavoi Satum, New Family, Rackman Center, Center for Women's Justice, Kolech. Organizations with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity: WIZO, NA'AMAT

Mizrahi Feminism

Main activities: active and continuous protest against the discrimination and oppression of Mizrahi women in Israel, groups for social-economic empowerment of women from excluded communities, economic cooperatives for women of Ethiopian origin and Palestinian women, creating and raising the visibility of Mizrahi art and culture, legal aid and representation, assistance in setting up independent organizations of Mizrahi women's groups and new immigrants from African countries. Organizations focusing on this issue are: Achoti, Tmura Center. Organizations with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity: Itach-Ma'aki, Isha L'Isha, Women's Court, Women's Parliament, Community of Learning Women.

Jewish-Palestinian Partnership

Main activities: the development of solidarity between Jewish and Palestinian girls and women in Israel; creating future Jewish and Palestinian women community leaders; creating active communities of weakened Jewish and Palestinian women; joint protest activity calling to end the occupation, for equal rights and the abolition of discrimination; generating partnership with women in the Occupied Territories and providing assistance for them with food, medicine and more. The organizations whose main identity is a symmetric partnership between Jewish and Palestinian women in Israel both within the staff and the organization's activities are: Community of Learning Women, TANDI. Organizations basing their activity on ideological partnership between Jewish and Palestinian women in Israel, without a symmetrical division of staff and activity: Achoti, Isha L'Isha, Bat Shalom, Bat Zafon, Nisan, Women in Black, Women's Organizations for Political Prisoners, Coalition of Women for Peace. It should be emphasized that in mid 2008, the structure of the Coalition of Women for Peace was

altered, and a Jewish woman and a Palestinian woman were selected to coordinate the organization jointly. Organizations with this issue as one of the aspects of their activity: Women's Court, The International Women's Commission, Women's Parliament.

Multi-Issue Organizations

Activity on varied issues including: operating daycare centers and women's clubs; economic empowerment; promotion of women's leadership; lobbying and promotion of legislation; individual assistance, mental and legal; promotion of culture and art by women; providing comprehensive information on women's rights from a variety of aspects. Organizations operating in such formats: Achoti, Emunah, Isha L'Isha, WIZO, NA'AMAT, Kol Ha'Isha, The Israel Women's Network. It should be emphasized that the organizations Achoti, Isha L'Isha in Haifa and Kol Ha'Isha in Jerusalem also focus on the creation of communities of women in the areas of their activities.

Community-Social Movements

These movements differ from the multi-issue organizations by focusing on the formation of communities of women from varied classes, ethnicities, nationalities and cultures. They focus on communal feminist activities and deal less with individual assistance and the work of a staff providing professional knowledge to a public of consumers. The activity includes a struggle against the discrimination of women in all aspects of their lives, insisting on the linkage between the different types of discrimination, attaining visibility to culture and art of weakened women, writing and distribution of reports and position papers and so forth. Movements operating in this format: Achoti, Isha L'Isha. The Coalition of Women for Peace works in a similar format regarding anything relevant to the struggle against the discrimination of women in all areas of their lives, emphasizing the linkage between the different types of discriminations and focusing on protest activity rather than in providing individual services.

While the categorization of organizations by clear-cut themes may be beneficial for the distinction between organizations and different areas of activity, it does not always accurately match the activity character of the organizations. For example, some of the organizations integrate social and community activity with legal assistance provided by experts. Others indeed focus on the struggle against the Israeli occupation and the discrimination against Palestinian women, but their activity also includes efforts for social-economic justice for women and struggle against sexual violence. The categorization, both in mapping the organizations and in analyzing the organizational field, might therefore transgress against the feminist perception, which attempts to implement its principles through varied activities and by fighting the oppression, which is apparent in different aspects. Moreover,

the activity of some of the organizations is not only project based, but leaves a lot of space for process-based and communal work, which cannot be given only one title, nor be defined by accurate indicators of objectives and results. For example, some of the organizations serve as open and safe houses for women, who meet, share, raise issues for discussion, create social networks and so forth. This activity cannot be quantified in terms of its scope, time resources and required funding, nor in terms of results, which are for the most part not immediate and cannot be circumscribed by time of beginning and end. This issue will be discussed further in the sub-chapter addressing the growing trend of professionalization and specialization in the feminist-organizational field and the complex relationship between organizations and foundations and other sources of funding.

Where are the Lesbian Organizations?

Notably absent from this list are Jewish lesbian organizations and joint lesbian organizations for Jews and Palestinians. Up until about two years ago, KLAF (“Feminist Lesbian Community”) operated in the feminist field, and presently there is a renewed attempt to revive its activity. The organization was founded in 1987 following the initiative of a group of lesbian women who were among the leaders of the feminist struggle in Israel. The organization defined its central goal as fighting for freedom and equal rights for any lesbian whoever she might be, irrespective of ethnic or religious background. Although the organization started working with a group of lesbian activists affiliated with the Israeli Left, it intended to unite all lesbian women be their political view what it may, as it was the only existing organization at that time. Due to the nature of the activity focusing among other issues on raising feminist-lesbian awareness, and in light of the fact that the lesbians involved in the effort to bring about social change belonged primarily to the Left, its characteristic was political-feminist and this is how most of its activists identified themselves. A feeling prevailed within the organization that political openness to women with other stances would not harm the radical perceived ideological principles of equal rights and liberty for all.

The organization emerged from an ideological feminist position with a clear goal to offer space for lesbian political activity. In its last years of operation it moved on to do mostly non-political social activities and it further provided individual support to girls and women before and after “coming out”. The organization stopped operating, among other reasons, due to financial debts and difficulties in raising funds to support the continuation of activity.

Some maintain that one of the central reasons for its closing down was the shift from a volunteer based organization to a ‘professional’ one, employing three workers on salary, including a director, without appropriate preparation. A rapid change of the organization’s central features was generated by the attempt to tone down its ideology, to appoint a director whose background was not primarily in feminist activism and to reduce the load of activity weighing on volunteers who were mostly from the feminist group that originally formed the organization. The reasons for ceasing the organization’s operation are yet to be examined. It was suggested that because it aimed at expanding into an umbrella organization suitable for any woman whoever she might be, and to sometimes tone down the ideological shade for the benefit of social events that would appeal also to women who were not politically involved and did not identify themselves as feminists, the messages were blurred until they faded somewhat, both in terms of values and of organization. Some said that this process further deepened the difficulty of sufficient fundraising for the organization, until it could no longer continue paying the wages of its employees or

fund the continuation of activities.

Many of the women who were volunteering for many years tired of activity or retired because they felt the organization drew away from its original valued intents. The core group that led the organization for many years grew smaller, and no substantive core was formed to assemble a new reserve 'supply' of dedicated women as ideologically committed to the political activity as had existed in the past. The attempt to shift the main responsibility from the political nucleus to salaried employees, not all of them sharing the many years of feminist activity, weighed on the continued activity of the organization.

Many attribute the circumstances of the ending of **KLAF's** activities to a broader socio-political trend of denial and exclusion of distinctive feminist-lesbian politics and of cooptation of the lesbian community by the dominant heterosexual society. I will expand on that later on.

In 2002, when **KLAF's** fiscal debts became evident and the activists understood it was in dire straits, a new radical political group grew, known as **Black Laundry**. The group started organizing toward the Gay Pride Parade, aiming to break the party, which was then detached from any political context with the exception of gay rights (mostly Jewish ones), and to charge the parade with political messages that created an affinity between political-social oppression to oppression on the basis of gender. The initiators of **Black Laundry** (who were mostly lesbians but also included transgenders and homosexuals) were leftist activists, some of whom failed to find their place within **KLAF** and wanted to tie the political struggle to end occupation and for social-economic justice to the lesbian-feminist one.

The 2002 Gay Pride Parade is still remembered as a turning point in feminist-lesbian protest in Israel. On the one hand, the protest was tinted by substantial political tone and was awarded enormous exposure in the public and the media, and on the other it marked the beginning of the end of organized and orderly lesbian-feminist activity among the Jewish population in Israel. **Black Laundry** activists, who opposed institutionalization, refused to become a registered *Amutah* and a hierarchal organization. They wanted to continue being based purely on voluntary work, and were unable to sustain their operation. A little over two years ago the group ceased to exist. The busy load of volunteer work on many activists created a relatively rapid fatigue and difficulty arose in creating a long-term feminist mechanism to address internal organizational conflicts.

In 2002 a lesbian-Palestinian organization was formed in Israel, named **Aswat** (Voices). From the onset the organization had incorporated into its messages national and cultural occupation and occupation on the grounds of gender, thus opening the door for Jewish lesbian activists to join events that it initiated, especially once the **Black Laundry** group ceased to operate. **Aswat** offers a framework of activity for Palestinian lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, transgenders, queer and intersex

individuals from Israel and the region. Extending the term Lesbian to additional identity definitions also characterized **Black Laundry** and presently characterizes the claim of many feminist activists, lesbian and transgenders, to grant visibility and recognition to a variety of sexual-gender identities which are not heterosexual.

In 2005 a group of religious Jewish lesbians was formed, named **Bat Kol**. The women active at **Bat Kol** requested to retain their religious identity and at the same time to realize their lives as lesbians, including forming families of two women. **Bat Kol** holds regular meetings and social activities for religious lesbians and numbers about a hundred members at present.

The absence of lesbian organizations from the public Jewish arena has yet to be thoroughly researched, and all that was written thus far is limited and partial. Additionally, the presence of feminist-lesbian women significantly decreased in the staffs of employees and directors of the organizations. In only two of the abovementioned organizations, is the director/coordinator known to be a lesbian. Some of the women who were active in that area have, as mentioned, retired from the political-public field. Political lesbians presently involved in the field of feminist activism found their place as activists in a variety of feminist and social organizations, but most of them do not focus their work on public struggle against the discrimination of gender minorities in the country. As such, the importance formerly attributed to the presence of a lesbian on staff of the organizations and in feminist conferences and events (as part of the Quarters System) had also been reduced. One of the women organizing public feminist debates told me: "I don't relinquish the Quarters System and am meticulous about having representation on stage for a Mizrahi, a Palestinian and an Ashkenazi, but there isn't always a lesbian speaker, because I can't always find someone who wants to speak under that identity".

Some activists ascribe lesbians becoming relatively "transparent" in both the organizational and political levels to the prevailing trend in recent years among what is known as "the Homo-Lesbian Community", and that is the desire to be accepted, so much so as to assimilate into the general public. One of the main banners raised by the community, maybe the major one of all, is the desire to fulfill the right of starting a family like "everyone", to get married and have legal recognition for children of non heterosexual parents. The attempt to actualize these rights is mostly undertaken by legal means, court petitions and endeavors to recruit support in the Knesset. In that respect, the main ambition to "be absorbed" by the general public and to receive the rights imparted to it, severed the sequence of unique political-lesbian identity and the wish to insist on discernible identities from the dominant ones. In Israel too, much like in the United States, the baby boom phenomenon intensified among lesbian women, and many of them started raising families and focusing on the need to attain the pertinent rights. From a political minority that was working together

for feminist social activity, part of the lesbian public then became indistinct and nonspecific, and for this very reason was accepted by broader avenues of the Jewish public in Israel. This is the place to emphasize that the women who led the lesbian-feminist field were in large part Ashkenazi and residents of the big cities.

Toward the national feminist conference held in the end of 2008, a new awakening of lesbian and transgender feminism occurred in the inter-organizational discussions that preceded it. Representatives of the organizations that took part in the preparation for the conference agreed there should be a discussion space about lesbian and transgender feminism and its place in the feminist field in Israel. For the first time, most representatives acceded to the demand of opening the conference, including its panels and workshops, to an active presence of transgender feminists too. Some speculate that this conference has stabilized and repositioned the lesbian “quarter”, which had become transparent in the feminist field in recent years, and would revive the recognition that feminism requires visible presence of the discourse, protest and activity of political gender minorities.

CHAPTER FOUR

Between Individual Services and Public Activism

The term Public Activism refers to the description of actions of organizations focusing mostly on protest and opposition activity in the public sphere, by means of demonstrations, pickets, gatherings and processions and exerting civic and media pressure on decision making levels. Other organizations focus mainly on providing individual assistance and support services within the private-organizational sphere. They all intend to achieve social change through their activities by implementing different strategies, some of which integrate into one another in their work, including: service providing, feminist education, mobilizing public opinion and decision makers and public opposition. Most organizations combine between the types of activity, but the center of gravity changes from one organization to the next, in accordance with its identity and goals.

The interviews with the organization representatives, along with the review and analysis of organizational identity, vision, goals and activities, have raised to the surface a central trend of professionalization in the organizational-feminist field. From different perceptions that exist with regard to the meaning of the term professionalism and professionalization, I will generalize and claim that this trend is reflected through the following characteristics: multiplicity of individual service providing organizations, the concentration of a significant part of feminist work at the hands of salaried women in organizations, the academization of staff, the constantly expanding divide between paid professionals and their target public, the focus on the execution of projects with clear objectives and indicators of success, thematic work in the context of projects, and reduced time and effort invested in feminist activity outside of funded projects.

During the process of interviews with the organization representatives, a dispute clearly rose to the surface with regard to this trend, necessitating further discussion and exploration. Before I delve into the thick of things, I will present the main issues in dispute.

Among the representatives, some maintained that the feminist-organizational

field in Israel is in the process of professionalization, which duplicates a preexisting social disparity between service providers, who are the paid personnel of the organizations, and the target public, who are the service receivers. According to this assertion, the rapid march of the feminist-organizational field towards academization and professional specialization, based on the distinction between knowledgeable employees and the lesser informed target audiences, duplicates a patriarchal hierarchy between different population groups. By this approach, the social inequality is partially reproduced into the structure and character of activity of some of the feminist organizations. The organizations, wishing to empower varied populations of women, at times adopt the vertical range that characterizes social classification between expert women and women in need, between service providers and its recipients. The claim is that depositing most of the feminist work in the hands of professional salaried women in the organizations, limits the ability to mobilize toward feminist perceptions and activities amongst different populations which are geographically, socially and economically distant from the organizational center.

The target populations of these organizations include, amongst others: women coping with poverty, women trapped in prostitution, women targeted by racial discrimination, *Agunot* and *Mesoravot Get*, victims and survivors of sexual violence, victims and survivors of physical violence, women with no acknowledged education and so-forth. Most of the women described and perceived as target populations are Mizrahi, immigrant, Palestinian and poor women. On the other side are the “service experts”, most of whom are Ashkenazi-Jewish women from a social class and standing that enables them to acquire academic education and to become knowledgeable in a sense that is socially acknowledged (in contrast to the knowledge of many weakened women that is not recognized as education and not accepted as relevant professional skills or “valued” in the employment market) and therefore allows them to progress in the ranks of professional hierarchy. This position maintains, then, that the process of professionalism in organizations has difficulty presenting a clear alternative to the socio-gender disparity in Israel, also as it is partly based on hierarchal social division and a distinction between worthy and recognized knowledge to knowledge which is devoid of public estimation and recognition.

Opposing these claims, there were representatives of other organizations who claimed that the increased trend of professional feminism enables more effective assistance to the target public and allows the service providers to specialize and offer a higher level of support and empowerment to the service receivers. They suggest that specialization raises the chance of the target population to be freed from the weakened and marginalized social and economic status in a measurable and significant way. According to this reasoning, it is not the distinction between

women of certain qualifications and those lacking them which is pivotal, but rather the degree of professional ability of the organizations to help other women bring to light their strength and skills from within them and translate them into professional and emotional qualifications that would enable them to integrate into society and be freed from personal-economic-social oppression toward them.

The arguments in support of professional feminism arose mainly by organizations focusing on providing services in different issues. According to them, activity based on providing services necessitates expertise and thematic continual work with the target populations, for them to succeed in extricating themselves from the social muddy bottom and transparency in which they find themselves.

There were also those who maintained that a contradiction between these two positions is not imperative. Professional feminism, they claim, can be based on values acknowledging equality between women, be aware of the social-national-economical discrimination that oppresses women, and alongside reciprocal professional help for weakened women could also offer communication between the different groups of women, a dialogue free of condescension. According to this outlook, there is no reason for the helpers and empowerers to be conceived as “superior” to others, rather than as specifically skilled to support other women and to assist them in recognizing their own abilities.

This controversy, as described by the representatives of the various organizations, reflects only one type of discourse amid many being discussed among the activists. The critique does not necessarily attest to a rift preventing collaboration, and the following chapter will demonstrate this, by addressing the expanding trend of forming coalitions and joint activities by different organizations. Both the criticizers of the implications of professionalization and those opposing such criticism believe there should be a place and space for all types of activity, and that the versatility in activities and issues addressed by the organizations is welcome. In their opinions, the outstanding issue refers mostly to the weight attributed in the feminist field to personal services activities and the question of how do they expect the public work of a broad feminist movement to grow and make an impact on all of society and change the patriarchal-social structure that they all oppose, if they stay within the existing organizational divisions and focus on providing services.

It should be emphasized that in interviews with the organization representatives, the theme of professionalization was merely one of the subjects discussed, and presenting the issue in a separate category might draw too narrow a picture of the complex array of relationships between the many organizations and the women active in them. And yet I thought it right to present the different views on this particular matter because of its centrality in the ongoing discussion in the field of feminist organizations at present.

Among the 46 organizations reviewed in the mapping chapter, 30 deal mostly

in empowerment and the provision of professional assistance and aid services. 18 of them were established since 1995. To these 30 organizations, 9 Rape Crisis Centers and 14 Shelters for Battered Women should be added, which are not mentioned separately in the mapping chapter. De-facto, there are 53 organizations in the feminist field focusing on providing individual services, compared with 16 organizations focusing on other modes of work. Most of the budget in the feminist field goes to the service providing organizations, partly because of the high cost of providing support and empowerment services. In most organizations, providing professional services is not the organization's only activity but its central one. The majority of these organizations perceive the services not as a target in itself, but also as a significant means for social change.

Even in organizations established before 1995, a growing professionalization trend is apparent, widening the network of expert and professional women in the organization and increasing the number of academic employees. The professional services are provided, among others, by lawyers, social workers, psychologists and women who underwent further professional training within the organization. In most of these organizations, there is preference to those of academic education and professional specialization when hiring for a paid position.

Most organizations that focus their work on active feminist opposition in the public and community space are engaged mainly in activity against the Israeli occupation, against the discrimination of Palestinians, and/or against the discrimination of Mizrahi women in society. Five of these organizations are communal in nature and focus on the establishment of feminist communities. Seven of the 46 organizations operate with no director or coordinator, and among the directors/coordinators in the other 39 organizations, only four are Mizrahi women, all of whom are from feminist-community organizations.

The distinction between professional women and target audiences is reflected also by the dominant presence of "experts" as speakers in many public events and feminist conferences. Even if there is general feminist recognition that any woman is negatively affected by some kind of social-gender violence, yet the common language distinguishing between the professional woman and the service receiver-weakened-survivor, detracts from this knowledge and accentuates rather the social classification between different population groups. These linguistic differentiations create one-dimensional identity distinctions, which not only distinguish between different populations of women, but also join the common hierarchal perception that considers victims and survivors of violence to be weak, passive and needy women. This trend weakens the ability to generate a comprehensive feminist-social change that eliminates patriarchal divisions, reduces the active solidarity between women from different population groups and weakens the ability of public mobilizations by the feminist-organizational field.

It could be claimed that most of the work within the organizations themselves and the diminished activity of a broad feminist movement that accentuates identification and solidarity with regard to issues that are common to a wide and diverse range of women, adds to the creation and affixation of these hierarchal distinctions. Joint feminist work, such as the public campaigns conducted by organizations together in recent years, served as testimony that dichotomies between women can be blurred and that extensive public mobilization is made possible when they protest and act together to generate alternatives to existing policies.

Many service organizations adhere, as mentioned, to the perception that effective services, which have the ability to generate real change to the condition of the service receiver, necessitate specialized professional knowledge in the relevant field. Specialization in one or few issues is characteristic to most organizations of different types. At times, a critical claim is directed at them that specialization prevents them from integrating opposition to the different types of women's oppression into their work and weakens additional political minority groups in the population. Demarcation of social change to a particular issue, characteristic of some of the organizations, weakens the capability of the feminist field to generate joint activism intending to create alternatives, leverage public mobilization and change the face of patriarchal society with its abundant manufactured conquests. According to this claim, the multitude of organizations tends to minimize the comprehensive feminist struggle and continuous creation of a broad feminist movement. A claim was made more than once by feminist peace organizations, that in demonstrations against the occupation of the Territories and against the oppression of Palestinians in Israel, only few activists from the professional service organizations attend. Interviewees in these organizations maintain that it is no wonder that among activists of the service organization are also women identified with the political right or center, and thus while they indeed express objection to one type of violence against women, they support or ignore another type of violence. The inter-organizational division, they assert, also expresses a cognitive split, which disassociates remote types of occupations, either territorially or nationally distant, from closer types of occupation such as sexual and economic violence. Activity opposing the latter is more acceptable by the Jewish public in Israel. There are some of the organizations focusing on the struggle against violence towards women, who profess that a minority of women from the peace movements participates in their activities, and that their focus on gender-national occupation and the oppression of Palestinian women prevents many of them from partaking continuously in the activities of these organizations.

The provision of professional services obligates some of the organizations to collaborate with the establishment. Organizations that operate shelters for battered women, assist survivors of sexual violence, provide mental and legal services for

Agunot and *Mesoravot Get*, work for economic empowerment and so forth, often cooperate with government and municipal institutions, by choice or necessity. Sometimes the cooperation with the establishment is inevitable due to the high budget necessary for the operation of some of the services, including the need for buildings and equipment, but sometimes it results from the belief that cooperation with the establishment might generate change and lead to broader public recognition in the needs of women and to the discrimination still existing against them in different aspects of life. Among the organization representatives were women who said that accepting budgets and services from the establishment forced them to be “nice”, and that at times, because of the connection with the establishment they had difficulty to come out in evident protest against one governmental policy or another. Yet they also claimed that the price they pay is lower than the benefits of the partnership.

Needless to say, a significant number of the activists in feminist organizations focusing on opposition and protest criticize this cooperation. Some of the representatives argue that it is mostly not about partnership with the establishment or influencing it, but rather assimilating into it, and as a result the organization is denied the ability to speak and act openly against the governmental and institutional policies, which are the weakening factor of the target publics of the “professional” organizations. They maintain that using one hand the organization assists those harmed by governmental policies in Israel that weaken women in all aspects of their lives, and with the other it shakes the hand of the government, that funds some of the activity and thus clears its conscience and relieves itself of responsibility. One of the prominent examples is the government’s shirking of responsibility to the personal and economic security of residents of Northern Israel during the Second Lebanon War. The different NGOs, including women’s organizations, were the ones caring for the needs of residents of the North – they distributed food, provided mental health, secured national insurance allowances for women and so forth. Some claim that among other things, the government evades its responsibility for the welfare of its residents because the different *Amutot* take upon themselves roles that the State should fulfill. It was further argued that it is rather the services and charity work of different *Amutot* that conceals or minimizes the visibility of the massive damage to different populations resulting from government policies. In this case, the State emerges exempt not only from responsibility to the welfare and safety of its residents, but also from active public opposition which might have risen to the surface had the needs of the harmed populations not been met by the *Amutot*.

“The extent of participation of non governmental bodies in the provision of welfare services can also be assessed from the data for 2004 published by the State Comptroller, showing that central departments of the Ministry of Welfare allocate almost their entire budgets to purchasing services from NGOs. 96% of the

budget of the Department of Personal and Social Services, and 93% of the budget of the Rehabilitation Department were allotted in 2004 to acquiring services from NGOs.”¹³

In contrast to these, representatives of professional feminist organization asserted that it is actually the feminist opposition activity in public space, for the most part resisting the trend of professionalization which does not substantially contribute to strengthening feminist issues and struggles. According to them, organizations that focus on activist opposition tend to ignore the immediate need of many women to alter their current situations and are busy with street protest or political conferences, the participation in which is limited only to those already “convinced”, and not recruiting the women troubled by day-to-day survival and the struggle with basic hardships. This approach suggests that it is in fact activist feminism that transgresses in condescension, because it speaks on behalf of many populations of women who are not in practice partner to their struggle, does not offer realistic solutions to oppression and violence and suffices with ideals of grand social change in an unforeseeable future, which contributes nothing to change the tangible reality of the lives of women at present.

An additional claim made by the organization representatives, was that the opposition to professionalization and methodology in working around distinguished and defined issues, might generate disorder and lack of inner focus in the organizational activity, rapid and unsystematic shift from one activity to another, dissipation to activities on many issues that creates a lack of effectiveness. Interviewees claimed that within these activist organizations, the load of activity, the multitude of work issues and their varying contents, causes them at times to work too little on too many issues. The multiplicity of struggle issues does not necessarily indicate prosperity of work or its effectiveness, but might generate a lack of focus with the possible results of “grasp all lose all”. In professional organizations successes can be evaluated, for instance, by the number of women whose salaries increased, found paying jobs, opened independent businesses or entered a life of work and society after a period of isolation and distress resulting from violence. On the other hand, with organizations based on protest or community activity and public opposition, it is harder to gauge successes and to clearly estimate the level of effectiveness of activity.

Many of the interviewees of professional feminist organizations consider the focusing on protest activity a type of privilege in comparison with the enormous emotional and practical investment required of them when providing personal support and individual empowerment. The interviewees maintained that work focusing on protest events and public gatherings, in fact evades the burden of daily face to face encounter with the survivor and the abuse, and that investment on the political rather distances the personal from both their consciousness and their field

of vision. The absence of an unmediated encounter with the violence close to them and the dedication to protest, against the occupation of the Territories, for example, leaves the oppression an arm's length away from really touching the lives and souls of survivors of all types of violence. According to this perception, activists in these organizations suffice in opposition and protest which is not daily and constant, which is infinitely easier than daily support of hundreds of women survivors of violence, who are in need of tangible aid, identification and attentiveness to their hardship. The ones involved mostly in public opposition don't need to compromise their values, a compromise which is inevitable when you need to help a woman on site to escape from her abusive husband, to find a job, to open a small business, to release from mental and existential distress due to violence, etc. It is easier, they say, to oppose the establishment when you don't need to meet a particular woman and provide her with services that at times necessitates cooperation with the institutions of a government you oppose. The feminist protest activity is therefore the privilege of believing in absolute social justice, not compromising the opposition to the establishment nor being dependent on it, and at the same time distancing from close encounter with survivors and the costs of personal injury of women from a variety of populations.

Among the interviewees, some were of the opinion that despite the enhanced trend of professionalization, it is the multiplicity of organizations, the differences in ideological perceptions and the means of their implementation, and the presence of protest activity and feminist communal activity side by side with organizations focusing on providing professional services, that enriches the work. Even among the activists that find conflict between these perceptions, some said that the very awareness to the dilemma is a kind of solution, since feminist activity fluctuates between general opposition to the patriarchal culture and establishment on the one hand, and the desire for women to integrate and become visible in society as it is and to be acknowledged for their claims, needs and rights on the other. The feminist field in its present structure is able to provide professional, individual and group responses for contemporary needs of weakened women, and at the same time embark on political protest activity striving for comprehensive social change. For example, survivors of sexual violence can receive professional individual and group help on hotlines, participate in support groups, receive psychological and other treatments, and can partake in street protests held by the feminist opposition organizations alongside the services organizations. It should be emphasized once more, that some of the organizations focusing mostly on professional help at times initiate field activity, and by no means do they ignore its importance. And conversely as well, among the organizations that are political and communal in nature, some have activities that also include individual professional support provided by "professionals" with expertise in their field of service.

Of all these, a central challenge is unraveling before the feminist-organizational field. This challenge can be briefly marked as the issue of the development and expansion of an un-institutionalized feminist movement, which although it is comprised in part of the organizations, these become in this case the executors of extensive and effective public feminist work. Over the past two years, inter-organizational partnerships started forming concerning shared struggle issues, which succeeded in raising the public impact of the feminist field, and from here hope can be indicated that this move will broaden and intensify with time. An un-institutional feminist movement adds to the effectiveness and visibility of the organizations and does not threaten to unite them or subject them to any umbrella organization. This movement can exist alongside the organizations if they could mobilize not only for the purposes of their own activity and not merely for the need of each to accentuate its advantages in order to procure necessary funding, but also to create a mutual and continual space intended both for the reciprocal dialogue and joint activity.

In a feminist field characterized primarily by the activity of organizations, by focusing on projects, by diminished feminist activity which does not emanate from these projects, by immense competition over resources between organizations, by an almost constant lack of resources and massive workload of employees in the organizations, more strenuous mobilization is required and a joint production of alternatives or means of expanding the existing organizational activity.

Increased Professionalization

There are three main reasons for the intensifying trend of professionalism:

1. The dominance of neo-liberal ideology in society and its implication on the nature in which civil society functions.
2. The influence of neo-liberalism on policies of foundations concerning civil society organizations.
3. Impairment of the perception of ability to generate a substantial change of society in Israel, and a growing need to provide a more immediate response to a growing community of women who are weakened in varied aspects of life.

Neo-Liberal Ideology and its Impact on Civil Society

The neo-liberal ideology is based, among other factors, on giving credence to a free market and the withdrawal of involvement and responsibility of government regarding the residents of the State. This ideology is a continuation of the liberal economic perception that took hold increasingly in the 1970s. Economic liberalism asserts the minimization of the state's involvement in social processes and favors the action of individuals according to their own interests and needs, as a recipe for a balanced and economically prosperous society. These perceptions are based in part on a discourse of civil liberties and rights, and among other issues, advocate the realization of the individual's right for property and freedom in his/her conduct through economic life, for the fulfillment of his/her private interests.

Diminishing government involvement in the economy and the management of public assets means the transfer of companies from public to private ownership, a move of privatization. Thus the government passes on its responsibility, either full or partial, for the supply of public and social services and for public infrastructure to private factors.

This ideology is not confined to the terms of free economy and economic interests, and it endows its influence onto all aspects of political, social, cultural life and onto aspects of welfare, education and health. Privatization is not limited to business systems only, but is expanded to systems of welfare, education, employment, prisons, higher education and culture. In these domains too, the neo-liberal ideology speaks in terms of liberal individual rights, claiming that it is opening the way for citizens to a life of liberty and freedom. Many neo-liberalists maintain that capitalism corresponds with liberty, and it is also compatible with the free competition between political parties and groups contending for government. According to this system, the involvement of the state is minimized to support capital forces that motivate the market, resulting with privatization of the socio-political solidarity between weakened people, including employees who in the past used to unionize in worker committees and professional unions.

The feminist field, partly characterized in its second wave by the creation and activity of feminist communities which were un-institutionalized and in part unregistered as *Amutot*, changed its means of action and features in the third wave. One of the main reasons for this was the damage caused by neo-liberal economy and policy to large populations, which were not connected to the economic and political capital hubs. Mainly damaged by this policy were women, left devoid of support or response from state institutions to their increasing difficulties. The establishment of service providing organization, such as the Rape Crisis Centers, Shelters for Beaten Women, organizations addressing economic empowerment and so forth, was intended to fill the social vacuum created, and to serve as a support system for women weakened further due to the massive control by neo-liberalism over society and the economy, and the continuously increasing shirking of the state of its responsibility for the residents living in the area.

Thus started a privatization process of the political struggle as a whole, and the feminist struggle within it, receiving a constantly expanding characteristic of institutionalized, non-governmental organizations, whose main mission is, as mentioned, to first of all provide services relinquished by the state. Privatization of a movement and a struggle means decentralization and split of a feminist movement into separate registered organizations, focusing on individual services roles and the support of women sacrificed at the now-liberalism alter and defeated by capital forces which are independent of supervision and free of limitation. While the crucial importance of this support should by no means be minimized, nor denying the fact that devoid of services such as these many women would have remained more abandoned and transparent than ever, the high price paid by the feminist movement due to its own privatization process should also be understood.

As mentioned, orderly and stable manner of activity characterized the existence of registered feminist organization, compared with un-institutionalized organizations more characteristic of the nature of activity in the second wave. These organizations are mostly built on teams of professional women working on a salary, who in addition to their feminist perceptions leading them to choose this occupation, further professionalize in their fields and tend to move from one organization to another in order to maintain their livelihood in their field of expertise. In other words, feminist activists today are mostly expert professionals bestowing their knowledge and experience to the organization in which they are employed. Thus feminist activism became a specialized profession, which in any case limited substantially the number of women continuously involved in this field. Most feminist organizations of the third wave are characterized not only by being based on a staff of professional women on salary, but also by means of action defined by concrete goals, clear and defined objectives, set means of action, and in the majority of them, provision of individual services. Public processes for

social change, along with mobilizing public activism and protest, linger as tools supporting the central service providing activities rather than serving as a central field of action by most organizations. All of the abovementioned naturally raises an issue concerning the ability of this type of action to destabilize the political and economic system, to disturb it from its satiation and serenity, and to create public change that undermines the outlines and contents of the ruling policy, not merely mobilizing extensive publics, but also raising to the surface substantial alternatives to the existing economic-social order.

The increase in number of feminist organization focusing on providing services on the one hand reacts to the need of responding to an expanding public of women harmed and devoid of economic, social and emotional needs, and on the other hand overshadows the continuous and deep damage inflicted by the state and capitalists to extensive population groups. While the organizations add to the safety of many individual women by relieving their existing difficulties and not abandoning them to cope with the present economic-social reality on their own, they also generate some form of concealment of this reality, as most of the time public space remains free of open, protesting and mobilizing feminist activism. Most moves toward social change made by the majority of organizations focus on legal activity, publication of reports, and lobbying the Knesset, and, as mentioned, they supplement the main activities of providing social services to different populations of women. Different types of aid services indeed reach many women in the population, but by nature are not a public recruitment tool for wide feminist activity that includes women from a broad geographical-cultural-social-economic range. Thus public activism also remains limited in the most part to those already involved in the organizational centers.

Moreover, women are affixed and socially defined as the ones responsible for service providing roles based on care, mothering and nurture, especially in private space. As neo-liberalism substantially weakened wide populations of women who were left with no essential services provided by of the state, its place was taken by feminist among other organizations, stepping up to provide these services. The dominance of service roles in the feminist-organizational space raises the issue of oblivious return to the traditional limited roles and positions of women, which the feminist field aims to challenge. As services were mostly provided within the territorial boundaries and private space of the organization, feminist presence in public space is decreased and becomes less visible. Events in public space, feminist opposition, vocal protest, perception of space, accentuating the voice opposing or demanding alternatives to the caring, helping voice that contains the victim, all undermine the patriarchal public order that outlines a fundamental division between the roles and conduct of women and men.

The neo-liberal method, which most organizations are opposed to and are aware of its costs, therefore sets a complex dilemma before the feminist field: on

the one hand there is a need to provide social, economic and legal services to wide populations of women who were harmed to the greatest extent by the neo-liberal method. On the other hand, there is need to respond, expand and deepen the existence of a broad and dynamic feminist movement that strives to generate solidarity and an active presence in public space, which will destabilize public order and mobilize significant public opposition to a neo-liberal society that reinforces capitalists and the masculine control of society.

The neo-liberal perception and the processes it creates and imprints on feminist space influence both the conduct of the organizations and the manner of communication between foundations and other sources of funding and the organizations. On the one hand, the organizations became much more dependent on foundations, as they are based on paid employees. On the other hand, the foundations are also influenced by the western, neo-liberal discourse, and are involved as well in introducing a vocabulary of individual rights and cost-effective considerations. The increasing involvement of foundations in feminist activity in Israel as a result of the previously reviewed reasons, expands the dissemination of “technologies of action” among organizations financially supported by them, be it by means of the creation of accompanying-organizations, providing pro bono services and guidance to activity organizations, be it by guidelines and mandatory requirements when being granted funding for projects, or by other means. As a result, many feminist organizations throughout the world tend to maintain a unified feminist agenda and action model duplicated from the west, without adaptation to local context, namely life experiences of different women, distinctive cultures, conditions, opportunities and political constraints in each country.

According to the gender roles in society, women maintain roles of nurturing, care taking and supervision. Activity in the framework of *Amutot* and non-profit organizations is a central route of civic participation, especially for women. The problem is that in choosing this path women reaffirm gender norms so that organizations with a feminist doctrine reconstruct, rather than challenge, the social roles and stigmas. As maintained by this contention, women’s organizations integrate into liberal democracy under its own terms, in accordance with its rules, and they interpret their platforms by means of politics of cost-effectiveness, needs and rights, interests and identities. By providing social services which are not supplied by the state, organizations are indirectly legitimizing policies that are harmful to women and men, and leave women to linger in typical gender based positions. As they are nourished by the economic-political system, organizations are forced to focus at times on solutions to symptoms that can be quantified and measured, rather than on the origins of the problems and their prevention, that is to say, not in generating a comprehensive systematic change that responds to the wide range of feminist claims.

The Impact of Foundations and Funders on the Professionalization Trend in the Feminist-Organizational Field

The expansion of the neo-liberal economy in the west has created and strengthened a policy of support for projects providing services to individuals and populations which are harmed by this system, in many foundations, public and private. The flourishing and multiplicity of service organizations also results from policies of many foundations, which prefer to fund projects based on a vocabulary and objectives that are also rooted in the liberal language and the existing economic-capitalist market. A substantial share of projects submitted to the foundations and granted funding are based on analysis of the costs of activity and its tangible benefit to the women receiving services, and on responding clearly and directly to the concrete needs and interests of individual women. Using this language, these women become clients of an organization that has a purpose of ensuring they will become satisfied customers of its services, thus leveraging the chances of support for its activities by the foundations. Most projects awarded funding are based on a language and practice of the violation and realization of rights, and less on terms of activism and public opposition that cannot be calculated in clear terms of cost-effectiveness. Foundation policies, as well as the types of projects usually granted funding, can therefore be described as based on a liberal feminist language, which emphasizes the woman's individual rights, the advancement of her integration into existing society and her progression up the political-economic ladder in its present structure. Policy and language based on liberal-western feminism leave little space for community feminist work, activism in public space, feminist opposition and social change that cannot always be translated to short term tangible benefit.

Furthermore, as most funding factors are situated in the west and speak western language, the language and contents of the projects granted support have to phrase and act in compliance with this vocabulary, leaving too narrow a margin for a world of feminist concepts and practices emanating from diverse perceptions as well as from the lives and experiences of different women in society. These women, as mentioned, remain target audiences receiving services from the feminist professionals who are made to act within the framework of projects phrased and directed at a western-liberal vocabulary. The policies of many foundations and the need of organizations to act based on the required language and modes of action in order to procure funding, leave the emphasis on responding to the symptoms of the neo-liberal system in ways that can be quantified and evaluated by accurate estimators. Not much space and funding remain for activity intended to change and challenge the social-economic structure as a whole, the values it is based on and the reasons for its growth and control over the entirety of social structures in the country. The economic support of thematic and measurable treatment of the symptoms of society's ailments and less of the comprehensive struggle to transform

it, raise the concern that feminist civil society is increasingly taking hold as a barrier between government and the women oppressed by its policies. As it is, the ailments remain relatively concealed from the eye and the public scene, which allows the government to easily maintain its policies uninterrupted, without substantive and comprehensive public opposition. In the absence of an extensive and dynamic feminist movement acting primarily in the public arena, one that is broader than the sum of its component organizations, the existing system remains fractured at times, but can still continue moving forward devoid of a sweeping and mobilizing feminist challenge undermining its consequences.

Despite the expansion of these service organizations as a result of this neo-liberal policy, representatives of many organizations still attest that they find it difficult to deal with the demand presented by most foundations to present projects based on terms of cost-effectiveness and quantification of activity to measurable objectives and achievements. As such, the difficulty also arose in organizing every project in accordance with a defined and demarcated schedule, which does not always correspond with the developments and changes that might subsist. The impact of neo-liberalism is apparent also in the pressures exerted onto the foundations by the factors funding them. The foundations are required to prove that projects supported by them attain achievements that are clear and effective in terms of cost-effectiveness. A dialectic process is created that feeds back into the neo-liberal system: the foundations are committed to their funding factors to prove the effectiveness of projects chosen by them, and the organizations mostly also act according to the same outline of action, both because of their focus on professional paid women, and due to the constraint necessitating division of the ongoing work into projects with high feasibility of obtaining foundation grants.

Representatives of most organizations attested that the majority of projects awarded funding are ones presenting linear development, systematic growth in the number of satisfied customers and tangible measurable results. Some of them compared the phrasing and structure of applications made to the foundations to those of a business plan, based not only on clear and measurable goal and objectives, but also on proven, mostly quantitative, achievements. In the limited and stressed time frame available to the organizations to implement the objectives of the projects, a small time slot remains for activity outside of defined projects, including such that is dedicated to both feminist work not directly linked to the areas of organizational activity and such that is intended for opposition and public mobilization that can not always prove immediate or clear-cut successes.

Activity focusing on the creation of projects, raising funds for them and their materialization, leaves too little resources of time for self reflection of the organization; self processing of organizational moves; a dynamic and continual feedback on the means of action and their correspondence with the vision and

goals of the organization; inter-personal and political relationships within the organization; and means by which the situation can be improved. Lacking time and other resources for processes of self reflection, the organization activists might sometimes not be aware of occurrences in the political-public arena and they may not respond immediately to events in order to generate effective public pressure or adapt the work of the organization to these changes, nor will they be mobilized to social change processes that were not previously planned. It was further suggested that out of the demands to meet targets and schedules and the resulting massive workload, the process itself becomes devoid of importance and marginalized in relation to the aims of the defined project and its outcomes. As feminist thought mainly emphasizes the importance of the political and inter-personal process no less than attaining a clear and concrete outcome, the feminist field finds itself losing one of the cornerstones of its position.

In order to illustrate this claim, we could examine the extensive work undertaken by organizations involved with projects for economic empowerment. The need to use data to prove an increase in placements of women in paid employment, the number of women establishing an independent business, their income etc., does not take into account the economic reality that makes it difficult for women to persevere at work due to their exploitation and difficult working conditions, and does not encourage women to set up small businesses due to the market situation, the decrease in economic power of the middle class that is meant to be the consumer target audience for such businesses and the taxation requirements that at times do not correspond with their income. Women who succeed in entering the employment market with the help of the organizations, might at times also find themselves unemployed shortly afterwards, for many reasons: be it low wages not sufficing for their sustenance, long working hours, difficulty in finding placement for children at a reasonable cost or humiliating treatment and exploitations by employers. Acquiring business skills, developing existing professional qualifications and personal and economic empowerment are not enough. Sometimes it is the social-economic policy that blocks the ability of women to extricate themselves from the oppression it creates for them. The conclusion should not be that the organization has failed, nor that it did not meet the targets it had set, if women open a small business but shut it down shortly afterwards, if they start a joint economic cooperative but it takes long years to establish or if they remain at the margins of the paid employment market. The responsibility for that should be placed upon the weakening social-economic situation that these women are forced to operate and survive in.

And if we are addressing the social-economic system in Israel, these are some of its implications to women in society: "The organizing principle of women in the Israeli employment market has been and still remains the principle of the 'second

income provider'. Women are also concentrated in 'feminine professions' and 'feminine niches' and their salaries are lower than that of men doing the same or equal work. The unemployment rate among women is significantly higher than the percentage among men... It is no wonder that some 60% of minimum wage earners are women, approximately 65% of receivers of income supplements are women, and about 60% of the unemployed are women... Many of the Mizrahi women are involved with less prestigious employment types... The class distinctions result from different opportunities in areas of education and employment made available to Ashkenazi and Mizrahi women as a result of the geographical-status space in which they exist: in the 'periphery' there is an over-representation of Mizrahi women in comparison with the 'center', and in the 'periphery' there are less educational and employment opportunities... In 1999 the percentage of Jewish women in the employment market was 52% and that of Arab women, citizens of Israel, reached only 20%, despite the fact that women today are more than 56% of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to matriculate".¹⁴

Most foundations are less inclined to fund community work, which cannot be quantified and clearly defined in terms of its achievements in distinct and demarcated time frames. Organizations dedicated or acting toward the construction and expansion of a feminist community, social and cultural activities and the development of feminist awareness, are forced to sustain this work with minimal or no funding, and sometimes reduce the scope of such activity considerably in favor of funded projects. This is one of the main reasons for the limited number of community organizations and the small quantity of community work, and on the other hand, one of the motives for the professionalization trend characterizing the organizations.

The reduction in value of the US dollar, the recession in Israeli economy and distribution of grants by the foundations to a great number of organizations, creates a tremendous workload within the *Amutot* over a large number of projects operating at the same time. The rapid transition of the feminist-organizational field to professional language and practice was not always accompanied by a process of studying the meanings of adopting such means of actions. Budgetary distress that exists in many organizations, execution of numerous projects, simultaneous intensive fundraising and the need to prove preference over other organizations, have left essential issues on the roadside. One of the main difficulties lies with the issue of integrating professionalism and feminist values, managing organization and projects, and maintaining and adhering to the inclusion and partnership within the organization and its community. The organizations lack resources to conduct processes of self reflection and build ideological mechanisms that will create constant and continual balance between the terms of effectiveness and accomplishment and the terms of solidarity, decentralization and equality. Issues

of feminist management, of feminist organizational consultation and of procedures ensuring that knowledge and expertise will not stay in the hands of a few along with the need for feedback and the generation of a mutual ongoing dialogue with audiences outside the organization, are very rarely addressed. The issue of integration between existing terms of professionalism, some of which are taken from a masculine language and practice, and feminist perceptions and dynamics, is left unprocessed. This issue on its own generates additional stress for the staffs of the organizations, as they are in constant conflict between the need to prove successes to funders and the need to create feminist activism both internal and external to the organizations which will challenge the preexisting language. As the feminist field in Israel did not grow slowly into service-focused activity nor to activity that requires professionalism, but rather transformed rapidly as a result of the social-economic reality in Israel and the policies applied by most funding factors, these issues still remain to be attended.

One of the features of civil society in the neo-liberal age is an increasing competition between non-governmental organizations over budgets. The opposition expressed by several of the organization representatives to policies applied by some of the foundations is losing significance, in light of the organization's dependency on funding by the foundations and the need to follow the outlines dictated by some of them. While there are many foundations that do enable continuous and productive dialogue with the organizations in order to learn at close hand about the content and criticisms of the grant recipients, geographic distance of some of the foundations, different perception and the fact that they are in possession of budgets sought by an abundance of organizations, prevent continuous and effective dialogue that might change the existing policies of the funding factors.

All of the above creates a competitive field and language between the organizations that causes each organization to focus internally on its own work and achievements. The absence of national, active and dynamic inter-organizational networking, along with the tendency to increase the self worth of the organization by negating another organization and the focusing on criticism towards other organizations operating in the same field instead of on mutual critique of the social-political system within the state, at times comes at the expense of strengthening a wide feminist movement which is varied in its contests and perceptions, and influential through inter-organizational cooperation. Some claim that the competition between organizations, in some of its features, increasingly resembles the competition between business organizations. Each organization is trying to produce more and more projects of the kind that would be more acceptable with the foundations, so that it could continue to survive economically and fund its activity. As one of the interviewees put it, "the competition between us is about whose is 'bigger'", or in other words, which of us can present more tangible, measurable and larger achievements.

The policies of some of the foundations directed at funding projects with tangible and/or quantitative success, adds further to the trend of hiring employees with professional knowledge and experience in their field. This is another reason for the deepening gap between the organizations' academic, professional, educated staff and the target publics.

However, the criticism expressed by the interviewees about the foundations and their policies creates an opportunity to expand the dialogue between the sources of funding and the organizations. Such a dialogue may benefit both parties and will increase the correlation between the needs of the foundations and wishes of the organizations. The foundations that are diligent in conducting such dialogue can speak of the advantages of mutual fertilization and the positive outcomes of joint learning by the representatives of the foundations and the organizations. Assuming that both the foundation and organizations are interested in generating social change in Israel and fighting the oppression of weakened populations, such a space of constant and continuous communication might produce new types of solutions and discourse that could improve the mutual ability to generate actual social-political change.

Damage to the Perception of Ability to Generate Substantial Change in Society in Israel

Many of the women attest to a great deal of despair due to the governmental policy, the political line guiding government, the existing economic system and the implications of these for society in Israel. Despite decades of vibrant feminist activity, continuous struggles against discrimination and violence, countless demonstrations and protests, broadening feminist awareness to additional publics, legislation and legal activity and more, society had not changed its militaristic and patriarchal outlines in any real way. The number of women abused by sexual violence rises constantly, as does the number of women murdered by their husbands. Discrimination against Palestinian, Mizrahi and immigrant women continues, heterosexism continues to conceal the personal-political existence of lesbians and members of other genders, many women live in poverty, the Israeli occupation of the Territories continuously worsens, and the growing privatization in the market robs more and more women of hope for a better economic future. Some of the interviewees claimed that in a deteriorating social-economical reality, all that remains is to help each woman individually within the framework of the existing social structure.

Many of the organizations agree that the masculine culture of government and society in Israel, one of its clear results being an offensive and discriminatory attitude towards women, is too powerful and deep for the civil-feminist society to be able to change in an overwhelming and crucial manner. In contradiction to

each individual feminist action, be it the providing of aid and services to a woman or be it a conference, a demonstration or a protest, far stronger powers are at work, emanating from a government that invests most of its national budget into armament and equipping future wars. Most of the Israeli society believes that military “security” is more important than civil-social, economic, environmental and gender security. The fear of the “enemy” along with terror from an upcoming war, internalization of the perception that weapons of war are key to security, and marginalization of civilian fields compared with “political” issues, leave the feminist work and consciousness not central enough compared with dominant values and the central conduct of government and society in Israel.

In a political-social reality such in Israel, many of the activists share a sense of despair about the ability to change the dominating social structure and ideology. With such a narrow margin for action for social change, many of the women active in this field concluded that helping one woman is better than another protest demonstration, which will be drowned out by “security” headlines that benefit from higher ratings. Indeed individual help sometimes necessitates partnership with the establishment, which the feminist movement in part was opposed to, but effective service might also be more influential than yet another demonstration. Responding to a survivor of sexual violence by telephone or economic empowerment thanks to which many women do succeed in earning a little more, assisting a woman to be freed from a legal state of *Agunah* or mental support to a victim of prostitution - can at least loosen the emotional and economic chains that imprison the woman whilst providing her with the feeling that she is not alone. This can expand for her the professional and/or social network that will relieve her from her loneliness and transparency to some extent. All of these points also contribute to the current trend of increased professional service providing organizations in the feminist field.

CHAPTER FIVE

Long Term Coalitions

The multitude of feminist organizations, the competition over resources and the differences of perceptions between them with regard to areas of activity, structure and character of work, invoke the question of whether they can cooperate with each other. In this chapter I review the existing organizational coalitions and the different types of inter-organizational cooperation existing today, including their varying characteristics. The review and analysis are an outcome of interviews that I held with representatives of different organizational coalitions and representatives of the organizations party to them. Much like the rest of this report, this review is also influenced by the political-personal view of the writer.

I chose to address this issue because of the prominence of the trend to form coalitions which has become apparent in recent years. In view of the competition and conflicts between the organizations, as described in the previous chapter, many of them increasingly recognize the need to maintain partnerships on varying issues, in order to amplify the impact of their activity both in the public domain and when addressing decision makers. Two extensive campaigns initiated by short term coalitions of feminist organizations in the years 2006-2007, proved that there is a willingness to work together for mutual goals. The great visibility that the organizations were given by the media as well as by public and parliamentary discourse clearly showed that the joint activity is very influential as well.

For the sake of full disclosure, prior to reviewing these short term partnerships and analyzing their characteristics, I should emphasize that I was very much involved in initiating and coordinating both campaigns mentioned, The first campaign was based on a coalition of 13 organizations working together for the election of a woman as President of Israel. The second campaign relied on a coalition of 13 organizations (and subsequently expanded to include 20 organizations) that embarked on a fight to exclude sex offenders from government. My active participation in these coalitions resulted from my feminist standpoint and my professional one. I maintain that joint activity by many organizations, or in other words lessening the competition

and division for the sake of a joint action which is rich in language and means of action, and the intensification of personal and inter-organizational contacts, contribute to the expansion of feminist discourse within the organizational field as well as endowing it to the general public, and is more effective in reaching the goals for which the coalition was set up. Joint struggles of organizations and wide inter-organizational work are spaces of action that usually succeed in integrating terms of professionalism with feminist perceptions of sharing and partnership, reciprocity, process, the decentralization of knowledge and visibility. It might be claimed that this is one of the reasons that these struggles succeeded in generating public mobilization, promoting real social change, raising awareness amidst varied populations and positioning the feminist field as a generator of change in public space and governmental policies. As terms of professionalism are translated to feminist language, and as feminist tongue is also interpreted to professional language creating new contents within it, so increases the ability of the field's impact to undermine beliefs and practices that are dominant in society, and to generate change concerning issues of violence and discrimination against women and other political minorities.

There are two major types of inter-organizational partnerships: **long term coalitions**, which work around a common subject for an indefinite period of time, and **short term coalitions** that arise to mobilize organizations for joint action in order to achieve immediate goals on an agreed upon subject. These coalitions work on the basis of a predefined schedule, mostly not more than one year long. An essential difference between these two types of coalitions – the long term and short term ones, also involves the issue of institutionalization. The long term coalitions that I chose to focus on in this chapter are for the most part institutionalized, intended to create long term dialogue between varied organizations, to identify what is agreed between them, to generate a joint agenda of these organizations, and additionally to create public visibility of the issues connecting these organizations. These are coalitions that in many cases are organized and coordinated by **SHATIL – Empowerment and Training Center for Social Change Organizations**, which serves as a consulting and assisting organization for these coalitions and as a funding factor for many of their activity.

The short term coalitions, to which I will refer in greater detail later on, are characterized, among other features, by the absence of institutionalization and the cooperation between organizations to promote a public-feminist struggle concerning an issue arising from the country's social-political agenda. These are coalitions focusing mostly on time-limited public campaigns with high media visibility. The funding of these short term cooperations is provided by a different organization every time, though the initiative for inter-organizational partnership might emanate from it, it serves mostly as the joint action headquarters through

until the completion of the campaign.

I shall begin the introduction of long term and short term coalitions in describing the characteristics, activities and achievements of each of them. In due course I will present the consequences of this activity, and the advantages and shortcomings embodied in long term and short term partnerships. The description of activities and achievements of the coalitions was up-to-date in early 2008.

The following coalitions act in an institutionalized manner in the feminist field:
Yachdav (Together) Coalition – For the Prevention of Violence in the Ethiopian Family;

ICAR Coalition – The International Coalition for Agunah Rights – to promote solutions to the problem of Agunot and Mesoravot Get (Women whose husbands are unable or unwilling to grant them a Jewish divorce);

Women's Budget Forum;

The Coalition Against Trafficking of Women ended its activity over a year ago.

There are two long term coalitions that have modes of action which are essentially different than those of coalitions initiated or coordinated by SHATIL. These are the **Coalition of Women for Peace** and **Haifa Women's Coalition**.

The **Coalition of Women for Peace**, established in 2000, was not included in this chapter as it is first and foremost an independent movement, although it is composed of ten organizations and some of its activities are common to some or several of these organizations. The organizations are: Bat Shalom, Bat Zafon, The Fifth Mother, Machsom Watch, Noga – feminist magazine, NLD (Women for Coexistence), Women in Black, New Profile, TANDI and WILPF. Some of these organizations are not included in the mapping chapter of this report, as they act not as registered *Amutot* but as sporadic initiatives that are active from time to time. The model of the **Coalition of Women for Peace** is worthy of research and further explorations, as it suggests a different dynamic and structure to those common among other long term coalitions or among independent organizations. Unlike other coalitions to be described in this chapter, many of the activists in the **Coalition of Women for Peace** – which focuses its activity on the struggle against the occupation of the Territories and the oppression of Palestinians in the region and on the linkage between different types of oppression of political minority groups in society – are not representatives of organizations that are partner to the Coalition. Some of the women are activists both in the **Coalition of Women for Peace** as an independent organization and in one or more of its partner organizations or other organizations. Since the coalition does not function mostly as the director of the dialogue between the different organizations, nor does it typically take the role of an intermediary between them, it can continue to carry out activities that all organization can be

partner to, yet they are not obligated to do so. More than functioning in an umbrella capacity, it acts as a feminist peace movement that enables women wanting to take action on this issue to join it, even if they do not belong to one organization or another. A more detailed description of this coalition appears in the section of the report mapping feminist organizations in Israel.

Haifa Women's Coalition is comprised of four organizations: **Isha L'Isha – Haifa Feminist Center**, **Rape Crisis Center**, **Kayan – feminist center founded by Arab women**, **Aswat – Lesbian Palestinian women**. These organizations were established over the past 25 years by pioneering women of the organized feminist struggle in Israel. The main aim of the coalition is to serve as an open and safe house to varied populations of women including Jews, Arabs, lesbians, Russians, Ethiopians, Druze and other ethnic groups.

The partnership between organizations of the **Haifa Women's Coalition** is expressed mostly by activity under one roof. Each organization has its own office, but the work in a joint building and space enables daily and unmediated encounter between employees and activists. Activity within a house shared by all organizations allows regular consultation between the organizations' women and facilitates joint events, such as International Woman's Day, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, International Day Against Homophobia and more.

Much like in the **Coalition of Women for Peace**, the **Haifa Women's Coalition** does not serve as a representative and institutionalized umbrella organization for the organizations active within it. The uniqueness of the Haifa Women's Coalition is in creating a shared physical and ideological space functioning as a safe house for feminist women in Haifa, intended not merely for the creation of activities, but also a place to stay at and meet with other women, study the feminist literature available and take part in regular meetings on varied issues arranged by one or all of the organizations.

As mentioned, most long term coalitions in Israel are created or coordinated by **SHATIL**, the **New Israel Fund's** empowerment and training center. **SHATIL**, formed in 1982, is a center providing support and consultation for social change organizations in Israel. **SHATIL** works for social and economic justice, human and civil rights, religious and cultural pluralism, immigrants from Ethiopia and the FSU as well as for the advancement of Palestinian rights and the promotion of environment and community issues.

As a center that provides capacity building to field organizations for social change, **SHATIL** empowers disadvantaged communities by providing them with tools to improve their lives and by constructing organizations that promote long term social change. **SHATIL** responds to needs arising from the field and also acts proactively – reaching economically and geographically marginalized public and empowering it by creating organizational forums. The work of **SHATIL** strengthens

democracy in Israel by encouraging citizens to become involved in governmental processes and by reinforcing the aspiration for social justice. SHATIL's main office is located in Jerusalem, with five additional branches throughout the country. SHATIL assists more than 1,000 social change organizations annually, through their foundation stages and their ongoing activity.

Yachdav Coalition - Coalition of Active Women from the Ethiopian Community

The Coalition was established at the end of 2005, on SHATIL's initiative. The partnership was set off after Lemlem Zahayi, an Ethiopian community activist and mother of two, was murdered by her husband.

Goals

The description of the Coalition's formation and goals states: "In recent years we have witnessed harsh expressions of violence that occur within the family, the most severe of which being the murder of women. 25% of all women murdered by their spouses in Israel are from the Ethiopian community, an escalating phenomenon..." The coalition's goals are (D.A) "to affect the allocation of resources by routing them in an effective manner for the purpose of reducing the phenomenon of violence; to encourage and contribute to the coordination and cooperation between factors addressing the problem, within the community as well as external to it; to influence the policy of immigration absorption in its different stages, before *Aliyah*, in the absorption centers and when embarking on independent life in the community; to empower the traditional leadership of Ethiopian expatriates in Israel and to encourage its active participation in addressing the problem within the community; to encourage provision of immediate extensive help which will be culture- and language sensitive to those in distress; to raise the complexity of the problem to public awareness within the Ethiopian community in particular and among Israeli society in general".¹⁵

Partner organizations in this coalition are Hiyot, Taleh, Potchim Sha'ar (Opening the Gate), Hagshamat HaHalom (Realizing the Dream), Almaya, Ani Ve'At (Me and You), Women's Leadership, Efshari, Support Center for Survivors of Domestic Violence – Haifa. Coordination of the coalition: SHATIL. With the exception of Efshari, an organization based on the activity of women, the other organizations in the coalition have both women and men activists.

Once a month, a plenary session is held with representatives of all organizations. These are assigned into five action groups: a team working with institutions; a communications team; men recruitment team; a team consoling the bereaved in murder incidents; and a team working with the spiritual leadership of the community. The coalition coordinator, who works on a part time basis, works out

of SHATIL offices, who also pays her salary and funds the activity. The continuous work includes raising public awareness to the issue by means of public relations and interviews in the media, including media of the Ethiopian community in Israel.

Achievements

Comprehensive mapping of crisis service centers; programs and responses to domestic violence in general and among the Ethiopian community in particular; preparation of a position paper on the subject of dealing with domestic violence in the Ethiopian family and its presentation before the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women; preparation and distribution of a briefing on preventive treatment for domestic violence; meetings with directors in the Ministries of Immigration Absorption and Health; participation in inter-ministerial committees of the Ministries of Welfare and Immigration Absorption that discuss and formulate solutions on the ground; and information work among different levels of the Police.

ICAR Coalition – The International Coalition for Agunah Rights

The starting point of this coalition is some fifteen years ago. At that time it operated for about two years only. Approximately six years ago, the New Israel Fund via SHATIL decided to renew the activity and reestablished the coalition. In its first year, SHATIL coordinated the coalition and provided ongoing organizational consultation to the director and representatives of the partner organizations. “ICAR is an international coalition of Jewish organizations working to draw attention to the problem of *Agunot* and *Mesoravot Get* (women whose husbands are unable or unwilling to grant them a Jewish divorce) and to promote solutions that are compatible with the *Halacha* (Jewish law).

The coalition thrives on the active participation of organizations concerned with women's rights, social justice, pluralism and education. Despite their widely varied religious affiliations and world views, these organizations are united by their shared desire to find a solution to the painful issue of *Agunot*. Their firm view is that refusal to grant a woman a divorce is contradictory to Jewish values and highly detrimental to the woman, her children and extended family, and society in general.

In a wider context, ICAR works in many different ways to promote the rights and advancement of Jewish women worldwide. Its activities include:

- Constructing a website.
- Advocating new and amended legislation regarding *Agunot* and *Mesoravot Get*.
- Conducting research to find solutions to *Halachic* and legal issues.
- Encouraging the use of the existing *Halachic* and legal solutions and efforts by the various religious movements to discover new solutions.

- Educational activity.
- Encouraging the use of prenuptial agreements.

The general aim of all ICAR activities is to bring about a situation in which no woman is trapped in the confines of marriage against her will.”¹⁶

The partner organizations in this coalition are Achoti, Emunah, Isha L'Isha, GRANIT, Hadassah Israel, the Center for Women in Jewish Law at the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies, Israel Religious Action Center, the Rackman Center for the Advancement of Women, the Masorti (Conservative) Movement, WIZO, Hemdat, Yad L'Isha, L.O., Lev La'Am, Women's League for Masorti Judaism, Mavoi Satum, Itim Institute, Crisis Center for Religious Women, the Center for Women's Justice, Ne'emanai Torah Va'Avoda, NAAMAT, International Council of Jewish Women, Kol Ha'Isha, Kolech, Israel Women's Network, SHATIL. Although not all partners are women's organizations, it was decided that their representatives in this coalition will be women only.

The Coalition Operates on a Number of Levels

- Social Level – Raising awareness to the problem of *Agunot* and *Mesoravot Get* and changing positions with regard to the problem in order to instill the status of a social phenomenon, and stopping reference to it as an individual hardship of a particular woman. In the same way, altering the public position toward divorce refusal so that it is considered a violent and abusive action.
- Educational Level - Preventive action against divorce refusal and abandonment by providing knowledge about the issue and the solutions to it; education about values of respect, equality and freedom in the relationship of a couple.
- Legal and Political Level – Advancing the attention to the issue of *Agunot* and *Mesoravot Get* on the agendas of decision making levels, public representatives and religious figures; efforts to bring about a change of the present legal status in order to create equality and balance between women and men in family law; improving the status of women in rabbinical courts and enforcing the existing solutions.
- Jewish Law Level – Promoting and implementing solutions in the spirit of *Halacha*, in order to generate equality and balance of powers between women and men in family law.

Achievements

The coalition disseminates a prayer for *Agunot* that is being read in synagogues and assemblies, participates in special meetings in Knesset Committees, initiates exhibitions and displays on the matter, demonstrates in front of the Knesset and the homes of men refusing to divorce. The coalition set up an information bank that includes a library and an up-to-date website. Furthermore, in 2006 the coalition

introduced a proposal for a Community Property Law. According to this bill, should the process of the divorce decree be delayed for over three months, division of all community property will be feasible before divorce is granted. In cases of violence, the rabbinical court and the family court will have the authority to advance further the time of property partition. The organizations appealed together to the Supreme Court of Justice on the issue of appointing Rabbinical Court judges, in attempt to ensure the selection of judges meeting criteria determined by law, and the prevention of influence and pressures by interested parties.

One of the main activities the coalition may take credit for is marking the international *Agunah* day on March 20. On *Agunah* Day 2008, ICAR Coalition organized a protest march from the Rabbinical Court in Jerusalem to the Knesset titled "Marriage is no Prison". The march was accompanied by a national study day on issues of *Halacha* solutions to divorce refusal. Additionally a stamp was issued for private or organizational use to commemorate the day.

The coalition considers its principal achievement to be the increased public and media awareness to the issue of *Agunot* and *Mesoravot Get*, which was also expressed in discussions about the subject held by various Knesset Committees. The coalition also succeeded in mobilizing organizations that prior to the formation of the coalition almost never dealt with this issue, and in creating a wide network of organizations, different in outlooks and activities, working together for the mutual cause.

The coalition headquarters are located at **Yad L'Isha** organization, which pays the salary of the Coalition Director, a half time position.

The partnership between organizations is expressed both in the activity itself and in regular meetings held. The plenum convenes once every three months with participation of representatives of all organizations. The Legal Committee comprised of lawyers from the various organizations meets bimonthly. The Steering Committee, in which ten women representing the more active organizations participate, convenes monthly. The coalition focuses its activity on lobbying the Knesset to promote legislation and on public protest activity.

Women's Budget Forum

"The Women's Budget Forum was created in August 2004 to promote a fair economic policy for women by means of gender analysis of governmental budgets. The goals of the Forum – to create public and parliamentary awareness of the gender implications of economic policies; serve in an advisory capacity for government ministries and public agencies in the development of tools and strategies for gender-sensitive budgeting; increase transparency by gathering, analyzing and publishing budget analyses disaggregated by gender; encouraging the State Comptroller to utilize a gender prism in examining government actions; advocate for the creation

of a new position in government ministries and public agencies: gender-sensitive budgeting experts; inculcate the necessity of taking gender considerations into account in budget debates in Knesset committees and plenary sessions; increase cooperation among women's, human rights and social change organizations on economic issues, so that these are designed to promote gender equality.

Activities of the Forum include: performing gender audits of government programs and decisions; writing and disseminating position papers on gender-budget issues; doing advocacy work at the Knesset, government ministries, local authorities and economic associations; conducting workshops and study days for decision-makers, media people and the general public; promoting gender equality in economic decisions through media work."¹⁷

The forum includes thirty organizations: Adva Center, Agenda, AL Ahali, Achoti, Isha L'Isha, Itach, Alzahraa, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Division for the Advancement of Women In the Kibbutz Movement, the Jewish-Arab Center for Economic Development, the Center for Religious Pluralism, the Association for Economic Empowerment for Women, Noa – Women and Work, Tmura Center, WIZO, Kayan, Women's Council of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Mahapach, Lafer Center for Women and Gender, Mahut Center, Mossawa Center, Women against Violence, Adalah, Kol Ha'Isha, Kolech, Israel Women's Network, Feminanci – College of Women's Empowerment, Efishari, Coalition of Women for Peace.

The Forum has three paid employees: a Jewish coordinator and Palestinian Coordinator, each on a half time basis, and a lobbyist at three quarters of a full time position. It was established on the initiative of the **Adva Center**. The employees of the Forum operate from the **Adva Center**, which provides them with office services and assistance in fundraising from foundations.

The continuous relationship between the organizations is managed via an email network, which also includes academic women who are not members of one of the organizations. The network enables dialogue between the participants and sending of messages. Within the framework of the Forum operates a Legal Committee, comprised of lawyers on behalf of the organizations, and they draft bills and are responsible for the legal analysis of the different publications. The lobbyist initiates meetings in the Knesset and accompanies the organization representatives to meetings alternately, allowing for maximal participation for all organizations that are partner to the ongoing activity. The plenum gathers bimonthly and a different issue is raised at every meeting. Representatives of all the organizations are invited to the plenum.

Achievements

The **Forum** is recognized in decision making centers as a professional factor with expertise in its field. The Forum takes credit, for instance, for the fact that Members of Knesset internalized the term 'gender' and its various implications, and that every year there is willingness to accept notes from the **Forum** about the national budget and suggestions for amendments; following the vigorous lobbying activity of the Knesset and government ministries, the Ministry of Transport recognized the absence of gender analysis of the ministry's budgets; the Knesset Lobby acting on behalf of the Forum on the issue of the impact of minimum wage on the public of women, succeeded in forwarding the Knesset discussion on the subject of raising the wage from December to June 2008; pressure exerted by the Forum on the subject of the Arrangements Law, led to the dismissal of an initiative to tax social security allowances due to the implication it would have had on women living in poverty; and more.

The Coalition Against Trafficking of Women

Following a report of the **Israel Women's Network**, in 1997 the Coalition Against Trafficking of Women was established. The Coalition partners were organizations aiming to eradicate the trafficking of women in Israel and attend to its victims. The coalition operated until 2007.

Goals

- "The State of Israel will examine the dangers these women face in returning to their country of origin and if necessary will grant them a fugitive status or find them an alternate country to immigrate to.
- The state will establish a safe shelter for the trafficked women, whether they testify or not. The shelter will provide medical, psychological and legal aid.
- A period of initial recuperation will be given before the woman decides whether or not she is interested in testifying.
- Individual care will be given to women with special needs – pregnant women, women addicted to drugs and minors.
- The police must initiate specific action and designate resources to fight the trafficking problem.
- The trafficked women are not to be released on bail by panderers.
- The state must compensate the victims as part of the criminal procedure.
- The state must provide a witness protection program for the trafficked women who agree to testify against those involved in trafficking."¹⁸

The member organizations in the coalition were the Israel Women's Network, Isha Isha, Hotline for Migrant Workers, Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, We

Are Equal, The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Amnesty International, KLAIF L.O., Kol Ha'Isha, Shomrei Mishpat – Rabbis for Human Rights, the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow and ATZUM.

Achievements

Following the spotlight directed at Israel by the **Amnesty International** report for 2000 and the US State Department in 2001, the declaration of Israel as a “superpower” of trafficking of women and the threat of sanctions by the United States, an inter-ministerial governmental team and a parliamentary committee of investigation were established. As a result, the Knesset passed a law in 2000, stating that human trafficking for the purpose of prostitution is a felony, and stipulated for legal aid to the women trafficked even if they were not residents or citizens of Israel. As a result the State’s Attorney and the Police formulated a new policy of alignment to fight organized crime, one of its arms being the industry of prostitution and trafficking of women. The Attorney’s office and Police also started enforcing the Money Laundering Prohibition Law on the properties of women traffickers and pimps. The Ministry of Welfare opened a safe house for trafficked women in 2004, and in it the women are offered the services of social workers, a psychiatrist and legal counseling. At the same time, the United States threatened economic sanctions against Egypt and at one point against Israel unless steps are taken to prevent the smuggling of women through their territories and to eradicate the phenomenon of human trafficking.

The coalition started as a partnership between few organizations. Following the growth in number of organizations operating in this field and the joining of additional organizations to the coalition, it was decided in 2003 to approach SHATIL to coordinate the activity, assist in fundraising and provide ongoing organizational consultation. The organization appointed a coordinator for the coalition in a half time position. The coordinator, who worked out of the SHATIL offices, called meetings of the organization representatives, produced information materials, initiated and organized field activities, coordinated the Knesset lobby and more. Due to disputes between the organizations to be discussed further below, it was decided by SHATIL to stop coordinating the coalition, which stopped operating shortly afterwards.

The Challenges

Each of the previously described coalitions mentioned one of their main goals to be the raising of public awareness of the issue that sets them apart. The involvement of many organizations in shared and continuous activity on a focalized and noticeable issue has helped all these coalitions to promote their objectives. Most of the interviewees believed that the fight against violence towards women from the Ethiopian community, the activity for *Agunot* and *Mesoravot Get*, understanding the gender projections of the State Budget and the feminist fight against occupation would not have received substantial public resonance were it not for the existence of the coalitions. The understanding that organization coalitions are capable of having real impact on promoting the subject for which they were established crosses organizations, women and perceptions.

In this case, there is an understanding that the main advantage of coalitions, in comparison with individual organizations, is their size and their focus on activity for social change, heightening their ability to raise issues onto the agendas of the media and the public, as well as their function as an effective pressure group. The various media prefer to cover the actions of wide organizational coalitions, because that way the audience addressed by the media is under the impression that the opinions referred to represent a large public rather than a narrow opinion. This is also true concerning the impact of the struggle on factors in decision making foci. Lobbying the Knesset and government ministries on behalf of numerous organizations, succeeds in recruiting bigger support and gains better responsiveness in Knesset corridors and government ministries.

An additional advantage of a coalition is the meeting created between organizations that are active on the same subject, both on the personal level of dialogue between the representatives, and the possibility of mapping positions and needs of the participants and formulating a common agenda. These coalitions aim to create a space of agreement between organizations competing with each other over visibility and resources. The workload usually characterizing the schedule of activity in the organizations, does not allow them to make time for acquaintance and/or continuous partnership with activists in other organizations. The coalition coordinator is the one initiating and organizing the common activity, and thus enables regular meetings between all women, while the representatives don't have to take upon themselves many tasks to be added to the workload required from them by the organizations in which they are active. Most organizations don't make time for continuous and constant lobbying work in the Knesset and government, and in some of the organizations lobbying is a relatively low priority because of the day-to-day workload. Most of them don't hire lobbyists due to lack of budget. Most coalitions also have relatively high visibility in the media, due to their predominant

occupation in changing public views. The focus of the various coalitions on promoting change of consciousness in public space, therefore, enables the member organizations to continue with their regular activity, which is mostly focused on specific target publics, and at the same time enjoy the advantage of public activity by the coalition.

Some interviewees testified that the participation of their organization in a coalition had raised the public and parliamentary awareness also toward the organization in which they are active, and contributed to its ability to promote the issue and raise larger sums in funds. Despite the competition created in this context between the organizations, some claimed that all organizations partner to the coalition gain from the improved visibility of the common subject, not only by recruiting more public or parliamentary support, but also due to the increased awareness of the issue among the foundations.

Competition between Organizations and between Coalitions

One of the main difficulties emerging in the activity of long term coalitions is the resulting growing competition between the separate organizations and the coalition itself over visibility and financial resources. Some claimed that the coalitions acted, whether from the onset or further down the road, as independent organizations that rely on fundraising for their own purposes. This necessitated them to describe their activities and achievements which are, as a matter of fact, similar to activities and achievements of some of their member organizations.

The competition might weigh on the dialogue between coalition partner organizations and accentuate the conflict between them over issues agreed upon. And indeed, some of the interviewees attested that once an organization has the impression that the coalition itself is competing with it, whether on an area of activity or fundraising, it is enough to undermine the experience of partnership and motivation of the rest of the organizations. The case of the **ICAR Coalition** demonstrates this dynamic. Despite the fact that the **ICAR** partners don't deny its great achievements in promoting awareness to the issue of *Agunot* and *Mesoravot Get*, there were those who criticized the Coalition for applying to the same foundations to which its member organizations also approach for funding.

The abovementioned criticism also refers to the competition created between the activities of the coalition and the public and legal activities of some of its member organizations. Among the organizations there are those who work on providing services as well as on raising public awareness and lobbying in the Knesset. These organizations compete among themselves as to which of them will be accredited for any particular action. The media doesn't tend to mention the names of all partner organizations, and mostly attributes the action it reports on to the coalition alone. The result is that sometimes, because of the competition over media coverage and

public visibility between the different organizations, press releases are issued at the same time both on behalf of the coalition and on behalf of its member organizations. Often the organizations quarrel amongst themselves about who initiated an activity or led it, and there have already been cases in which representatives of different organizations met with Knesset Members separately or initiated several separate public protests.

The **Yachdav Coalition** did not experience a dispute similar to the one that broke out in the **ICAR Coalition** since most of its member organizations are relatively young and small, with few resources available. The coalition contributes to raising public awareness, thus increasing the chances of the active organizations to fundraise and solicit support for the issue which was relatively transparent prior to the establishment of the coalition. Some estimated that if and when several of the organizations will become more established and bigger, with more funding at their disposal, a competition will also rise to the surface at the **Yachdav Coalition**, similar to the one existing in **ICAR**.

In interviews concerning the activity and circumstances of the disintegration of the **Coalition Against Trafficking of Women**, it became evident that the main difficulties resulted from the same experience of competition. The coalition, which needed to fundraise in order to operate, in fact competed, according to some of the interviewees, with some of its participating organizations. In this case too, the dispute revolved around public credit for the various activities. Representatives from different organizations claimed that they initiated one activity or another, and therefore it was these organizations rather than the coalition that should have received the media and public recognition.

The case of the **Coalition Against Trafficking of Women** reflects the ambivalent attitude of organizations to partaking in coalitions. On one hand, in order to subsist, a coalition needs a secure source of funding that would enable the continuity of activity. On the other hand, when it is an organization that takes upon itself the coordination and funding of the activity, it is soon perceived not only as a benefactor enabling work to be done, but also as a factor that dictates the trends and contents of the work of all organizations. The **Coalition Against Trafficking of Women** could not continue to exist, had **SHATIL** not taken it upon itself to fund the salary of the coordinator and activity expenses, but some of the interviewees claimed that in their perception this was also the cause for the disintegration of the partnership. On one hand, there is a need of many organizations to sustain an equal partnership and communications between all participating organizations in the coalition, and mostly none of the organizations have the time and fiscal resources to establish and coordinate the great amount of work required. On the other hand, the factor initiating or enabling the continued operation of the coalition is perceived to be one paying the piper and calling the tune. Thus far no coalition, long or short term, is known to

have been funded by all participating organizations. Some representatives claimed that although controversy might have diminished to become less central in such a situation, it would not completely vanish. The economic resources available to the organizations vary, and therefore participating organizations cannot invest equal resources. A dissimilar investment of resources in the activity of the coalition might produce a hierarchal experience between the organizations and a constant concern that “wealthier” organizations would have more influence. Most organizations testified that they don’t have available budgets to devote to coalitions, and so the option of participation of organizations in funding long term joint activity remains at this stage theoretical only, but is worthy of discussion and consideration of the possibility of its execution.

Recommendations

In light of the aforementioned, a series of recommendations to enhance the ability of organizations to work together in the framework of long term coalitions might be suggested. Prior to detailing these recommendations, it is appropriate to raise the ideological issue surfacing from the conflicts that characterize the activity of some of the coalitions. As the feminist field today is mostly based on separate organizations, each organization itself and its continued existence sometimes becomes the main goal. The opportunity facing the organizations is to expand the feminist field composed of separate organizational units into an extensive feminist movement, which does not function as an umbrella organization, but subsists alongside the organizations and enhances their influence and public visibility. Even if more thinking and discussion is required concerning effective ways of generating feminist processes by multiple organizations and abundant with women holding a variety of perceptions who together want to change the existing reality, this challenge should not be allowed to escape us as it possesses a great opportunity to expand the impact of feminist perception over the public-political space in Israel.

1. Long term coalitions should be formed to address a unique issue that none of its participating organizations deals with directly, and therefore lessen the probability that conflicts and competition should arise between participating organizations.
2. Some suggestions for the operation of active coalitions, in which there exists competition over resources and visibility between one or more organizations and the coalition:
 - a. **Define an end date for the work of the coalition**, in order to increase the common mobilization within a defined time frame. Determining the end of the coalition's activity in the foreseeable future would enable softening and possibly even preventing competition. Since there is a broad agreement that a multi organizational coalition contributes greatly to raising public and parliamentary awareness of the issue being discussed, the organizations should cooperate for a limited period of time that would enable all of them to benefit subsequently from more effective fundraising, thanks to the visibility the issue attained by the public as well as the foundations.
 - b. Coordinators of the different coalitions should **strictly adhere to extensive accreditation** for all organizations active within the coalition framework. While the media tends to attribute certain activity to a particular body, the reporters could be asked to also mention in their coverage the names of the partner organizations each time, so that not only the coalition alone would benefit from public visibility.

c. Create an ongoing discussion concerning the issue of fundraising from funding sources. As is well known, each field has a number of foundations supporting its themes of activity, therefore allocation of resources is possible and its advantages outweigh its disadvantages. Even if the coalition or one of the organizations had to relinquish approaching a particular source of funding, this dynamic will encourage partnership and agreement between all organizations and enhance the solidarity between them.

d. Request symbolic participation in funding coalition activity by each of the member organizations. Even if the fiscal investment is not equal by all organizations, it will contribute to reducing the hierarchical experience that characterizes the relationships of some of the organizations with the coalitions at present.

3. From article d. above, a recommendation can also be derived directed at foundations and their funding policy for organizational partnerships. The foundations could encourage proposals for funding to be submitted by several organizations interested in forming a coalition together. It is important to emphasize that these should be policies encouraging multi-organizational coalitions rather than policies dictating their existence. Such policies could contribute to the activity of existing coalitions and encourage more of them to form, on the condition that foundations would strictly maintain a no intervention policy concerning decisions made by partner organizations. Decisions concerning who will coordinate the work of the coalition and how to prioritize between different activities should depend exclusively on agreement between organization representatives, and not on a policy outlined by the foundation. This process will also obligate the organizations to decide on changing their fundraising policies. A joint funding request will allow extensive agreement to be reached in advance with regard to the goals of the coalition and major issues concerning its future activity.

CHAPTER SIX

Short Term Coalitions

The discussion of short term coalitions will be based on two campaigns shared by several organizations, undertaken during 2006 and 2007. In September 2006 a **Public Campaign for the Election of a Woman President of Israel** started, which continued until March 2007. In February 2007 a **Public Campaign for the Removal of Sex Offenders from Government** was underway, and it lasted until the end of July that same year. Since I coordinated both these campaigns, my perception of these processes arises, among other factors, from my involvement in them.

Public Campaign for the Election of a Woman President of Israel

The initiative to elect a woman for presidency arose during a session of the **Women's Parliament** organization in the summer of 2006. During the session, representatives of feminist organizations presented women they believed deserved to hold that position. The substance of that session presented a breakthrough in public and feminist consciousness concerning the subject, since some of the women who were suggested to be worthy for nomination as President, were neither Members of Knesset nor prominent women from the academia, but mostly activists in the organizations. The women proposed as suitable to serve as the President of Israel held diverse roles, were of different status and ethnicities and held varied political stances. As such, the initiative to elect a woman for President was rooted from the onset in a different ideological language than the common one, and not necessarily one that only asks to promote senior official women to higher positions.

Shortly after the public session was held, the **Achoti** Movement initiated the Public Campaign for the Election of a Woman President of Israel, and called other organizations to join in the public and media campaign. The main goal of the campaign was to raise public awareness to the need of electing a woman for the

role of President of Israel. Twelve organizations joined the campaign: the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow, Coalition of Women for Peace, Israel Women's Network, Kol Ha'Isha, NA'AMAT, Women's Parliament, SHIN Movement, Itach, WE Power, Women on Line Website, the Tel Aviv Rape Crisis Center and the business-feminist organization Comme-Il-Faut.

The initiative to elect a woman for president succeeded in generating extensive public resonance, on a setting of media publications regarding the suspicion of serial sex offences by the residing President at the time, Moshe Katzav. The campaign emphasized the need to alter the patriarchal perception of government in Israel that determines the leader is a man, and the status of the First Lady emanates from her position as his wife. The website especially built for this campaign stated the following, which was also distributed by email to the general public:

"The Basic Law: President of the State stipulates that at the Head of the State will stand a President. Since the establishment of the State of Israel eight presidents headed it, and up to this day a public debate never arose concerning the reason for only electing men for this important national role. It seems that the reality according to which only men get elected to head the presidency is perceived as a natural, unchallenged matter, so much so that the official website of the presidency features the heading: "Presidents and their Wives". In this way an excluding and one-dimensional perception is reinforced, not enabling the balance, equality and inclusion that are needed by Israeli society.

...The fact that the person heading this distinguished and important institution is under accusation for sexual assault of women intensifies the need of electing a figure whose reliability, integrity and ability to represent all male and female residents of the country with respect can be trusted.

The women's organizations and social organizations, aware of the less illuminated side of Israeli society, have joined together in order to promote the election of a woman for President of Israel, by recognizing the power of a woman with social feminist awareness to inspire. A woman who could bridge the gaping rifts of Israeli society while providing a voice for weakened groups, and who has the ability to weave the variety of voices and unique colors assembling Israeli society with an approach that endorses... mutual respect...".¹⁹

The campaign was based on vigorous public relations activity that generated extensive reporting by the media in Israel. Every week, many reports appeared in the various media about the subject. Furthermore, an ad in support of the election of a woman President for Israel was published, signed by leading women and men from feminist, social, political and other sectors and organizations. Many of the signatories were activists of social organizations acting with and on behalf of different political minorities, from a variety of cultures, ethnicities and classes. At the same time a petition circulated and was signed by about 3,000 women and men

from throughout the country, which enabled the recruitment of the general public around this goal. A public opinion poll undertaken by one of the media several months into the campaign, suggested that about seventy percent of the public in Israel supported the election of a woman for president. Within the framework of the campaign a demonstration was held in front of the Knesset in support of a woman candidate for Presidency, a conference supporting this initiative took place and other activities were conducted.

The **Achoti** Movement funded the campaign, and its coordinator worked on a part time basis out of the movement's office. Monthly meetings of the organization representatives were assembled in order to decide on future activities, and the daily communication between the organization representatives was by email.

Achievements of the Campaign

The campaign laid the foundation for a dynamic of short term partnerships between organizations working together for an agreed upon goal. The partnership lasted despite differences in perceptions, fields of work and means of action of the organizations. The campaign reaped many accomplishments: the media-public terminology emerging from it onto the social space was composed of radical feminist terms and outlooks seeking to change the existing order, including a challenge of the patriarchal-family structure represented by and inherent to the institution of marriage. The main goal of the campaign was the introduction of a feminist concept to wide public avenues, with an open subversion against features of the election and traits of the personas elected to senior positions in Israel, as well as raising public awareness to the linkage between masculine-governmental power lacking supervision and inhibitions and the suspicion of serial sex offenses of the President at the time. The campaign succeeded in its first few months to achieve the targets set in its commencement. The public campaign was not intended first and foremost for de-facto and immediate election of a woman President over a man, and did not suffice only with the change of sex of the personality elected for this position. The campaign was primarily ideological, and intended to assimilate feminist perceptions into the public discourse, challenging the existing value order. Some asserted that the explicit feminist terms and perceptions emanating from the campaign and published in the media contributed to public mobilization, and certainly did not lessen from it. In the first months of the campaign, the findings of the survey, frequent media coverage, enlistment of women and organizations from a wide range of stances, support of opinion leaders from a variety of sectors, all signaled a massive penetration of feminist perceptions and discourse to the general public.

The campaign was crowned with success, among other things, because its initiators and activists understood that the public and the media were set at a point

of rejecting the existing government ideology and structure. Set on the background of almost daily press coverage of serial sex offences performed by the President at the time, feminists could respond in the spirit of their principles: to place a feminist initiative and language in the public arena that had a chance of attaining public attention intended to change a troubling and violent reality.

The campaign achieved one of its principal goals when it became apparent that a wide public indeed supported the election of a woman for President. Nevertheless, a difficulty arose to recruit women from a variety of ethnicities and classes to present their nomination for presidency. Some of the women, many of whom were activists in the feminist field, said they were reluctant to start the required process to present a presidential nomination, primarily because of the requisite support of Knesset Members, who elect the next President. Only one woman conceded, Member of Knesset Colette Avital. Other women expressed apprehension of presenting their nomination because they didn't believe they could gain significant support. The fact that the election of President is in the hands of the Knesset rather than the public considerably reduced the chances of a woman to get elected to the position and dissuaded women who were not Members of Knesset to present their candidacy.

Although Colette Avital did not gain the support of a Knesset majority and came last of the three candidates in the presidential election, some referred to the move she made as a significant precedent, both for the public support in the candidacy of a woman for the role of President and by the very presentation of a woman as a Presidential candidate. Others referred to Avital's singular nomination as a testimony to the difficulty of feminist women, who are not part of the existing governing system, to take hold of senior public positions. They further maintained that alongside the achievement led by Colette Avital, this campaign exposed, once again, the difficulty that women from non-dominant ethnicities and classes encounter in gaining extensive support and visibility with the public, the establishment and government.

Public Campaign for the Removal of Sex Offenders from Government

An initiative to start a campaign of women's organizations who would fight for the removal of sex offenders from government, rose on the basis of events exposed during the preceding year in the Israeli media which concerns sex offenses executed by senior officials in government. The goal was to broaden and alter the character of the public discourse at the time about sexual assault, by pointing a finger at the individual and collective attacker benefiting from senior political status, and by means of embarking on vigorous protest activity against sexual violence toward women.

The Coalition of Women for Peace agreed to finance the campaign, and it also mobilized the action to realize its goals. The campaign coordinator first approached nine feminist organizations to join the common activity, and all of their representatives accepted the invite. The organizations partner to this campaign were the Coalition of Women for Peace, Achoti, Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, Itach-Ma'aki, Isha L'Isha, the Israel Association for Feminist and Gender Studies, the Tel Aviv Crisis Center, Kol Ha'Isha, Israel Women's Network. Later on in the campaign additional organizations joined: WIZO, Tmura Center and Kolech. After the campaign ended, joint activity concerning the struggle against sexual violence of senior official men in government continued. Joining this activity were Economic Empowerment of Women, Mahut Center, NAAMAT, Women and their Bodies, Women's Parliament, Women Spirit and SHIN.

During March and April 2007, organizations from a wide political-feminist range and varied areas of activity mobilized to join the campaign. The organizations agreed to create a partnership between them in order to evoke a vibrant and extensive public discourse against the harm to women's public safety in Israel due to sexual violence by government officials in senior positions toward women subordinate to them.

The central message of the campaign that was underway in May 2007 demanded the distancing of sex offenders from government, placing an emphasis on the linkage between governmental power and sexual violence of men in senior positions towards women. The campaign had set itself two main goals:

1. To recruit journalists from the various media to support the campaign message and thus raise public awareness to the phenomenon, and in doing so preventing influential factors in the media from mobilizing in favor of sex offenders in government.
2. To create a mutual discourse between the women's organizations that would broaden public awareness about the phenomenon of sexual violence by government officials in senior positions, one which would concern itself to the varied ways of opposing it.

The campaign plan focused on several levels of activity

1. Vigorous public relations activity on issues concerning sex offenders holding senior positions.
2. Advertising the campaign on the Internet.
3. Field activities of women against the phenomenon, with an emphasis on the abandonment of the customary dichotomy between “professionals” and survivors of sexual violence. This would enable the realization that every woman is a survivor of one type or another of sexual violence to audiences both within the organizations and external to them.
4. Mobilizing public opinion leaders and the general public to activity for the removal of sex offenders from government.
5. Legal activity for the indictment and official dishonoring of senior sex offenders.

The character of the inter organizational partnership

The Coalition of Woman for Peace funded the campaign and the salary of the coordinator, and therefore organizations joining the campaign were not required to participate in its funding.

Organizations communicated in several ways: at the beginning of the campaign meetings were held to formulate the messages and goals of the campaign together. During the course of activity, the organization representatives met several times with the advertising agency that contributed its services pro bono in order to co-formulate the public announcement that went online on the Ynet website. Joint meetings were also held with the polling company that held a survey at the beginning of the campaign researching positions of the public concerning sex offences in government. Throughout the campaign, organization representatives created an emailing network that enabled them to maintain constant contact, sometimes on a daily basis. Following the campaign the emailing network expanded and at present it includes representatives of 30 women's organizations that continue discussing demonstrations, protests, manifestos and additional shared activities through the network.

Achievements

The campaign's goals were reached above and beyond expectation: before the campaign, the Israeli media covered the issue of sexual violence by depicting the violence survivor as a helpless victim from the geographical-social-ethnic periphery, shaded and nameless. The Israeli media would often cooperate with the skeptical and blaming attitude towards survivors of sexual violence, and even more so when the suspects and convicted sex offenders were men in senior positions. The goal set by the coalition of women's organizations in this campaign was to give reporters in Israel a lesson on the phenomenon of sexual violence in general and the phenomenon of sexual violence within the government in particular. During the course of the

campaign hundreds of conversations were held with journalists about the issue, in order to educate them about the central features of sexual violence in government, with the intention that they would internalize the messages of the campaign and therefore transform their tendency to support sex offending government officials by replacing it with recognition of the existence of the phenomenon of sexual violence towards women and thus give support to survivors of the violence.

The case of Minister Haim Ramon is a test case. From the beginning of the coverage of the indecent act he performed on a woman, most journalists were rallied in his favor and published items encouraging the skeptical view of the complainant against him. In the middle of the campaign, media coverage had transformed and many of the journalists changed their positions concerning Ramon, both regarding the offence itself and the attempts to smear the complainant. Furthermore, due to the campaign, many journalists were able to identify the connection between the behavior and conduct of the two senior sex offenders – Moshe Katzav and Haim Ramon.

During the last three months of the campaign, between May and August 2007, substantial changes occurred in the Israeli media. Key media figures, including newspaper editors such as Amnon Dankner (Editor of Ma'ariv at the time), published editorials condemning the senior sex offenders and expressing support for the survivors of sexual violence. During these months the entire Israeli media was mobilized to cover the sexual violence of senior officials in government.

Moreover, the media discourse in Israel about the phenomenon of sexual offences in government became one of the most talked about and covered issues, featuring on front pages of the printed press, heading television and radio news broadcasts and appearing on news websites. For example, during the months of May through July 2007, 172 items were published in the media on behalf of the campaign, in addition to dozens of op-ed articles on the subject. The Israeli media immediately internalized the existence of a mass of women's organizations, and from the campaign's second month on, most articles published on the issue accredited the women's organizations. This was how the existence of women's organizations as a broad and influential body, was internalized by the public in Israel.

The Israeli media continues to cover the work of the women's organizations on this issue up till now, even though the official campaign ended by late July 2007. This is due to appeals to the Supreme Court of Justice submitted by the **Tmura Center** and **Achoti** Movement against the appointment of Haim Ramon to Government, and due to appeals by the **Israel Women's Network**, **Association of Crisis Centers** and **Kolech** against the plea bargain agreement with Moshe Katzav, the continued litigation on the issue of dishonor cast upon the former President, and the long line of demonstrations.

The additional significant achievement of this short term coalition is the partnership formed between the women's organizations, a partnership that

continued to expand during and after the campaign. It is a breakthrough in the area of joint action in the feminist field, especially since some of the organizations discussed are intrinsically different from one another, both in outlook and in areas of activity. Although some of the organizations understandably tend to emphasize first and foremost the credit for their own organization and the coalition second, it seems that an opportunity was created to place the common work and mutual struggle at the head of the feminist agenda.

And furthermore, the joint activity enabled the organizations to expand and diversify the activity in the field of sexual harassment, to re-conceptualize it, to expand and renew the ways of fighting the phenomenon. The integration of field activity, media activity, legal activity and publicity was enabled by the cooperation between organizations differing in perceptions and specializations, and from here the dramatic affect of the campaign on the public mobilization against the phenomenon of sexual offences of holders of senior positions in government emanated. For example, after the plea bargain with Moshe Katzav became public, in the beginning of the last month of the campaign, some 20,000 demonstrators participated in the women's organizations rally in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, an unprecedented number in relation to the previous protests against sexual violence. Veteran activists said that until then, they were used to seeing several hundred demonstrators at most when fighting the issue of sexual violence against women.

Additionally, the cooperation between women's organizations enabled a dialogue between different feminist perceptions, between attitudes endorsing aid and assistance first and foremost and approaches that prioritize public protest, and women from a variety of identities, identifications, ethnicities, nationalities and public status. This cooperation also relied on new personal acquaintances, because although many of the women have been active in the feminist field for many years, the inter-organizational division prevented these familiarities.

An additional achievement was accredited to this campaign: the desire of each of the organizations to prove its involvement in the campaign both to the public and to the foundations. During interviews with representatives of the organizations it became clear that most *Amutot* that participated in the campaign presented their campaign activity in their annual reports to the funding foundations. At least two organizations were funded during the campaign for their participation in it, and some of the organizations also received contributions from individuals who identified with the struggle.

During the campaign, there were agreements as well as disagreements within the inter-organizational dialogue. These could be recognized and addressed even if they preexisted, thus enabling the continuation of partnerships, some of which are maintained until today. I will expand further about the conflicts created between organizations during and after the campaign in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Coalitions Between Organizations – Between Competition and Partnership

Both short term coalitions described above acted within frameworks of joint campaigns, and the focus of their activity was on raising public awareness through the media. The main reason for the success of these coalitions was the time limit restriction they were bound to. A tight schedule in conjunction with focusing activity on public relations, enabled the different organizations to agree upon the objectives and contents of the partnerships, and during the time of the struggle itself, agreement outweighed the differences of opinions between them. The ability to set defined targets, a clear action plan and an allocation of roles and assignments between the organizations, improves substantially when the partnership is short termed. Such short time span coalitions, enables all partners to be more flexible, the goals agreed upon can be achieved and disputes between them can more easily be set aside.

When there is a defined date for the ending of joint activity, the organizations are willing to forgo being credited in the media. In the framework of a short term coalition, no organization is required to give up media visibility for a long time, and the advantage of exposing the issue of the joint struggle to the public supersedes the short term costs of reduced credit for each individual organization. The dramatic rise in media coverage of the phenomenon of sexual violence enabled broad public mobilization for the joint struggle and by the end of the campaign contributed both to the increased media coverage of organizations that continued to work on this issue, and their ability to recruit public support and resources.

In both of these coalitions, consent overpowered conflict during the campaign. The partnership created surrounding the election of a woman for President was formed in an easier manner and was burdened by very few conflicts, because the issue of the campaign was not identified in its contents with any of the partner organizations, and therefore was not competing with any existing organization or activity. In other words, the fact that there was no feminist organization identified with activity for the election of a woman President for Israel, prevented competition

between the coalition itself and its members. Additionally, only one woman presented her nomination for presidency. Possibly, had other women nominated themselves, disputes might have arisen between the organizations in support of one candidate or another. Furthermore, the theme of the campaign was acceptable for women with more liberal feminist perceptions as well as women with more radical feminist outlooks. The former considered the candidacy of a woman for a well known and esteemed national position an achievement on its own. The latter perceived the campaign as an opportunity to bequeath the public with their perception, aiming to change the patriarchal face of the State and society, whether by selecting a feminist woman to a senior position or by attempting to recruit candidates for this position from excluded and occupied ethnicities, cultures and nationalities. These women adopted a tactic of selecting a theme that could mobilize a wide public in its favor, while generating a radical-feminist discourse around it.

The process of creating inter-organizational agreements concerning the election of a woman for presidency became more complex and challenging in the case of the campaign for the removal of sex offenders from government. Until the beginning of the campaign, the **Rape Crisis Centers** were identified as the only or dominant factor addressing sexual violence. The participation of the **Crisis Centers** in the campaign was therefore necessary, but later on it was also the cause of dispute between the centers and some of the partner organizations. As previously emphasized, during most of the campaign agreement overrode dispute, and the **Crisis Centers** agreed to the partnership because it had the power to significantly highlight on the public agenda the subject that they had been addressing with great dedication for many years. For the rest of the coalition partners, the vigorous and exclusive occupation with the fight against sexual violence was new and mostly not identified with their main organizational activity. Joining in the work on an issue that succeeded in recruiting broad public sympathy, alongside the credit attained by some of the organizations who were partner to the campaign directly or indirectly, increased the motivation of organizations to be involved in the activity and contributed to broadening the network of organizations that later joined the coalition. On the other hand, towards the end of the campaign the motivation of the **Crisis Centers** to continue in the joint activity declined, due to conflicts created with some of the partners concerning the nature and contents of the protest, valid apprehension of obscuring the centrality in this area of activity, and competition with other organizations over media and public visibility on the issue.

A month prior to the end of the campaign, following the unfolding of Katzav's plea bargain, the differences of opinion grew stronger than the agreement between organizations, mainly because an opportunity was created to initiate extensive protest activity against the plea bargain. A dispute over the messages and nature of the demonstration caused the **Association of Crisis Centers**, which until then

was an equal partner to the other organizations in the campaign, to organize its own demonstration in Rabin Square calling to annul the plea bargain. At the same time the rest of the organizations were also busy producing and publicizing a demonstration, without reaching agreement between coalition participants about the content of the advertisement publicizing the demonstration in the press and the substance of the protest itself. The **Crisis Centers** and additional organizations found themselves on one side of the fence, and opposing them were other organizations of the opinion that protest versatile in its contents should be created against the plea bargain, including disorderly conduct in the city streets. One of the disputes revolved around the question whether to demonstrate only against Katzav's plea bargain or to add to it also the protest against Ramon's return to Government following his conviction of performing an indecent act. Another controversy concerned the nature of the demonstration: on the one hand were the **Crisis Centers** and other organizations, supporting the recruitment of speakers for the rally mostly from the political-social mainstream, and on the other hand, other organizations claimed that coalition partners should be given maximal presence on the speakers' podium. The organizations differed also with regard to the nature of the protest. The **Crisis Centers** and additional organizations supported a legal and organized demonstration, which could mobilize the political consensus and bring it on board. Other organizations suggested that the flagrant breach of justice as it arose from the plea bargain invented by the Attorney General for the former President, necessitates the breach of societal order by demonstrators and creating an "impolite" protest.

The split that was expressed by fierce controversy behind the scenes of the rally eventually rose to the surface, and two demonstrations were held almost parallel to each other. In Rabin Square was an orderly rally with speakers, mostly from the political-media mainstream, and its message was the annulment of the plea bargain with Katzav. While members of all organizations were present in the audience, some of the organizations initiated an additional demonstration, which began just before the rally in the Square ended. More than a thousand women, many of whom identified themselves as victims and survivors of sexual violence for the first time, blocked roads and interrupted traffic in a call that was compatible with the general message of the campaign, that is, a call to remove sex offenders from government, cancel the plea bargain with Katzav and dismiss Haim Ramon from the Government.

The last month of the campaign was already laden with disputes, especially between the **Crisis Centers** and anti establishment organizations. Nonetheless, at the end of the campaign, when representatives of all the organizations met, they were able to converse and also discussed the conflict between them as well as their desire to continue working together in the future. All representatives admitted that

the campaign attained good achievements and congratulated its existence, and there was a feeling that the consolidating elements were stronger than the dividing ones.

Due to the development of events following the end of the campaign, including the appointment of Haim Ramon as Vice Prime Minister and deliberations on appeals against this appointment and against the Katzav plea bargain, the media continued to find interest in the activity of the women's organization on this issue. By now, additional organizations were asking to join the partnership, although in theory the work of the coalition was over. The campaign partnering women's organizations and additional organizations did not want to stop the activity.

The **Crisis Centers**, which prior to the campaign were, as mentioned, the organizations mostly identified with the subject of sexual violence, remained divided. Continuing the partnership really offered a golden opportunity to maintain and broaden public awareness on the subject that the centers address, namely the struggle against sexual violence. At the same time they feared, to a certain degree of justice that the content of the protests and some of the press releases produced on behalf of the women's organizations were not befitting their outlook and the nature of their activity. Some of the protests, and in the same manner some of the items published by the media, were noted for radical and anti-establishment discourse – and some of them even explicitly called to disrupt order and display disobedience toward the police during the demonstrations. While not all of the organizations agreed with the nature of the discourse and proceedings, the opposition came mainly from the **Crisis Centers**, who were apprehensive about being identified with values, content and activity that are unbecoming to the nature of their organizations. Some of the volunteers and hired staff of the **Crisis Centers** are not necessarily identified with left wing or anti-establishment positions. The Centers receive some of their budgets from government ministries, they work in cooperation with both the right and left wings of the Knesset on legislation amendments, and their main activity is in providing support services to survivors of sexual violence. For this reason the feminist anti-establishment activity which was budding during the campaign, and continued once it was over, alongside the discourse that grew in the media concerning the protest of the women's organizations and was partly identified with anti-establishment positions, exacerbated the conflict between the **Crisis Centers** and some of the organizations that continued to address the issue of sexual violence.

On the other hand, the growing motivation of many women's organizations to participate in the struggle and continue it further, prevented them from recognizing the evident difficulty of the **Crisis Centers** that had acted in this arena practically alone for decades. Even if during the campaign the **Crisis Centers** benefited from the immense visibility of the fight against sexual violence, and due to this could

also raise funds and grants for their activities, by the end of and consequent to the campaign, they were considered to be a source of contention by some of the other organizations, who were interested in going back and getting involved in the struggle over the issue in their own ways. The swift transitions from an exclusive issue attributed to one organization, into a broad issue identified with women's organizations, was an achievement on one hand, but on the other a source of conflict, the legitimacy of which was not recognized by all partners. The absence of an organized platform for discussion between all of the organizations due to the official ending of the campaign meant that from this stage onward the joint activity was conducted without a coordinator on salary.

From the time the campaign for the removal of sex offenders from government was officially over, and the short term coalition in fact ceased to exist, it actually became a long term coalition with no deadline, and the same conflicts characterizing partnerships that are not limited in time started to appear. Interviewees of the **Crisis Centers** expressed frustration resulting from the fact that they continued to assist sexual assault survivors daily and face the immense difficulties and great deal of work still remaining to be done concerning this issue and despite that, their achievements on the issue of fighting against sexual violence throughout the years were erased from the consciousness of some of the organizations. According to them, the success of the campaign gave some of the organizations the notion that public opinion change on the subject happened because of them, and now each of the organizations wanted to harvest the fruit of the year's achievements without recognizing that the **Crisis Centers** were first to bring the existence of a phenomenon of sexual violence to public awareness. These claims characterize the known conflict between organizations focusing mostly on aid and services, and organizations focusing mainly on protest and opposition. It should be emphasized that the **Crisis Centers** continually incorporate the aspect of social change into their work, both by active Knesset lobbying and by public events, although first and foremost they deal with support for survivors of sexual violence. The service providing organizations argue against the privilege of field activists, who are free to demonstrate for sublime ideas but don't have to face the complexity of providing support to victims of violence every single day. Conversely, protest organizations direct their claims at service providing organizations, as they are of the opinion that they work within the existing order, cooperating with the establishment and are not doing enough to change the social structure that produces more and more of such victims.

The discussion that continued to exist between the representatives almost exclusively by email, rather than communicating face to face, initially deepened the feeling that controversy overpowers the agreement. By the end of the campaign, what seemed to be a dispute that would be difficult to bridge, faded with the

realization that embarking on joint feminist activity reaps achievements that cannot be reached by only one organization. By the summer of 2008, one year after the end of the official campaign, 27 organizations succeeded once again to embark on a short term struggle against the phenomenon of sexual harassment by senior staff members of higher education institutions against students. Speedy communication on the email network, joint signatures on a demand to institute an ethical code forbidding intimate relationships between professors and students and an intense media campaign by the women's organizations, generated unprecedented achievement. A few weeks after the joint action, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem announced that it was adopting the demand to install an ethical code against sexual harassments, the Minister of Education announced that she would work to other institutions of higher education adopt this code, and journalists also mobilized to support the demands and discourse of the organizations on this issue.

Recommendations

1. Multi-organizational action necessitates a coordinator – an employee who will organize the joint activity, coordinate between all factors and activities, manage disputes and ensure that communication subsists between all activists. The absence of an employee and lack of finances for the continuation of orderly activity, were among the reasons for the friction that existed between the organizations at the end of the campaign for the removal of sex offenders from government. If the activists express willingness to maintain joint activity following the completion of the work of a short term coalition, all organizations should attend to securing funds that would enable the continuation of the organized activity.
2. In long term as well as in short term coalitions, it is recommended that all partner organizations contribute in accordance with their ability to the funding of joint activity. Even if there is variation in the amounts each organization is able to contribute, participation in funding will increase the commitment of all organizations to the particular activity, and enhance their involvement in the joint undertaking. Funding by all organizations would lessen allegations against the main organization funding the activity, that it controls the contents and nature of the protest for which the coalition was formed. Such was the case of the additional Supreme Court of Justice hearing against the appointment of Ramon to Vice Prime Minister, which was funded jointly by one foundation and eight organizations. Participation in funding amplified the experience of partnership between NGOs and recruited additional organizations, some of which were not previously active in the framework of the coalition, and by joining it they were in fact expressing their support of the struggle.
3. Experience demonstrates that short term coalitions succeed in raising feminist issues on the agenda and mobilize the public to act on their behalf. The organizations prove that they are able to come to agreements and reduce conflicts between them, as they operate within a time frame. In that case, foundations should encourage partnerships initiated by the organizations, knowing that inter-organizational partnerships formed for a limited time, succeed in addressing disputes and uniting for a joint struggle.
4. Short term coalitions cooperating for the purpose of a struggle on an issue identified with one of the partner organizations, are more committed than others to limit the time span of their activity, due to competition generated with time between the coalition and that specific organization. If there is a will to continue the common activity even after the limited time initially set for it, the coalition should be given leeway to express the variety of means of action and types of discourse, and not try to fuse the message of all organizations or to demand one single way of protest. The challenge facing the organizations

setting off into joint action is in providing space and recognition of versatile feminist perceptions, a constant attempt to generate a message integrating all of them and dialogue between women and organizations that succeeds not only to acknowledge diversity but also to listen to the other and to learn from it. Such a principled move could become the cornerstone of existence for a long term feminist movement and might interpret the successes accredited in recent years to inter-organizational coalitions into the creation of continuous activity of a wide and influential feminist body.

5. A short term coalition enables the mobilization of much effort and intense activity of all the participating *Amutot*. Most of them cannot afford to relieve themselves from their day-to-day activity for any length of time for the purpose of maintaining cooperation with other organizations. A coalition limited in time can maintain functional involvement of all participating organizations, unlike the tendency characterizing long term coalitions, which with time maintains continuous effective activity of only few of the partnering organizations.
6. A short term coalition can increase the number of issues that would urge the women's organizations for joint action. Alongside a few long term coalitions, many joint activities should be initiated with predefined beginning and ending times, and so to increase the involvement of organization activists in issues differing from their main area of activity. The plurality of short term coalitions would increase inter-organizational acquaintances and the knowledge of organizations about varied issues in the feminist field.

Common Space for Feminist Organizations

All interviewees expressed a desire to create partnerships that would address the enduring issues they deal with, as well as other subjects. Based on all of the abovementioned, it is therefore recommended to set up a permanent space for the activists in feminist organizations, that would enable inter-personal and inter-organizational acquaintance, communication, discussion of issues on the agenda, familiarity with aspects of knowledge of the participants and sharing of knowledge, joint construction of mechanisms for dealing with disagreements, and together, the continual creation of a feminist agenda. The intention is not to form an additional organization, but rather to create a physical and ideological, non-establishment and non-institutionalized space, that would facilitate such dialogue.

Especially with the competition intensifying between the organizations over visibility and resources, at a time during which the number of organizations in the feminist field rose dramatically and the issues of activity grew in number in the feminist-organizational space in Israel, so the need grows for a shared space that will establish the partnership and, doing so, would contribute to raising feminist issues on the public agenda.

In addition to the motivation the organizations have today, which is the promotion of the area of activity specific to them, they need to establish and strengthen a common space for all, in order to add to their knowledge as well as their ability to make achievements in the public field. If the feminist perception is based on the principle of the advantage of multiplicity over the singular, on the need to create a reciprocal and egalitarian outlook and on the abolishment of hierarchy structured in all levels of patriarchal society, it is important that each of the activists be committed to the complex undertaking, which is primarily the partial relinquishment of the need to accentuate the activity of the organization she is involved in, in order to act for the whole of feminist space and for the widening of its public influence.

This statement is not dismissive of the advantage of the existence of many organizations, and the understanding of the need of each organization to survive economically and work to promote its particular interests. Alongside the entirety of multi-organizational activity taking place today, it would be right to establish an additional space that could enable knowing, talking, initiating and acting together, thus realizing in practice the feminist values on behalf of which we all work. If we don't want to unknowingly reproduce what is known as "free market" competition, if there is motivation to dedicate activity not only to emphasizing advantages of "our" organization as compared to other organizations, if there is recognition of the fact that feminist ideology of all types is always based on the acknowledgment of the oppression of women in every aspect of life, then it might be required from all those involved in this field to get to know better additional aspects of knowledge and struggles than the ones they specialize in, and to nurture affinity between all of them and all of the issues that are in their hearts and souls.

Not for nothing was a decision made by **Isha L'Isha** at this time to initiate another national feminist conference, with a preparation process that included from the onset many representatives of feminist organizations and gatherings. Some claim that this feminist conference was meant in part to mark the beginning of a new era in the feminist herstory of Israel, in which feminist discourse and work might come together to form joint and continuous inter-organizational activity. The meetings in preparation for the conference and the joint consolidation of issues to be discussed earmarked an opportunity for feminist solidarity concerning issues in dispute as well. The fact that this conference took place in Nazareth, in November 2008, is also noteworthy, due to the growing inclusion into the feminist field of the need for joint and mutual work by Jewish and Palestinian women, and of women from different geographical-social-economic areas.

This feminist conference ended just recently, and at the time of writing this document a concluding meeting, intending to produce conclusions from the process that transpired and draw directions for future action, had not yet taken place. Hence, the outcomes of the conference cannot be elaborated on at this stage, except by

expressing in succinct manner what happened in the conference and what seems to have been missing from it. Women involved in preparation of the conference got acquainted with an immense variety of women from other organizations and gatherings, whom they did not meet previously nor shared personal and political acquaintances with. Some assert that the prolonged process of preparation of the conference generated its major advantage – the opportunity for a continuous and extensive dialogue between activists from different organizations. The fact that there was considerable visibility of activists from Palestinian organizations and women from anti-establishment organizations, both during the preparation process before the conference as well as within its framework, is for some of the participants an advantage and for others a disadvantage. Most Jewish feminist organizations focusing on providing individual services either did not participate in the conference or took part only in a small part of it. Some of them maintained that even if they did endorse the dominant presence of a radical-political discourse in the context of the fight against occupation of the Territories and the discrimination against Palestinian women in Israel, the price for this was the absence of extensive enough tackling of other issues very much troubling the feminist field in Israel. Part of the conference participants emphasized that its uniqueness was in the absence of severe conflicts, which characterized some of the preceding feminist conferences revolving the issue of oppression of Palestinian women in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Others said that although they were opposed to this issue taking over most of the discourse, they were apprehensive about expressing it openly, as they might have encountered protest against them from most other participants.

It is possible that in continuance of the joint campaigns, the national feminist conference and the ongoing discourse formed on the email network over the past two years, a common and mutual discussion could be held with foundation representatives to address the present means of funding. Integrating funding factors into the existing need for joint and effective feminist work can strengthen the probability of generating extensive, continuous feminist activity by multitudes of women and organizations. As mentioned, it is not about funding a new or existing organization, which would amalgamate and represent the joint activity of other organizations, but rather concerns the funding of mutual activity, when a desire for such action arises by the existing organizations in the field.

Summary

The analysis of Jewish and Jewish-Palestinian Feminist organizations in Israel sought to review the main features of the organizations' activity and prominent trends in this field. The choice to focus on specific features and analyze them extensively emanates both from contents raised in interviews with representatives of the various organizations and the interpretation of these issues according to perceptions and narratives guiding the writer's outlook. Therefore, there is no dispute over the fact that the analysis is based on the subjective stance of the writer, who has been involved in the feminist field for many years. And yet, despite the necessity to summarize the diverse and abundant work done in this field, this analysis attempts to communicate as many points of view as possible. Neither does the analysis presume to present all characteristics of the feminist-organizational field, but rather to mention the major subjects of activity and discourse and to mark directions for future dialogue and activity.

The report also touches upon the challenges and difficulties characterizing the activity in the feminist-organizational field, but the aim is not to criticize conduct in this respect, but to highlight the possibilities embodied in developing dialogue on the various issues. Needless to mention, the writer considers herself a part of the dynamic described in the report, and not an external observer looking in on what happens within the organizations and between them. Writing in the third person stems, among other things, from reference to the points of view expressed by interviewees and meant to enable the reader an overview of the characteristics and trends in the field, without determining a singular, supposedly objective picture of the feminist organizations in Israel.

It should be mentioned that the report reviews and analyzes exclusively the Jewish feminist organizations and the feminist organizations mutual to both Jewish and Palestinian women. The Palestinian feminist organizations within Israel were dedicated a separate report of the *Altufula* Organization. The necessity to produce two separate reports reflects the Israeli political reality in all aspects

of life. The separation of Jews and Palestinians in residential areas is not merely a territorial distinction but in essence a racial, national and class based segregation, intended to reduce opportunities for encounter and communication between the two populations. In order to sustain direct communication between Jews and Palestinians, an organizational effort and ideological intent are required.

Most feminist organizations comply with this national separation as there is no possibility for both populations to meet on an equal footing, due to the political reality in Israel and the region. Some of the organizations make the national distinction because of their awareness of the inability to have equal activity for Jewish and Palestinian woman. In organizations working against the occupation and for equality between Israeli Jews and Palestinians in Israel and the region, the Jewish activists are sometimes more dominant than the Palestinian ones in the internal organizational discourse. This hierarchy reflects both the national-cultural discrimination existing between the two populations and the unwillingness of many Palestinian women to be involved in Jewish or joint organizations, in which they are sometimes a numeric and political minority. They would rather be involved in separate Palestinian organizations. The result is that in the leftist feminist organizations there is sometimes a minority of Palestinian participants and a majority of Jewish activists. Additionally, the freedom of action and protest of Jewish men and women is exponentially greater in a Jewish State, whereas Palestinian women might pay a much higher personal and political price for their protest. As a result, it is only feminist solidarity that can overcome the existing situation, along with feminist insistence to link the different types of occupation endured by women and by other political minorities. The complex challenge of creating a wide feminist movement, that accentuates visibility and leadership of the population of most weakened women in Israeli society, cannot be desisted even if each organization is entitled to focus on its field of activity and despite the fact that the load of activities within each organization leaves narrow space for additional work. This is another way in which the feminist field can suggest a substantive and candid alternative to the patriarchal-political agenda in Israel.

Some feminist organizations adhere to national segregation as they are unwilling to enter the political debate between activists supporting the continuation of the occupation and those opposing it. The organizations refrain from the argument in order to recruit women from a variety of political stances to their ranks, united by the issues these organizations are dealing with. The attempt to mobilize more and more Jewish women to feminist activity prevents many organizations from making a clear connection between the implications of gender based occupation and national based occupation. A division is therefore created between feminist organizations based on the perception of “women for women”, and feminist organizations that insist on the link between all types of occupation, which women and other political

minorities in Israel and the region live under. The latter claim that as long as there is no acknowledgement of the inherent relationship between sexual, physical and economic violence directed at women, and the national and cultural oppression some of them are under, the state of women in Israel and the region would not improve. These organizations suggest that as long as Israeli society and its political institutions are based on a militaristic-masculine outlook and the dominance of the army and military “security” in budgets as well as the general discourse, the dimensions of violence directed at women will not decrease, and women would be the major public still to suffer.

The above description reflects one of the fundamental features of the feminist field in Israel – the national segregation that exists in most organizations. This could therefore be the place to wish that in the future feminist space in Israel will succeed in offering an alternative to the political-masculine reality in which women live. Feminist organizations suggest alternative narratives to patterns of discrimination and violence against women, and might in the future also suggest an alternative to the present segregation policy separating the Jewish and Palestinian populations in Israel. But as long as the organizations continue to be divided along the lines of the national dichotomy rather than joining forces, the separation and disparities will be duplicated also for women on both sides of the physical and ideological fence. This desire does not ignore the differences that sometimes exist between issues troubling Jewish women and Palestinian women; nor the fact that Palestinian women are forced to confront not only gender discrimination, but also racial-national discrimination. The feminist perceptions are meant to alter the existing social-political structure and to suggest alternatives based on equality for women and the extermination of all types of masculine violence oppressing women, and therefore it is recommended that the whole Jewish-feminist field would consider it a challenge to confront the national segregation also dividing its own ranks.

The organizations demonstrate several additional important characteristics, which should also be considered as challenges facing the active women in these organizations. The rapid growth in number of organizations operating in Israel today and the differentiation of specialties and identities of the organizations, have created on the one hand a welcomed plurality of areas of action in the feminist field, and on the other, have increased competition over visibility and sources of funding. The increase in areas of activity enables to respond to the needs of many more women dealing with hardship. The multitude of organizations also suggests a broader arena of activities for women, be it mental help, legal advocacy, personal, political and economic empowerment, or different types of protest action. However it should be mentioned that most women active in the feminist field tend to belong to and identify with one organization, and are not inclined to divide their activity between numerous organizations. And as some of the interviewees asserted,

the “organizational identification” is stronger than the “feminist identification”. This is why, according to them, the ability to initiate extensive shared activity by all organizations, is impeded and the activists have a tendency to play down the importance of other organizations in comparison with the significance of “their” organization.

Despite the tendency of organizations to compete for visibility and resources, the phenomenon of short term coalitions and feminist partnerships is accelerating, and succeeding to create and perpetuate cooperation between a large number of organizations and perceptions. Convening for joint activity around a time limited campaign and the successes gained by such campaigns in the effort to raise issues which were previously of lesser visibility on to the public and parliamentary agenda, produced a clear desire among all organizations to continue acting that way. Indeed, long and short term coalitions now and again have to face conflicts between organization representatives, but the conflicts haven’t prevented the women from understanding that the joint activity begets impressive results, and that the organizations that have joined together are rewarded by it.

The coalitions, both long and short term ones, in which most conflicts appeared, were the ones addressing an issue identified with one or more of the participating organizations. If the partnership is extended and the common activity has no clear and agreed end date, the conflicts tend at some stage to deepen and overpower the understandings between them, and it then takes time to generate additional broad joint activity. And more: the more successful the common activity proves to be, so grows the number of organizations wanting not only to participate in it, but also to take credit for it, and that is another one of the challenges facing the various organizations today. In recent years, some organizations accomplished respectable achievements as a result of the joint efforts, but they have not yet created an organized dynamic of dealing with crises.

Additional challenges in the feminist field result from the transparency of Mizrahi women and lesbians among the employed staff and central activists of most organizations. The structure established by the second wave of feminism in Israel, namely the Quarters Policy, quickly faded and Ashkenazi heterosexual employees are once again dominant in most organizations. Mizrahi women in Israel continue to be a target public for the aid and service activities of most organizations, but either consciously or unconsciously they are distanced from the organizational leadership. The continuously expanding distinction between experts and educated “professionals” and the “assistance recipients” amplifies the ethnic discrimination in the feminist field. Since the recognized knowledge in Israel is that of an academic-western education, and since many organizations are inclined to hire academic employees, the disparity between women who could, by virtue of their economic status and ethnic origin, attain higher education, and women whose class and

origin prevented this opportunity from them, only increases further. Although some of the organizations support affirmative action for women in work places, not all of them implement this principle in order to correct the discrimination against Mizrahi women.

The lesbian women formerly organized in **KLAF** and the protest movement **Black Laundry**, both of which are no longer active, have either partially turned to activity in other organizations or substantially reduced their feminist activity. The fact that only two of 46 organizations have lesbian directors or coordinators is one proof of the transparency of the lesbian issue in the feminist agenda in Israel. Many lesbian women, who previously led numerous activities in the feminist field, stopped their activity altogether because they thought the goals of the community in Israel were achieved. Indeed the lesbian community's focus on the right to form families generated social and legal-judicial achievements on this issue, but it also concealed the discrimination and hetero-sexism being directed at lesbian women from the public agenda. Many of the lesbian women testify to various types of humiliation directed at them in public spaces and the "pornographization" of the attitude towards them. The fact that lesbian relationships are no longer defined as pathological in the SDM psychiatric guide contributed to the alleged normalization of gender identity, but also made the social-heterosexual oppression still affecting lesbians transparent.

The issue of the legitimate integration of transgenders in the feminist field had also not been thoroughly discussed yet. Some of the feminist activists outright reject the possibility of including women whose sex is not compatible with their gender in feminist conferences and events. The rejection of the legitimacy of assimilating into the feminist field of those not complying with the common gender division, is the result of suspicion and fear, as expressed by some of the organization representatives, toward biological women who "look like" men. According to them, the feminist field provides the public of women with protected space, and the presence of women in it who chose to be seen "as men" undermines their sense of security. The fact that in the national feminist conference in November 2008, transgenders participated and there was a discussion space addressing relevant issues for sexual and gender political minorities, indicates an opportunity to create lesbian and trans feminist activity, after a prolonged period in which the "fourth quarter" became transparent.

An additional challenge facing the feminist field is the integration of religious feminist organizations into the present joint activity. Besides **Kolech**, the other organizations dealing with the issue are mostly not involved in an ongoing manner in multi-organizational activities and struggles. The subjects these organizations address are sometimes foreign to other organizations, but that is precisely why they should be recruited into the existing activity, and their experience and contents of

their work be learned from.

The multitude of challenges facing feminist organizations today does not lessen from the substantial achievements attained by the feminist field in Israel in recent years. Almost daily media presence, protests and demonstrations with high visibility and real impact, promotion and legislation of laws for women, precedential judicial rulings in favor of women and for social justice for political, ethnic and economic minorities, an extending linkage between different types of occupation for the creation of a society that is not violent toward its minorities, significant growth in the number of women involved in the activity of organizations, a rise in the number of issues addressed by the organizations, the creation of partnerships of different types and for varying purposes and the possibility to receive help on a wide variety of issues, is only a partial list of the successes accredited to them. All these should be supplemented with the continuous dialogue that exists between feminist organizations in the email network, enabling consistent and shared raising of pressing issue on the public agenda. In that sense, the feminist field in Israel succeeded in creating from within a dynamic of mutual discourse and inter organizational partnership, which, although bound today mostly to the email network, is unique in the civil society of Israel.

From a State founded on the basis of the myth of the “New Jew” – the white, young, tall, muscular, brave man defeating his enemies, and from a society that for decades denied the existence of inequalities between its men and women, there is no doubt that the public in Israel had developed awareness of the existing discrimination and violence against women. The forty six Jewish and joint Jewish-Palestinian feminist organizations, along with the Palestinian feminist organizations in Israel, produce a remarkable amount of activities, all of which have made discrimination of women in Israel noticeably present and less likely to be silenced.

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* The references are in Hebrew unless indicated otherwise. English translations are available on most listed websites.