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Gender Conflict Society and Human Rights: SHUR Findings

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Introduction

SHUR – *Human Rights in Conflict – The Role of Society* - set out to explore the interaction between ethnic conflict, civil society organisations and human rights discourse and practice. In particular SHUR investigates which specific actions of a set of civil society organisations operating in a conflict situation contribute to the securitising, de-securitising and holding of the conflict and to the violation, reparation or establishment of human rights. The SHUR project analyses the impact of civil society on human rights in four conflict environments: Bosnia Herzegovina, Cyprus, Israel/Palestine and the Turkey-Kurdish question.

Gender is a key variable for explaining, understanding and ultimately transforming armed conflict. Gender is also a key dynamic at the intersection between understanding and halting conflict, defining and securing human rights in conflict situations, as well as postulating and explaining the role of civil society in the context of war. Gender, therefore, is a productive analytical lens within the SHUR project, building theoretical and empirical bridges between the three pillars of this endeavour: conflict, human rights and civil society.

This paper explores the theoretical implications of understanding ethno-political conflict, civil society and human rights from a gender perspective and presents the empirical findings of the SHUR project in the four case study settings. Firstly, a definition of gender is provided and the relation between gender, conflict, human rights and civil society is explored. Gender is then mapped out on the analytical categories relevant to SHUR's theoretical understanding of civil society's identity, action and impact. The empirical findings of SHUR are then presented, and implication for policy and challenges are presented in the conclusion.

Understanding Gender and Conflict

For the purpose of the SHUR project gender is defined as a *set* of norms and practices constructed in a specific location and time, shaping individual, symbolic and structural subjectivities and constructing and governing hierarchical relations of power within political communities (Reiman, 2002). Norms and practices encompass socially accepted constructions

of masculinity and femininity (Connell, 2001), that permeate individual and collective identities as well as social spaces. Gender constructs subjectivities (Butler, 2005) on an individual, symbolic and structural level (Reiman, 2002). It shapes individual identities and it is also symbolically mapped out on a set of binary oppositions e.g. public-private masculine/feminine, culture/nature, rational/emotional, mind/body, formal/informal etc and on an institutionally sanctioned sexual division of labour. At a structural level gender legitimises a web of power relations based on these dualisms (Reiman, 2002). Masculinity and femininity as structures of social practice (Connell, 2001) exist in hierarchical relations of power, with each other and also within. There is not one but multiple femininities and masculinity hierarchically ordered on a spectrum, whose apex can be defined as a hegemonic or dominant masculinity/femininity.

Both the horizontal, individual to collective, and vertical, devalued to hegemonic, dimensions of gender are key to the intersection of gender with conflict. SHUR defines conflict as “the incompatibility of subject positions” (Diez and Pia, 2007). Conflict becomes violent as a consequence of a securitisation move. Securitisation implies the discursive postulation of *the Other* as an existential threat to the subject. Subject positions as well as securitisation are highly gendered discourses. Gender is a marker of subjectivity and a subjectivity that is constructed and mobilised to perpetuate the war effort. In conflict societies a strict division of sexual labour is enforced, and highly dichotomic understandings of femininity and masculinity become hegemonic.

Securitisation is therefore also the mobilisation of hegemonic understandings of gender, which are enforced on individual, symbolic and structural levels to sustain the war effort. Gendered dichotomies, self / other, friend / enemy; masculinity / femininity, “just warrior” / “beautiful soul” (Elhstain, 1987), contribute to postulate *the Other* as an existential threat. In a society mobilised for conflict the blurring of gender identities is seen as an existential threat and securitisation implies a hardening of the gender borders, as well as repression of non hegemonic masculinities and femininities.

The warrior, the conflict’s hegemonic masculinity, is a “male identity” (Karner, 1998), shaped by purging, on an individual, symbolic and structural level, typically feminine characteristics, such as compassion, feeling and forgiveness. Conversely securitised femininities relegate women to the role of cheerleaders, home makers and more crucially physical and symbolic reproducers of the nation. In women the existential threat posed by the Other becomes embodied. So called “deviant” models of femininity and devalued

masculinities, warrior women, homosexuals and conscience objectors are demonised and constructed as the enemy within (Kesic, 1999), as the blurring of the masculinity-femininity binary implies the blurring of the Self-Other binary at the root of the securitisation move.

Because of its role in the discursive construction of *the Other* gender plays a particularly relevant role in ethno political conflicts. *Ethnos* is defined in reference to a common language, culture, religion, race and mythic ancestry, a strong sense of belonging with rigid criteria for membership. These criteria are not neutral or structural; they are histories and discourses of gender which often are mapped out on women's bodies, particularly in times of war. ⁱThe woman's body becomes the living border that separates the ethnic group from the rest, that defines membership and exclusion, Self and Other. In the context of war, as borders of the ethnic group harden, women's bodies become an even stronger marker of identity and essential to the survival of the group itself. When ethnic struggles are aimed at self determination as a nation, women come to embody and reproduce the nation itself, as well as the aspiration to nationhood. Wartime demographic policies and the use of rape as a tool of ethnic cleansing are two glaring examples of the use of women's bodies in ethnic/nationalist strugglesⁱⁱ. As markers between self and others women as well as non hegemonic genders are highly exposed to human rights violations within conflict.

Understanding Gender and Human Rights

There is a complex and productive relationship between gender and human rights' formulation and promotion, as it is underlined by feminist struggles' ambiguity with human rights discourses. Feminists have critiqued human rights from a gender and cultural perspective. They claim that current human rights formulation carry a white, middle class male bias, and design a juridical space which is eminently public, failing to unpack the private space, traditionally inhabited by women, and leaving unchallenged relation of power within the family unit and society at large. Moreover Feminist activists from the South have critiqued human rights from a cultural perspective as well as from a gender one, claiming that rights as they are enshrined by international legal documents are irrelevant to their difference, to their location within particular power relations within their community and within the international arena.

Despite these criticisms, women activists have used human rights as a tool for political change, stressing that the notion of humanity can be reclaimed by traditionally excluded

identities, rendering the concept of “human” more inclusive of *Others* such as women, sexual and racial minorities etc. (Butler, 2005). Securitisation relies on the discursive construction of the *Other* as an existential threat, in other words in the de-humanisation of the enemy. The extension of the concept of human to the *Other*, is potentially transformative, as it implicitly counteracts the securitisation move. The gender-human right nexus is therefore fundamental to the understanding of de-securitising impact within a conflict context.

The other key debate in the context of human rights and gender is the debate on individual versus group rights. There is a productive yet problematic tension between gender and human rights, as the human rights of “women” invokes the claim of an individual right on the base of a collective identity. Our definition of gender as an individual, symbolic and structural marker of identity points towards interdependency of the individual collective and structural nature of gender identities. The importance of the individual/collective right discourse in the context of war is pivotal as the invocation of collective rights can be manipulated for securitising moves within conflict. The understanding of rape as a war time human right violation is a glaring example of securitising effects of human rights invocations. When rape is conceptualised and articulated as a violation of a collective identity, there is a risk that the concept of “women” can be mobilised to sustain a securitisation move. Securitization relies on rigid gender identities, including the identity of women as gatekeepers of the “ethnos”(Cockburn and Zarkov, 2004). It is important, in the context of violation of rights based on gender, that reparation of rights is strongly anchored in the individual “human” identity of the subject. This will have important implication in the impact civil society actors in conflict have on human rights.

Understanding Gender and Civil Society

In order to analyse the impact of civil society organisation’ action on conflict and on the violation or reparation of human rights of women and LGBT it is useful to map out gender onto SHUR’s theoretical understanding of conflict civil society (CoSO). The variables identified by SHUR as fundamental to estimate the impact of CoSO’s are the context in which CoSO operate, their identity, their framework of its action and the political opportunity structure.

Definition and Context

A civil society organisation (CSO) is defined as a more or less institutionalised association of people that is both a product of existing power structures and an agent of political change. (Putnam, 1992; MacAdam, et al, 1996). Women, as well as LGBT and racial minorities have traditionally been excluded from the public sphere, and have therefore populated the margins, coalescing structurally around civil society movements. Civil society therefore is a promising political avenue for progressive gender change. At the same time civil society organisations, are a product of existing structures (MacAdam *et al*, 1996), therefore embedded in relations of power, which are highly gendered and hierarchical locally, nationally and trans-nationally. The tension between civil society and gender is heightened or diminished according to a set of factors, including context. In the SHUR project contextual features are given by the presence of absence of the state, by the level of domestic development and the presence of international actors.

Gender as a civil society discourse exists in tension with state structures. In democratic states civil society organisations can be conventionally understood as based on the action-guiding principles of minimising violence in daily life; finding ways to debate public affairs; recognising human equality; and seeking inclusion, therefore gender agendas should find easier avenues to be affirmed and transform political practice. Civil society organisations however may also contend the political arena for the curtailment of gender equality and rights of women and LGBT. In authoritarian states gender agendas may be co-opted and/or human rights of women and LGBT severely repressed. In former communist states for example, propaganda paid lip service to gender equality but feminist struggles were subordinated to the communist cause. In a vast number of authoritarian states homosexuality is punished with death, and women's rights activist repressed. In these environments civil society movements can play an important role in furthering rights of women and LGBT but are also constantly menaced and repressed.

When the state is failing or re-constructing, political tensions are higher and stakes more fluid. Civil society organisations therefore can have an even stronger impact on gender norms and gender change, The instability and power vacuum opens possibilities for marginalised actors to re-negotiate relations of power, but levels of violence may be higher and violation of rights more frequent. In conflict situations feminist struggles may also be co-opted by other causes, and gender progressive civil society organisations operating within a

structure of resistance may find themselves silenced and marginalised when the other actors gain powerⁱⁱⁱ.

The social development contextual feature of SHUR's understanding of CoSO's can be understood as the state of gender relations within a specific country, before, during and after the conflict. For example, the level of gender equality in the home and workplace, the legal status and social acceptance of LGBT, the political representation of women and LGBT, and the level of violence are all important social development indicators. Depending on the level of social development gender progressive CoSO can have a different impact on long term equality struggles. Conflict can also act as a catalyst, for example recent ethno-political conflicts have facilitated access to political representation of women.

The impact of the internationalisation of civil society organisations action within a given society, especially in conflict situations is also an important contextual feature that underscores our understanding of global civil society. The impact of internationalisation on CoSO in the gender domain can be counter intuitive. This complexity applies to all categories of global civil society organisations: liberal humanitarian and relief organizations; politically or financially co-opted organizations; and militarily embedded organizations. Liberal humanitarian organisations are more likely to promote a progressive gender agenda and may positively interact with local civil society but can also reiterate hegemonic power relations on the base of culture, race and class. The same analysis applies to financially co-opted organisations as well as liberal humanitarian and relief organisations^{iv}.

Finally, given the strong role that gender plays in constructing and sustaining military culture (both armies, paramilitary organisations, militants and private security companies) the gender impact of military embedded organisations is likely to be significant. While improved security and military presence may better access to services for women (such as schools etc), hyper-masculine practices that sustain military culture may hamper progressive gender change and counter the efforts of local and international feminist civil society organisations (Enloe, 1993). Rape carried out by soldiers/insurgents/private military troops, and military fuelled prostitution are the most fragrant examples of the negative impact of military embedded organisations on gender.

In highly fluid political environments, such as in conflict ridden societies, gender identities become polarised to sustain the securitisation move. The likelihood of progressive gender change, therefore, is mediated by CoSO in complex, multifaceted ways, depending on identity, framework of action and political opportunity structure as well as context.

Gender and CoSO's identity

The classification of CoSO in terms of identity and ideological background is key to evaluate their potential impact of CoSO presence and action on gender dynamics in a conflict ridden society as gender dynamics in turn shape those very identities and imbue understandings of the Self. SHUR adopts four main classifications of civil society organisations grouped: egalitarian, multiculturalist, assimilationist and racist. To all four the construction of gender identities is fundamental. Egalitarian and sometimes multicultural CoSO are more likely to identify with gender egalitarian agendas and promote progressive gender change; assimilationist and racist CoSO are more likely to be constructed on disciplinary and conservative understandings of masculinity and femininity and their presence/actions may hamper progressive gender change. Even egalitarian CoSO's gender agenda however should not be assumed uncritically, since all CoSO are embedded in relations of power, hegemonic in terms of gender, race and class. For example the bi-communal feminist organisation Women in Black in Israel has been critiqued for a strong class bias, which has substantially limited the impact of the organisations' action on the conflict and progressive gender change (Jacobi, 1999). The elaboration on the field data will provide further understanding of the dynamics connected to the CoSO's identity and human rights.

Gender and Frameworks of Action

In terms of framework of action CoSO interact and act on gender in conflict. SHUR's theoretical framework includes four different frameworks of action: conflict escalation, management, resolution and transformation. CoSO operating in a conflict escalating mode are likely to mobilise rigid gender identities as part of the securitisation effort, thus increasing the likelihood of women's and LGBT rights violations as violence increases and borders between the Self and the Other become more rigid. We have extensively argued that gender is a key mediator of this dynamic, and within conflict situations the battles between Self and Other are often carried out on women's bodies, and through discriminatory and disciplining practices on non hegemonic sexualities.

The conflict management framework underplays gender as a level of analysis. This approach therefore is likely to underestimate both the effect of CoSO on gender norms present in a conflict society as well as the significance of the gender agenda of CoSO in shaping

peace. In this approach CoSO, such as families, religious groups and markets are a black box, where gender relations of power remain unquestioned and irrelevant to the action of CoSO themselves. Moreover this framework fosters a stereotypical understanding of gender roles, assuming women as victims in need of protection, cheerleaders, homemakers, nation embodiments and ethnic borders and rarely actors in shaping conflict and potentially peace. Women can be peace makers on a micro-level, but women's political role is underplayed

The Conflict Resolution framework is better suited, to acknowledge and analyse CoSO's actions and their impact on gender but it is still gender blind. Conflict resolution fails to acknowledge women's needs and in particular physical needs, so crucial in conflict society where women's bodies are sites of securitisation struggles and fighting (Reiman, 2005). Burton's needs theory subordinates gender needs in line with the status quo of gender and race relations and fails to grasp inequality and injustice perpetrated and sustained because of gender and race hierarchies.

The Conflict Transformation/Peace building framework's understanding of identity transformation offers more promising prospects to include gender progressive CoSO and building more equal and just post conflict society. The conflict transformation approach focuses on conditions of social injustice, unequal development and discrimination, which generate the structural precepts of conflict. Gender discrimination is quintessentially part of these inequalities, and it is one of the structural injustices that need to be addressed in order to construct durable peace.

Gender, political opportunity structure and impact

The Political Opportunity Structure category of SHUR's analysis is the final important feature to understand of CoSO on peace, human rights and gender. Timing, the domestic institutional framework, the level of development, economic, social and cultural spheres, the international system and actors operating within it play a key part in shaping the context and the political opportunity structure of CoSO. Each of these aspects, together with each of the CoSO, interact with the gender subtext and the likelihood of the violation of human rights before, during and post conflict. The impacts of CoSO activities in conflict can be fuelling, holding and peacemaking. All pass through understanding of gender, promote gender agendas and affect gender justice, therefore long-term transformation of a society.

Having mapped out gender on the theoretical underpinning of the SHUR project we shall now analyse the findings of the SHUR field research, trying to address some key questions: how does gender interact with the different conflicts analysed? Which organisations, with what human rights actions and in what circumstances can build peace and a more equal society?

Gender, Conflict Society and Human Rights , the SHUR findings

All organisations researched and interviewed by SHUR are embedded in a system of gender relations of power, in contexts where conflict hardens and opens to renegotiation gender identities and political spaces. All organisations therefore have an impact on gender relations. For the purpose of this paper, however we will focus on two kinds of actors that we think have then most interesting impact for gender and human rights in conflict. The organisations are selected on the base of two features: how gender interacts with their identity and how gender interacts with their action.

- **Gender Identity:** In this category we place CoSO's whose identity is informed by a hegemonic gender identity– for example associations of mothers, victims or families of victims. In this category we also place CoSO whose identity is based on non hegemonic gender identities, such as associations of male victims, demobilised soldiers and conscience objectors.
- **Gender Agenda:** In this category we place CoSO who strive to bring forward a progressive gender agenda, such as women's rights organisations and LGBT activists.

The types of action/frameworks of action which we feel are particularly relevant to the impact of the gender, human rights conflict nexus are the following:

- **Retributive actions:** by this we mean actions that aim at restore or give retribution to victims for human rights violations that occurred during escalating phases and/or are still occurring (Framework of Action being escalation or resolution).
- **Reconciliation actions:** such as bi-communal initiatives and dialogue building actions (Framework of Action being resolution or transformation).

- **Transformative actions:** such as those actions aimed at shifting gender power relations and bettering women and LGBT access to rights and/or services in a conflict or post conflict phase (Framework of Action transformation).

Contextual and political opportunity structure features are also key variables, in particular the most relevant to our case studies are:

- The level of gender equality within the society and the presence of gender progressive activism prior to the conflict.
- The level of gender related violence prior and within the conflict (for example the practice of honour crimes; or the widespread use of rape as a tool of ethnic conflict).
- The interaction between international players and international gender agendas and local CoSO ownership of feminist discourses.

Finally the data raises a number of issues with regards to impact:

- The short term/long term impact of transformative action and the holding peace-building continuum.
- The individual/collective dimension of human rights claimed by women and LGBT and their impact.
- The impact of retributive actions/transitional justice claims.

Gender Identity CoSO

One of the most interesting example fo CoSO in the scope for SHUR's research are the associations of mothers, victims and families of victims of the conflict. These organisations are present in all conflicts analysed, and the ubiquity of these associations seems to confirm the argument that women's identities: mother and victim are hegemonic identities in conflict situations. In terms of context, it is interesting to note that associations of victims can emerge in the post conflict phase (in the case of Bosnia for example) or can be present in phases of frozen conflict (as in the case of Cyprus and of Turkey). Organisation's identities vary in different contexts and within each context as well. We find a variety of civic

post- national CoSO (Bosnia), multicultural CoSO (Turkey) and assimilationist CoSO (Turkey). The actions of these organisations are mostly retributive actions and in some cases reconciliation actions. The impact observed is usually fuelling or holding. In estimating the impact, the identity of CoSO seemed to have been the most important variable, with POS and FOA being particularly relevant variables for multicultural CoSO's impact.

We have argued that discourses of gender contribute to securitisation by positing the "Other" as an existential threat. The "mother" and "victim" (of rape in particular) hegemonic identities are structural to securitisation moves: where mothers are the "reproducers" of the nation and rape the embodied symbol of the trespassing of the ethnic border. It follows that CoSO of "mothers" and "victims" can reproduce discourses of securitisation fostering conflict escalation. On the other hand "Mothers" and victims/ families of victims associations can have a holding or peace-building impact, when they act to reconcile communities on the base of the "shared" "mother" and "victim" identities.

How does the hegemonic identity mother interact structurally with the two opposite securitising and resolution discourses? Different identities, framework of actions and political opportunity structures accounts for this apparent contradiction. The understanding of individual identity as the overlapping of plural affiliations (Sen; 2006) has been applied to the SHUR scope of analysis by Gentile (Gentile, 2008). This approach contributes to understand the different impacts of CoSO, as different identity within an individual and group of individuals come to reinforce or contradict each-other. In the case of assimilationist organisations working within the Turkey/Kurdish issue for example, the hegemonic identity "mother" aligns with the ethnicist/ assimilationist identity Turkish to construct the Kurds as an existential threat. On the contrary in the case of a civic post national CoSO in Bosnia, the "hegemonic identity" mother counteracts the ethnic identity on the base of a shared human and gender identity (Gentile, 2008). The association's action therefore is mostly in terms of reconciliation and retribution, achieving a non securitising impact.

The impact of multiculturalist CoSO is more complex, as data shows that framework of action and political opportunity structure may be more influential on impact in the case of these organisations. In fact, by claiming the rights of only one group the Multicultural CoSO incurs in a higher risk of unintended securitisation. This is the case of a mother's association in Turkey where the request for cultural rights has fuelled conflict, even if their intention was a peace building one. The fuelling impact may result from the context and political opportunity structure of the conflict, in particular the nature of the Turkish state and the context of civil

society activism therein. In other cases it is the political opportunity structure that further affects the fuelling impact. For example, an association of mothers of victims in Bosnia requesting reparation unintentionally fuelled the conflict by perpetrating securitising discourse, positing *the Other* as a monster, a criminal and an existential threat.

The issue of unintended consequences of reparation actions is an important one. In the Bosnian context in particular attempts to transitional justice fostered by local and international organisations have often resulted in fuelling the conflict by maintaining a highly securitised environment. To better understand the dynamics of this action-impact nexus it is relevant to discuss the issue of transitional justice for rape victims.

The widespread use of rape as a tool of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia prompted the international community to declare rape a gross violation of human rights and a tool of genocide. An International Tribunal has been instituted to trial and punish the perpetrators of genocide, and mass rapes. The effectiveness of transitional justice in restoring the rights of women victim of rape in Bosnia has been widely contested as well as the peace building impact of this endeavour. If the failure is partly to attribute to procedural issues, a more fundamental concern attains to the perpetuation of discourses of rape as a violation of the right of a whole population, of an ethnos, with women conceptualised exclusively as victims. The understanding of rape as a “collective” ethnic group right as opposed to the violation of an individual woman’s right has been very problematic. When rape becomes a crime against an ethnic identity it reinforces securitisation discourses and leaves women re-traumatised by the reparation experience as conflict, once again is waged on their body. (Mertus, 2005).

Further analysis of CoSO and their action confirms that there is a link between hegemonic understanding of gender and fuelling impacts. CoSO whose membership is based on non hegemonic gender identities, for example deconstructed masculinities concur to this argument proving that when understandings of masculinity are exploded and hegemonic masculinities crumble, there is further space for transformative action. Male victims of conflict related violence, former prisoners and male relatives of the missing seem to be more prone to act in conflict resolution mode, promoting reconciliation and the rights of victims on the base of their shared “victim” identity. The identity of “victim” is a “feminised” identity, renegotiating spaces for alternative understanding of masculinities beyond the hegemonic warrior identity, which is structural to securitising moves. In the same way, conscience objectors organisations, in Israel for example, contribute to de-securitising impacts by questioning the status quo of accepted male behaviour that is serve the nation’s cause for

survival. A comparison between associations of male and female victims across and within different case studies would be interesting to evaluate the impact of more fluid, renegotiated, exploded gender identities on conflict.

Gender Progressive CoSO

The second group of relevant actors to our analysis are what we can call “gender progressive” CoSO. By gender progressive CoSO we mean those organisations that promote the formal protection or reparation for violation of women’s rights and LGBT rights and promote further inclusion of women and LGBT in the post conflict society. In terms of context these organisation may have been founded before or to deal with issues not relating to the conflict (in Israel and Turkey for example), or may be instituted as a result of the conflict (in Bosnia, Cyprus and Turkey). In terms of identity, the vast majority of these organisations are civic, post-national or multicultural. In terms of framework of action these organisation work on issues directly relating to the conflict (conflict resolution), but also on issues that don’t relate *strictu sensu* to the conflict. These actions can be considered to be transformative as they bring about gender change by re-negotiating spaces in the unstable political context of the conflict. Focusing on non conflict related issues is also a strategic choice for these organisations to break down ethnic identity barriers and promote bi-communal, reconciliation initiatives.

The issue of the relevance of the organisations’ framework of action to the conflict itself is an important one in relation to impact. These organisations generally have a de-securitising impact – holding and/ or peace building. Most interestingly analysing these organisations’ actions demonstrates that holding and peace-building impact are placed on a continuum both in terms of timing and in terms of depth of the change. In Bosnia for example, the work of an organisation working for the rights of homosexuals has a holding impact, since its work doesn’t immediately relate to the issue of ethnic identity in the conflict. Action to promote a more equal and tolerant society however operates in conflict transformation, fostering a society where the respect of human rights and understanding of the “other” can prevent securitisation in the future.

The same is valid for organisation working on violence against women, in Israel, Bosnia and Turkey. Domestic violence is present in many societies in peace as well as in war, but in conflict and post conflict situations domestic violence rates have been known to spike,

due to more rigid gender identities and exacerbation of social violence. Organisations working on domestic violence in post conflict situations, work in conflict transformation mode, holding the ethnic conflict but contributing to the building of a more equal violence free society.

Working on issues of violence has also had allowed gender progressive CoSO to approach issues relating to the conflict in a non controversial way, to achieve holding and peace building impacts. An interesting example of this can be found in Turkey. An organisations' focus on honour crimes, away from immediate Turkey vs Kurds debates has allowed the CoSO to establish good relations with both Kurdish and Turkey's sides. This has lead to bi communal cooperation on the issue of honour crime and domestic violence, resulting a de-securitising impact. Also, in Turkey, a women's professional organisation fostering further inclusion in business, culture and politics has managed to engage women from both sides contributing to building bridges across the divide. These actions have a peace building impact both in the short and long run, as proven by women's organisation working on wider social inclusion issues in Bosnia and Israel too.

Two political opportunity structure features that are most important to the peace-building efforts of gender progressive CoSO: the level of local elaboration of feminist discourses and the level of international support to the work of these organisations. In Bosnia for example, CoSO dedicated to women have mushroomed after the conflict. The high level of violence against women prompted international attention and funding to women's issues, "creating" a feminist movement, that was previously inexistent or negligible (Helms, 2001). As funding dwindled in the early years of the 21st century, the lack of local support and ownership caused some organisations to disappear, while other organisations which developed feminist agendas on the base of local sensitivities, needs and understanding of feminism managed to secure local funding. These organisations are also the ones with the stronger transformative impact. Ownership of feminist discourses and practices is therefore important in the peace building endeavour, as proved by CoSO in Turkey and Palestine as well.

The issue of ownership is important with regards to multicultural understandings of feminism, such as for example Islamic feminism. Among the gender progressive CoSO in the scope of SHUR research are some Islamic feminist organisations, striving for more women friendly understandings of the Quran and equal access to inheritance rights and rights within marriage. In the context of Palestine the impact of Islamic feminist struggles has been a non

securitising one. There is no sufficient data however to state whether other contextual features (as in the case of multicultural gender identity organisations) may have a stronger effect on these organisations' impact.

If local ownership of feminist discourses is important to achieve lasting impact, analysis of all contexts show that solidarity with transnational feminist movements and international funding is important for gender progressive organisation's impact on long lasting peace building. This has important implication for the conclusions and political recommendations of the SHUR project.

Conclusions

The SHUR project findings outlined above confirm some important hypothesis about the relation between gender and conflict, gender and human rights, gender and civil society. The role of gender as a key marker of identity with an impact on securitisation emerges clearly. The more gender identities are rigid, and hegemonic gender identities assumed uncritically the more CoSO's impact is likely to be securitising. The more gender identities are "in flux" and CoSO's plural identity affiliation privilege the "shared" human traits the more CoSO's impact is likely to be de-securitising. In terms of CoSO's identity civic post-national CoSOs are likely to have a de-securitising impact, because of their stronger reference to a discourse of shared humanity and inclusiveness of gender identities. These CoSO fully operate within feminist understandings of human rights, opening the concept of "human" to be more inclusive, therefore de facto counteracting securitising moves. On the opposite end of the spectrum are assimilationists or racist CoSO whose gender identity is integral to the construction of the ethnos and contributes to securitising discourses. Multicultural CoSO focusing on collective identity are more likely to have mixed impact on the conflict, because they often strive for only one group's rights. If in their plural affiliations however, they privilege shared gender identities, their conflict resolution actions may achieve de-securitising impacts. Because of this ambiguity, the impact of multicultural CoSO may be further influenced by contextual or framework of action variables.

We have seen how the analysis of the frameworks of action also helps in estimating impact. CoSO operating in conflict escalation mode are likely to have securitising effects. Those operating in conflict resolution and transformation may have mixed impacts. Two issues emerge from the data: transitional justice/reparation issues need to be conceptualised

around individual human rights and non rigid understandings of gender identities in order to have non securitising impacts. Moreover, CoSO that operate in conflict transformation mode tend to have a holding impact in the short term and a peace building impact in the long term. Working on building a more equal society, gender progressive CoSO re-negotiate political spaces and gender identities towards more inclusive conceptions of human rights. By working on structural inequality, at the root cause of the conflict, CoSO can achieve deep and transformative peace building impacts.

Because of their long term nature these impacts are more difficult to measure and estimate. Because many of the conflicts in the SHUR scope of analysis are ongoing and/or frozen it is challenging at this stage to fully grasp the extent of this “deep” effects of gender transformation in these societies. The relationship between holding impacts and peace building impacts over time needs to be further explored within and beyond SHUR’s research. Another key issue that needs further study is the issue of the impact of multicultural CoSO, and of the impact of collective human rights articulations. The impact of multicultural CoSO on the conflicts within the SHUR analysis has been ambiguous and further understanding on how Islamic feminists for example can have an impact on the conflict, on the violation or protection of human rights of women in the short as well as the long term is needed.

The SHUR findings are limited to a specific set of data, and a specific set of organisations. As we have many times stated, all CoSO have an impact on gender, but the field data is insufficient to estimate the impact of the full sample of CoSOs on gender discourse. For these reasons we have focused on two types of actors that most impact gender dynamics. We can estimate that “Gender blind” CoSO who have an inclusive understanding of human identity above ethnic identity (i.e. civil and post-national CoSO) and CoSO that work in conflict transformation and conflict resolution mode, are more likely to have de-securitising impacts. As with gender sensitive CoSO, also for “gender blind” organisations the interaction with international players is likely to be influential.

Citing the international actors involved in conflict brings us to a first political consideration with regards to international policy *vis à vis* CoSO working in the area of gender. International support, both in terms of political backing and funding is fundamental to conflict transformation work. This has been grasped by EU institutions as well as international funders and gender equality is among the EU political and funding priorities within conflict environments. Many of the gender sensitive CoSO have received funding from EU as well as other international institutions. Political backing and support however should

not disregard or ventiloquise women's voices on the ground as local and context specific understanding of gender should be prioritised in the agenda. Another interesting political implication emerges from the holding peace-building continuum. Transformative actions can be most effective in peace-building, but peace-building is a long term endeavour. International actors therefore have to commit to promoting change in the long run in post conflict societies. It is widely acknowledged that often donors experience fatigue and that political priorities shift in time, meaning that international commitments may be withdrawn after a few years of engagement, with disastrous consequences for CoSOs on the ground.

Prioritisation, as well as length of commitment is an important political consideration. Prioritisation of transformative initiatives is pivotal, including those of neglected actors such as LGBT CoSO. The SHUR research is lacking significant data on LGBT activism in conflict zones and more research needs to be undertaken on the role of these actors. Political and funding attention to these organisations needs also to be paid. Moreover, further attention, both in reaserch and in funding needs to go into understanding the impact of masculinities on conflict and on peace building, as well as on general social development with regards to issues of symbolic and physical violence against both men and women. Gender studies aim to understand the dynamics of the relations of power mediated, individually, structurally and symbolically by understandings of gender within a given society. Understanding the dynamics of masculinity and femininity therefore is pivotal to bring about progressive gender change, and to build a more equal, more human societies in peace as well as in war times.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ In peace time as well as war gender is structural to the definition of ethnicity and culture. Contemporary western society, minority groups have often claimed rights on the base of their ethnicity. Pharek's analysis of these claims shows that the vast majority of clashes between different ethnicities rotate around gender issues, the regulation of women's clothing, exogamy or endogamy within the group and the rights of women themselves (Pharek, 2001).

ⁱⁱ Demographic policies are integral part of ethno-nationalist struggles; the socialisation-coercion of women and compulsory heterosexuality is planned and implemented at a political level to assure the reproduction of the ethnic group. Demographic policies in the State of Israel have been in place almost since the foundation of the state in 1948. The fear of demographic annihilation is a constant haunting in the Israeli subconscious playing a key role in constructing the enemy, the ever growing Palestinian population, as an existential threat (Jacobi, 1999). The demographic policy of the Palestinian national aspiration is equally aggressive, with the Gaza strip sporting the highest population growth in the world and an ever increasing pressure on Palestinian women both in the territories and in refugee camps to bear sons for the struggle, to annihilate Israel. Women on both sides therefore are fetishised as reproducers of the ethnicity/nation and their wombs are appropriated and mobilised for the political struggle. Rape is the other strong signifier of the role of women as embodied signifiers of ethnicity and nationality. It is by no means a coincidence that rape has been object of attention and legislation in recent years following the explosion of ethnic conflicts. Rape is a widespread tool in all kind of wars, as raping the enemy's women is a symbolic castration, a marker of a warrior's failure to protect his home and country (Cockburn and Zarkov, 2004). In the context of ethnic war, rape becomes an even stronger marker of emasculation and an existential threat to the ethnic group. Rape camps and forced impregnation as seen in Bosnia and Rwanda, to quote two of the many recent ethnic conflict, were widespread means to annihilate the other group, insinuating in the ethnic group, the seed and children of the enemy and/or destroying the enemy's capacity to reproduce itself. The exclusion of women raped by the enemy from the polity, in former Yugoslavia and Africa, further highlights women's role as physical reproducers and policed borders of membership for the group. The man's seed identifies the ethnos, as in all patriarchal societies, but it is the woman's body that physically carries it and bears the brunt of securing the border between I and Other, friend and enemy, life and death. Ethnic wars are literally fought over women's bodies. International legislation has, as a consequence of ethnic conflicts, come to grant to rape the status of crime against humanity. Rape is old as war itself, but it is by no means casual that when rape was used systematically to erase the ethnos, the group, the nation, it became worthy of juridical attention. In this light rape in war is a collective crime against the group, against the ethnos, not the violation of an individual right. Women are mere carriers of the ethnos itself, its fetishised, physical borders. It is unsurprising therefore that rape perpetrated by peace keeping forces in Kosovo and other post conflict areas (Witworth 2004) have escaped international tribunals, as this rape is considered less threatening to the ethnos, and it is perpetrated traditionally by the conqueror. The jurisdiction of rape as a collective human right violation is problematic and points to the relevant debate on individual and collective rights crucial to the question of human rights in conflict.

ⁱⁱⁱ This has been ubiquitous in post-colonial struggles, where feminist groups allied themselves with nationalist movements (violent or non-violent) and lost out in the compartmentalisation of power in the post colonial state (Tohidi N, 2001; Mernissi, L, 1991).

^{iv} In developing countries contexts, Western feminist CSOs have been often target of local women's criticism for importing a vision of feminism, racially, class and location wise alien to local struggles (Mohanty, 1988). The alienation of local women vis à vis Western feminist groups promoting development/democratisation in given contexts has even prompted the development of indigenous women's civil society organisations which have then in turn internationalised themselves, i.e. the DAWN network (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) in the 1980s (Barriteau, 2000). Women's groups from the "South" have often critiqued "foreign" attempts at democratising, economically develop and improve gender equality in a given society as neo-colonial enterprises. Aid programmes such as the IMF and World Bank programmes have been widely attacked for pursuing a gender blind, masculinist agenda.