Art as Resistance in Palestine:

Graffiti in the struggle against the Israeli Occupation

Ana Mafalda Sintrão Young

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Thesis submitted as partial requirement for the conferral of

Master in International Studies

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Resumo

A arte é, desde o início da ocupação Israelita, uma ferramenta fundamental da resistência palestiniana e o *graffiti* umas das suas expressões mais visíveis. Na resistência, o *graffiti* é utilizado como forma de mobilização, expressão política e oposição à hegemonia da narrativa sionista. Uma análise cuidada do *graffiti* levar-nos-á a um maior entendimento das características e aspirações políticas da resistência palestiniana. No entanto, após a construção, em 2002, do Muro de Separação na Cisjordânia, o *graffiti* de Banksy e de outros artistas internacionais no mesmo, tem vindo a receber, significativamente, mais atenção mediática e académica que o *graffiti* produzido por artistas Palestinianos. Se, por um lado, isto contribui para aumentar a visibilidade internacional da causa Palestiniana, por outro, muitos consideram que aqueles não só embelezam o símbolo mais gritante da ocupação Israelita, como a enquadram em termos demasiado universais para conseguirem ser fiéis à experiência Palestiniana. Nesse sentido, com base na análise comparativa de três murais produzidos pelo artista Palestiniano Mohamd Alraee no campo de refugiados de Aroub, na Cisjordânia, esta dissertação de mestrado visa dar voz ao *graffiti* Palestiniano contemporâneo, com o objectivo de captar as especificidades que lhe são únicas como forma de resistência.

Palavras-chave: *Graffiti*, arte política, resistência, conflito Israelo-Palestiniano.

Abstract

Art has been a fundamental tool of Palestinian resistance since the beginning of the Israeli occupation, *graffiti* being one of its most visible expressions. As a tool of resistance, *graffiti* is used as a means of mobilization, political expression, and opposition to the hegemony of the Zionist narrative. Careful analysis of *graffiti* can lead to a better understanding of the characteristics and political aspirations of the Palestinian resistance. However, graffiti painted by Banksy and other international artists on the Separation Wall (built in 2002) has received significantly more media and academic attention than that produced by Palestinian artists. This contributes greatly to increasing the international visibility of the Palestinian cause, however, many locals consider that not only does it embellish the most striking symbol of Israeli occupation, but it casts it in terms too universal to be faithful to the Palestinian experience. Based on the comparative analysis of three murals produced by the Palestinian artist Mohamd Alraee in the Aroub refugee camp (West Bank), this master's thesis aims to give voice to contemporary Palestinian *graffiti*, with the aim of capturing the characteristics that are unique to it as a form of resistance.

Keywords: *Graffiti*, political art, resistance, Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Relevance of the Topic and Research Question

The following dissertation derives from my personal interest in two different but, nevertheless, closely intertwined subjects; art and politics. Art, as a means of expression and political resistance fascinates me greatly as I genuinely believe in the transformative impact that it can have on society, no matter what form it takes. Politics, in particular in the form of the struggle of the Palestinian people for their self-determination, has been of great interest to me ever since I became interested in politics. It is unquestionably a very complex and lengthy situation, involving actors with very different experiences.

And due to this longevity, several distinct techniques of resistance have developed... One constant, however, has been the use of art as tool of Palestinian resistance.

I was particularly interested to understand how *graffiti* was, and still is, used to resist the Israeli Occupation and how the techniques of resistance and the political role and characteristics of Palestinian *graffiti* have evolved throughout the conflict.

During the First Intifada (1987-1993), *graffiti* was used, primarily, as a tool of communication and mobilization. *Graffiti* had to be applied quickly and often at night, mainly because if caught, *graffiti* artists were harshly punished by the Israeli military. During this period, the message had to be simple and "strait to the point". The language used was mainly Arabic which suggests that the message was directed at an internal audience.

Despite the ending of the First Uprising, the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, *graffiti* continued to denounce the Israeli occupation but was now also used to address and criticize Palestinian political elites.

The construction of the Separation Wall, also known as "the Wall", in 2002 added another dimension to the role of *graffiti* in the Palestinian struggle. The Wall became the primary site of political expression, artistic creation, and resistance. International artists and activists used it to express solidarity with the Palestinian people and to criticize Israel and its political allies. English was the most commonly used language and international symbols of freedom and liberation, such as Nelson Mandela, Gandhi or even the Statue of Liberty were often featured also. This phenomenon suggests that the content visible on the Wall was meant for international consumption.

Substantial differences exist between *graffiti* found on the Wall and mainly meant for an external audience, and that aimed at the internal audience and found in Palestinian villages or refugee camps. When addressing the domestic audience, attention seems to be given to historical events, support for political prisoners and the celebration of martyrdom. Palestinian artists use *graffiti* as a tool in their political struggle and resistance, and for them aesthetic considerations are secondary. It is fair to say, then, that *graffiti* offers many clues to understanding the Palestinian perspective on the occupation and

the nature of the local resistance movement, yet *graffiti* created by international artists, such as Banksy, tends to attract considerably more international, media and scholarly attention.

There appears to be a gap in the literature about Palestinian *graffiti*, as studies seem to focus more on the analysis of international rather local *graffiti*. Focusing only on transnational interventions on the Wall, however, may lead to relevant considerations about the Palestinian struggle and resistance being lost. Therefore, I suggest that it is relevant to analyse Palestinian *graffiti* produced by locals outside the mainstream sites of media and tourist attention, such as Abu Dis or Bethlehem, cities that boarder the Separation Wall. Such analysis can offer relevant insights into the current state of the Palestinian resistance movement as well as a deeper understanding of the characteristics that are unique to the Palestinian people's struggle and resistance efforts. Moreover, I will argue that the interpretation of the symbolic elements present in *graffiti* produced by local Palestinian artists contributes to a worthwhile understanding of their intentions, political message and aspirations. Therefore, the research question that will guide this dissertation is the following: How can contemporary Palestinian *graffiti* help us frame the Palestinian resistance today?

1.2. Methodology

The methodology used to carry out this research consisted of the study of existing scientific literature on resistance and political art (in Palestine) followed by critical analysis and interpretation, via a comparative approach, of three pieces of *graffiti* made by a local Palestinian artist.

Due to the inability of physically doing field research, I opted to do research through digital ethnography via social media, namely Instagram. My primary goal was to use Instagram to find young artists that use social media to exhibit their works and express their political views. During my research I came across a young Palestinian artist that seemed to be engaged in creating *graffiti* as he would regularly share photographs and short videos of himself painting murals or of the final results of his work. This artist was Mohamd Alraee, a 25-year-old Palestinian living in the Aroub refugee camp in the southern West Bank. I contacted him via his Instagram account (@mohamd_alraee), explained to him that I was writing my thesis for my Master's degree in International Studies and that my objective was to understand how *graffiti* is used as a tool of resistance in contemporary Palestine.

I asked him if he could share some photographs of his work with me and he soon sent me a several pictures of his creations. Later, I had the opportunity to ask him a some questions. My objective was to understand what the murals and symbols used suggested about his political leanings and his vision for Palestine, and then, based on comparative methodology, to propose how *graffiti* can offer insights into the current state of the Palestinian resistance movement.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

This work is composed of five chapters. Following the introduction, the second chapter consists of the theoretical conceptualization of the two key concepts to this work: non-violent resistance and everyday resistance. I will offer an overview of the Palestinian resistance, its evolution, and the concept of *sumud[1]*. Through concrete examples, I will argue that the adoption of non-violent techniques of resistance, such as stone throwing and peaceful demonstrations, during the First Palestinian Intifada and afterwards, is the result of strategic considerations and of the need to raise awareness of the asymmetric power imbalance between the Palestinians and the Israeli military forces. Further, I will explore the concept of everyday resistance, which, in the Palestinian context, is inherently linked to the idea of *sumud.* I will sustain that these "smaller acts" of resistance are instrumental to the Palestinian resistance movement as they prepare the "ground" for more visible acts of resistance such as demonstrations, protests, riots or insurrections.

The third chapter introduces art as an important resistance tool in the Palestinian context. I will argue that art has always been an important part of the Palestinian history of resistance and that artistic creations, whether music, literature, visual arts or dance, have been integral to the construction of the Palestinian identity and its sense of struggle and togetherness. Nuances are, nonetheless, observable within the Palestinian cultural scene over time. Historical events and externally imposed conditions have marked the Palestinian cultural landscape by impacting the themes touched upon, the techniques used and the aesthetics of artistic works. I will later explore the ability of political art to provoke *dissensus* in Palestinian society (Rancière, 2010a) by offering alternative narratives to the official Zionist version of history. I will offer examples of how art has been used to challenge the Israeli occupation and conclude by arguing that the efforts made by the Israeli government to censor Palestinian cultural expression are testimony to the tangible effects of art as a form of resistance.

The fourth chapter begins by providing a theoretical conceptualization of political *graffiti* and later explores how *graffiti* production has been an instrumental element of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, particularly at two historical moments (during the First Intifada and after the unilateral construction of the Separation Wall). I argue that *graffiti* is framed to talk to different audiences, with different symbolic elements, slogans and messages used to suit each one. Later, I will examine *graffiti* produced for domestic consumption to understand how it is being used currently as a resistance tool. By conducting a comparative analysis of three *graffiti* murals sent to me by Mohamd Alraee, I hope to offer a broad understanding of contemporary Palestinian resistance. Following the idea proposed by Khalili (2007) that the martyrs idealized by the Palestinian political parties are demonstrative of their political

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[1] *Sumud* denotes the ability of the Palestinians to resist and continue to live in the face of the occupation and extremely harsh living conditions (Qumsiyeh, 2011:11).

positions, I will apply the same logic and analyse the symbolic elements applied by Mohamd in his murals in order to offer a possible interpretation of the artist's political inclinations and affiliations and suggest what type of resistance movement he envisions for Palestine. In the final chapter, by comparing the insights obtained in the previous chapters and by framing Mohamd as an example of a young Palestinian involved in artistic resistance, I will use the considerations obtained to propose what Palestinian *graffiti* produced today can tell us about the state of the Palestinian resistance movement.

2. Resistance and the Experience of Palestine

2.1 Conceptualizing Resistance

To conceptualize resistance is a challenging task as the concept has no widely held consensus in scholarly literature. It has been variously described as the *"active efforts to oppose, fight, and refuse to cooperate with or submit to (...) abusive behaviour (...) and control"* (Profitt, 1996:25) and as the *"expressive behaviour that inverts, contradicts, or prevents alternatives to cultural codes"* (Pitts, 1998:71).

It is, first and foremost, a socially constructed concept where a multitude of actors (resisters, targets, observers) and dimensions (perceptions, intentions, strategies, power relations) inherently contribute to the definition as well as to the understanding of the issue (Gordon, 1993:142)

As there is no commonly accepted definition, where one observer sees resistance, another might see "accommodation or even domination", and even if they do agree on a shared definition, they might still disagree on whether a certain action is encompassed by it, or not (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:548).

Furthermore, resistance may vary in *scale* (individual or collective), in *geography* (local or trans-national), in *targets* (individuals, groups, organizations, institutions or social structures). It may also vary in terms of *goals or objectives*, pursuing, for instance, some level of change or maintaining a certain degree of stability (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:536).

It may be *overt* and recognized by targets and observers and intended to be generally understood as resistance or *covert* and intended to go unnoticed by their targets, and consequently go unpunished but recognizable as resistance by watchful observers (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:545).

Moreover, as the definitions differ, it seems to be more commonly accepted that resistance is an *"oppositional act"* (Vinthangen & Johansson, 2013:1). There is a sense of *action* that involves "some active behaviour, whether verbal, cognitive, or physical" (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:538); and a sense of *opposition*, of questioning and contradicting or challenging the existing power structures (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:538).

As Foucault eloquently puts it: "if there is power there is resistance and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power" (Foucault, 1978:95). The relationship between power and resistance seems to be cyclical with one leading to the other. The exercise of dominant power leads to resistance; this in turn may encourage more domination that will eventually provoke more resistance (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:548).

It is a fluid and dynamic relationship, in which rulers react to resistance by finding innovative ways to force obedience as well as to "control rebellions", and resisters find new methods and strategies to escape the new subjugation (Vinthagen & Johasson, 2013:31). Hence these power relations cannot be

limited to a binary structure of dominator *versus* dominated but are rather a "multiform production of relations which are partially susceptible to integration in overall strategies" (Butz & Ripmester, 1999:2).

Even if the interactions between power holders and resisters tend to be asymmetrical, it is not obvious that power always decides the dynamic between them. Although most authors give resistance a secondary role as it emerges as a response to an already existing power, others, such as Hardt and Negri (2004), consider resistance as an original activity with the capacity to act for itself and to lead the power dynamics as it is the *producer*, whilst power is the *organizer* of a pre-existing reality (Hardt & Negri, 2004:63).

There are still others that advocate for the combination of both, claiming that power is able to produce a certain degree of subjectivity to maintain its position, but can never do it completely or entirely; and it is within these loopholes that resistance finds its space to develop (Vinthagen & Johasson, 2013:30).

As power relationships evolve, the strategies used to resist them will transform and adapt to the new context; some resistance techniques might be "ineffective *(in)* certain contexts *(and)* can be challenging and subversive in others". It seems, then, that resistance and power function in a "mutually constitutive relation" (Lilja et.al, 2017:45) and "they shape each other interactively over a dynamic trajectory" (Adnan, 2007:abstract).

Another factor of division among scholars is the importance given to *intentionality* and *recognition* of resistance acts. There seems to be no consensus on whether resistance should be intentional (by the resisters) and recognizable as resistance (by others) to be considered as such (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:539).

The discussion gains special relevance when we consider less obvious forms of opposition, such as *"everyday forms of resistance"* (Scott, 1989:33).

The most evident difference between "everyday" and more conventional forms of political mobilization, such as protest movements, large-scale revolutions or open confrontations, is the greater visibility of the latter over the former (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:539-540).

Visibility is, obviously, a prerequisite for resistance to be recognizable. However, depending on the circumstances, "resisters may manipulate their behaviour in order to encourage or discourage recognition" (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:540).

When lacking resources or the opportunity to openly resist their oppressors, powerless people tend to carry out acts, that by their ordinary and mundane nature, are less confrontational than, for instance, armed resistance (Scott, 1985:302). It is common for these everyday acts to go unnoticed by the powerful. By masking the resistant nature of their activities, peasants are able to continue to resist while protecting themselves from repression (Scott, 1985:xvi). In fact, for the acts to not be recognizable as resistance might be part of the resister's goals (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:540).

Other acts, in contrast, are observable but the powerful do not necessarily interpret them as resistance. An example of this is the use of *humour* or *songs* to covertly express resistance while

avoiding punishment. Sometimes resisters feel compelled to hide the act of resistance and at others the intention behind it (Sanger, 1995:179; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:540).

This leads us to the other topic of the academic debate on resistance: the intention of the resister. Does the resister need be conscious of his own resistance and should he intend to do so for the action to be considered resistance?

This question is again central when talking about *everyday resistance* acts as open defiance as mass-movements and revolutions imply a higher and more obvious degree of both consciousness and intentionality (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:542).

In James Scott's perspective, *intentionality* is key to identifying resistance acts and it is often a better indicator of resistance than the outcome *per se* (Scott, 1985:290). Intent is naturally difficult, if not impossible, to perceive (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004:542), especially when the incentives to not reveal one's identity are strong (Scott, 1989:55).

In the face of dangerous situations, resistance is adapted "to be ambiguous, to have double meaning, to be garbled" to avoid detection and open retaliation from those in power. Hence, subordinate groups tend to mask their political objectives by basing their political activity on the "pervasive use of disguise" (Scott, 1989:54-55).

Disguise, however, can take many forms. It can consist not only of hiding the resistant nature of a certain activity but also of hiding the identity of the resister (Scott, 1989:54). The *message* might be clear but the *messenger* anonymous, or *vice-versa*; sometimes the identity of the resister is concealed but the class and/or resistance movement he represents is unambiguous, at other times it is clear who the messenger is but the message he is delivering is purposely ambiguous (Scott, 1989:54-55).

To sum up, there are a multitude of definitions of the concept of resistance. Despite this, scholars tend to agree that, above all, resistance is an *act* that *opposes* a certain power (Vinthangen & Johansson, 2013:1). Therefore, it is impossible to understand resistance without considering the circumstances within which domination occurs and how they contribute to the existing power relations (Flowedew, 1997:318).

Moreover, these power relations change and evolve over time, as well as the strategies used in the search to (re)gain a power advantage (Vinthagen & Johasson, 2013:31). And despite the fact that interactions between dominated and dominator tend to be asymmetrical, it is not assured that power holders always define the dynamics (Hardt & Negri, 2004:52). For instance, when, as an effect of resistance, the authoritarian ruling elites recognize their inability to remain in power while following the same political patterns as before, the existing power dynamics tend to transform and new political spaces of representation of the subaltern claims are created (Grinberg, 2014:40).

Within these power dynamics it is relevant to analyse the *intentionality* and *recognisability* of resistance acts. When faced with oppression and structural violence, resisters often feel compelled to hide the resistant nature of their acts, the intention behind them and their own identity (Hollander &

Einwohner, 2004:540). Hiding the intention behind an act and maintaining the anonymity of the perpetrator might be a necessity for resisters in order to hide their political objectives from the oppressors and so avoid violent consequences (Scott, 1989:55).

2.2. Nonviolent Resistance

As already mentioned, resisters often adapt and re-shape existing techniques and find new ones in order to counter an asymmetric power balance, while power holders look to find new strategies to control, limit and maintain their power advantages (Flowedew, 1997:318; Vinthagen & Johasson, 2013:31). As power relations evolve and power dynamics change, either to the benefit of the opponents or in favour of the resisters, the strategies used by each side also transform (Lilja et.al, 2017:45).

The dynamics of conflict escalation and de-escalation have raised special interest among social scientists, with particular emphasis falling on the shift from unarmed to armed resistance, and the transition from armed insurgencies to more pacific means of struggle such as negotiation, reintegration or other forms of conventional politics (Dudouet, 2013:401).

Despite this heightened interest, literature on the subject is scarce, particularly where armed groups strategically shift from violent to nonviolent resistance in contexts where the conflict cannot be resolved by force and there are no conventional de-escalation methods to turn to (Dudoeut, 2013:401).

The principle difference between violent and nonviolent resistance is the use in the former of direct and behavioural violence to inflict physical damage on people or property (Bond et al., 1997:557). In other words, violence consists of intentionally inflicting harm on others, believing it will lead to the achievement of a concrete goal or result (Qumsiyeh, 2011:4). This does not imply, however, that all actions carried out without violence are nonviolent. Nonviolence as a form of resistance appears as a "direct substitute for violent behaviour" in a context where violence is expected. Use of the term "*nonviolent resistance*" emphasizes a conscious, deliberate and active opposition to violence (Dudouet, 2008:4). The term *"civil resistance"* is also associated with unarmed, non-military and non-violent movements (Sémelin, 1993:27).

Violent resistance may be defined as consisting of "collective attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors *(...)* or its policies" (Gurr, 1970: 3-4) via the use of physical force that ranges from "guerrilla insurgency, quasi-conventional warfare to terrorist attacks" (Dudouet, 2013:403). Nonviolent resistance, in contrast, tends to adopt a "wider array of mechanisms" (Bond, 1994:63).

Nonviolent (or unarmed) resistance may be defined as collectively organized popular resistance to state authorities which purposely avoids the use of "weapons of modern warfare" (Zunes, 1994:403) and calls for collective engagement to resist violence in all its forms (Dudouet, 2013:403).

Following the *theory of consent* which asserts that the authority of any ruler or regime comes from the continuous and voluntary obedience of its subjects, nonviolent resistance rests on "withdrawing this

consent through non-cooperation or civil disobedience" and thus limiting the support that governments can call upon (Dudouet, 2008:4; Hardt & Negri, 2004:54).

If one accepts that power only functions if the target population accepts it, then nonviolent resistance can be a forceful challenge to a power structure by reducing the human resources the rulers can count on, denying the rulers knowledge and authority, reducing the material resources available (e.g. refusal to pay taxes, boycotts, etc) and by increasing the cost of maintaining an oppressive regime (Qumsiyeh, 2011:23).

Within a non-democratic context, however, the structural impact of nonviolent strategies may be reduced due to the fact that oppressive regimes do not rule by popular consent and attempts to engage in nonviolent direct actions are often repressed by the state through "legal restrictions, terror and a media monopoly" (McAdam & Tarrow, 2000:151; Zunes, 1994:420).

Palestinians, for instance, have a long history of non-violently resisting oppression, though every effort at resistance has been brutally repressed by Israel. Not only do Palestinian resisters encounter grossly disproportionate state violence, but they are also often portrayed as violent by the "media's conditioning in Western societies". Moreover, throughout the years, the Palestinian struggle has often been analysed through a Zionist-centric academic lens that considers resistance actions by Palestinians, either armed or unarmed, to be illegal and the Israeli response to be justified as it is defending a legitimate goal (Qumsiyeh, 2011:1-3).

Although not unique to the Israeli-Palestinian context, societal violence is often legitimatized and legalized, whilst the violence of non-state actors is quickly deemed illegal, its cause considered illegitimate and its use unjustifiable, therefore giving the state the monopoly of the use of force (Qumsiyeh, 2011:5).

Nonviolent resistance encompasses a range of protest techniques, which by contributing to the "creative disorder" of a society, magnify the existing social and political tensions within it and impose a greater cost on those looking to maintain their advantage within the existing system (McCarthy, 1990:10).

It can easily be argued that "popular resistance is superior on both moral and utilitarian grounds". Firstly, violence is counterproductive as it generates more violence and eventually more opposition, making it harder to justify on utilitarian terms. Secondly, the use of violence to defeat an opponent can lead to traumatic post-conflict resentment and eventually, if successful, to the construction of a society based on amoral principles (Qumsiyeh, 2011:29).

One should not, however, assume that nonviolent resistance is less risky (to the individual resister) than the adoption of more violent techniques. The Palestinian resistance experience has shown otherwise; countless Palestinians were killed while non-violently resisting. Under Israeli occupation, thousands have been killed, injured, and arrested "for simply being a Palestinian in Palestine" (Qumsiyeh, 2011:28-9).

It is important to note, however, that the line separating violent and nonviolent resistance is not always obvious, and resistance movements might not be exclusively armed/violent or unarmed/nonviolent. More often than not, resistance movements rely on a combination of both techniques. As rulers and occupiers develop power structures to achieve their goals, resistance focuses on the deconstruction of such structures, using a mix of violent and nonviolent actions tailored to the circumstances encountered (Dudouet, 2013:403; Qumsiyeh, 2011:5-6).

Moreover, the progression and intensity of conflicts vary over time with the frequency and intensity of violence against the foe growing and diminishing (Dudouet, 2013:404; Mitchell, 2011:86).

Negotiation between states and armed resisters, however, is more likely to occur when there is a change in the asymmetry between them such that they both recognize the other's ability to frustrate their success. Likewise, armed groups will be more willing to negotiate when power dynamics shift in their favour as it improves their chances of achieving a political solution that better serves their political objectives (Dudouet, 2013:404).

Furthermore, when armed groups understand the inability of their violent methods to alter the power dynamics, they are more likely to adopt different strategies, such as civil resistance, in order to gain enough clout for a useful negotiation process (Dudouet, 2011:249).

Additionally, violent resistance faces far more limitations than nonviolent resistance as it is dependent on a higher degree of logistical support, access to arms and other equipment and geographical coordination (Qumsiyeh, 2011:9). According to the *rational choice theory*, leaders will adjust the group's strategy according to instrumental rather than ideological motivations. Leading elites will analyse the utility of various tactics and compare their ability to minimize costs and maximize benefits (Jones & Libicki, 2008:25). The choice of the means of struggle is then a careful calculation of the benefits of violent vs. nonviolent strategies. Such a calculation may lead leaders to reconsider the efficiency of violence to reach the intended social change (Dudoeut, 2013:407).

A constant imbalance in power in favour of the state, allied with the ineffectiveness of violent approaches to counter the asymmetry of the conflict plus the realization that the power dynamics are not favourable to negotiation, drive resisters to try innovative strategies in the search for tactical advantages, often leading to the adoption of nonviolent actions as an alternative method in asymmetric conflict (Dudoeut, 2013:410).

Nonetheless, the effectiveness of nonviolent actions is questionable as few nonviolent struggles result in the "achievement of win-win solutions". On the contrary, nonviolent resistance has often resulted in "accommodation strategies", in which the opponents give resisters a certain degree of bargaining power at the negotiating table without altering their position on the issues in dispute and without forgoing the possibility of continuing the conflict by other means. This concession results from the realization that the balance of power is shifting in such a way that it is politically wiser to give negotiation some room (Dudouet, 2008:15-19). Non-violent resistance has, at the same time, the ability

to unsettle the opponent yet allow him or her to desist without losing dignity or face (Qumsiyeh, 2011:24).

It is also important to note that the adoption of nonviolent actions by "outsiders" to the conflict, particularly by those who collude, whether actively or passively, with the oppressor may have a greater impact than those that the victims themselves take (Galtung, 1989:20).

Israel, as with any other power, calculates the risks and rewards of any action it might take. This calculation is based on multiple factors, among which are the potential public relations impact, the diplomatic and economic benefits (Qumsiyeh, 2011:8), plus the potential pressure that may be exercised by transnational social movements on countries on which Israel depends politically, economically or even materially (Dudouet, 2008:17) to force it to seek political change, even if indirectly (Schock, 2005:20).

Colonizing powers often base their structural power on mechanisms of oppression, such as apartheid, that require huge resources, whether they be "financial, physical, public relations, propaganda (or) diplomatic" to sustain them. Often these resources come in the form of foreign aid and support (Qumsiyeh, 2011:206), Israel being no exception. For instance, most of Israel's statehood is dependent on US aid (political, military and financial), on the export of "security related products and armament, (on) tourism and foreign direct investment" as well as on political and diplomatic support (Qumsiyeh, 2011:206).

In this sense, movements such as the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) are important as they are, to some extent, able to compromise Israel's ability to trade internationally and as a result impact its economy and access to resources (Qumsiyeh, 2011:207). Boycott means the "refusal to buy products or interact with entities or individuals that support oppression or are part of a system of oppression"; Divestment consists of "withdrawing financial support that props up the oppressive system", and Sanctions impede actors from "dealing with oppressive governments or entities". Combined they are an effective tool to raise the stakes of continuing to oppress the Palestinian people to such an extent that it becomes politically, economically, and even materially unbearable[2] (Qumsiyeh, 2011:207).

When rulers and occupiers see the number of people who support them diminishing, they find themselves obliged to re-evaluate their political position. In this sense, Israel is vulnerable due to its strong dependence on the rest of the world, particularly Europe and the US, so it cannot afford to ignore these external opinions (Qumsiyeh, 2011:24-26). Moreover, in a globalized world, Israel's economy is more susceptible to outside pressure due to its dependence upon export markets, foreign investment and financing. This susceptibility means a mass globalized movement based on "capital investment sanctions, a drop in foreign direct investment and a climate in which investor confidence is lowered"

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[2] This political strategy was successfully used in the struggle against the South African apartheid regime. In the Palestinian case, however, US intervention was more than once able to prevent any economic and diplomatic pressure on Israel therefore diminishing the impact of the BDS Movement (Qumsiyeh, 2011:208).

will eventually compromise the State internal structures[3]. To work, movements such as BDS need engagement with civil society and international political elites who, in the opinion of Ilan Pappé, have to this day, failed to penalize Israel for its actions and policies against Palestine and the Palestinians (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015:37). Still, the BDS movement has helped to build a global network of solidarity with Palestine and has helped to put the Palestinian cause back on the international agenda. Therefore, its impact should not be underestimated (Chomsky & Pappé, 2015:4).

In conclusion, although there is a wealth of literature focusing on the escalation from unarmed to armed resistance within conflicts, it is also important to analyse the inverse; the behavioural shift from violent to nonviolent resistance.

Despite the fact that situations of extreme violence limit the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance tools, in most contexts of oppression and exploitation, nonviolent resistance might be one, if not the only, constructive and peaceful way of struggle. Certainly, its ability to transform and shape power dynamics and human relationships makes it a unique form of political action (Dudouet, 2008:20-21).

Remarkably, nonviolent solutions offer some considerable advantages over violent means of insurgency, such as their capacity to engage the population, pressure the opponent and raise domestic and international support. They also encourage public participation while fostering dissent in the opponents support base, and enable the resisters to gain leverage at the negotiation table as governments will be more willing to engage in negotiations with nonviolent expressions of opposition (Dudouet, 2008:20; Zunes, 2016:364; Dudoeut, 2013:407).

As a closing remark it is fair to say that the world is evolving in a direction that considers military confrontation against civil society less and less acceptable, in which military superiority "has become less likely to produce the results political leaders desire" and in which regimes will find it harder to justify the use of violence against an unarmed opposition (Qumsiyeh, 2011:244; Zunes, 1994:412).

2.3. *Everyday Resistance* and *Sumud* in Palestine

These more visible acts of resistance, such as demonstrations, protests, riots or insurrections emerge in an attempt to draw attention to an unbearable situation but they do not arise from nowhere. On the contrary, such events are often the most visible expression of a path previously prepared "by stories, poems, songs, visual arts and other local acts of defiance and resistance, unseen by authorities and by outside observers" (Tripp, 2013:5).

Along with its physical expression, resistance may also take place as part of the routines and practices of day-to-day life. These forms of "everyday resistance" cannot be dismissed as of little

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[3] 'Towards a global movement: a framework for today's anti-apartheid activism', Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, 2007:154

importance compared to more visible resistance mechanisms. In fact, their very existence can prepare the ground in ways that the authorities are unable to detect (Tripp, 2013:6).

Everyday resistance cannot be mentioned without reference to the work of James Scott, as he has inspired and extensively contributed to the academic field of the Resistance Studies by showing that "non-organized resistance can have a great impact on social change" (Lilja et.al, 2017:42). The author affirms that by adopting everyday forms of resistance, such as foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance and alternative narratives, among others, the relatively less powerful actor introduces an alternative path to organized, collective and confrontational forms of resistance (Scott, 1989:34).

Everyday resistance can be described as the setting within which "people act in their everyday lives in ways that might undermine power". Therefore, *everyday resistance* is about specific actions and mechanisms that are available to all subalterns in their day-to-day lives (Vinthangen & Johansson, 2013:36).

Moreover, subalterns tend to adopt these *everyday acts* as resistance mechanisms when, due to the circumstances, open defiance and organized resistance is impossible. Instead, the *everyday resister* opts for techniques that avoid notice and detection and consequently are "quiet, dispersed, disguised", deliberately invisible and anonymous (Scott, 1989:34).

For Scott, *everyday resistance* falls into the category of "infra-politics", i.e. it consists of activities or practices that are not necessarily perceived as political within a certain society, despite having political intentions and consequences (Scott, 1990:183).

Furthermore, what *everyday resistance* lacks in structure and visibility it compensates for in its ability to exert pressure and to provide safety and anonymity to its users. Thus, one key characteristic of *everyday resistance* is the "pervasive use of disguise" in which the identity of the protesters is sometimes concealed, but not their class or message, and at other times the message is ambiguous but delivered by clearly identifiable messengers (Scott, 1989:54).

Often, in dangerous contexts, resistance acts are intended to be ambiguous, to have double meaning, to be misrepresented in order to avoid being interpreted as open and direct defiance and hence avoid open and direct retaliation. Instead, "open declarations of defiance are replaced by euphemisms and metaphors; clear speech by muttering and grumbling, open confrontations by concealed non-compliance or defiance" (Scott, 1989:55).

Moreover, different domination techniques encourage different types of resistance; material domination, such as appropriation of taxes and labour, encourages direct resistance by disguised resisters; denial of status - humiliation, deprivilege, assaults on dignity - encourages the elaboration of hidden messages of anger or the emergence of disguised discourses of dignity and worth and often the ideological justification of domination by the privileged ruling groups contributes to the rise of dissident subcultures or counter-ideologies (Scott, 1989:55-6).

Everyday resistance seems to reflect "tactical wisdom" being used not only for the survival of its users but also to sabotage the existing structure of domination, especially in contexts where open resistance is considered too dangerous. When faced with a "realistic fear of coercion" or a previous experience of state violence and repression, subordinate groups are more likely to prefer these resistance techniques in place of more open forms of political defiance (Scott, 1989:34-5).

Conversely, Vinthangen and Johansson (2013) find that actors do not necessarily perceive their acts as resistance, hence it is not necessarily a question of "tactical wisdom". Instead the authors claim that the term *"everyday"* implies a sense of normality, a sense of incorporation in the resister's daily life, as well as in his/her "personality, culture and tradition"; and that the term *"resistance"* implies that those everyday acts have the ability to challenge the power dynamics. In this way, Vinthangen and Johansson suggest that *everyday resistance* is a type of resistance that is "done routinely, but which is not politically articulated or formally organized" (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013:10).

In this sense, the nonviolent resistance acts embraced by the Palestinian community fall into Vinthangen and Johansson's categorization of *everyday resistance*. The Palestinian popular resistance experience emerges from a sense of *sumud*, i.e. an "active form of willingness to sacrifice oneself in order to achieve justice". *Sumud* also highlights the "steadfastness, persistence and success in the face of adversity" and more than mere passive tolerance, is an "active form of popular resistance" (Qumsiyeh, 2011:11). By simply living, eating, breathing, by going to school and tending their sheep on land where settlers regularly attack and harass them, by working under extremely harsh conditions and marrying and having children in what remains of Palestine, Palestinians are resisting Israeli occupation (Qumsiyeh, 2011:235).

Furthermore, large scale actions are harder to engineer for subordinate groups as these groups are often geographically disperse, face linguistic barriers as well as a lack of organizational skills and tactical experience (Scott, 1989:35), hence the attraction of subordinate groups to this type of resistance is understandable. Everyday techniques are relatively safer (as the scale of the action is smaller); they do not require formal coordination and often promise more "*de facto* gains". As a result, while open confrontations bring them closer to the "formal, de jure recognition" of their claims, *everyday resistance* promises more material gains (Scott, 1989:34).

In the same vein, Asef Bayat (1997) asserts that the "informal people" are political and adopt certain practices that are able to incite visible social changes. According to Bayat, however, Scott's understanding of *everyday resistance* is inadequate to understand the struggles of the urban poor as it reduces them to hidden, quiet and individualistic efforts (Bayat, 1997:56).

Instead, Bayat suggests that often the urban poor become involved in proactive resistance activities as they try to "improve their life chances (in terms of capital, social goods, opportunity, autonomy and power)" while simultaneously striving to curb the benefits accrued by the prevailing groups. Such proactive resistance activities may include, for instance, the illegal occupation of abandoned buildings or the emergence of parallel economic activities (Bayat, 1997:55-6). Here, a kind of *everyday resistance*

emerges where subalterns, especially those in the lowest classes or living under the poorest conditions, organize themselves collectively through what Bayat refers to as *"quite encroachment"*, or in his words: "the silent, protracted but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive and improve their lives (…) marked by quiet, largely atomized and prolonged mobilization with episodic collective action" (Bayat, 2000:545-6). Although it is true that in a primary phase the individuals are striving to improve their own living conditions, the individual efforts quickly become public and evolve into a collective struggle once the state and/or those in power try to block the people from advancing (Bayat, 1997:62).

Everyday forms of resistance seem to represent a class struggle as the adoption of such techniques by a large number of individuals has a similar impact to more direct forms of confrontation once they become a "pattern of resistance". As the pattern of resistance grows, it becomes customary, and the expectation about what is permissible change. Once this happens, the political and administrative costs of impeding resistance increase (Scott, 1989:36-41). As the power dynamics shift in favour of subordinate groups, there is space for new forms of opposition to emerge and everyday resistance may transform into a more direct and open challenge to the power holders (Grinberg, 2014:40; Scott, 1989:58).

In this way, these smaller actions might precede other forms of more "obvious" resistance and incite larger social organizations to take action (Lilja et.al, 2017:43), often offering an explanation of where open rebellions come from (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013:3). Moreover, even if no political movement can be identified or a direct cause found, everyday resistance contributes to the disgruntlement with authority and the undermining of power. Likewise, despite often being invisible to the public eye, it can lead to the creation of a new common vocabulary and scheme of solidarities among subalterns that can "challenge the material power of a regime or state" (Tripp, 2013:7).

Moreover, despite lacking formal coordination and being mainly based on individual actions, everyday resistance mechanisms depend, to a certain degree, on *(informal)* coordination. This is particularly true in smaller communities where some degree of coordination is achieved when there is a generalized sense of unfairness, as well as a common fear of retaliation that amplifies the tacit cooperation among the resisters (Scott, 1989:52-3).

In this regard, history shows us that all Palestinian uprisings are unplanned and with no direction or guiding strategy (Qumsiyeh, 2011:242). They are, nonetheless, the overall result of the continuous employment of innovative and imaginative forms of resistance that are only found within the experience of the Palestinians (Qumsiyeh, 2011:234). Most Palestinian resistance activities emerged from the "bottom-up" and often political parties and leaders were surprised by the outbreak of new uprisings and the new methods being used (Qumsiyeh, 2011:234-43).

The uprising of 1987, also known as The First Intifada, drew on to the streets a huge number of Palestinians from the most varied sectors of society. It emerged as a grassroots movement rather than

being formally incentivized by the Palestinian Leadership. The Palestinian people mainly engaged in nonviolent actions, such as demonstrations, roadblocks, burning tyres, striking and civil disobedience. Due to the large number of men that were under administrative detention at that time the uprising was mostly carried out by women, youths and children and was, for the most part, an unarmed protest (Mason & Falk, 2016:169-170).

This historic moment is commonly known as the "Stone Revolution" as throwing stones at the Israeli Security forces was the major form of protest. The asymmetry of the confrontation; stone throwing against the highly militarized Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) typified the confront. (Mason & Falk, 2016:171). The extremely disproportionate violence used against Palestinian resisters by the Israeli government was not only noted but led many to question the dominant Israeli narrative that Israel was a "solitary state surrounded by extremely violent enemies" and resulted in a significant change in the international community's perception of the conflict (Rigby, 2010:52-53).

Additionally, the 1987 Intifada 'backfired' internally, with many Israelis surprised by the level of repression employed by their government. This led to the subsequent election of a Labour government with a more "pro-peace" agenda. The Intifada also resulted in increased solidarity between Israeli and Palestinian civil groups and the growth of the number of "refuseniks": Israelis that refused to serve in the military in the occupied Palestinian territories (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011:129-130). It does seem that by continuously increasing the cost of the occupation, Palestinians were creating new forms of solidarity while at the same time enhancing the divisions within Israeli society leading to more and more Israeli civil organizations supporting the "Palestinians' quest for peace and justice" everyday (Qumsiyeh, 2011:241).

The First Intifada came to be seen as a successful example of the ability of nonviolent resistance to provoke moral shifts in the political climate and build pressure on target states, regimes and groups (Mason & Falk, 2016:171). The Palestinian popular resistance, then, seems to get closer to its objectives when it acts as a collective effort based on "teamwork, individual sacrifice, heroic resistance, kindness and solidarity, all of which made life very difficult for the colonizers" rather than being led by a unique charismatic leader (Qumsiyeh, 2011:238).

However, lack of clear goals and conflicting agendas of the different actors involved can be counterproductive and frustrate resistance actions. Having a specific goal, audience and target can help measure the success and productivity of a certain event (Qumsiyeh, 2011:244).

Initially, the 1987 Intifada caught both the Israeli Government and the traditional Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leadership off guard. The latter having to work hard to connect with the new generation of Palestinian activists.

At that time, the political party *Fatah* was emerging as the largest faction and its members and actions were crucial in establishing the evolution of the post-Intifada events. The PLO was concerned about its irrelevance and inability to influence the turn of events and this led it to participate in the Madrid Conference (in 1991) that eventually resulted in the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

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Moreover, the generational gap between the younger frontline activists (that valued innovative and rebellious actions) and the PLO leaders (that recognized Israel and renounced violence) was becoming more and more pronounced (Qumsiyeh, 2011:231).

Initially, the Oslo peace process was received with enthusiasm by Palestinians and Israelis alike. However, its principle flaw soon became clear, namely that Israeli concerns were given much more importance than those of the Palestinians (Rigby, 2010:59-62). The Oslo Accords were, and still are, considered by many as a disaster for the Palestinian cause as they led to more disunity within the Palestinian people, to the international recognition of Israel as a Jewish State by more than 60 countries and the consequent growth of Israel's diplomatic and economic power. For the PLO, the Accords meant a weakening of its role as a legitimate representative institution and to its eventual replacement by the interim Palestinian Authority (PA) and to a doubling in the number of Israeli settlers in area C[4] (Qumsiyeh, 2011:233).

Soon opposition by the Palestinians to the peace process began to grow, which resulted in both violent and nonviolent responses and eventually in the eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000 (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011:137). This uprising was initially unarmed and Palestinians avoided the use of firearms, but soon "violence crept in as a response to Israeli brutality" (Qumsiyeh, 2011:233) with both sides engaging in the deadly use of force (Mason & Falk, 2016:171).

Despite the increase of violence, many Palestinians remained committed to nonviolent resistance and continued to engage in nonviolent protests, demonstrations, boycotts of Israeli goods and everyday acts of solidarity and *sumud* (Rigby, 2010:66-67). Nonetheless, the Palestinians were far more severely condemned by the international media for the use of violence than Israel, with some stating that one of the major outcomes of the second Intifada was the Israelis' "recapturing" of western sympathy (Ackerman, 2001:64).

Still, one may argue that everyday resistance is less challenging to the existing power structures than more open forms of resistance (Scott, 1989:57). However, the often-physical consequences inherent in open confrontations discourage individual action and should not be ignored (Scott, 1989:51). For instance, many nonviolent Palestinian resistance actions, particularly in public spaces, are brutally repressed by the IDF; demonstrations are usually dispersed using "tear-gas, rubber-coated steel bullets and chemical substances which cause nausea" (Mason & Falk, 2016:174; Broning, 2011:141).

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[4]Two years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the Oslo II agreement was settled with the objective of implementing the agreements of 1993. Matters of security, economic arrangements and public administration were defined. Oslo II divided the West Bank into three areas: Area A, officially under the PA control; Area B, in which Israel and the PA shared responsibilities over security and public order, respectively and finally, Area C where Israel maintained full control over security and civil affairs. This area encompassed all the territory that was not included in Areas A and B and represented the biggest parcel of land. The Israeli control over Area C should have been of temporary character, and its controlled gradually transferred to Palestinian control. https://peacemaker.un.org/israelopt-osloII95, consulted on: 18/11/2020.

If the means of resistance vary according to the form of power exercised, then to consider only organized, collective and direct mechanisms as (proper) resistance is to measure only the level of structural repression that limits the existing resistance options (Scott, 1989:51).

On the other hand, *everyday resistance* may be about cleverly using "imposed systems" to the benefit of the resister(s) (de Certeau, 1984:18) within their ordinary daily activities. Resisters use the dominator's resources, products, systems, and spaces insomuch as it turns "the actual order of things" in their favour (de Certeau, 1984:26-34).

The construction of the Separation Wall in 2002[5] after of the onset of the Second Intifada (2000) offers a good example of the use of this type of resistance. The Wall is an economic drain on Palestinians but they have found creative and inventive ways to use it in their favour, namely through the emergence of "check-point" vendors, porters and transport services (buses and taxis)" and even "wall tourism" (*graffiti* tours and gift shops). The Wall itself is used as advertising space for local business, with restaurants and other small business using it as a way of publicising their menus and products and even to "project World Cup football matches" in order to attract clients (Larkin, 2014:155-7).

In conclusion, everyday resistance may prepare the ground for more obvious expressions of resistance that the authorities are unable to detect and it cannot be dismissed as of little importance (Tripp, 2013:5). Moreover, in a non-organized, in-formal manner, everyday resistance can greatly contribute to significant social changes (Lilja et.al, 2017:42), once it is adopted by a large number of individuals and the expectations about what is permissible change (Scott, 1989:41).

What everyday resistance lacks in structure it compensates for in its ability to exert power as well as to protect its users' identity (Scott, 1989:54). This capacity is particularly relevant in circumstances where open confrontation is perceived as too dangerous (Scott, 1989:34).

As a final remark, *everyday resistance* may contribute to shaping subalterns' attitudes towards power and the position of power holders towards resistance. Not only that, it may also offer a more extensive repertoire of resistance techniques (Tripp, 2013:16). Furthermore, by contributing to the emergence of innovative counter-narratives, *everyday resistance* promotes an alternative route, not only to power, but to resistance itself (Scott, 2013:17).

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[5]Israel began the unilateral construction of the Separation Wall in 2002, during the Second Intifada. Israel justified its construction with the need to protect its citizens from Palestinian attacks (Dana, 2017:887). The ''security fence'' is 708 km long and annexes 9,4% of Palestinian territory of the West Bank. With it came severe constraints on the access to jobs, public services, education and family for the Palestinians and the territorial fragmentation of the Palestinian land and people (Larkin, 2014:134).

3. Art as Resistance in Palestine

3.1. Art as a political strategy

Political cultural production is not a technique exclusive to resistance movements. For centuries, states and their governments and elites have strategically used cultural production as a way to "construct, reify, and normalize national(-ist), patriarchal or tribal identities and ideologies" and to represent and reinforce their authority, interests and agendas (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:15; Trip, 2013:186; McDonald, 2013:25).

Cultural production is also used to express political opposition and dissent and to unmask hegemonic cultures in contexts of authoritarianism, censorship, occupation, and violence (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:15). Music, poetry, images, and dance are "epiphenomenal tools for the mobilization of oppositional politics and ideology" (McDonald, 2013:31).

For Palestinians, cultural production has historically been influenced by the conflict and *art* has, since its earliest days, been one of their tools of resistance. Furthermore, political developments of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have contributed to the Palestinian peoples' notion of struggle and strongly defined their national identity (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:9). Historical encounters and the political manoeuvrings of the conflict have helped shape the techniques and aesthetics of Palestinian cultural movements and the themes they have embraced (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:9).

Although possessing a rich, centuries old cultural heritage, the Palestinians lost their cultural centre of gravity with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Following this event, also known as the *Nakba*[6], a large part of the Palestinian community was dispersed as refugees around the world and those that remained were placed under the sovereignty of three different entities: Egypt, Jordan and Israel. This led to the natives being dispossessed of a "socio-political unified environment". This contributed to the weakening of internal unity and to increasing political fragmentation among Palestinians who, by being geographically dispersed, experienced different realities within the same conflict (Qumsiyeh, 2011:236).

Largely influenced by this moment, generations of Palestinian artists emerged from the cultural ghetto created by the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and from the experience of dispersal and destruction which is visible in the artworks of that period (Boulatta, 2004:71).

During the period between 1967 and 1993[7], the Palestinians suffered from extreme censorship and were forbidden from expressing "nationalist" sentiments. Not only was the production of local media

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[6] During the 1948 exodus of Palestine, more than 500 Palestinian villages were forced into depopulation and heavily destroyed in order to create the State of Israel, and thus hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes and towns. This event later became to be known as *Al-Nakba* or, in English the "disaster", "catastrophe", or the "cataclysm'' (Masalha, 2014:34).

[7]This period corresponds to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel, following the Six-day War in 1967, a period that lasted until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, after which the Palestinians were given limited governance and autonomy: https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/palestineremix/timeline_main.html#tl-4.

limited to "highly controlled and censored news" (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:5), but also national symbols, such as the *kufiyya* (Palestinian head scarf), were prohibited (González, 2009:205). Artistic production was also subject to control; the raising of the flag or the use of the Palestinian colours (red, green and white) was forbidden and artists were often arrested and their creations confiscated (González, 2009:205; Tripp, 2013b:118). Furthermore, for Palestinian artists living within the "Green Line"[8], cultural connections with other intellectuals were severed and access to new Arab cultural currents from neighbouring countries strictly limited (Boullata, 2004:71).

With the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, *art* became a space for political intervention for the nationalist resistance movement. The period from 1960 to 1970 is associated with the emergence of several "classic" Palestinian artists such as Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Darwish and Suleiman Mansour. Through literature, poems and paintings, they used their work to "voice the nationalist aspirations of the Palestinian people" as well as their very personal experience of "refugeehood and exile" (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:9).

Until the late 1980s, however, the most visible form of Palestinian resistance was the armed struggle which was mainly orchestrated by organizations working from outside the occupied territories (Tripp, 2013b:117). The First Intifada (1987-1993), however, brought new life to the Palestinian resistance and a "new direction in Palestinian history, politics, and culture" as this was a moment of intense national sentiment and reflection and "new national intimacies were shaped, and new cultural identities formed" (McDonald, 2013:117). Numerous Palestinians engaged in acts of civil disobedience such as building barricades, setting tyres on fire and throwing stones. It was during this period that folk music, poetry, dance, and *graffiti* became the primary means of social and political mobilization (McDonald, 2013:118; Tripp, 2013b:119).

New ways of imagining Palestinian resistance and nationalism emerged and gained momentum. This momentum coincided with a generational change and reflected a cultural transformation within Palestinian Society that led to a new direction in Palestinian politics; resistance to the occupation would now take the form of concerted grassroots civil disobedience actions, while on the other hand lethal collective protests would be, from then on, avoided (McDonald, 2013:118). The idea was to engage in "unarmed civil disobedience on a massive scale" (Ehrehreich, 2016:83). Such a drastic political transformation would not have been possible without the strategic re-framing of cultural symbols and practices. In a combined effort to articulate the political and the cultural, politicians, intellectuals and artists strategically sought to "reconceptualise the resistance movement away from the once ubiquitous image of the uniformed freedom fighter (*fida'yi*) to the more sympathetic image of adolescents

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[8] The ''Green Line'' was established in 1949 and refers to the territorial division that emerged from the Israeli war against Jordan, Egypt and Syria for the Palestinian territories. Between the armistice and 1967, the West Bank was under Jordanian authority. In the June 1967, however, Israel made efforts in order to conquer the remainder of historical Palestine, and after the ''six-day war'', the West Bank was taken from Jordan and occupied by Israel (Bornstein, 2003:1; Boullata, 2004:71).

demonstrating in the streets". Songs, poetry, posters, *graffiti*, scarves, and stones were now framed as signs of resistance, history and "presence in the land" (McDonald, 2013:120).

The effectiveness of this redefinition lies in the heightened visibility given to the power imbalance between Palestinian demonstrators and the Israeli army before an international audience (McDonald, 2013:120). Disproportionate use of force by the Israeli army caused worldwide criticism of the Israeli government and resulted in a substantial growth in support for boycotts of Israel and in support for the Palestinian demonstrations. At this point, it became clear to Israel that it would have to reassess its policies in Gaza and in the West Bank. In a context of state terror and disproportionate use of force against Palestinians, the Israeli society began to move its support towards the Labour Party, led by Yitzhak Rabin (McDonald, 2013:131).

Once elected, it was in Rabin's best interest to start negotiations with the PLO and end the uprising. A wave of optimism grew among the Palestinian population and reconciliation efforts were expected from the newly elected Israeli Government (McDonald, 2013:132). Some positivity towards Palestinian culture and costumes was encountered and Palestinians no longer had to hide the celebration of events, such as weddings, births and funerals, and cultural events were allowed in the streets. It was believed to be a period of peace and reconciliation so the *Intifada*, the culture of mourning, sacrifice, and revolution, felt no longer necessary (McDonald, 2013:133-35).

Eventually, the Oslo Accords (1993) were signed, and the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established in 1994 and with it a new artistic period was born (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:9). With peace talks seeming to promise the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, "the cultural scene was infused with a new energy". Proper exhibition places were provided, and institutions devoted to promoting Palestinian visual arts and boosting a new generation of artists were established[9] (Boulatta, 2004:72).

This period reflected a rupture with the more traditional Palestinian cultural resistance, very much centred on the notions of nation, refugeehood and trauma. The period following the Oslo Accords represented an attempt to innovate and embrace new processes of artistic production and "experimenting with new languages, symbols, and aesthetics", whereby everyday life and the ordinary people's experience became the central theme of artistic production and resistance (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:10).

Also, the position of the PA with respect to the Palestinian cultural resistance movement was particularly relevant to the definition of new aesthetics as well as to the political questions addressed.

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[9] In 1992, the Al-Wasiti Art Center (by Sliman Mansur, co-founder of the League of the Palestinian Artists in 1973) and the Anadiel Gallary (by Jack Persekian, an independent curator) were established in East Jerusalem. Later, in 1997, the al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art (also by Jack Persekian) opened doors also in East Jerusalem. In 1996 and 1998, the Khalil Sakanini Cultural Center and the A.M. Qattan Foundation opened in Ramallah, respectively (Boullata, 2004:72-74). Few years later, in 2003, a Department of Fine Arts was created at the Al-Aqsa University of Gaza (Slitine, 2018:51).

If, on the one hand, the PA encouraged the Palestinian "resistance culture", on the other, it normalized resistance to the occupying power and was itself an agent of control and censorship (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:9). Nonetheless, for the first time in modern Palestinian history there was an "authorization and sanctioning of official Palestinian self-expression, on Palestinian land" (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:6).

However, and even though the Accords supposedly represented an end to the official Israeli occupation, attempts to silence and erase Palestinian identity and culture did not stop (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:5). Less than a decade after the first Palestinian Uprising, the Second Intifada broke out due to the frustrations of the Palestinians over the broken promises and failure of the Oslo Accords (Pappé, 2011:229).The Second Intifada (2000-2005) was characterized by the ransacking of cultural institutions by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), the bombing of the Palestinian national radio station building and transmission tower and the destruction of television stations and the confiscation Palestinian official archives (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:5).

Moreover, with the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa* Intifada Israeli armed incursions into areas under Palestinian control became commonplace. In parallel, freedom of movement between Palestinian towns and villages became increasingly restricted, principally due to the building of the 700km wall between Israel and the West Bank (Tripp, 2013b:122).

All these political developments have heavily influenced Palestinian cultural production and turned it into a witness to the close relationship between art and politics (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:10). The "spatial-political conditions" experienced by the Palestinians have strongly influenced the cultural scene (Tawil-Souri, 2011:13). In the Palestinian experience, "aesthetics and politics are intertwined", insomuch that even the most private representations of cultural expressions have political connotations (Said, 2003:163-164).

In an environment of state repression and control, every "performance space" is an opportunity to a "assert counter hegemonic and/or subversive nationalist identities" and to articulate the nationalist efforts of the Palestinians living under occupation and in exile. In this sense, "protests, demonstrations, concerts, lectures, weddings, and funerals" are spaces where cultural performances take place and traditions are perpetuated. Each of those events, even the most private ones, "involve a transaction of cultural norms, national signs, engineered to elicit powerful feelings of belonging and community" (McDonald, 2013:32).

Due to the Israeli State's continuous attempts to eradicate Palestinian culture and identity through repression, control, silencing and obstruction, 'creating culture' in Palestine assumes a multitude of political functions: besides serving as a testimony, it is a tool of mobilization, of self-identification, of resistance to the colonial occupation and a generator of national sentiments (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:6; McDonald, 2013:31).

Palestinian cultural expression is the reflection of the "desire to be seen, to be heard, to be documented" (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:11). Aiming to preserve the past and recreate the present while

"dismantling the mythic Zionist/Israeli narrative" (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:11), the Palestinian cultural praxis has endorsed the task of "keep telling the *[Palestinian]* story in as many ways as possible, as insistently as possible, and in as compelling a way as possible, to keep attention on it, because there is always a fear that it might just disappear" (Said, 2003:187).

For the Palestinians has been essential to concretize the notion of identity, of what it means to be Palestinian, because "the loss of identity tends to cause social marginalization and political inaptitude in open and competitive societies" (Khashan, 2000:18). As a result, Palestinian culture contributes to the self-expression, self-presentation and self-realization of a people living under extreme conditions "of silencing by the thundering story of Zionism, dissident memory, counter-memory" (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:13; Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007:6). Moreover, the "Palestinian memory" has historically achieved an important role in the construction and preservation of a "counter-history" to the Israeli narrative (Sa'di & Abu-Lughod, 2007:6). While the conflict has remained unresolved, Palestinian culture continues to be one of resistance, where the main goal is "to fight historical amnesia and create a more equitable future" (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:13).

3.2. Art's disruptiveness and everyday resistance

Popular culture often works as a constitutive feature of collective identity formation "within which broader social forces emerge" (McDonald, 2013:31). Culture can be understood mainly in two ways; it can be seen as a set of "values, norms, and patterns of action people follow" or, in the artistic sense, as the artistic production that results in "a physical phenomenon or artefact", for instance, a song, a painting or a piece of *graffiti* (Hall, 1977:318). In this sense, much of what it is produced, "performed, negotiated, and disseminated in the everyday lived experience", from cooking to cinema, music or visual arts production, is culture (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:5).

Furthermore, art and aesthetics are nuclear to the construction of community and/or national identities (Richter-Devroe, 2014:17). By reviving, preserving or even inventing new cultural realms, nationalist groups are capable of strategically engineering national sentiments within a certain community (McDonald, 2013:28). The representation of something through art can persuade people to see themselves and their surroundings in a certain way. "The ingenuity and appeal of artistic experiences" can influence people into accepting a certain version of history and to adopt a developing identity (Tripp, 2013b:260).

Consequently, domination of artistic production is crucial to assert control over a publics' shared imagination and to promote the "constitution of the subject" (Tripp, 2013a:187). Controlling the cultural space enables the projection of certain images of power and of those in powerful positions "into the spaces of everyday life", and simultaneously limits alternative images from invading the public imagination (Tripp, 2013a:187).

Thus, the transformative potential of *art* lies on its ability to incite *"dissensus"* within a community or society. By provoking *"dissensus"*, *art* creates a division in what is perceived as acceptable within a certain group. By disrupting the "common sense" and questioning the "consensual and established", art is able to transform the political in the most radical ways (Rancière, 2010a:69; Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:17).

However, not every artistic production is intended to have political meaning. The criteria for classifying *art* as political does not merely depend on the topic or message addressed, but on its ability to challenge perceptions, to produce new affective ties and to introduce "new forms of political subjectivity" (Rancière, 2010b:122).

Following in the same vein, Rancière (2010b) is critical of "self-proclaimed political art", that wants to teach a supposedly ignorant spectator by placing political messages at the core of the artistic productions (Rancière, 2010b:14-15). In the author's view, such art does not introduce any new political perspectives and merely relies on already exiting ideologies (Rancière, 2010b:31). Moreover, this type of "political art" risks falling "into established institutionalized cultural networks, which are often sustained by market relations" (Richter-Devroe, 2014:17).

Hence, *art* is transformational when it is able to "activate affective ties by disrupting hegemonic imaginaries and sensibilities" and when it triggers alternative public and cultural expressions that challenge the official version of history and offer a different narrative (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:12; Tripp, 2013a:187).

By the same token, the work of many artists helps to "underline the spurious nature of the rulers' claims to authority", which consequently contributes to revolutionizing the relationship between ruler and subject (Tripp, 2013a:188). Moreover, the way artistic production, in all of its forms, makes the "powerful uneasy" is an excellent testimony to its potential to "shed light upon the hidden vulnerabilities of those in authority" (Tripp, 2013a:197).

In this sense, artistic creations that focus on representing the ordinary, the mundane and everyday life instead of pursuing a clear anti-regime message, can also challenge at the macro-political level (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:13). In the context of Palestine, however, "the normal is the exception and the abnormal (of occupation) is the everyday" (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:20). To prioritize the mundane and seemingly apolitical disrupts the common perception inasmuch as it "reorders the realm of the sensible" and permits new subjectivities, affections, identities and imaginaries to emerge (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:20).

For instance, some post-Oslo cultural production that represents the "paradoxes of everyday normal(ised) life under occupation" gives the outside observer a new perception of the Palestinian experience, and as a consequence disrupts the "commonly held perception" of the conflict (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:18).

Not only that, but everyday focused art also contributes to deconstructing the Palestinian "self-imposed" national image (Tawil-Souri, 2011a:153-154). Younger generations of Palestinian artists that

focus their work on representing the everyday reality of the Palestinian people are not only breaking with "classic nationalist tropes", they are also "challenging the political consensus" (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:19).

The younger generation of Palestinian artists is not only disillusioned with the post-Oslo political framework but is also contesting the "narrow conceptualization of resistance art" proposed by the older generations. They aspire to "shift the parameters and aesthetics of politics and, in doing so, to fashion novel youth political culture" (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:20). Moreover, because these younger "subcultures' operate outside the traditional Palestinian "nationalist" culture of resistance, they are able to propose new affections and to redirect the observer towards new perceptions (Rancière, 2010a:151; Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:20).

This may be the case of Elia Suleiman, film director and actor that stands out among other Palestinian artists for offering an individual perspective on the Palestinian reality and for avoiding "static notions of identity" in his work. Suleiman often resorts to irony, self-mocking and the absurd to offer a fresh point of view on what it means to be Palestinian. In his work he attempts to give a perspective of the Palestinian people that goes beyond (the self-imposed) image of suffering and martyrdom.[10]

In his latest movie, *"It must be heaven"* (2019), Elia Suleiman comically and absurdly explores the sense of constant alienation felt by the Palestinians, and the gap between the experiences of those living outside and inside Palestine, while criticizing western societies that live life oblivious to the realities of others. The movie, which features Suleiman himself as the main character, is about the journey of a film director trying to pitch a movie based on this very idea to producers. Starting in Nazareth, Palestine, Suleiman travels to Paris, where his idea is rejected for not being "Palestinian enough". Later in New York, his idea is rejected for being precisely the opposite.

Tired and hopeless, Suleiman returns Palestine. The last scene of features a new generation of Palestinians dancing freely and carelessly in a club in Haifa. Based on the real social scene of Haifa, considered today as an important social hub for newer generations, Suleiman interprets their seemingly forgetful attitude towards the occupation as a form of resistance that is not associated with any political party but about freely expressing oneself. In these youths, Suleiman finds the despair and frustration of his own generation transformed into "some sense of hope" for the future.[11]

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[10]Interview of Elia Suleiman by Anne Bourlond first published by the *Revue d'etudes Palestiniennes* in 1999.
[11]In a Q&A at the Cannes Film Festival following the premier of the movie in 2019, Suleiman offered brilliant insights about his methodology and creative process: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr6Ns1WYIQ4&ab_channel=FestivaldeCannes%28Officiel%29, consulted on: 21/11/2020.

Figure 3.1. Elia Suleiman in "It Must be Heaven" [12]

Palestinian cultural production is, nevertheless, the reflection of externally imposed conditions of "de-territorialisation, fragmentation, and dispersal", and of the internalised need to deconstruct the Israeli narrative and unilaterally written history, and the Palestinian determination to be heard and seen (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:13). Nonetheless, as Palestinians have different experiences of the conflict, resisting the occupation takes different nuances "as one moves through time and space between various Palestinian communities" (McDonald, 2013:28).

Despite the fact that the *Nakba* led to the geographic division of Palestinian society into three main constituencies (Palestinians inside Israel, Palestinians in the occupied territories and the refugee and *Diaspora* communities outside historic Palestine) to the present day it still represents a place of collective memory and history that "connects all Palestinians to the most traumatic event in Palestinian history" (Sa'di, 2002:177; Masalha, 2014:31).

The traumatic events of 1948 are fundamental to the construction of the Palestinian identity and to the collective sense of struggle. The "historical fragmentation and the colonial boundaries" imposed on the Palestinian people intensified the identity and political distinctiveness between those living under Israeli law, those living in exile (mainly in neighbouring Arab countries) and those experiencing life in the occupied Palestine (Masalha, 2014:31; Said, 1992:117).

As a result, there are myriad possibilities when it comes to representations of "Palestine". An artist, according to his or her own personal experience, attempts to address "specific needs and values that are born of multiple and diffuse experiences of dispossession" and occupation (McDonald, 2013:27).

The above notwithstanding, the indigenous Palestinian inhabitants are deeply connected to each other through the *Nakba*, inasmuch as "that has become for them an eternal present" (Sa'di, 2002:177). To resist attempts to "localize the *Nakba* in the past and describe it as a finished event rather than an

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[12] Throughout the movie, Suleiman makes references to several symbolic elements of Palestinian reality, struggle, and resistance. In this image, for instance, there seems to be an association with the figure of the Handala, character that will be explored in the following chapter of this thesis. This image was retrieved from: https://www.cinemaclock.com/movies/it-must-be-heaven-2019, consulted on: 21/11/2020.

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ongoing reality" is a key part of the Palestinian collective consciousness (Ali, 2018:149; Masalha, 2014:31).

And it is often through aesthetic tools that the struggling masses are able to find a counter hegemonic voice against foreign control, to encounter an effective means of empowerment and a way of surpassing the structures of domination (McDonald, 2013:25). As the possibilities of engaging directly in political activism are limited, or almost impossible, resorting to cultural activism represents a first step "towards rising up from the ashes of destruction" and can equip Palestinian society with a sense of internalized strength that the Israeli government cannot easily prevent nor erase (Pappé, 2011:75).

Culture then, is the political space where suppressed emotions, ideas and opinions can emerge (Scott, 1990:xiii). According to Scott, culture is an alternative space where the weak can protect their truth through "hidden transcripts" in a way that the powerful are oblivious to (Scott, 1990:164-65). It is a safe space where the powerless can express themselves relatively freely and share "less-than-innocuous messages" within the existing power structures (Scott, 1990:181).

Accordingly, it is relevant to consider how people act (and react) in their daily lives once they can challenge the dominant power relations (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013:2). A lifestyle may be considered a form of resistance once it consists of a set of behaviours that "undermine the existing power structures" (Ali, 2018:155). Moreover, those *hidden transcripts of truth* - that can take the form of songs, folklore, paintings, slogans, literature, carnival demonstrations and so on - often provide the ideological foundation necessary to initiate a revolt against the oppressor (Scott, 1990:80). To some extent, for the subjugated to be able to speak their truth publicly asserts a certain sense of recovered dignity (Ash, 2002:281).

Art, particularly visual art, is a tool through which citizens not only pass messages between each other and to different audiences, but also express their political preferences (Tripp, 2013a:186). Artistic interventions are not only reflective mechanisms, they also contain the potential to form a "new kind of political public", more informed and politically aware, as well as to influence the political agenda (Tripp, 2013a:186). Expressive art is then a constructive space "where the political and ideological effects of the occupation are not only expressed, but given materiality" (McDonald, 2013:31).

Palestinian culture - its stories, literature, art and traditions - represents a challenge to the Zionist narrative and to the Israeli denial of the Palestinian people's existence. Every aspect founded in the daily reality that materializes the Palestinian collective memory or sense of belonging to the land becomes a process of everyday resistance. If we follow the interpretation offered by Hamdi (2011), that everything that keeps the idea of Palestine alive is a type of *sumud* then artistic production certainly falls into this category (Hamdi, 2011:40-41). Thus, the political role of culture relies on being a form of transformative resistance able to shape "the political behaviour among the Palestinians in their everyday resistance" (Ali, 2018:148-9).

3.3. Art as defiance: non-violent resistance

The Zionist narrative is mainly built on a foundational myth of "a land without a people to a people without a land" that essentially erases Palestinians from the land and from the discourse about it (Piterberg, 2001:31).

In the Occupied Territories the process of *'judaization'* began with the renaming of important sites and streets, and was followed by systemic erasure of Palestinian history and culture, a process that Ilan Pappé designated as *'memoricide'* (Pappé, 2007:225-230). The foundation of the Israeli occupation consisted primarily of the militarization of the police force, the construction of borders, check-points, reinforced-concrete forts and the establishment of guard towers along the roads (Enrenreich, 2016:206). And, of course, it was based on the destruction of entire Palestinian villages and homes with the objective of denying Palestinian existence in the "past, present and future" (Lambert, 2013:24). This regime *("architecture of domination")* is designed to "protect and sustain an occupying army stationed amid a population that did not want it there" (Enrenreich, 2016:206).

The city of Gaza has been particularly subjected to what has been referred to as '*urbicide*', meaning the "deliberate wreaking or killing of a city" (Graham, 2007:12) which consists of destroying civil buildings and cities without military targets (Slitine, 2018:50). The objective is to "affect the very life of the population in such a way that war cannot be ignored by anybody and must be experienced on a daily basis by a nation's civilians" through architectural structures (Lambert, 2013:23).

There are other examples of '*urbicide*' in the Palestinian context. For example, in the West Bank, the Separation Wall, the check-points, the exclusively Israeli axis of transportation and the demolition of Palestinian homes in order to construct Israeli settlements are all part of a set of systemic tools conceived to oppress the Palestinians on a daily basis and to disturb their lives as much as possible (Lambert, 2013:67-78). Moreover, the check-points and systems of permits imposed by the Israeli authorities to enter and leave occupied Palestine have drastically limited the circulation of people and culture (Stiline, 2018:50).

Simultaneously, from 1967 onwards a strict military censorship was imposed on the press of the occupied territories and every academic and cultural program had to be previously reviewed and approved by the Israeli occupying authorities, which eventually transformed the West Bank and Gaza into "besieged ghettos virtually isolated from the outside world" (Boullata, 2004:71). More than anything, these tools function as "a giant humiliation machine, a complex and sophisticated mechanism for the production of human despair" and the biggest struggle is to "simply stand and not be broken" (Ehrenreich, 2016:500).

Israeli policies and measures are designed to destroy all forms of culture that evoke the Palestinian national identity and collective memory (Swedenburg, 1989:268). Their power is not only exercised over the land and its architecture, but also imposed on "the story, its point of view, and the meta-narrative of truth and memory" (Bresheeth, 2007:165).

Israel persistently refuses to allow Palestinians to celebrate their past and their history (Bresheeth, 2007:165). An example of this, is the *"Nakba Law"*. This law, passed in 2011, authorises Israel's finance ministry to revoke or suspend governmental funding to institutions and organizations that reject Israel as a "Jewish and democratic state" and that celebrate the country's Independence Day (May 15th) as a day of mourning[13]. It targets Palestinians in Israel and the primary goal is to delegitimize their collective memory. The Israeli *modus operandi* is not restricted to land confiscations and house demolitions, but takes a variety of forms, including exerting control over "the telling the story of the place itself" (Ali, 2018:148).

As mentioned previously, at the time of the First Intifada, raising the Palestinian flag or using its national colours were prohibited in the Occupied Territories according to Israeli military regulations (González, 2009:205; Tripp, 2013b:118). Inevitably, however, this made it easier for the Palestinians to commit "multiple small acts of resistance". Flags, stickers and *graffiti* appeared everywhere to such a degree that the Israeli military could not prevent nor control it. In failing to do so, the IDF seemed weaker and less in control than they intended (Tripp, 2013b:118).

Soon these smaller gestures of defiance became a way of engaging a larger segment of the population who would "have normally shied away from overt acts of resistance" and were essential for the preparation of bigger collective actions. Moreover, these sustained and deliberate acts of defiance and confrontation became a way of symbolically asserting not only the "Palestinian-ness" of the land, but also the political existence of the Palestinians as a people rooted to the territory, the rejection of their expulsion and marginalization, and their resistance to subordination (Tripp, 2013b:119-20). The Palestinian's struggle is the fight to resist their "real and symbolic" erasure from the land and it is so deeply rooted within the people that Palestinian cultural production has been informed and shaped by it. The challenge is to counter the hegemonic and structural attempts to silence and erase them, so "the very act of 'creating culture' is a form of political resistance" (Tawil-Souri, 2011b:4-5).

As an example, in the summer of 2002, during the Second Intifada, the Palestinian artist Vera Tamari set up an art exhibition in Ramallah (Figure 3.2) that consisted of a line of smashed cars and was ironically entitled "Mashin?" *[Going for a ride?]* (Tripp, 2013b:256). This was an allusion to the Israeli military operations of April 2002, during which the Israeli Army not only killed thousands of demonstrators and demolished numerous buildings but also used bulldozers and tanks to crush up to 700 cars in Ramallah alone[14]. The cars present in Vera's exhibition were some of them. By transforming these mundane objects into artwork, the artist is reminding the public of the everyday violence experienced in occupied Palestine (Tripp, 2013b:256). Not only that, she is also signalling her "refusal to be intimidated by Israeli military power" and it is a clear example of defiance against the occupation,

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[13] https://www.adalah.org/en/law/view/496, consulted on: 05/09/2020.
[14] https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0504/S00248.htm, consulted on: 07/09/2020.

in such a way that it "struck a chord with the many Palestinians who passed by or wandered around among the wrecked cars" (Tripp, 2013b:257).

The exhibition impacted not only Palestinians, but also the Israeli military. In June 2002, one day after the opening of the exhibition, Israeli tanks were spotted circling the site and rolling over the already flattened cars[15], unaware that they were themselves becoming part of the installation (Tripp, 2013b:257). It is easier to assess the artists' intention than to predict the real impact a piece of artwork has on its audience, but the reaction of the Israeli soldiers to Tamari's installation, even if they were not necessarily the target audience, not only gave a sense of power to the work but also evidenced its ability to "unsettle and annoy". In practical terms, this reaction gave importance to the resistance piece (Tripp, 2013b:258).

And even if the artist's effort was to lead the audience into re-thinking the *status-quo*, the reaction of the viewers is always affected by their own "aesthetic judgements, background and personal preferences" (Tripp, 2013b:258).

This duality of "artist intent" *versus* "viewers' interpretation/reaction" is very characteristic of resistance art. For instance, a piece of art might be intended to suggest a different perspective on a certain situation by proposing a new and radical aesthetic; however, it may also lose the ability to engage and mobilize a counterforce if it departs too much from the "commonly understood conventions". The power of art is then very much tied to the "resonance it can strike in an audience" (Tripp, 2013b:258).

Nonetheless, artists can have a key role in framing new visual vocabularies, not only by presenting a new perspective on reality but also by representing "half remembered" episodes. In fact, art and other cultural means often function as memory tools by which "awareness and values are passed down through generations" (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995:127). By framing new visual vocabularies artists are creating a "mnemonic" for the collective memory of the Palestinians and to establishing a presence that demands recognition (Tripp, 2013b:259).

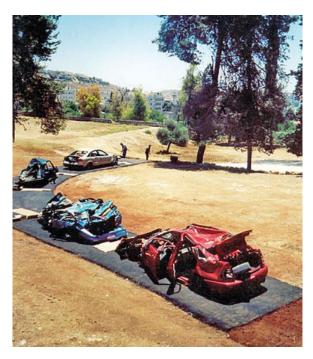[15] Ibid.

Figure 3.2." Mashin? *[Going for a ride?]*" Installation by Vera Tamari, Ramallah 2002[16]

For instance, the year 1973 marked an important moment for the Palestinian artistic resistance movement when the League of the Palestinian Artists was created. Ignoring the impact that the League would have on the general population, the occupying forces allowed the collective of artists to organize group exhibitions and did not attribute any importance to what they considered to be "marginal activities". To the Palestinian audience, however, every piece of art brought to light in the presence of the Israelis became a source of "national pride and self-reassurance" (Boullata, 2004:72).

Once artists and exhibitions began to be seen by the occupying forces as representative of the resistance, they became targets of military harassment, censorship and imprisonment and the confiscation of art works and closure of galleries became a part of their daily reality (Boulatta, 2009:232). This reflects the political space artistic expression is able to occupy, and how it is troubling for those who want to maintain the *status quo*, particularly by suppressing the emergence of alternatives and the non-recognition of those who demand a "political realignment" (Tripp, 2013b:259).

The effort made by governments and regimes to censor cultural expressions and representations is nothing but a testimony to the powerful "obsession with public expression of dissonant and subversive messages and their fear of the power of art". Hence, the tangible effects of resistance art seem to be better assessed through the reactions of "those who feel most threatened" (Tripp, 2013b:259-60).

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[16]Image retrieved from: https://universes.art/ar/nafas/articles/2009/kamal-boullata-palestinian-art/images/07-vera-tamari, consulted on: 20/11/2020.

4. *Graffiti* as Resistance (…in Palestine)

4.1. Conceptualizing *Graffiti*

The term *graffiti* is derived from the Italian word s*graffiato* which signifies to cut or scratch stone. In the modern context *graffiti* means any image or text on any surface visible to the public. A wide range of everyday items such as spray paint, marker pens, stickers, stencil graphics and sharp instruments are commonly employed in its creation (Klingman & Shalev, 2001:405; Fredrick, 2009:217). It is a means of expression and communication that encompasses a wide range of "media, techniques, subject matter, form, and meanings" (Frederick, 2009:212).

It is an ancient practice, but it was not until the 1970s and 1980s, with the emergence of hip-hop and the "subway-style *graffiti*" in the United States of America (particularly in New York), that scholars began to appreciate its potential as a form of youth resistance and its ability to provide "little insights" into the mind of the individual creating it (Ferrel, 1995:75; Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974:492).

Since the beginning of this century, an increase of *graffiti* production around the globe has been observed. Although it is created in different ways and for different objectives, it is most often characterised as being part of an anti-social behaviour, associated with vandalism and assumed to be produced by the younger members of society (Frederick, 2009:212-3; Jorgensen, 2008:273). Frequently *graffiti* is seen as a problem requiring prevention rather than as a source of mark-making behaviour worthy of study (Fredrick, 2009:214).

Often looked upon as illegal, many scholars consider that the political utility of *graffiti* varies with its perceived legality, the more legal *graffiti* becomes the more its political legitimacy is undermined (Waldner & Dobratz, 2013:379). According to Lewisohn (2008), political art - in which he includes *graffiti* - once placed in a gallery becomes politically neutralized. The ability of *graffiti* to "smash the system" is lost when the system itself gives it legitimacy (Lewisohn, 2008:104).

Political *graffiti* expresses ideas targeted at influencing the opinion of the public or the government policy and decision making. Moreover, political *graffiti* expresses a position or positions that are normally in opposition to those of the state or the wider public (Jørgensen, 2008:242). It typically reflects current social issues and community concerns (Klingman & Shalev, 2001:405) and presents the public with a counter hegemonic narrative (Waldner & Dobratz, 2013:378).

Due to its particularities, *graffiti* has many advantages for its authors. Firstly, the ready availability of the necessary tools (e.g. spray cans) allows the *graffiter* to transmit his or her messages quickly and at low cost. Secondly, by being on the margins of institutionalized political mechanisms and the "mainstream modes of communication", the *graffiter* benefits from freedom of speech. Thirdly, *graffiti* is a "form of democratic expression that is accessible to anyone regardless of background or skill" (White, 2001:257). And lastly, the anonymity associated with its creation protects the *graffiter* from potential retribution (Rodriguez & Clair, 1999:2).

According to Jørgensen (2008), *graffiti* can be sub-categorized into different genres. Some *graffiti* being primarily non-linguistic, and other being primarily linguistic. Non-linguistic *graffiti* is mostly concerned with the aesthetic aspect and is often elaborate and associated with mural paintings, but it can also transmit political messages. Between non-linguistic and linguistic *graffiti* there is a "borderline genre", named "tags" (signatures). Despite not carrying an extensive or complex message, at the minimum, tags make it known that the producer was "present at a particular site long enough to leave her or his mark". Lastly, linguistic *graffiti*, as the name suggests, consists of writing on walls to broadcast messages decipherable by the general public and is purposely produced for "public consumption". *Graffiti* is normally oppositional in its content, but even when it is not, the very act of wall writing suggests "oppositional attitudes on the side of the producer" (Jørgensen, 2008:237-38).

Moreover, such behaviour surely reveals a range of different impulses: the desire to reflect upon life; the need to connect with the place or the necessity to communicate with others. It is sometimes funny, but most often instructive, combative and every so often offensive (Frederick, 2009:231). It has multiple motivations, and its meaning is "perpetually regenerated" since the interpretation belongs in "the eye of the beholder" (Frederick, 2009:231). According to Bennett (1983), the meaning does not belong to the text itself, but is rather activated by the "discursive reading position of the reader" (Bennett, 1983: 218). Without proper framing, *graffiti* is always open to multiple significations (Cover, 2002:176; Frederick, 2009:211).

Therefore, the analysis of the local context in which *graffiti* is placed is very important as it will reveal layers of nuance that are specific to it, that are "unique and unrepeatable" (Fraenkel, 2002:315). To study the location of a piece of *graffiti* will highlight not only the "urban dynamics shaping the practices of inscription" but also the historical and geographic specificities that influence its placement and content (Chmielewska, 2007:155).

Graffiti artists draw upon a broad visual history to transmit their message. Often using pictures of objects and personalities from the 20th century. A lot of these images are recognizable as they are taken from other media. Many times, the images are re-purposed by being altered, combined with other images and through plays on words (Frederick, 2009:220).

The theme of resistance is commonly reiterated in the representation of revolutionary figures and world-renowned civil rights leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King or Che Guevara. Images with symbolic power are effective instruments for provoking collective emotions, evoking a feeling of struggle, and producing practitioners of resistance (Alim, 2020:73-4). Artistic expression can be highly influential due to the "symbolic power" it possesses. Bourdieu defines symbolic power is "an almost magical power, which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what would be obtained by force, by virtue of a specific effect of mobilization" (Bourdieu, 1991:166).

4.1.1. Is all *graffiti* political?

Graffiti may be considered a political act even though the message transmitted is not political. Whether or not this is the case, might depend on the understanding of the geographical location and context within which is created (Lewisohn, 2008:104). There are some authors, however, who think that *graffiti* is underlyingly political because it represents a direct challenge to authority and how capitalism considers the distribution of space (Waldner & Dobratz, 2013:379). The act of writing *graffiti* often violates all sorts of controls contrived to stifle the present-day city and hem its populace in to fixed forms of social isolation (Ferrell, 1995:86). Following in the same vein, Hanauer (2011) considers that "*graffiti*, through its unrequested interjection within the public domain, is always inherently a political act" (Hanauer, 2011:306). As it is non-institutional and outside the normal bounds of political discourse, *graffiti* is a form of contentious politics (Waldner & Dobratz, 2013:383). It represents the "twilight zone" where the communication of deeply felt, but rarely unspoken sentiments and attitudes is possible (Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974:492).

Graffiti is an example of micro-politics where individual actors hope to influence the political position of both national and international actors. Potentially able to publicly challenge the state and other powerful actors, *graffiti* represents bottom-up political activism (Hanauer, 2011:316). According to Hanauer (2004) *graffiti* has three essential political functions. Firstly, it provides an entry pathway for ideas into public discourse that are ignored by other media. Secondly, it provides individuals with the chance to publicly voice controversial ideas. Thirdly, it accommodates a venue of political discussion for the marginalised groups (Hanauer, 2004:30). *Graffiti* is then, the micro-level political avenue by which everyday anonymous people publicly present their political understanding (Hanauer, 2011:302).

4.1.2. The battle over the public space

The primary canvas for *graffiti* in the public space is the "wall", a term encompassing a range of structures such as barriers, fences, gates, or the exterior of buildings. According to Foucault (1991) numerous institutional mechanisms, namely walls, are strategically planned and built by governments to control a populace by limiting its access to space, in which the "apparatuses of security" is an essential technique (Foucault, 1991:102-103)[17]. In his "theory of governmentality", Foucault suggests that individual behaviours - at the micro-level - are governed through disciplinary norms and structures instantiated at the institutional or macro level (Foucault, 1991:102).

As a strategy, walls enable the control of circulation by setting paths and routes for people and consequently limiting or decreasing their chances of encounters (Breghenti, 2010:322). To push back against these limitations, *graffiti* is often used as a record of human presence and desires in order to assert claims over space (Frederick, 2009:212-14). The human desire to mark territory is visible across

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[17] For instance, Israelis refer to it as a fence, a 'security fence' or a barrier. The word 'security' legitimises and deflects questions about the legality of the Wall, the intent behind it, its violation of human rights and its highly injurious impact on the local population (Peteet, 2005:165).

different cultures and eras, but it gains particular symbolism in the context of "exploration, colonisation, war, migration and settlement" (Frederick, 2009:212-14). Within the relationships of power, the control over the cultural space is contested. While the powerful attempt to define and control the space, the less powerful attempt to undermine this imposition by using it as a way to assert control over everyday life (Ferrell:1997:22).

In the battle over public space, *graffiti* tends to be ephemeral. Often painted over, whitewashed, or removed by authorities, *graffiti* does not tend last very long. The political commentary provided by *graffiti* is constrained by being "short-term" and reflects "specific moments of a fluid reality" (Jørgensen, 2008:237; Ross et. al, 2017:415).

Because *graffiti* uses the street as a "arena of politics", is an integral part of what Bayat (1997) defines as "street politics". Street politics are understood to mean conflicts between the populace and the authorities that are formed and expressed in the social and physical space of the streets. For those who do not have a formal arena in which to express themselves politically, the street becomes the sole domain in which they can make their ideas known. It is the active or participative use of public space that makes street activity political; the use of footpaths, intersections, squares and public spaces turns them all into places of contestation (Bayat, 1997:63).

4.1.3. *Graffiti* as mobilization

According to Gramsci (1971), a human mass cannot be independent without organizing itself (Gramsci, 1971:364). Only by acting as a "collective man", a mass of individuals with diverse intentions and aims can perform historical acts of change (Mouffe, 1979:191). Every collective political act, however, requires mobilization. To mobilize the masses, organization, communication, and networking among heterogenous actors, whether formal or informal, are needed (Bayat, 1997:64).

As a form of communication, political *graffiti* intentionally interacts with the public (Bruner and Kelso, 1980:241). It not only provides critical commentary but also incites civic engagement, participation and resistance from the observer (Ombati, 2015:32; Rodriguez & Clair, 1999:2). It is a channel for social interaction, where knowledge is transmitted, values and aspirations promoted, attitudes moulded and group identities formed or enlarged (Frederick, 2009:211; White, 2001:266; Ombati, 2015:34).

By being exposed in public spaces, *graffiti* allows the counter narrative messages to be equally visible and absorbed by everyone who passes by. By doing so, all the individuals that pass by are potentially new challengers of the hegemonic order (Rodriguez & Clair, 1999:3). Hence, the "street" is a place that offers the possibility for those who use the public space to mobilize or to be mobilized by other individuals without necessarily sharing an "active network" between them. Instead, "street mobilization" is possible due to the "passive networks", i.e. the tacit recognition of a shared identity among atomised individuals, which allows the establishment of a communication avenue with others

that are unknown to the *graffiti* artist. As these others might experience the same conditions, the *graffiter* hopes to activate this passive network and extend collective action. What stands between a passive network and action is the common threat. When "automized" individuals are confronted by a common threat their passive network spontaneously turns into an active network and collective action. The spontaneous possibility of group action turns the street into an important political stage and is the reason why unpopular governments pay so much attention to them. Even if states can control and limit public demonstrations (marches, sit-ins, protests) they are often incapable of prohibiting street populations from working, driving, or walking - in short, from street life (Bayat, 1997:64-6).

4.2. *Graffiti* in Palestine

4.2.1. *First Intifada* (1987-1993)

Graffiti is deeply connected to the history of Palestinian land. As a political act, it found its most notable expression during the First Intifada and after the unilateral construction of the Separation Wall in 2003 (Peteet, 1996:139; Hanauer, 2011:301). The reason for its importance as a political tool and as a resistance mechanism during the First Intifada can be found several years previously to that event. After the Six-Day War in 1967, Palestinian print media were under intense scrutiny by the Israeli military and operated under severe constraints. Still, the highly politicised Palestinian publishers cherished newspapers as a way to inform, mobilize and educate the community (Bishara, 2009:4).

Israeli military law, however, prohibited the publishing of anything that could "prejudice the State of Israel, the public safety and order" (CPJ, 1988:67). As a result, editors and journalists were often imprisoned, fined and the publication of newspapers suspended (Benvenisti, 1983:18). By the time of the First Intifada a complex system of media censorship was in place, to the point that every article had to be examined before being published[18] and up to 25% of the work submitted for evaluation was deleted and never allowed to be shared with the public. Censorship was not merely a way of stopping information and mobilization from spreading within the Palestinian community, it was also a mechanism created to prevent the emergence of a cohesive Palestinian political identity (Bishara, 2009:5) by eradicating any expression that could foster Palestinian nationalist sentiment or suggested that the Palestinians were a nation of individuals that shared national interests and sentiments (Benvenisti, 1983:1). At the time of the First Intifada, the Palestinians had no broadcast media and newspapers were so highly censored as to have virtually no practical utility. Consequently, everyday political activity shifted to underground outlets, such as *graffiti* writing (Bishara, 2009:7). Palestinians were unable to construct their own narrative due to the distorting effects of censorship on communication. *Graffiti* was a form of overcoming this discontinuity (Peteet, 1996:142).

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[18] Under Military Order 101, "No publications can be brought in, sold, printed, or kept in someone's possession in the West Bank unless a permit has been obtained for them" (Hilterman, 1991:105-6).

Graffiti became the primary source of information and news (Peteet, 1996:151). Instead of newspapers, political leaders, activists and eventually the general population, turned to the "small media"[19] to discuss and share critical information about the resistance movement (Bishara, 2009:7). Denied access to an uncensored print media, walls became the primary arena in which public opinion could be formed (Habermas, 1991:398). Because it was created under such a complex apparatus of censorship, *graffiti* was not only a form of expression, but it also served as a record of domination[20] (Peteet, 1996:142). As a communication device, *graffiti* spoke to multiple audiences: the Palestinians, the occupier and eventually the international community. *Graffiti* spawns different interpretations and spurs different readers to take different actions. Besides encouraging other acts of resistance, creating *graffiti* was itself part of the repertoire of actions of civil disobedience, along with the withholding of taxes, refusing to buy Israeli goods and flying the Palestinian and flag and using the national colours in clothing (Peteet, 1996:140-3). *Graffiti* encouraged resistance, provided political commentary (figure 4.1), and updated the community on the progress of the uprising. It also invited people to take action (e.g. "Monday is a strike"), celebrated martyrdom and sacrifice, envisioned different futures, and was the standard mobilization strategy of the First Intifada (Peteet, 1996:143).

Figure 4. 1. "The State and the Right of Return are Non-Negotiable Revolutionary Strategies" *graffiti*ed by Fatah Movement during the First Intifada (1987-1993)[21]

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[19] ''Small media'' is a term coined to Bishara and refers to the use of posters, bulletins, leaflets and graffiti as a mean of communication (Bishara, 2009:4).

[20] As Peteet suggests, graffiti such as "No taxes without representation" not simply give instructions of action to the community but is also ''a diagnostic of the kinds of tactics deployed by the occupying authorities'' (Peteet, 1996:142).

[21] Image retrieved from: https://palarchive.org/item/163328/the-state-and-the-right-of-return-are-revolutionary-strategies-first-intifada-graffiti-1980-90/, consulted on: 20/10/2020.

Usually, *graffiti* carried the signature of different Palestinian political factions, either their full name or acronym (figure 4.2) but references to historical moments or Islamic symbols were also commonly featured (Peteet, 1996:149). *Graffiti* also served the purpose of "marking territory". As a territorial marker, the goal of *graffiti* was to imprint territorial demarcations while asserting claims over space (Ley & Cybriwisky, 1974:492). By observing the density of signatures, symbols and the colours present on the walls, the reader could determine which party was more prominent or in control of a certain neighbourhood or area (Peteet, 1996:149). It was common for one organization to paint over another's *graffiti*, which was a testament to the "many strands of political resistance in Palestine" (Tripp, 2013b:275).

Figure 4.2. *Graffiti* written by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) during the First Intifada (1987 - 1993)[22].

Considered an act of "incitement and hostile propaganda", *graffiti* was deemed illegal according to Israeli Military Regulations and was responded to as such. Successfully writing on walls was a clear act of defiance of "Israeli claims to surveillance" and brought to light the inability of the occupier to control and regulate every space (Peteet, 1996:143-6). *Graffiti* appeared in the most public and visible places such as squares, busy roads, crowded shopping areas and on private property. The pervasiveness of *graffiti* made it difficult to avoid and it was a "constant reminder both of the abnormality of everyday life under occupation and of the mass uprising" (Peteet, 1996:143-47).

Palestinians were not allowed to express themselves culturally and politically in public spaces because of the military occupation. By writing on walls, Palestinians were graphically and visibly responding to and resisting efforts to exclude them from public space. Although a form of cultural production, *graffiti* served as a means of communicating despite official censorship (Peteet, 1996:145-8).

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[22]Image retrieved from: https://palarchive.org/item/163339/a-photo-of-graffiti-scribbled-on-a-wall-during-the-first-intifada-1987-93/, consulted on: 20/10/2020.

The autographing of *graffiti* by political groups not only allows its authors to remain anonymous, but also hints at a sense of community and resolve of a public sharing a common political experience and language. Nonetheless, painting *graffiti* frequently led to violent encounters with Israeli soldiers, and often those applying *graffiti* were either shot, severely beaten, or arrested, for these reasons *graffiti* was often created at night. This violent response to *graffiti* emphasized the Israeli recognition of the importance it had in galvanizing its audience, in promoting collective consciousness and in inspiring agency in the public sphere (Peteet, 1996:147).

Graffiti in the Occupied Territories was mainly written in Arabic which suggested that it was directed to an internal audience (Peteet, 1996:150). Regardless of this fact, it was part of the resistance strategy to make the international community aware of the occupation, so occasionally *graffiti* would be written in English. Because international photojournalists and television crews took so much interest in *graffiti*, it became a way of projecting the Palestinian voice in the international political arena (Tripp, 2013b:275).

With the advent of the First Intifada, Palestinians became concerned with Western public opinion. This concern only deepened during the period of the Oslo accords as the fate of the Palestinians became increasingly bound to the US and Europe (Bishara, 2009:9). With the end of the First Intifada and the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, *graffiti* production did not stop. In the period between the two Intifadas *graffiti* continued to denounce the Israeli occupation but was now also used as a platform to express internal Palestinian political rivalries (Tripp, 2013b:275).

With the Oslo Accords, Palestinians were given a limited form of self-governance and Israeli military patrols in Palestinian urban areas diminished. New media outlets were now available as the PA established the official Palestinian broadcast media; Radio Voice of Palestine and Palestine TV in 1994 and with technological advances unofficial media proliferated. However, these new media institutions were now facing restrictions from the PA itself and Palestinians still struggled to find a forum in which to openly debate their future (Bishara, 2009:8-9). At the same time, writing on walls was no longer as dangerous, so *graffiti* lost some of its appeal as a way of resisting the occupation. It began to reflect the publics' dissatisfaction with the Oslo Accords, with PA governance and internal disquiet (Tripp, 2013b:276).

4.2.2. *Second Intifada* (2000-2005) and after

After the outbreak of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* not only did regular armed military incursions into Palestinian Territory return, but construction of the Separation Wall began in the West Bank (2002), swallowing up to 10% of Palestinian Territory (Tripp, 2013b:277). The Wall not only represented the most physical manifestation of Israeli domination, it also allowed the Israeli authorities to extend, reproduce and "reinscribe it in space" (Tripp, 2013b:277-8; Azoulay & Ophir, 2005:21).

At first, Palestinian popular resistance to the Wall included mass protests, "sit-ins" blocking bulldozers, legal petitions, and advocacy campaigns. However, the inability to physically stop the construction of the Wall led to the adoption of "creative resistance strategies", such as using the Wall to apply *graffiti*, protest art, or even advertising[23].Owners of businesses whose properties directly face the Wall use hand-sprayed messages to promote their products and prices. It is also used to promote different shops, restaurants, local services, musical concerts, and other culture gatherings (Larkin, 2014:156).

Residents have varied responses and reactions to this phenomenon, revealing subtle differences in perspectives on the Wall, the continuing Israeli occupation, and the PA. Some considering this to reflect a tacit acceptance of the Wall, others consider the inscriptions on the Wall, whether political, social or commercial, an oppositional practice and an act of resistance (Larkin, 2014:157). *Graffiti* represent a written and visual rejection of the Wall as a means of incarceration and, as such, constitute a form of political intervention and action (Peteet, 2016:336)

The Wall, heavily patrolled on the Israeli side but left almost unguarded on the Palestinian side, began to be used as the place *per excellence* for artistic expression, resentment, and resistance (Tripp, 2013b:277). The Wall emerged as a "multi-layered" hub for local and international artists, for voicing the local marginalized voices and expressing global solidarity through *graffiti*, slogans, murals, and posters. As in the First Intifada, *graffiti* on the Wall addresses multiple audiences: Palestinian society, the Israeli State, and the international community (Larkin, 2014:135-6).

4.2.3. International audiences

As explained previously, Palestinians engage in individual *sumud*[24], however they also recognize the importance of engaging the international audience with its cause (Larking, 2014:141). In a study conducted in 2011 of the *graffiti* present on the part of the Separation Wall surrounding the Abu Dis neighbourhood (Jerusalem), it was found that out of the 78 *graffiti*es present, 66.7% of the messages were in English, 14,1% were in Hebrew, 8.9% were pictorial, 6.4% were in other international languages such as Turkish, Italian or French and that only 3.8% were in Arabic. Out of the grand total, 70.5% of the messages were critiques to the Wall, of Israeli policies and its allies and in support of the Palestinians (Hanauer, 2011:308).

The linguistic shift from Arabic to English seems not only to testify to the change in the demographic of the *graffiti* artists, now mostly foreign, but also to the targeted audience (Gould, 2014:9). The fact that the majority of the *graffiti* on the Wall is in English suggests that it is meant for international consumption, either through direct observation by political tourists, or by extension through media outlets and internet sites (Hanauer, 2011:308-10).

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[23] For instance, George Hasbun, owner of the Bahamas Seafood restaurant located next to the Wall in Bethlehem, uses the Wall to advertise the restaurant's menu (Larkin, 2014:157).
[24] See Chapter 2.

The location of *graffiti* is tactically chosen. Along the Wall, for instance, most *graffiti* can be found in Bethlehem and Abu Dis, mainly because these are popular tourists destinations[25] so there is a greater chance that *graffiti* will be seen and photographed and, consequently, its messages will reach a wider international audience (Toenjes, 2015:60). Artists come from all over the world to offer messages of support and solidarity, often with the desire to raise awareness within the international community and to bring pressure on Israel and its allies. English is "the language of protest" for those who want to address Israel, the United States and the international community (Larkin, 2014:144-51).

It is not always easy to distinguish between *graffiti* painted by Palestinian artists from those by transnational activists (Toenjes, 2015:58). *Graffiti* on the Separation Wall seems to be orchestrated to communicate with international audiences. It is common to find murals covered with internationally recognized symbols and powerful images (Alim, 2020:57). These murals often invoke international symbols of resistance, such as Nelson Mandela or Ghandi, in an attempt to place the Palestinian struggle side by side with other revolutionary contexts and the Palestinians as an integral part of the global struggle for freedom, liberation and anti-colonialism efforts. By using visual references to figures and historical events, artists are reinforcing the idea that the Palestinian experience is not unique to them, and that "like other victimized communities, they can also prevail in the liberation struggle they have been waging" (Alim, 2020:74-5).

By exposing a message or cause in a certain way, activists can reach different audiences and elicit different responses from them. If an artist wishes to reach a certain audience it is important to frame the message in a way that will resonate more with that audience (Toenjes, 2015:57-9).

For instance, Palestine has always been an important site of Christian pilgrimage. Any artist wishing to reach this audience would turn to specific religious discourses or symbolic Christian imagery (Toenjes, 2015:60). As an example, in Figure 4.3 below, one can observe two very symbolic elements, the Statue of Liberty and Handala[27] posing as the Virgin Mary and Jesus respectively, framed as Michael Angel's pietá. The Statue of Liberty is a symbol associated with the "American dream" of freedom and prosperity, and Handala is an iconic symbol of the Palestinian identity, resistance and associated with the "right to return" (Gould, 2014:11-2).

By manipulating symbolic elements shared with Christians and Americans and combining them with a very important symbol of the Palestinian liberation struggle, the artist is not only targeting a specific audience but is also framing Palestinian suffering and daily experience of the occupation in a way that will be understandably more appealing. *Graffiti* helps to build communication between

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[25]The graffiti on the Separation Wall has attracted many ''political'' or ''conflict'' tourists. The popularization of the Wall among international tourists is closely linked to the interventions of the British artist Banksy who, since 2005, has travelled to Palestine to spray paint his solidarity with the Palestinian cause. His interventions are not restricted to the Wall, but they have helped to generate media coverage and publicity for the Palestinian struggle. The rise of conflict tourism led locals to open souvenir shops and organize ''Wall tours'' (Larkin, 2014:143-157). Besides the Separation Wall, Banksy's interventions are also found in the streets of Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and northern Gaza (Tapies, 2016).

geographically dispersed but like-minded solidarity movements (Toenjes, 2015:60; Gould, 2014:12). It seems that Palestinian and transnational activists strategically use the Separation Wall to access transnational networks and to find external support for the Palestinian struggle against the occupation (Toenjes, 2015:56-8).

Figure 4.3. Handala and the Statue of Liberty, Bethlehem Wall. Photography by Matthew DeMaio[26]

Critics have remarked, however, that when international *graffiti* frames the Palestinian struggle in universalized terms, it fails to connect with local realities, making it harder for the Palestinian perspective to be heard and eventually risking diluting the power of *graffiti* as a resistance tool in the Palestinian struggle (Gould, 2014:13; Alim, 2020:75).

Although *graffiti* by international artists attract transnational attention, the locals receive these interventions on the Wall with some ambivalence as some consider that the artwork of western artists not only beautifies the Wall, but also receives more media coverage and scholarly attention (Larkin, 2014:144). Aesthetic considerations seem to have secondary importance to the Palestinian artists, that instead look at *graffiti* as a visual support for the political struggle (Alim, 2020:70).

4.2.4. Internal Audiences

Graffiti destined for domestic consumption differs from that aimed at an international audience. When directed at international targets, *graffiti* tends to evoke human rights discourses, peace slogans, criticism of international stakeholders associated with Israel and often adopt westernized symbolic elements in an attempt to raise international awareness, solidarity and foster global pressure on Israeli

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[26] Image retrieved from:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273087602_The_Materiality_of_Resistance_Israel%27s_Apartheid_Wall_in_an_Age_of_Globalization/figures?lo=1, consulted on: 20/10/2020.

policies (Larkin, 2014:161). On the contrary, *graffiti* intended for the domestic audience tends to "localize the struggle". Attention is given to historical events, political commentary, support for political prisoners and the remembrance of martyrdom. It seems to be of great importance then, that the specificity and local nature of the Palestinian struggle be always kept in sight (Larkin, 2014:151-2).

I suggest that it is important to analyse *graffiti* created by Palestinian artists, preferably outside the mainstream sites of media and touristic attention, such as Bethlehem and Abu Dis, to understand the characteristics that are unique to them. To study the artistic work of local agents can offer relevant insights into the state of the contemporary Palestinian resistance movement and about its political demands and aspirations.

To do so, I wanted to access photographs of *graffiti* produced by young Palestinians. As I used web browsers, namely Google, to search for photographs of *graffiti* online, I found that the vast majority of *graffiti* pictures available are those made at the Separation Wall, often by (famous) international artists.[27] To overcome this obstacle, I thought of using social media, namely Instagram, to hopefully find young Palestinians involved in the creation of political *graffiti*. I came across Mohamd Alraee, a 25-year-old Palestinian living in the Aroub refugee camp[28], in the southern part of the West Bank (Figure 4.4). I understood from his Instagram account that he is very much involved with *graffiti* creation, as he regularly shares photographs of *graffiti* murals. I asked if he could share some photographs of his work with me. He very promptly sent me some pictures of his creations and later I had the opportunity to ask him a few questions.

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[27] See for example: https://scenearabia.com/Culture/apartheid-art-palestine-israel-graffiti-separation-wall-west-ban?M=True, consulted on: 23/11/2020.

[28] The Aroub refugee camp is located in the southern West Bank, between the cities of Bethlehem and Hebron. Though mainly situated within the Area B, the camp partially falls with the Area C, which as previously explained, is under Israeli administration. This might explain why the Aroub Camp has one of the highest number of incursions by the IDF in the West Bank. Around 10.000 live in the camp, which is characterized by high unemployment rates, overcrowding and poor living conditions: https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/arroub-camp, consulted on: 23/11/2020.

Figure 4.4. Aroub refugee camp, West Bank, Palestine 2020. Photograph courtesy of: Mohamd Alraee

I wanted to understand how often Mohamd engaged with the walls, if it was a collective or individual activity and, of course, what message he was trying to transmit. He explained that, for the most part, he was creating *graffiti* alone and it was something that he did on a regular basis. He then explained that:

"Most of the time it is a political message, like resistance, you know… [The message] can't be subjective in Palestine. [Resistance] is part of our daily life and reality. Other times it is connected to a community matter… but it is always political, specially living in a refugee camp."

Walls are, to this day, a very important part of Palestinian resistance, and while *graffiti* on the Wall at Bethlehem and Abu Dis appears to be more focused on engaging international audiences with the Palestinian cause, it seems, from my brief encounter with Mohamd, that he uses *graffiti* as a way of addressing the community, incentivizing resistance, criticizing authority - Israeli and Palestinian - and suggesting a different political direction. The content of the murals and the symbols used seems to suggest the type of resistance Mohamd is looking for, what political orientation he has, and what future he envisions for Palestine.

All Palestinian political organizations identify with the anti-colonial revolutionary struggle; however, their models and allies vary in accordance with their agendas and ideologies (Khalili, 2007:49). Moreover, the martyrs idolized by the Palestinian political parties are demonstrative of the different political positions (Khalili, 2007:133). I suggest the same logic can be applied to an analysis of local Palestinian *graffiti*. The idolized martyrs, symbolic elements and signs chosen by the artist can

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help us to not only understand his or her political positions and affiliations but can also be indicative of the type of struggle they are willing to pursue.

Because the images sent to me by Mohamd use symbols commonly associated with the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine): Che Guevara, Basel Aa'raj and the fida'yi covered with the red and white *keffiyeh*, I will briefly frame that political party in relation to those symbols and later I will suggest a possible interpretation of the murals sent to me by Mohamd. The significance of those elements is worthy of study as they can greatly aid in the interpretation of the message and intentions behind the artist's interventions on the Aroub refugee camp walls.

The PFLP is a secular and paramilitary Palestinian political organization associated with liberationist/Marxist ideologies. Its origins date back to the late 1960s, and it not only positioned itself against the Israeli occupation but also against compliant neighbouring Arab regimes, such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Despite adopting the "language of suffering", the party rejected the notion of victimhood, instead replacing it heroic narratives about guerrilla fighting and the use of arms (Khalili, 2007:164). Everybody was invited to engage in the struggle and women were a big part of the PFLP revolutionary movement. For instance, in PLFP posters women were portrayed as an equally important part of the struggle and were invited to engage in the same tasks of the political and military struggle as men[29] (Khalili, 2007:94; Tripp, 2013b:266).

The importance of the shared symbolism to the construction of the Palestinian identity and sense of collectiveness has been explored in a previous chapter of this thesis[30]. The same applies to the Palestinian political organizations. For instance, the image of Che Guevara (Figure 4.5) is particularly important in the PFLP common imagery. His death in 1967, the year of the Six-Day War, was associated with the adoption of revolutionary guerrilla resistance as opposed to "regular armies" (Khalili, 2007:132).

The guerrilla fighter was an important part of the revolutionary vision of Che Guevara and martyrdom was a fundamental element of resistance (Che Guevara, 1961: 25-46). Indeed, the figure of Che Guevara became one of the most celebrated icons of the Palestinian national liberation struggle (Khalili, 2007:12).

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[29] One of the most acknowledged PFLP fighters is Leila Khaled, who became iconic for her role in the hijacking of an aircraft in the 1970's (Tripp, 2013b:266).
[30] See Chapter 3.

Figure 4.5. Mural of Che Guevara, Aroub refugee camp, 2020. Photograph courtesy of Mohamd Araee.

In the PFLP narrative, armed resistance is celebrated as heroic and the *fida'yi*[31] (Figure 4.6) is framed as both a symbol and a motif which help define heroism in militant terms. Particularly during the rise of the Palestinian nationalist project during the 1960s, the image of the martyr would be inherently connected to the figure of the *fida'yi* (Khalili, 2007:111).

Moreover, until the *First Intifada* the *fida'yi* was the primary national symbol of the Palestinian struggle. The first Uprising, however, brought a new reconfiguration to the heroic figures of Palestine. As previously explored[32], during the *First Intifada*, resistance tactics included mass mobilization, strikes, demonstrations, and stone throwing instead of guerrilla operations, which contributed to the "fading away of the figure of the *fida'yi*". From then on, the heroic figure of the *fida'yi* was substitute by that of the *shahid*[33] which is used to refer to the Palestinians civilians who have been killed in the conflict (Kahili, 2007:142-6).

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[31]*Fida'ya* stands for the guerrilla fighter, the redeemer who sacrifices him/herself for the common cause (Khalili, 2007:145).

[32] See Chapter 2.

[33] https://justvision.org/glossary/shahid, consulted on: 21/10/2020.

Figure 4.6. Mural of a *fida'yi* (guerrilla fighter), Aroub refugee camp, 2020. Photograph courtesy of Mohamd Araee/

Figure 4.7. Bulletin № 48 from the PFLP, 1981. Designer: Marc Rudin[34]

Still, celebration of martyrdom is a very important aspect the Palestinian resistance culture. When I addressed the mural of Basel al Aa'raj (Figure 4.8), Mohamd told me that Basel was a young political activist, famous for being highly educated, who was killed by the Israeli military in 2017. Mohamd then proceed to characterize Basel as a "muse for every educated political activist". Aa'raj was very vocal against the Palestinian Authority, Mohamd explained, because:

"They stopped fighting against the Israeli and instead followed a neoliberal way, settling for economic freedom… [The dissatisfaction with the PA is] a sentiment shared by a lot of Palestinians but not by all of them" he then added. In fact, Aa'raj was an advocate of the grassroots struggle against the Israeli occupation but also against the PA leadership[35]. He was associated with a new wave of young leaders who wanted to "revitalize the stagnant Palestinian national movement".[36]

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[34] Image retrieved from: https://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/pflp-bulletin-number-48, consulted on: 23/10/2020.

[35] https://electronicintifada.net/content/dismantle-it-and-let-them-fall/31281, consulted on: 23/10/2020.

[36]https://al-shabaka.org/mentions/assassination-basel-al-araj-palestinian-authority-stamps-opposition/, consulted on: 23/10/2020.

Figure 4.8. Mural of Basel al Aa'raj, Aroub refugee camp, 2020. Photograph courtesy of Mohamd Araee.

Ar'raj was arrested by the PA in 2016 and accused of conspiring to plan armed attacks against Israel. Just six months after his release, Israeli soldiers raided Basel's house in al-Bireh (Ramallah), killing the prominent young activist. The death of Aa'raj provoked enormous outrage among the Palestinian community, many believing that the circumstances of Aa'raj's death suggest that it was the result of a joint effort between the IDF and the PA.[37]

Since his passing, "the educated martyr" has become one of the most recognizable symbols of resistance in contemporary Palestine. Not only has he become a symbol of opposition to the PA, but many also consider him to be a modern representation of the pre-Oslo revolutionary sentiment. Very outspoken in his support of the armed struggle, Aa'raj studied revolutions and resistance techniques used around the world with the purpose of equipping his fellow Palestinians with the necessary knowledge to resist the occupation. He was an intellectual but at the same time defended armed resistance.[38] Perhaps because of this he has been compared to Ghassan Kanafani, a prominent novelist,

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[37]At the time of Aa'raj's arrest, in an interview to the German magazine *Spiegel*, Mahmoud Abbas, PA's President, stated that: ''Our security forces are working very efficiently to prevent terror. Just a couple of days ago, three young men were tracked down and arrested. They were planning an attack. In this context, our security cooperation with Israel is functioning well.''https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/mahmoud-abbas-says-in-interview-he-will-not-run-again-a-1087310.html, consulted on 23/10/2020. Moreover, Aa'raj's killing occurred in an area under PA security control which suggested that the IDF operation was coordinated with the Palestinian Institution https://al-shabaka.org/mentions/assassination-basel-al-araj-palestinian-authority-stamps-opposition/, consulted on: 23/10/2020.

[38] https://electronicintifada.net/content/dismantle-it-and-let-them-fall/31281, consulted on: 23/10/2020.

poet, journalist, fighter and martyr from the 1960s and 1970s, a period when the "armed struggle was connected to the arts, literature, and intellectualism."[39]

Ghassan Kanafani (Figure 4.9) was assassinated in 1972 by a Mossad car bomb in Beirut and, similarly to Aa'raj, many believe that Lebanese security forces were accomplices in the killing (Khalili, 2007:113). Celebrated as the "factional martyr", Kanafani was the spokesman for the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and was seen as the "archetype of the nationalist intellectual" who believed in both penmanship and fighting (Khalili, 2007:133). While not involved in the armed struggle himself, Kanafani advocated for its use as he understood its value in capturing western media interest and attention.[40]

Simultaneously, Kanafani believed that cultural production should be directly employed in the Palestinian struggle and resistance efforts (Desai, 2020). With clarity of vision, strong convictions, hopeful, energetic, and full of political aspirations, Kanafani founded many magazines and newspapers throughout the 1950's and 1960's and wrote a series of short novels.[41] These, written under intense scrutiny and censorship, relied on the use of metaphors and symbols to reflect on the Palestinian past and struggle as well as to incite Palestinians to engage in the resistance (Desai, 2020).

As an example, in "Men in the Sun" (1962), Kanafani follows the story of three Palestinian refugee men in their journey to Kuwait, hoping to find work in the oil fields and a better life. Forced to enter illegally in another country, the three main characters meet a fellow Palestinian working as a freshwater truck driver who agrees to smuggle them into Kuwait. As they approached the Kuwaiti border, the three men hide inside the water tank on the back of the truck. Hot and dehydrated, the men silently die while the driver is showing his travelling documents. The novel finishes with the freshwater trunk driver screaming at the men's dead bodies: "Why didn't you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn't you say anything? Why?". Political and intellectual circles have interpreted this to be a call for Palestinians to take responsibility for their own path to existence and, while not offering a specific strategy, seems to highlight the need for the Palestinian people to act and rise to organized resistance (Desai, 2020).

Ghassan Kanafani had revolutionary ideals and was committed to the liberation struggle and internationalization of the conflict and the establishment of global solidarity networks for Palestine. The symbolism associated with the image of Kanafani, his literature and revolutionary ideals is associated with a time in the Palestinian history in which resistance was seen in a collective sense and art was used as part of the collective struggle (Desai, 2020).

A turning point, many consider, came with the signing of the Oslo Accords (1993), after which the concept of resistance became a more individualized notion rather than a collective project. The Oslo Accords are seen, today, as the moment when, in many ways, the liberation movement collapsed. The

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[39] https://electronicintifada.net/content/bassel-al-araj-icon-lost-generation/31051, consulted on: 23/10/2020.
[40] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxXWQXal2XI&t=1s&ab_channel=AlJazeeraEnglish, consulted on: 22/11/2020.
[41] Ibid.

loss of a robust liberation movement (in which artistic creation was featured as a vehicle for its efforts) and the geographical, political and cultural fragmentation imposed by the Oslo Accords, led Palestinian artists to increasingly focus more on individual everyday perceptions of home and belonging. The relationship with the arts became more and more individualized (Rahman, 2015:3; Zahzan, 2020). Oslo faded the resistance culture and replaced the artistic focus with initiatives of peace, dialogue and individual forms of artistry sponsored by international donors (Desai, 2020).

Figure 4.9. Ghassan Kanafani at his office in Beirut (1970). Photographer: Bruno Barbey.[42]

On the contrary, Aa'raj is seen as the embodiment of the revolutionary spirit and commitment that the Palestinians had before the Oslo accords and before the creation of PA because, instead of turning the defeat of Oslo into an ideology, as many Palestinian have, he rejected it. Like Kanafani, Aa'Raj believed in both the pen and the gun. After his assassination he became a popular icon in Palestine and would be painted side by side with Ghassan Kanafani. Like Kanafani, Basel Ar'aaj refused to adopt defeat as an ideology, but rather put into practice the ideals of the revolution. Perhaps today the tactics used would be different, but the pre-Intifada revolutionary spirt is needed for the resistance struggle. According to Desai (2020), it is time for the new generation to learn from the mistakes of the past generations and return to the Kanafani's ideals of fighting for Palestine (Desai, 2020).

Some have suggested that the Palestinian resistance grew tired of itself and that Palestinian *graffiti* no longer offers messages of either hope or concrete solutions (Gould, 2014:9). But if one agrees that *graffiti* highlights Palestinian political aspirations and that symbols and signs reflect the artist's own

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[42]Image retrieved from: https://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/ghassan-kanafani-in-his-office, consulted on: 24/10/2020.

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politico-ideological orientations (Allin, 2020:66), then the images provided to me by Mohamd deserve great attention and careful study.

Basel Aa'raj was not politically associated with any faction and yet the mural features him with the red and white *keffiyeh*, colours associated with Palestinian left-wing parties, such as the PLFP[43]. The PFLP, for instance, was very vocal in its opposition to the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, as they disagreed with the concessions made by Arafat and the two-state solution agreed to. Moreover, from its very beginning, the party expressed its opposition to centrist and contentions PA policies (Khalili, 2007:141). Aa'raj shared this sentiment.

In line with the political ideals of Che Guevara, Aa'raj believed that the revolution should be carried out by the *fida'ya* and that revolutionaries needed to be freed from the burden of the state to continue the revolution. In that sense, Aa'raj believed that, with the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO, the burden of the state was transferred to the PA, at the expense of the revolution and the liberation process, the only solution being to "dismantle it and let them fall"[44]. He was also a critic of the "culture of Oslo", marked by "individualism, lack of morals and principals, feelings of inferiority and colonized thinking" and instead celebrates Palestinian society, culture and morals from the First Intifada, a time when the resistance was marked by struggle and sacrifices[45].

I suggest that by interpreting the murals sent to me by Mohamd, one can determine his attitude to the Palestinian resistance movement today; Mohamd celebrates Basel Aa'raj, who is held up as an example of the struggle of the new generation, and Che Guevara, a figure who was one of the main symbols of the Palestinian struggle from the 1960s until the First Intifada.

Lastly, Mohamd brings back an important symbol from the past of Palestinian resistance the *fida'ya*, that, as argued previously, lost its "momentum" with the First Intifada. To bring this element back, I believe, is to state that the spirit of the pre-First Intifada is alive, that the *fida'ya* is still relevant and that the revolutionary struggle continues to this day.

If the martyrs that he celebrates and symbolic elements he chooses to represent are any indication, it is fair to say that Mohamd is in step with the new wave of Palestinian youth that is not only against the Israeli occupation, but also questions the authority and legitimacy of the PA.

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[43] https://electronicintifada.net/content/bassel-al-araj-icon-lost-generation/31051, consulted on: 23/10/2020.
[44] https://electronicintifada.net/content/dismantle-it-and-let-them-fall/3128, consulted on: 29/10/2020.
[45] Ibid.

5. Conclusion and final remarks

Art, whether traditional or contemporary, has always given humankind an outlet for ideological expression and longings for change, becoming over time an indispensable political tool. Artistic production, whatever form it takes, has become an unyielding tool for socio-political resistance and an irresistible force for mobilization and dissent.

Palestinian art, created within an environment of oppression and censorship, is steeped in opposition to hegemonic Zionist narratives and, to the Palestinians, finds its most expressive form in *graffiti*. Although perceived as a subversive art form, challenging normalcy and the *status quo*, *graffiti* can also be seen as a rebellious cry for change and a contentious act of opposition. It is not surprising, therefore, that it is one of the most important tools the Palestinian resistance has for spreading its message. With no intermediary between the art and its audience, *graffiti* politicizes the very streets along which its audience walks.

It is necessary to understand the conceptual evolution of the resistance within the context of the Israeli occupation to understand the artistic production that has resulted. In the period of the First Intifada, from 1987 to 1993, Palestinian resistance shifted from armed struggle to a non-violent, grassroots movement in which Palestinians from all walks of life were engaged. It was based on "teamwork, individual sacrifice, heroic resistance, kindness and solidarity" (Qumsiyeh, 2011:238). Its non-violent approach and roots in civil society led to the fading in importance of the figure of the *fida'yi*, the freedom fighter that, in the period preceding the Uprising, was the major symbol of armed national resistance.

During the period of the First Intifada, *graffiti* was the major mean of communication by providing information, news and political commentary in the face of Israeli censorship. Through *graffiti*, Palestinians reclaimed the public space and affirmed it as their own, in a clear demonstration of resistance.

In 1993, the signature of the Oslo Accords led to renewed hope for peace and the creation of a Palestinian state via the establishment of an interim government - the Palestinian Authority (PA). The collective struggle that had characterized the resistance in the First Intifada once again shifted to a more individual focus in a society increasingly fragmented by its own perception of the Accords. The Accords and the PA failed the Palestinian people who, in the face of continued attempts to erase and silence their identity and culture, quickly felt the need to resist once more. If, prior to Oslo, resistance was understood as part of a collective struggle, afterwards it became more associated with individualized efforts. The use of culture as part of the resistance project faded and the artistic focus was instead replaced by forms of individual artistry.

Within this new paradigm, the cultural scene was renewed, reflecting a break from traditional symbols and aesthetics and a shift to embracing everyday life and ordinary people's experience as the central theme of artistic production and resistance (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:10).

Disenchantment with the newly created PA and the broken promises of the Oslo Accords led to a second Uprising in the year 2000. Ironically, the biggest contribution of the Second Intifada to the artistic scene was the building of the Separation Wall in 2002. This physical manifestation of separation became a blank canvas for the Palestinians.

Although the people were powerless to stop its construction, the Wall did, however, heighten their resilience and foster increased adaptability. The artistic community rose to the challenge it posed by using it as a site for protest *graffiti* and business owners used it for advertising local businesses and cultural events (Larkin, 2014: 156). Soon the Wall became the place *per excellence* for artistic creation, a place where local and international voices of solidarity could be heard through *graffiti*, murals, slogans and posters.

However, whilst the target audience of the art on the Wall is the international community, the Israeli state and Palestinian society, a study in 2011 showed that only 3.8% of linguistic *graffiti* was written in Arabic, whereas 66.7% was in English, suggesting that not only is this the work of foreign artists, but also that it is meant for international consumption (Hanauer, 2011:308; Gould, 2014:9).

It has long been understood that the interpretation and framing of art by the individual is a consequence of his or her own experiences and cultural context. This is particularly important when trying to reach an international audience. *Graffiti* targeting this audience draws upon themes such as human rights and criticism of the Israeli occupation and its international backers. And, in an attempt to make the message relatable to a target audience aware of similar revolutionary contexts and liberation movements, it makes use of western symbols and imagery.

Locally, intervention by foreign authors has divided public opinion, with critics asserting that the beautification of the most symbolic manifestation of occupation is not commendable and that universalizing the Palestinian struggle severs it from its specificities and dilutes its message. This disconnect makes it harder for Palestinian perspectives to be heard, and ultimately, to be considered by international decision-makers - on whom the Palestine cause has relied for many years. Moreover, internationally targeted art has gained far more media coverage and scholarly attention. This attention dilutes the Palestinian message when compared to art focused on the domestic audience, sparking some indignation and concern.

Having arrived at this conclusion, I decided to focus on *graffiti* produced by local Palestinians targeting the domestic audience and analyse it in depth. I believe that analysing local *graffiti* from outside the mainstream media and tourist sites can provide insights into the current state of the Palestinian resistance movement and its political demands and aspirations and into the dilution of its message.

To this end, I analysed three *graffiti*es provided to me by Mohamd Alraee, a Palestinian youth living in the Aroub refugee camp in the Southern Westbank, who uses *graffiti* as a way of expressing his

political views. In the three *graffiti* provided, three distinct but cohesive figures are depicted, Che Guevara (Figure 4.5), the *Fida'yi* (Figure 4.6) and Basel al Aa'raj (Figure 4.8).

I suggest that the idolized martyrs, symbolic elements and signs depicted in those images not only reveal the artist's political views and affiliations but also the type of struggle he is willing to pursue. Analysis of the local context in which *graffiti* is created uncovers the various layers of nuance specific to it that are "unique and unrepeatable" (Fraenkel, 2002:315).

The representation of the aforementioned revolutionary figures, namely Che Guevara, the symbolic *Fida'yi* and Basel al Aa'raj is cohesive in the sense that they are symbols of what I interpret as a demand for the mobilization of a new insurgency. This new insurgency would not only be against the occupation but also the illegitimacy and failure of the Palestinian Authority and would empower a renovated resistance and intensify the ideology of revolution rather than the broken spirit of a defeated people.

The themes I have identified in the murals sent by Mohamd seem very much to be in line with the themes that Larkin finds in *graffiti* directed at a Palestinian audience, themes such as historically important events, political commentary, support for political prisoners and remembrance of martyrdom, all elements that tend to localize the struggle (Larkin, 2014:151-2).

There is, however, a special nuance, a context, that can only derive from the fact that Mohamd belongs to a generation that grew up in a post-Oslo world, a new wave of Palestinian youth that demands a break with individualized, fragmented resistance and calls for the return to a pre-Intifada collective revolutionary spirit.

After coming to these conclusions, it is clear to me that scholarly and political attention should be paid to all the expressions of Palestinian youth, particularly art and *graffiti*. They are the heirs to the Palestinian Authority and to the occupation. Their concerns about their socio-political situation must be heard, not only by the international community, but also by the occupier.

Ultimately, art is a crucial way of preserving and validating collective memory, national sentiment and community-belonging, its constant presence and reinvention allows a group of people, whether connected by nationality, ethnicity or collective trauma, to secure their identity and prevail against any threats directed at them.

Graffiti, within the artistic context referred to is a powerful tool of micro politics. For the Palestinians, it is a means of reclaiming the public space and politicizing the streets and offers a vehicle for ideals that are too often ignored by the mainstream media. In this sense, it is pure artistic political activism.

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