

Visual Activism in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Gaza

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Abstract

How has the political visibility of Palestinians within the occupied West Bank and Gaza been constructed and managed by the Israeli occupation? How has the management of the Israeli field of vision and the distribution of Palestinian visibility shaped who can be seen, how and from what position? Focusing on the politics of visibility within Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Gaza in a post-Second Intifada period (2005-2014), the thesis examines how anti-occupation activists employ visual digital technologies and online communication platforms to make the occupation, and its effect upon Palestinians, more visible to Israelis and international spectators.

Concentrating on the collaborative nonviolent action between Palestinians, Israelis and international visual activists, the thesis identifies how anti-occupation artists, activists and organizations have worked to creatively challenge the established regimes of visibility within Israel/Palestine. Taking into consideration the potential of new media technologies as a means of producing, enhancing and/or sharing a critically engaged perspective on the occupation, each chapter will highlight different collaborative processes undertaken in an effort to challenge the visual management of the occupation by the Israeli military and government.

This study draws upon recent literature that prioritises the relationship between vision, visibility, power and social theory (Brighenti, 2010) and the politics of visibility in Israel/Palestine (Hochburg, 2015; Faulkner, 2014) to present visual activism as meaningful way of widening the space in which politics can be conceived, performed and represented.

After situating the thesis in an appropriate context between visual culture and the politics of visibility, the thesis explores how visibility is structured around varying regimes that differ from context to context and are formed around a number of political, military and social mechanisms. Thereafter the four core chapters will examine how visual activism has been employed within the West Bank and Gaza, highlighting a range of geographical, social and political complexities that underpin the specific conditions of each case study. The first case study highlights how social media and various online platforms can be mobilized in an effort to raise awareness of an event to an international audience, namely the Bedouin village of Susiya and their campaign to remain on their lands. In this regard, visual activism is considered as a visibility making tool that is networked and multi platform. Moreover, the case of Susiya outlines the problematic nature of 'creating the right image' as well as attesting to how lesser considered images might have the most effect when circulated online. The second case study explores how the Internet was used successfully as a strategic

tool to maximize the visibility of nonviolent resistance within the Village of Bil'in for a largely international audience. While the third case study identifies how visual activism and new media technologies can be imbedded within the act of protest as a means of enhancing and defining the visual outcome. Lastly, case study four reflects on the 2014 Israeli military operation in Gaza, commonly referred to as Operation Protective Edge, as a way to delineate the range of conditions related to the military occupation over Palestinian territories and the creative ways visual activism has worked to overcome these conditions in a very specific political space.

The thesis examines and applies visual activism as a means of highlighting Palestinian visibility and the Palestinian struggle against the occupation through nonviolent, creative action. Distributed online, these collective efforts have been conceived for an internationally sympathetic audience rather than exclusively for Palestinian or Israeli web-users.

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Abbreviations

AIC – Alternative Information Centre

BDS – Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

BTS – Breaking the Silence

CCIPPP – *Campagne Civile Interntionale Pour la Protection du Peuple Palestinien*

CIRCA - The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army

HRW – Human Rights Watch

ICJ - International court of Justice

IDF – Israeli Defense Force

JIDF – Jewish Internet Defence Force

ISM International Solidarity Movement

HRO – Human rights Organization

NGO – Nongovernmental Organization

RHR – Rabbis for Human Rights

OPT – Occupied Palestinian Territories

PA – Palestinian Authority

PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organization

TANS - Transnational Activist Networks

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Introduction



Figure 1: A screen grab of video stills documenting the Palestinian and Israeli adhoc grouping, Artists Without Walls (AWW) nonviolent, creative action in protest at the Israeli built separation barrier in the Palestinian district of Abu Dis (2004).

Who sees? Who is capable of seeing, what, and from where? Who is authorized to look? How is this authorization given or acquired? In whose name does one look? What is the structure of the field of vision? To whom should or can one report what one sees?

- Ariella Azoulay, *Death's Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy* (4: 2003)

The Ultimate Israeli dream, that they are there and we are here, has become a reality. Separation. They are there and we are both there and here, but most important, they are not here. We should not see any Palestinians and we should also not hear from them.

- Gideon Levy, *A Slumbering Society* (2011)

For a few hours, we will operate jointly, we will see and speak to one another, the physical obstacles will be overcome, and the residents of Abu Dis will be able to see what is happening on the other side of the wall

- Artists Without Wall, Press Statement¹

On April 1 2004 at 6pm, Artists Without Walls (AWW), an adhoc group of Israeli and Palestinian artists, and anti-occupation campaigners gathered in Abu Dis, a Palestinian district in Jerusalem to jointly engage in an act of visual activism.² As a form of direct, nonviolent creative resistance against the stark materiality of the Israeli built separation barrier,³ AWW sought to create an interactive virtual

¹ See http://osaarchivum.org/galeria/the_divide/chapter19.html

² Rather than a collective, AWW was an ad hoc response to the development of the separation barrier. A collection of Israeli and Palestinian artists, in addition to those at the Israeli Centre for Digital Arts, responded to the barrier through set of actions which included another video projection intervention as well as playing tennis over the wall. Furthermore the Israeli Centre for Digital Arts, in collaboration with the Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art (PACA), and the University of Arts Berlin, organized a project called "Liminal Spaces" where artists, curators, and scholars from Palestine, Israel and other countries came together at a series of conferences held either side of the West Bank checkpoint in Qalandia, as well as in other cities, including Leipzig, Germany.

³ Built by the Israeli government in the occupied territory of the West Bank, the barrier, which is made up of wire-fence, ditches, concrete slabs, some as high as 8-metres, will, upon completion, traverse 700km in length. Limiting Palestinian travel from the West Bank to a number of designated border points or checkpoints, although still within the West Bank territory the barrier has had significant impact upon Palestinian employment and economic growth. On 20 July 2004 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) violated international law in 'Resolution ES-10/15'. I refer

“window” into the concrete façade. Working to ‘eradicate the lines of separation and the rhetoric of alienation and racism through nonviolent and creative actions’, AWW placed one video camera and one projector on either side of the barrier. Turning both cameras and projectors on simultaneously, AWW projected and displayed the real-time recordings from either side of the separation barrier onto the separation barrier.⁴ Projected at the same time, the purpose of the event was to make the separation barrier transparent. With Palestinians stood and seated on one side of the barrier using their telephones to speak to one another, the resulting action not only changed the perceived materiality of the barrier, but also, if only temporarily, how people engaged with it. Looking *through*, rather than *at* the Israeli built separation barrier, the AWW intervention manipulated the field of vision, employing technologically driven creative resistance to reconfigure the visible.

Visual activism of this sort challenges the authorisation of vision, amending the rules of visibility to create new ways of seeing. Attempting to render visible that which has been blocked and questioning the developing spatial, architectural and visual arrangements of the Israeli occupation over Palestinian populations has, since the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Intifada in 2000,⁵ become a key strategy in the battle over visibility. Tactically intervening into the physical landscape, artists such as the Bethlehem based collective, DAAR (Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency), the multinational Israel/Palestine based photography collective

to this series of structures as the ‘separation barrier’ in an effort to ascribe a neutrality when referencing it throughout my text. A 2010 study by Richard Rogers and Anat Ben-David (Rogers, 2010) notes that the ‘official terms’ for the dividing wall are ‘security fence’ on the Israeli side and ‘apartheid wall’ on the Palestinian side’, however, beyond the two official terms, the structure has been given other names by various agencies appearing in the media (e.g. the International Court of Justice’s ‘West Bank wall’) or by news organizations covering the issue (e.g. ‘barrier wall’). Using data from Google News and official NGO source material, the authors explore (Centre, n.d.) the variants of terminology to create conflict indicators from the shifting language employed by officials, journalists and others to describe the structure, however for consistency I refer to the structure as the separation barrier and explore how it might function, in terms of visibility as well as how activists engage within with visibility in mind.

⁴ See the International Middle East Media Centre (IMEMC) for a report on AWW’s project and their mission statement. <http://www.imemc.org/article/17793> - date accessed 03/10/2014

⁵ The word ‘Intifada’ means uprising or awakening in Arabic. It was initially assigned to the first Palestinian civilian resistance to Israeli occupation in 1987-93. The term was applied later to the second eruption of violent resistance of Palestinians, this time under the Palestinian authority. The Second Intifada, named the ‘Al Aqsa’ Intifada began in late September 2000. Al Aqsa is the name of the Muslim mosque situated at the Temple Mount, Jerusalem.

Activestills, activist groups such as the Freedom Riders and even entire communities like the Palestinian village of Bil'in have all used creative practices to question who, how and what is visible. Often with support from an international network, harnessed through the relatively easy access to the Internet and social media,⁶ these groups, many of whom will feature throughout this thesis, question the varied regimes of visibility related to how, when, from where and by whom Palestinians' are seen. In each case these groups seek to challenge our current understanding of the conflict.

Each nonviolent, creative action noted above resourcefully responded to and worked towards subverting the militarised environment of separation and control. Operating primarily in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT), these actions seek to answer many of the questions that frame the enquiry of this thesis. For example, in 2008 DAAR transformed a military water tower, located in the deserted Israeli military base of Oush Grab, into an open-air cinema screen by projecting video images against it. 'Replacing the military gaze with another kind' the transformation of the military water tower subverted the direction of the gaze, replacing the military gaze with a temporarily disruptive action (Hochberg, 2015: 1). As my thesis will outline, through thematically organised case studies and relevant examples, each action, like the AWW intervention in 2004, has sought to question the uneven visual configurations of the occupation through creative and often technologically engaged ways. While some did not achieve a significant degree of attention, or failed to resonate beyond a small number of spectators, other visibility making efforts have become internationally recognised as creative modes of nonviolent resistance as well as works of art.

Nevertheless, each event, each action and each effort to engage a critical form of spectatorship is not without its complexities, nor rarely so easily achieved as the

⁶ For discussions related to Internet access in the OPT and an overview of usage, access and function, specifically since 2000 onwards see Tawil-Souri, H. (2012) Digital Occupation: The High-Tech Enclosure of Gaza. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41(2): 27-43 and Aouragh's 2011 book, *Palestine Online: Transnationalism, the Internet and the Construction of Identity*.

AWW intervention in 2004. While the action was commendable, the spatial intervention can also be considered problematic. Examining the language used to support the one-off initiative, it can be suggested that AWW framed the separation barrier with a sense of neutrality. Likening the separation barrier to a mutually agreed upon, and proportionate solution, between two even-handed, opposing communities. As one AWW statement read,

The segregation and confinement of people is only another step towards alienating Palestinians and Israelis from one another and dehumanizing the conflict. When one ceases to view the other side as made out of individuals with hopes and dreams, violence becomes much easier and the results are tragic for both sides.⁷

I open my thesis with this example because as Gil Hochberg recognises, “undoing visions of violence, or creating new perspectives and new modes of looking, is never a simple task” (Hochberg, 2015: 2). To highlight the AWW project is to draw attention to the complex relationship between vision, power, control and knowledge that shape and reshape the field of vision between Israel and the Palestinian population living within the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and Gaza. Seeking to render visible one’s failure to see, the AWW action suggests that if the barrier was removed, each party could engage in a mutual and reciprocal gaze of recognition. While the action is perhaps too idealistic and simplistic, I want to suggest that both looking and seeing are presupposed on existing knowledge that frames our gaze and shapes the language we use. Thus, to suggest that the construction of the separation barrier is one step closer to ‘dehumanising the conflict’ prefigures an assumption that the status and representation of those on both sides of the ‘conflict’ vis-à-vis the separation barrier are equal, replacing the asymmetry of an on-going occupation for something more mutually engaged. Thus the incongruity of how AWW describe

⁷ The full statement can be found here:
http://osaarchivum.org/galeria/the_divide/chapter19.html - date accessed 03/10/2014

the intervention, as a separation between Israelis and Palestinians does not also reflect the conditions on the ground, for the separation barrier's existence, within Abu Dis, separates Palestinians from Palestinians in an immediate sense. This is due to the fact that the separation barrier cuts its way through the centre of a Palestinian district within the Green⁸ Line rather than directly separating Israelis and Palestinians. As a result, AWW were also operating at a symbolic level whereas for those who live with the reality of the separation barrier will always see and experience it differently.

One juxtaposing example to the AWW efforts, that best explains this struggle over vision as a key characteristic in the long-standing battle concerning what is the perceptible reality of Israel/Palestine and the Israeli occupation, is the Gilo wall.

⁸ The Green Line refers to the 1949 armistice lines established between Israel and the neighboring Arab states in the aftermath of the 1948 war. The war led to Israel controlling over 78.5% of historic Palestine, now commonly referred to as Israel inside the Green Line. At the time, the Jordanian-controlled West Bank and the Egyptian-ruled Gaza Strip were 'beyond the green line' however, the 1967 Six-Day War changed the geopolitical landscape further. The War and the Israeli capture of lands beyond the Green line, including the West Bank and Gaza fell under Israeli authority. Internationally, these areas are not recognized as part of Israel, although shortly after the war Israel annexed East Jerusalem and in 1980 did the same to the Golan Heights, previously part of Syria. Since the 1967, successive Israeli governments have built settlements beyond the Green Line, on lands that the Palestinians claim as theirs, but Israel's control over the Palestinian territories is still unrecognized according to international law.



Figure 2: The Gilo wall photographed by Israeli photographer, Miki Kratsman (2001)

Built in 2000 by the Jerusalem municipality to protect the affluent Israeli settlement from Palestinian sniper fire from the adjacent village of Beit Jala, the wall ran along the perimeter of the Israeli settlement of Gilo in the north of Jerusalem.⁹ Photographed by Israeli photographer, Miki Kratsman in 2001 (Figure 2), the Gilo wall underlines the potential to redirect gazes or manipulate vision, simultaneously concealing and exposing the deep rooted ethno-national spatial imagination from which the occupation is in part, constructed.¹⁰ Painted by immigrant artists from the former Soviet Union, the wall displays a picturesque and depopulated middle-eastern vista (Mitchell, 2006: 590). The intention of Kratsman's photo is clear. By inviting the spectator to draw comparison between foreground and background we are invited to see both a reality and a fantasy, for behind the wall is the Palestinian town of Beit Jala. As the wall painting renders the Palestinian landscape in soft tones, rolling hills and trees, it renders the landscape devoid of people and their history. The houses

⁹ The Gilo wall was dismantled in 2010.

¹⁰ For an extension of this discussion see Yehouda Shenhav *Beyond the Two State Solution* (2012). For a specific discussion on the mythologizing of space and settlement development see Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar's *Lords of the Land: The War Over Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories - 1967-2007* (2007).

within the mural mirror those in Gilo, taking a European aesthetic, rather than continuing with the Arab architecture that fills the landscape, thus is a form of 'double-vision' for Israelis who look at the landscape but do not or choose not to see Palestinians. Indeed, as sociologist Nimrod Luz (2008) suggests, the way in which the wall is painted represents architectural practice consistent with Zionist ideology:

European-style vistas, duly formed in a grid pattern, the architecture is a unique ensemble of buildings fashioned in accordance with the international style, all convey a clear ideological message of detachment and separation from old, historic, Middle Eastern, traditions.

Ruchama Marton, psychologist and activist, argues that psychologically, the Gilo wall represents an ideological illustration held within Zionist planning and social assumptions on the practices of space and identity, clearly illustrating the perceived mark of Jewish victimhood (2005: 213). Whereas, the Zionist axiom of a 'land without people for a people without land' is reinforced in the images, affirming the righteous stature of the Zionist belief to activate a 'non-seeing' policy. To paint the landscape free of the 'other' Marton argues, allows the land to remain empty, thus removing the 'native problem' (2005: 212).

Obfuscating the nature of the occupation as an occupation, the Gilo wall and its mural can be understood as one of the 'official frames of vision' related to the discourse of the occupation (Apel, 2012: 232). Representing and rationalising Israel's historical claims to the land, the physical wall itself reflected the emergent security discourse (Gordon, 2008; Ophir, 2012) that has become central to Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's political philosophy. This security discourse takes precedence over the 'peace' emphasis of Netanyahu's predecessor Shimon Peres (Newman, 1997) and is also a more broadly held view across the Israeli political right.¹¹ While this aspect of security will be explored in

¹¹ The notion of security over peace will be further explored in my historical and conceptual framework as one of the underpinning rationales that have been mobilised in terms of Israel's defence of the barrier's existence. One such example is Benjamin Netanyahu's article for the New York Times in July 2004. Writing in response to the ICJ decision to condemn the legality of the

detail throughout the thesis, and specifically in Chapter Four, my contention is to state that the politics of visibility within Israel/Palestine is woven into a number of narratives. These narratives include an emphasis on Israel security, defense and religious determination, which become 'regimes of visibility' (Brighenti, 2010) through which state actions are rationalized. As stratified regimes, built into the discourse of control and dominance, erasure and victimhood also shape, manipulate and complicate Palestinian visibility. As Shlomo Brosh, a local government representative who commissioned the Gilo mural, said about the wall's design 'the idea was to make the walls transparent... If they [Palestinians] have forced us to shield ourselves, then we decided that at least we wouldn't give up the landscape that used to be there' (Ha'aretz, 01.04.2004)

The potential to redirect gazes or manipulate vision is an on-going process that feeds into a number of narratives. One such narrative that underpins much of the visibility making practices highlighted throughout this thesis is the narrative of security and Israeli victimhood. Since the outbreak of the Second Intifada, Israel has escalated the construction of barriers and walls, surveillance towers and settlements; each construction, military or civilian has multiple functions and purposes. A development that began in 2003, the barrier is a combination of multi-layered fences and in places, concrete slabs as high as twenty-six feet. As a multi-functional object, the separation barrier controls space and populations in addition to shaping an unequal field of vision.¹² Operating as an icon (Brown, 2010) that promotes reassurance to the Israelis and represents a form of dominance to Palestinians, the separation barrier also helps to reassuringly produce a definable and defensible border within a liquid geography (Weizman, 2007: 228). While other arguments suggest that the barrier operates as means of annexing additional territory, an argument based on its illogical route (Azoulay

separation barrier, Netanyahu writes that its removal would be 'cheered by the terrorists who would kill Israeli citizens' writing that it 'defends' Israeli.

¹² The inequality of this vision will be explored further to include military architecture and the use of civilians as extensions of the authoritative Israeli State gaze within the West Bank. This has been discussed in 2007 publications, firstly by Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar in their text, *Lords of the Land – Occupied the War Over Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007* and secondly, from a military perspective in terms of recent practices, by Eyal Weizman in his text *Hollow Land* (2007) who discusses settlements as 'hypervisible' intrusions into the Palestinian field of vision.

& Opher, 2005), the separation barrier also shapes and controls how the occupation is framed and seen, nationally and internationally.

The production, management and manipulation of the visual field of the Israeli occupation over Palestinian Territories, specifically in terms of how the occupation is seen and made visible, both nationally and internationally by Palestinians and Israelis, is a highly contested arena. With this in mind, this thesis will highlight a number of visibility making actions that both expose and perform aspects of this unevenly distributed visibility. These actions and processes¹³, that I broadly refer to as visual activism, are (with the exception of those examples used to open this thesis) events that have taken place in a post-Intifada era (2005 onwards), and specifically between 2005–2012¹⁴. Moreover, the relationship with the event and the visibilities produced are intrinsically linked to the potential mass distribution of online media and social media platforms. Thus, this thesis also seeks to contextualise the term visual activism, providing an opportunity to explore how such visual responses have the capacity to visualise the uneven relationship between publics, information and power relations, both in an online and offline capacity.

With these thoughts in mind, this thesis does not seek to produce a history of the Israeli occupation, nor will it explicitly seek to investigate the ideological motivations or architectural, spatial and topological specificities that have come to govern much of the Palestinian population whilst increasingly shaping how the 'conflict' has been represented in the press.¹⁵ Rather, I will explore these

¹³ I refer to these actions as processes because, for some activists, it is the 'doing' as much as the end result that is significant. This is wrapped up in the notion of Palestinian steadfastness – to present and act out resistance, which is initiated from the first meeting, to the publication and construction of an event as well as the final outcome, output, intervention or mediation. Moreover, while the end result may, at times, not be as hoped or not reach a broad a spectatorship as intended, visual activism in this context is a collaborative process. As noted thus far, each example has been a 'collective' or ad hoc formation of people, often Israeli and Palestinian, and international.

¹⁴ This is with the exception of my final chapter on Gaza and Hebron – in this regard, my Gaza text was written as a response to events unfolding at the time of researching my thesis and I felt it would be remiss to ignore it, specifically when considering the relationship between the notion of visibility and dominance.

¹⁵ See Simon Faulkner, 'The Most Photographed Wall in the World' *Photographies Journal* (2012, pp232-242).

factors as part of a cumulative process, one that certain artists, activists, communities and Human Rights Organisations (HRO) have creatively responded to in an effort to challenge the profoundly uneven distribution of visibility. Accordingly, this enquiry goes some way towards examining Israel's management of the occupation, including the varying pace at which it unravels, broadly, in relation to Palestinian visibility and Palestinian human rights. The thesis does this principally through the specifics of each particular chapter as isolated, yet telling examples of the variety and complexity of visibility. Thus the key questions this thesis asks are:

- How have activists and artists helped to visualize the political inequality of the Israeli occupation through creative processes both on and offline in a post Second Intifada context?
- How have the management of gaze and the distribution of visibility been creatively manipulated across a range of constituencies?
- To what effect have digital and online media been prevalent in these political and creative acts and performances?

Consequently, the aims of the thesis are:

- To produce a better understanding of how visual activism helps to make the everyday nature of the occupation and its effect upon Palestinians more visible in a post Intifada context.
- To explore how these anti-occupation artists, activists and organizations challenge the regimes of visibility in an effort to engage an Israeli and international spectatorship.

- To consider the significance and potential of new media technologies as a means of producing, enhancing and/or sharing a critically engaged perspective on the occupation.

The term visual activist and the associated practice has been associated with the black, South African photographer, Zanele Muhol who has used the term as a way to describe the impetus of her work. As a self-proclaimed visual activist Muhol's work counters the invisibility, marginality and systemic silence related to the black L.G.B.T community within South Africa in a post apartheid era. Focusing on LGBT community members who played a role within the liberation movement of South Africa and thereafter, Muhol's work seeks to draw attention to an under represented community, the victims of HIV as well using portraiture (Faces to Phases 2004 – present) to visualize the bodies upon which gay hate-crimes, including 'corrective rape' assaults, have been practiced. While her first solo exhibition was in 2004¹⁶, the genealogy of the term visual activism in relation to Muhol's work/identity is not visible until October 2013. Interviewed on a number of platforms as a result of being awarded the Carnegie International Prize by Pittsburg's Carnegie Museum of Art it is then that Muhol identifies herself as a 'visual activist'.¹⁷

Having undertaken my PhD in 2011, my use of the term visual activism pre-dates that interview by two years. Thereafter the term was used as a title from a session at the International Sociological Association's (ISA) Congressional Meeting in Buenos Aires, 2012 where I presented a paper entitled '*Visual Activism in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: New Media Technologies Enable Witnesses and Visual Citizenship*'. Since then the term has appeared periodically from 2013. Firstly in a publication by Lauren Gurrieri entitled '*Stocky Bodies: Fat Visual Activism* (2013) in the interdisciplinary humanities journal *Fat Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Body and Society*.

¹⁶ The series was entitled *Visual Sexuality, as part of Urban Life*, and was exhibited at Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, 2004.

¹⁷ One specific example is an interview with web-publication, The Huffington Post, dated 16.10.2013. See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/16/zanele-muholi_n_4101706.html [date accessed 12.09.2016]

Through a participatory visual ethnography project with six stocky bodied Australian activists, Gurrieri and the participants create a free image bank and online resources for media providers, educators, health professionals, activists and the general public. The purpose of this visibility-making action is to help challenge the stereotypical and representational conventions of a fat body in society. In doing so, the image bank and supporting documents re-present fat bodies in a number of environments. By looking anew, or being presented with self-made alternative images, the intentionality of the project is to reframe how fat bodies are recognized in everyday society whilst the project itself functioned as a way to re-empower other stocky-bodied persons. The use of the images as a form of 'visual activism' is explored as a way to 'inspire reflective engagement, contest dominant discourses and support local advocacy' (Gurrieri, 2013: 2).

In 2015 visual activism was a key term, anchoring much of the work published in an edited collection published in the sociology journal, *Current Sociology*. The publication drew much of the work from the aforementioned 2012 ISA event where I also presented my initial research. Articles by Wilson and Milne (2016), entitled *Visual activism and social justice: Using visual methods to make young people's complex lives visible across 'public' and 'private' spaces* and Gülsüm Depeli's (2016) paper *'Being an Activist Camera: The Case of the Karahaber Collective in Turkey'* addressed visually orientated activist practices as both a method and a practice for revealing unseen issues or engaging publics in specific debates. For Milne and Wilson, their study used visual methods as a way to 'invite visual activists to reconsider their understanding of public and private spaces' and to 'contest prevalent unsympathetic policy representations of poorer young people's lives (Milne, 1: 2016). By using visual methods including photo elicitation and drawing techniques with disadvantaged and thus 'unseen' or 'less visible' members of society, the focus of their study was to garner greater attention on their [the young people's] need for support, and to extend imaginations of their futures' (Milne, 2016: 2). For Milne and Wilson, the use of the term visual activism stands in for a practice and process that constitutes a specific person or community which lacks or is denied agency. For Depeli, the term is used as a way to articulate the relationship between an everyday reality

and a political representation for transgender communities in Turkey. Using video and the Internet as tool of mediation that enables a visibility for a marginal community to appear as present but also at threat helps to evoke conversations about inequality and mistreatment of another community that is denied agency. In each case, visual activism is anchored in a process and practice of critical image making and mediation that demands some form of rejoinder. Most recently, another specially edited collection, this time in the Journal of Visual Culture (2016), featured a number of 300-500 word responses, reflections, conversations and a 'coda' or concluding contemplation on the mechanisms of visual activism as an emerging category of socially engaged, politically orientated art or visually based practice. Lacking the specifics of the previous two submissions in Current Sociology, the content within the Journal of Visual Culture instead pointed to a number of arenas in which visual activism might manifest, be debated or validated as an effective tool both on and offline.

1. Chapter outline:

The structure of this thesis will be split across seven individual chapters. Functioning in two parts, the first section of the thesis, including my 'historical and conceptual framework' (Chapter 2), will help to contextualize the research, drawing upon a range of texts from a number of disciplines as well as looking at historically relevant studies and key events, supported by a series of illustrated images to help underpin my argument. Thereafter, the thesis will be divided across four thematic chapters, addressing individual but related themes of visual inequality and resistance between 2004-2012 in four separate regions of Israel and the OPT, including Gaza. For each case, the notion of visibility making will be considered in terms of the 'case specifics' of that event, addressing the strategies and efforts applied by the activists and artists in their particular struggle. For each thematic chapter, analysis and comparison between context and the event will be considered in terms of the political construction of visibility as an activist practice. Special attention must be given to Chapter 6, which deals with Gaza, a territory that has not been 'occupied' since 2005 after the Israeli 'disengagement' (Weizman, 2007). As the penultimate chapter, Chapter 6 works towards

concluding the thesis, dealing more specifically with how artists and activists directly responded to an intense and wide sweeping process of Palestinian delegitimization, both in word and image, during the Israeli military operation, Protective Edge (2014). Written in response to the bombardment whilst concluding my thesis, the chapter presents a contextual and theoretical shift in the analysis of events and images produced, due in part to the largely inaccessible space that is the Gaza Strip by non-combatant Israelis or internationals. Chapter 7 will conclude the thesis, focusing on the outcomes of each chapter, discussing the dynamics of each event, the influence of international participation and online media.

Chapter 1: Historical & Conceptual Framework

Set up within a contextual history of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, Chapter 1 seeks to interrogate visibility as a phenomenon that is inherently ambiguous, highly dependent upon context and that operates between complex social, political, and technological arrangements. In doing so, I will look at the various conditions and modes of visibility as a series of 'regimes' (Brighenti, 2010: 3) that are stratified across the dependable contexts and narratives specific to the Israeli/Palestinian situation. I will do this by firstly exploring the conflicting and contested historical narratives that have come to shape much of the present day arguments related to Israel/Palestine before going on to survey and identify the various modes of civil and non-violent resistance adopted by Palestinians. Additionally the multiple factors behind those decisions will be outlined with an acknowledgement to the current situation and the adoption of creative non-violent protest after the failed violent uprising of the Second Intifada (2000-2005).

The necessity of historical context is fourfold. Firstly, as a researcher the examination of historical contexts and significant milestones pre and post formation of the Israeli State vis-à-vis the relationship with Mandate Palestine (1920-1948) and the subsequent 1948 Palestinian exodus or al Nakba (Palestinian Catastrophe) were hugely beneficial in terms of shaping my

understanding of the conflict. This was specifically useful in terms of situating the ideological and historical context of Israeli state building as well as their efforts to redefine the Jewish identity (Finkelstein, 1995). Secondly, the exploration of a historical context helped me to understand the significance of the 'New Historian Movement' of the 1980s and their reinterpretation of recent Israeli history through their analysis of declassified state documents in the Israeli State Archive as part of the 'thirty-year-rule'.¹⁸ The focus of this thesis will principally be framed in a post-1967 context, taking account of the Israeli division of land, status and subsequent visibility for the remaining Palestinian population. This population is divided into: Palestinian "citizen of Israel" (residents of the 1948 borders and the annexed Golan Heights); Palestinian "residents of Israel" (including the majority of Palestinians living in the annexed parts of East Jerusalem – though few were granted Israeli citizenship); and Palestinian "noncitizens" (Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, who, since 1995 have had their residential status managed by Israeli ID cards without being granted citizenship). The need to set up a historical framework was also beneficial as a way to explain how this partitioning impacted upon the variance in vision and visibility between Israelis and Palestinians.

Thirdly, I cannot assume that the readers of this thesis are necessarily familiar with this history and therefore it is seen as important to give the reader the necessary tools to better understand the context in which my approach is rooted.

Lastly, and importantly, such an approach also helps to better situate each specific chapter, enabling me to draw out the complexities of the occupation as a system of multiple, overlapping but differentially visible, uneven arrangements.

¹⁸ A public records act commonly found in the UK, Australia and Ireland, Israel also adopted this model as a way to review their foreign policy documents based on their archives law of 1955. Following a 2010 update of the legislation, the office of the Prime Minister released a statement explaining that "the new regulations shorten the period after which non-security-related material may be viewed, from 30 to 15 years, while lengthening the confidentiality period of certain defense-related documents to 70 years in cases in which Israel's security conditions require it". Quote taken from Israeli national newspaper, Ha'artz article by Barak Ravid (28/07/2010) entitled: State Archives to Stay Classified for 20 More Years, PM Instructs. <http://www.haaretz.com/state-archives-to-stay-classified-for-20-more-years-pm-instructs-1.304449> - date accessed 17/12/2013.

In doing so, I situate these historical contexts within a field of literature concerning visual culture and the politics of visibility that help to articulate the relationship between power and vision. In doing so, this approach helps to define my use of the phrase *visual activism* as a visibility making practice that supports the basis for the arguments that run throughout the thesis.

Chapter 2: Methodology & Fieldwork Overview

Methodology and Fieldwork will address the theoretical and methodological approaches that have been applied to this research. The purpose of this is to outline my approaches and take the reader through my research processes related to image analysis, selection as well as outlining my archiving processes. I will revisit these approaches again, in my conclusion drawing reflections against my outcomes as well as outlining their potential role in my future research. The second section, *Fieldwork* reflects upon my method in relation to my fieldwork, outlining the value of my interviews as well as the value of visiting Israel and the West Bank to enable me to get a better sense of the geography and the context in which my case studies are situated.

Chapter 3: Case Study 1: The Unrecognized Palestinian Village of Susiya

This chapter focuses on the unrecognized Bedouin village of Susiya, located in the Southern Hebron Hills of the West Bank. As Bedouins, a derivative from the Arabic word Bedu meaning ‘inhabitant of the desert’, Susiya and 19 other small *khirbehs*¹⁹ make up a remote population of Palestinian herders and farmers, who, for the most part, have existed on these lands near Hebron since the 1830s (Shulman, 2011:15). Located in Area C of the West Bank, an area under full Israeli military and administrative control, which comprises roughly 63% of the West Bank, Susiya is situated within a topography whereby 99% of the land is excluded from Palestinian use. Moreover, the villagers are denied any form of permanent residency or building permits, in addition to basic amenities such as

¹⁹ A *khirbehs* is a traditional dwelling typically found in the arid and dry areas around Hebron.

water, electricity, basic shelter and education. A community under repeated threat of demolition; the villagers were originally expelled from their cave dwellings in 1986, which are now an archaeological site run by settlers. The current village is located on their own agricultural land, having been moved multiple times since the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000.

Starting with the villagers most recent demolition order, issued by the Israeli Civil Administration in 2012, this chapter explores the creative response to the order and the resulting visibilities and representation produced. Building on fieldwork undertaken in Israel and the OPT in 2013, including interviews with fieldworkers and activists, I will firstly outline the initial visibility making efforts within the village, including their 'day of celebration', a one day multi-activity event and the hosting of their own photography exhibition, held in the tents of the village residents. Secondly, I will look at how the villagers, with support from activists and the Israeli Nongovernmental organization (NGO) *The Village Group*, helped to highlight the villagers struggle by developing a specific website for the community. By way of contrast I will then focus on the problematic nature of how to produce the 'right image' of the village in direct response to the 2012 demolition order. Spurred on by the threat of demolition, a number of NGOs and Human Rights organizations (HROs) visited the village, promoting their plight and representing their struggle. In an effort to 'overcome distance' between the audience and the distinct other (Tomlinson, 1999: 154), the multiplicity of mediations were, I argue, at odds with the wants and desires of the villagers, specifically in comparison to the images produced by the villagers themselves.

In an effort to present a complex and codified set of administrative, legal, military and historical arrangements, this chapter outlines the hierarchy of status under the occupation and the blurring of narratives between biblical claims to the land and the precarity of the community who are 'unrecognised'. In addition, this chapter attempts to further consolidate the conditions for the distribution of a visibility that is subject to varying modes of power and influence, generated in response to Israeli State practices, as well as the efforts to overcome Israeli political and visual domination, that are continued in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Case Study 2: Bil'in: Making popular struggle visible online, 2005 - 2011

The main points raised in this chapter aim to show how the residents of the West Bank village of Bil'in turned to the Internet, and specifically the utility of a website, to control the representation of their struggle against the development of the Israeli built separation barrier on the village's land. Coordinated by the village's own 'Popular Committee', a collective of local residents assisted by international activists, the development of the village website can be seen as another aspect of the village's engaging visual strategy. Renowned for their visually striking, peaceful and collective anti-occupation protests, this chapter focuses on the Bil'in website (<http://www.bilin-village.org>) as perhaps the last remaining aspect of their visibility making process to be interrogated by academics. Active between 2005-2011, the website was accessible until 2013 before going offline. Examining the website as an archive, the chapter extrapolates a number of themes prevalent within the website by focusing on the visual material held within the website's pages as well as the visual construct of its multiple homepages from 2005-06, 2006-07 and the last design from 2007 onwards.

The intention is, like that of Chapter 3, to highlight the role of the international community as a form of agency to help substantiate their specific struggle. The relationship with internationals and the visibility making efforts to highlight the Susiyan plight were ultimately fraught by the representation of the villagers as weak and helpless; a charge that is at odds with their longstanding commitment to remain on the land, embodied through the Palestinian notion of 'sumud' or steadfastness. The case for Bil'in will highlight a number of dynamics that stood in their favour, including their accessible location, close to Ramallah, the de-facto Palestinian capital as well as Jerusalem to the east. Able to draw in support from local Israeli activists as well as being accessible to Internationals, the village's location within the mixed Israeli-Palestinian administrative zone of Area B, in

addition the Popular Committee's background as educated, less religiously conservative and committed peace activists are a number of factors that point towards Bil'in's sustained success. As a result, the Popular Committee consciously mobilised images of assertive and courageous contestation against an armed, often violent Israeli military, emphasising devotion for creative and peaceful protest. Doing so, as this chapter will outline, provided the Popular Committee and its supporters with a number of opportunities to shape and promote their image online directly to an international spectatorship, breaking away from the perceived dependency on disadvantageous tropes of victimhood.

Chapter 5: Case Study 3: "I'm a Freedom Rider! I'm just trying to go to Jerusalem!" - The 2011 Palestinian Freedom Riders.

This chapter starts by framing the relationship between visibility, power and mediation (with specific attention paid to the capacity for new and online media) to challenge and redistribute what Irving Goffman has referred to as, the perceived 'normal appearance' and 'proper performance' of a society and its authoritative institutions. The chapter then proceeds to explore two separate cases where the use of a nonviolent creative intervention by anti-occupation activists into Israeli public space seeks to raise questions concerning the 'normalcy' of the occupation including the Israeli military's 'proper performance'.

The first section of the chapter focuses on the Palestinian Freedom Riders, a Palestinian collective including International Solidarity Movement (ISM) founder Hurriya Ziada, eminent Palestinian Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh and prominent youth campaigner Fadi Quran. The group defiantly boarded a segregated Israeli settler shuttle bus connecting the Jewish settlement of Ariel to Jerusalem, with hand-held recording devices, broadcasting their sit-in, live to a global audience

on 15 November 2011,²⁰ 50 years after the original freedom rides in Montgomery, USA.

Taking the 'new visibility' (Thompson, 2005) as my starting point, I will articulate how new media technologies have the 'potential' to exceed the evidential capacity of a single, or even series of photographs, moving the debate surrounding the evidential capacity of the visual into a new realm. Deviating from the norms of visibility associated with the space on the bus and the rules that govern what could and should be seen, creating, if only temporarily, a space that offers the 'possibility for appearance' where 'I appear to others as others appear to me' (Arendt, 1958: 198). In addition each action, while diverse in its performance and execution, shared the same principle, which is to reframe how the occupation functions and should be seen; both actions also highlight the problematic diversity of the occupation. As the chapter will highlight, part of the rationale for the Freedom Riders' well managed media campaign was to draw attention to, and encourage Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against two specific bus companies who operated the segregated shuttle service; the Israeli Egged and French operator Veolia, as well as highlighting the lack of citizenry rights and equality under occupation.

The second half of the chapter explores the Israeli based NGO, Breaking the Silence (BTS), a volunteer group exclusively made up from ex-Israeli military combatants who collect and publish testimonies from soldiers who have served in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem since September 2000 (the beginning of the Second Palestinian Intifada).²¹ I will explore how BTS work to strategically to make visible narratives and testimonies that are often hidden, both to an immediate audience; in this instance, the Israeli public, but also, through the use of new media to an international audience. For Breaking the Silence, their

²⁰ In February 2011, prior to the Freedom Rides, TIME Magazine described Fadi as the "face of the new Middle East" for his work in the recent nonviolent resistance movement being led by Palestinian youth see link:

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2062474,00.html>

Date accessed: 14/05/2012.

²¹ For more on Breaking the Silence visit their website:

<http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/about/organization> accessed on 23/07/2014

intention was not only to challenge the status and visibility of the occupation by highlighting the conditions of its reality, but also, like the Freedom Riders, to mobilize shame (Keenan, 2004) by denying the right to deny.

Taking into account for whom each visibility making action is being made visible and knowing that 'an audience' is never homogenous, distinguishing between Israelis within Israel and an international community, my contention is to suggest that each group (the Freedom Riders and Breaking the Silence alike) are doing similar things, for different audiences. Each visibility making action challenges the appearance of the occupation to a *specific* audience, questioning what might appear as 'normal' or 'proper' based on their own stratified regimes which shape how and what they see.

Chapter 6: Case Study 4: A Tale of Two Cities: Blackout Gaza and Divided Hebron.

My penultimate chapter is firstly a response to the latest (at the time of writing) Israeli military operation, named by the Israelis as 'Operation Protective Edge'. Carried out during the summer of 2014, Operation Protective Edge was the fourth and longest (7 weeks in total) military incursion into the Gaza Strip since the unilateral 'disengagement' in 2005.²² What began as manhunt for the killers of three Israeli settlers in the Palestinian city of Hebron, Operation Protective Edge quickly transpired into the most violent and sustained bombardment of Palestinian territories since the height of the violence during the Second Intifada (2000-2004). Taking this as my context, the chapter outlines some of the issues related to the production of visibilities in Gaza and the West Bank in response to the 2014 bombardment of Gaza and later the more systematic violence of the occupation (2010).

As the penultimate chapter and the final case study, the approach is a departure from those chapters that have preceded it. While chapters 3-5 were based on

²² Operation Hot Winter - one week operation between 28th February-3rd March 2008, the Gaza war - 27th Dec 2008 - 18th Jan 2009, Operation Pillar of Defense 14th-21th November 2012 and lastly, Operation Protective Edge (7 weeks) 8th July - 22nd Aug 2014).

extensive desk research and fieldwork, including primary research and interviews with participants or key stakeholders, chapter 6 is instead a response to a specific event that unfolded during the latter stages of my thesis research. Neither based on collective Palestinian, Israeli or international collaboration nor is the chapter largely focused on the potential of the Internet to engage a specific constituency, the chapter perhaps best highlights the regimes of visibility that work in response to the management of vision concerning (and linking) the Palestinian body politic between Gaza and the West Bank. Thus, the inclusion of Gaza provided a comparative analysis for a distinct yet parallel problem; how to visualise everyday violence in creative and engaging ways.

By exploring the rhetorical approach taken by Israel in the build-up to the bombardment of Gaza, I will analyze the *performative* use and power of language and image by the Israeli army and government as a means of justification for their action, as well as a way to shape and frame Palestinian identity. Thereafter, I will shift my attention to the analysis of the documentary photography of Gianluca Panella and the photography collective, Activestills. Taking Jacques Rancière's notion that 'politics is first of all a battle about perceptible and sensible material' (Guénoun and Kavanagh 2000: 11), I will explore how both Panella focusing on Gaza, and Activestills focusing on Hebron, seek to reconfigure the distribution of the sensible in relation to what is visible and invisible, sayable and unsayable. Recognising, as I have throughout the thesis, that power is closely aligned with visibility, I assert that both Panella and Activestills reconfigure the distribution of the sensible, inviting us, the spectator, to see the effects of the occupation through a new set of configurations. In doing so thereby altering the spectatorial expectation of the viewer and our understanding of the occupation in a day-to-day context. For Panella, an Italian photojournalist working inside Gaza at the time of the bombardment, this is achieved by visualising the unseen systemic violence of the occupation through the failure of vision itself. For Activestills in Hebron, it is the visual emphasis on the banality of violence and the unspectacular yet significant carving up of space by Israeli contractors and military as routine work, representing absolute power. It is hoped that by including a comparative analysis of the political visibility of

Gaza, in terms of military practices and political language, the thesis takes a more holistic view of the occupation and the multiplicity of regimes in play.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The thesis conclusion draws together the findings of the research and outlines the contributions it has made to developing discussions and recent literature concerning the struggle over Palestinian visibility, specifically online, with specific consideration to how the Palestinian struggle has been made visible to an internationally sympathetic audience rather than exclusively Palestinian or Israeli web-users.. It also raises questions and possibilities for future research.

This thesis explores how visual activism helps to visualise the effect of the occupation upon Palestinian within the OPT and Gaza through creative nonviolent, visibility-making practices. Focusing specifically on a post-Second intifada (2000-2014) period, I will outline how a range of anti-occupation artists, activists and organizations challenge the regimes of visibility by deploying modes of visual activism in an effort to reconfigure the visual field for Israeli and international spectators. To do this, I will consider and identify how the Israeli field of vision is conceptualized by regimes of visibility determined by ideological and militaristic factors. These regimes, as I have begun to address, are historically rooted in the privileges and powers that are written into 'imaginative geographies' of the land that shape how and who is seen from which position.

Chapter 1 Historical and Conceptual Framework

1.1 Introducing My Conceptual Framework

This chapter is presented as a conceptual framework, justified below in section 1.2, upon which the study of visual activism in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Gaza will be situated. In doing so, I will develop a critical understanding of relevant theories, practices and approaches related to visual culture and the various practices used by the artists, groups and communities in their struggle over visibility. The historical and conceptual framework will firstly introduce the contested histories of Israel, paying specific attention to the emergence of the 'New Historians' movement in the 1980s. The function of this is to help set up the complexities that frame much of how the occupation is currently debated, both historically and presently. Thereafter, I will move onto section 1.3 where I will discuss relevant aspects of 'popular resistance', a central theme to my thesis, as well as recognizing its importance throughout Palestinian culture. Next I will outline some of the key aspects and developments attributed to Palestinian social movements, distinguishing between 'civil resistance' and 'non-violent resistance' in addition to the linguistic emphasis on 'joint' struggle. In each case, the consideration of visibility and the implicit and explicit visual configurations related to the development, implementation and structuring of the occupation will be considered, building towards an identifiable process of visibility making and resistance. This in turn will be contextualized in relation to armed resistance vis-à-vis historic and ongoing Israeli state violence. Thus I will suggest that the emergence of visually orientated nonviolent resistance, rather than 'peace activism' (Hallward 2011 – 164-167) post Second Intifada, is, in part, a response to a culmination of factors that Jacob Høigilt refers to as a 'double repression' (2015). Through internal political factionalism between two repressive and opposing political parties within the OPT (Fatah) and Gaza (Hamas), Høigilt suggests that a double repression 'confuses and breaks down collective identity and belonging for Palestinians (Høigilt, 640: 2015). In addition, the existence of an occupying power and the fragmentation of space through large and small Jewish settlements, the snaking separation barrier,

militarized zones and flying checkpoints, disrupt space and time, making mass movement almost impossible and thus armed uprisings futile. Thus, my contention is that visual activism, in addition to Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions, supported by online platforms, have the greatest potential to visualize and fight the occupation than the violent practices that have otherwise been historically aligned with the colonized or oppressed.¹

Section **1.4** entitled *Early Zionism and the British Mandate to 1967* will provide a context for the development of Israel focusing on the political and social development of Zionism as a practice that shaped how Jews saw themselves, their relationship to the land and the Arabs who already inhabited it. The relevance of this section is determined by the current political context and a set of visual practices that critique the visibility of the 'present refugee problem'.

In section **1.5** I provide an overview of significant historical events since the creation of the State of Israel, with particular attention given to the 1967 'Six Day War', the occupation of Palestinian Territories in the West Bank and Gaza, the annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights through to the post Second Intifada era of 2005. Whilst ideological continuities linking pre-state ideologies and early Israeli settler practices will have already been addressed, specifically as such ideologies shape and affect the conditions visibility today, section **1.6** (*The consequences of the Six-Day war in terms of visibility*) will pay particular attention to what Derek Gregory refers to as the 'privileges and powers that are written into [these] imaginative geographies' (Gregory, 2013). In doing so, this section will examine the emergence of the settlement movement, the ideological investment into the landscape and the political and military significance of this in terms of shaping and controlling vision. With this, my intention is to provide an overview of developments since 1967, emphasizing the various visual and political inequalities sustained by the Israeli State including the variants in military and administrative rule over Palestinians and their territories.

The penultimate section **1.7** (*In/Visibility in the First and Second Intifada (1987-*

¹ Here I am thinking of the work of Frantz Fanon and his writings on colonisation. Specifically in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) whereby the subject of colonisation must apply violence as a way to gain independence.

1993) & (2000-2005) and Visual Activism) contextualizes the development of both Palestinian Intifadas; situating their initial nonviolent response from 1987-1993, the break down in the Oslo Accords and the emergence of the violent Second Intifada from 2000. In doing so, I will outline Israeli state practices of military and architectural modes of 'blocking' Palestinian culture from Israeli vision. Section **1.8** will conclude the chapter with a discussion on visual activism as a nonviolent response to these Israeli developments after the Second Intifada subsided.

1.2 Justification

Adopting a conceptual framework enables a systematization of the literature, terminology and context that I feel is appropriate for this thesis; given the range of literature demanded to sufficiently deal with the political complexities of Israel/Palestine. Describing the relationship between visibility, power and citizenry rights whilst considering the impact of various media technologies has led me to draw from a range of literature. The use of a conceptual framework enables me to explore the possible synthesis of various disciplines as a means of situating my argument and elucidating upon some key concepts such as visual activism, visibility making and the appropriateness of regimes of visibility within the historical context that I have subcategorized above. Taking direction from visual culture, sociology, human rights discourse, photography theory, practices of civil resistance and a range of key texts related to the formation of identities, histories, and geographies related to Israel-Palestine, the adoption of a framework rather than a specific literature review helps bring together separate literatures as a way to conceptualize my research. Moreover, this approach enabled me to frame this approach as a critical essay, which in turn responded to specific themes relevant to the research and aims of the thesis.

Thus, my approach to visibility making and more broadly, visual activism is drawn from an effort to pull together a range of factors to ask why and how a specific action is carried out, the kind visibility produced and for whom. While accounting for reception and receivership is often abstract and difficult to

accurately define, as will be addressed throughout the chapters, the thesis focuses on problems and failures as well as positive outcomes. With this in mind, the conceptual framework will help situate the process of visual activism as a 'weapon of the weak' that responds to specific environments, times and spaces that evolve over the context of the Israeli occupation. Accordingly, it should be recognized that activism by those who lack visibility within a political context defies a singular designation and is never homogenous. In this regard, the conceptual framework will also enable me to set up a context in which the actions of each activist, group or artist can be recognized as an isolated creative response to context that is also one of many interrelated aspects of life under occupation. The fluidity of visual activism, and practices that might be categorized as such, is clear in the concluding chapter of Nicholas Mirzoeff's text, *How to See the World*. Pointedly finishing on the notion of visual activism as a new phenomenon, Mirzoeff asks the reader, 'so what then is visual culture now?' (2015: 289) By way of concluding he suggests that we can now use visual media to create 'new self-image to be seen and to see [through] the interaction of pixels and actions. Pixels are the visible result of everything produced by computers. Actions are the things we do with those cultural forms' (2015: 298). With an emphasis placed upon the ubiquity of technology to connect people, visualize ideas and produce meaning, the attention here is placed on the outcome, not the process. My contention is to approach visual activism as a process adopted by people, across multiple platforms, to stand in for a conceptualization of the people who have adopted it. As Mirzoeff notes, visual activism is a process of 'making' visible aspects of our daily lives by drawing attention to the fact that 'they', a majority in whichever context that might be, 'do not represent us'.² For Mirzoeff, this 'us and them' dichotomy is situated in a specific context of the global Occupy Movement, and specifically the visual media produced and, circulated in relation to the direct action on New York's Wall Street protests. My contention is that this logic also applies to the minority which includes: anti-occupation activists, the politically active left within Israel, as well as Palestinians and internationals who use digital technologies and social media as

² The example Nicholas Mirzoeff explicitly refers to is the 1%, vis-à-vis the 99% movement, as well the graffiti and social media campaign that circulated during the Arab Spring as a means of expressing oneself in opposition to the 'majority of bankers/politicians'.

way to disrupt the everyday field of visibility or/and invite a specific constituency to reconsider the status quo.

This oppositional approach to being represented is where I break down the analysis into regimes. Representing 'ourselves' visually and politically is of course never straightforward, because we must first become visible. Using the conceptual framework as my starting point, I will explain that visual activism is a process made up from an alternative visual vocabulary that is collective, collaborative and technologically assisted. Moreover, it is also not fixed nor is it as easily demonstrable as tweeting a photo or creating a video. Defying a singular definition, this approach to visibility making as activism is, to borrow a phrase from Shirley White (1994: 16), 'kaleidoscopic'. Paraphrasing White's description of participation, visibility making can also:

Change its colour and shape at the will of the hands in which it is held and, just like the momentary image of a kaleidoscope, it can be very fragile and illusive, changing from one moment to the next...

Moreover, it is also a complex and dynamic phenomenon that is often only truly seen from the eye of the beholder, as I will address in Chapter One.

The purpose of a conceptual framework is 'a tool to scaffold research and, therefore, to assist a researcher to make meaning of subsequent findings' (Smyth 2004). The framework is to 'form part of the agenda for negotiation to be scrutinized and tested, reviewed and reformed as a result of investigation' (Smyth, 2004). Thus, a framework is only ever a snapshot of a developing notion and a means of communicating a potentially bigger idea.

In summary, the application of a framework can further research through:

- Providing a basis from which to interpret and form a coherent whole from further literature.

- Enabling the articulation of the findings.

- Organising the inclusion of any emergent categories.

To outline the historical relationship between Israel and Palestine is to address a highly contested history. The polarisation of views between historians and histories does not just exist from generation to generation but also, perhaps most explicitly, between ‘The New Historians’ and those that question their progressive approach. Thus, while there is a need to highlight the importance of specific historical events, so too is there a need to outline the disparities in historical accounts. As I will outline below, the contested veracity of these accounts played a significant role in widening and extending the academic debate related to the history of Israel/Palestine from both Israeli and latterly, Palestinian historians. However, the impact of these works also affected political and social dynamics within Israel.³

In what follows, I will outline the significance of the New Histories movement, which emerged in the late 1980s, and the effect of its revisions, specifically in terms of their investigation into the cause and effect of the 1948 war and the creation of the Israeli State. As noted in my introduction, the attention paid to a pre-1967 context will only be done as a means of acknowledging key events and debates related to the formation of Israel, with a specific emphasis on the development of contested historical narratives that have implicit significance on the way Israelis see, visualise or obfuscate Palestinians, their territories and their history. While paying specific attention to the Israeli governance over Palestinians, both militarily and administratively, I will outline how, concurrent with specific key events, Palestinians developed a principled approach towards civil resistance as a response. This literature review will conclude by considering the current context, in which my cases studies are framed, taking account of the settlement movement and the development of military architecture in terms of their post-Second Intifada context. As a result, I will explore key literature related to the politics of visibility, activism and visibility making in the age of the ‘new mediated visibility’ (Thompson, 2005).

³ Academic texts were changed to account for the revisions.

It is perhaps not unsurprising that a schism exists between Israeli and Palestinian historians and the narratives that each party subscribes to. While the arguments and polarity existed, specifically in contention to the formation of the Israeli State and the actions that led to this event, New Historian Ilan Pappé notes that prior to the emergence of the New Historians, it was commonly perceived that only Israeli scholars were considered to be the authority on the region. This perceived 'professionalism' by "old historians" denied any potential for a Palestinian narrative to emerge (Pappé, 1999). By 'blocking' such narratives, Pappé argues that, the exclusion of non-elite hegemonic groups by Israeli historians points to a shallow social and cultural history associated to the historiography of Israel's independence. This denial of alternative voices from within the landscape, Pappé argues, 'reflected a colonization of land and also its history' (1999: 2). Having the greater power enables one to write a history in a more politically effective way. With the construction of a state, Israel employed the state's apparatus to successfully propagate its own narrative in front of domestic as well as external publics. No more so was this mobilized than through the development of Israeli historical writings on the conflict's history. As the history was written, representing Israelis as victims of the conflict who were left by the British to defend themselves against a multinational Arab majority, the New Historians' work was considered as an effort to 'debunk a number of Israeli myths' not as an academic exercise but 'as a contribution to a better understanding of the Palestinian problem' (Abu-Lughod, 1989: 119).

This effort to debunk these myths accompanied the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. Working with the newly released, previously classified government documents, the publication of four books by the New Historians, challenged the dominant discourse centering on the events related to the formation of the Israeli State in 1948 and the ensuing refugee problem. These four texts by Israeli scholars are Simha Flapan's *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (1983), Benny Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (1987), Ilan Pappé's *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-51*, (1992) and Avi Shlaim's *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist*

Movement, and the Partition of Palestine (1988). Making use of the Israeli adopted British thirty-year rule for the review and declassification of foreign policy documents. The New Historians had access to vast amounts of primary source material released to the Central Zionist Archives, the Israel State Archives, the Haganah Archive, the IDF Archive, the Labour Party Archive, and the Ben-Gurion Archive for research purposes (Shlaim, 2004). Reading much of the work produced by and linked to the New Historian movement, this particular narrative was intelligently coupled with the construction of Palestinian historians as ‘propagandists’, while their Israeli counterparts were considered professionals (Pappé, 1999: 3). This notion was also highlighted by Benny Morris who suggested, but arguably did not challenge,⁴ the assertion that Palestinian scholars were seen as ‘chroniclers’ and ‘not real historians’ (Morris, 2004: 5-6). Thus, the idea that there are at least two contrasting traditions in understanding Palestinian history is, as Abu-Lughod notes (1989), crucial when considering the ‘decades of the Mandate’ and equally the writing that came as a result. These two traditions have virtually nothing in common. As Abu-Lughod pointed out, an observation echoed by the New Historians and the revisionists that followed, the old histories ‘were much more abundant in Western languages’ and, he suggests, were ‘received more hospitably in the West’ whilst having ‘little credibility in the third world’ (Abu-Lughod, 1989: 120).

Thus, the construction of images of Palestinians was, then, a long and multifaceted process that sought to delegitimize and dehumanize them, underpinned by their lack of sovereignty. Presented as frantic, weak or untrustworthy, as I will later detail, it was only as late as 1978 with the publication of Edward Said’s seminal text, *Orientalism*, that Palestinian and more broadly, Arab identities, were discussed in an international context in a more positive nature. Building upon this, the New Historians of the 1980s set about working to challenge what had become an established perception of

⁴ Norman Finkelstein has criticized Morris for not tempering his own research findings and in doing so, not overtly pointing to what Finkelstein suggests is the overt evidence of an Israeli sponsored transfer. An argument initiated in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* (1991) Vol. 21, No. 1 and later developed in his book, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (1995). Additional, in a book review of Benny Morris’s updated edition of ‘The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949’ Issam Nassar notes that Morris has ‘failed to include the work of Palestinian historians’ that he exclaims, ‘presents and ambivalence towards Israel’s history’.

Palestinian culture. As Abu-Lughod (1989: 120) notes, in an overview of the New Historian movement,

The difficulties are not only those of national identity and perspective; nor are they of language and skills, or access. They are much more complex and relate simultaneously to values, beliefs, attitudes as well as the national and historical experiences of *both people* [emphasis added]. It may be possible for an Israeli or a Palestinian scholar to make an authoritative contribution on one or more aspects of the Palestinian/Zionist/Israeli national experiences; but none has been able to do so thus far.

This point here is that the discussion was perceived to be neither final, nor one directional. As Avi Shlaim (2004) points out, the initial debate concerning the New Historians was focused on method and source; their work could be broken down into five specific areas' that challenged the traditional narratives produced by their predecessors:

- British policy towards the end of the Palestine Mandate
- The Arab-Israeli military balance in 1948
- The causes of the Palestine exodus
- Arab war aims
- The desire to question the persistent political deadlock after the guns fell silent

These five areas were echoed, albeit in a somewhat more partisan way, by a proponent of the New Historian movement, Israeli political scientist Norman Finkelstein in 1995.⁵ The vitality of the New Historians enabled a wave of new debate that challenged the largely standardized Zionist account of the causes, character, and course of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which had remained largely unchallenged outside the Arab world. While the release of newly available documents was *the* contributing factor to the historical revisionism, a change in

⁵ See Finkelstein's *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (1995: 51).

the general political climate was arguably another. Prior to the work of the New Historians the notion of war for Israelis was seen as a response to threat. Commonly framed as an unequal struggle between a Jewish David and an Arab Goliath, this unwilling yet triumphant struggle was a perpetuated notion that manifest in multiple forms. The manifestation of these notions 'resulted, so Shlaim (2006) argues, in a desperate, heroic and ultimately successful Jewish struggle against overwhelming odds'. Asima Ghazi-Bouillon points out that much of the New Historians narratives were to challenge the notion of 'ein breira' or 'no alternative' as a central explanation of why Israel went to war and a means of legitimizing her involvement (2009: 68). Mythologized within Israeli culture as part of their identity building narrative, the emergence of the First Intifada offered the New Historians a political space for the re-examination of the country's earlier political history.

Emerging as and when they did, the validity of the New Historians claims caught a wider public attention soon after the publication of their findings. As Shlaim (2004) recounts, 'the Israeli public paid close and unremitting attention' to the so called 'war of the Israeli historians'. This war was not conducted exclusively within the precincts of academia but periodically spilled over into the public arena. Criticism of the revisionist history of Israel appeared in two forms. Firstly, those who adopted this position but belied the depths of their research. This criticism came from those who thought these New Historians were mere apologists for the Palestinian crisis. As one review of Benny Morris's revised *Birth of a Palestinian Refugee Problem* (2004), by Issam Nasser in *Political Science Quarterly*, states, 'Morris's ambivalence towards Israel's historical responsibility is still present'. Moreover, Nasser questions why Morris's revised book still 'lacks the use of works by Palestinian historians despite the author's extensive archival research' (2005: 177). A charge that was similarly faced by all the New Historians.

In addition, scholars including Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, Walid Khalidi, Nur Masalha, Ariella Azoulay, Benjamin Beit Hallahmi, Tom Segev of the Israeli daily,

Ha'aretz and Norman Finkelstein, while acknowledging the importance of the New Historians, also felt that their work did not go far enough in their critique of Israel's practices during 1948. Charged with replacing a history of denial with one of a more appeasing narrative, works by Said, Chomsky, Khalidi, et al. emerged to further challenge the received histories of "old historians" whilst also criticizing some of the arguments produced by the new. Questioned by these authors about whether or not they had gone far enough to challenge and condemn the Zionist state building agenda, its leaders and their ideological approach to seizing land and the destruction of Palestinian life, the New Historians were also condemned by the Israeli right for, conversely, undermining the Zionist claim to the land with falsities.

One such example is Israeli historian, Anita Shapira in a 1999 article for the *New Republic* who claimed that the New Historian offered 'nothing new, neither in the way they approached historical materials, nor the way they used them' (Shapira 1999). Shapira's criticism of the New Historians method, findings and agenda became an enduring denigration against their work. With Simha Flapan's passing in 1987, the three remaining New Historians entered the 1990s with varied positions on their argument, with charges from Shapira and her counterparts on the right beginning to frame distinctions between Morris and his counterparts. As a positivist, Morris's disposition as a historian was not to make moral judgments. Nor did he write, so he claimed, in order to influence political processes. As moralistic arguments developed across all parties invested in the history of Israel, the role of historian (morally, ideologically, politically), in terms of their relationship to the history they presented or defended thus, began to envelope the debate throughout the 1990s. Not rejecting the hegemonic Zionist discourse, Morris took a position that because moral standpoints change with time it is impossible to make a judgment about actions in the past. Thus, instead of playing down issues related to the refugee problem, Morris opted to contextualize events, in effect taking up a de facto Israeli/Jewish apologia position for actions that the historical discourse e.g. the old historians, had previously ignored/overlooked or missed. In contrast to Morris, Shlaim believed that historians must stand outside society and reflect upon the truths uncovered.

Identifying what he considered to be 'pitfalls' in the positivist approach, Pappé, the most theoretically developed of the New Historians, underwent a radical transformation in his approach (Ghazi-Bouillon, 2009: 65); perhaps best demonstrated by his postmodern thinking, began to shift the tone of his research and his view on the role of the historian to warn his peers about presenting a one dimensional view of the past as either one narrative or the other. Whatever the political and intellectual position, the notion that the writing of history must be based on and not informed by political desire is polemical. In stark contrast to Pappé's cautionary advice, Shabtai Teveth, an 'anti-revisionist' historian, remarked that the 'old history was the only history'. However, the most vocal opponent of the New Historians was Israeli political scientist, Efraim Karsh. An Israeli historian by virtue rather than trade, Karsh writing in the *Middle East Quarterly* (1996: 20) noted that the New Historians...

Fashion their research to suit contemporary political agendas; worse, they systematically distort the archival evidence to invent an Israeli history in an image of their own making. These are strong words; the following pages shall establish their accuracy.

Originally a research analysis for the IDF, Karsh responded to the emergence of New Historians, departing from his original research field of Middle Eastern policy and Soviet affairs, by publishing his 2000 refutation *Fabricating Israeli History: The New Historians*. Pointing to the influence of Edward Said in 1978 with the publication of *Orientalism*, Karsh identifies Said as the reason why historical work produced on the Middle East were 'judged not on their intrinsic merit but in terms of a perceived national and/or ideological identity and their respective scholars and their conformity to the fashionable fad' (2000: 9).

As the First Intifada was about to begin in 1989, Palestinian scholar Abu-Lughod, reflected upon the diversity of histories by suggesting that,

Even the definition of Palestine itself is in dispute. Demographic figures are disputed; land ownership figures are disputed; processes of land

alienation are disputed; policies of the British, the operations of the Mandate, the role of the League of Nations, as well as social development, culture, and education are all subject to serious controversy. Even Palestinian existence itself is disputed by the extreme exponents of the Zionist tradition.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that the interpretation of any particular event would almost always be different for adherents of these two traditions. For some, the polarity of these narratives underpinned their extreme political actions. Not long after the implementation of the 1993 Oslo Accords and the Declaration of Peace, those independent of any political authority were making plans to derail the early peace process. As the potential for reconciliation between the then Israeli Prime Minister and Labor party leader, Itzhak Rabin and his Palestinian counterpart, Palestinian Liberation Organization leader, Yasser Arafat moved closer, the polarity of these historically contested traditions widened.

One year after the Oslo Accords, a series of events by fanatical Israelis and Palestinian extremists took place; underpinned by the disputed history of their respective past and the potential for the futures to be rewritten. These events included the 1994 Hebron Massacre, when Israeli fanatic Baruch Goldstein shot 29 praying Palestinians, injuring many more on 25 February 1994. One year later brought the November 1995 assassination of Rabin, by fellow Israeli Yigal Amir, having just spoken at a peace rally. These events were in parallel to a spate of Palestinian bus bombings, most notable of which were the Beit Lid Massacre on 22 January 1994, carried out by a Palestinian Islamic Jihad which killed 21 Israelis and the Dizengoff Street Bus bombing in Tel-Aviv city, on 19 October 1994, resulting in 22 deaths and attributed to Hamas. With the violence raging Binyamin Netanyahu, and his right wing party Likud, took office in 1996, shifting Israeli discourse away from peace to an emphasis on security. Highlighting the existential terrorist threat faced by Israel and the desire of Arab countries to 'push Israel into the sea,' Netanyahu deployed the rhetoric of security as 'a means of maintaining the perpetual feelings of fear... preventing the Israeli

populace from believing that peace or conflict resolution was a tangible and realistic possibility' (Newman, 1997). The breakdown of the Accords signaled a shift in policy that Shlaim (2000) referred to as a 'return to the Iron Wall policies of Ze'ev Jabotinsky'. Sixteen years later, Shlaim's prediction has been proved to be correct.⁶

These histories and debates have been selected because they represent the problematic nature of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship and the contested nature of questions of who did what and where accountability should lie. This historical overview and the debates that I have highlighted are by no means comprehensive. Rather, I have selected these polarities in an effort to highlight how looking/seeing and visualizing Palestine and its inhabitants is inherently tied to a number of contested histories. These histories, which included the 'traditional' narratives of the old historians, perpetuated a discourse that claimed Palestinians had voluntarily left their home or refused peace, underpinned the psyche of Israeli society as either blameless or acting in defense. Contesting these histories, the New Historians questioned these narratives, which in turn, began to question the regimes of visibility that had historically ordered, influenced and determined what and how a specific Israeli history and its practice should be seen. As a consequence, critical practices related to visualizing this contested history began to emerge both within and outside Israel.

In what follows, I will map out some of the contested historical issues related to

⁶ The iron wall is no reference to the physical separation barrier, however the publication is a timely coincidence ... The Iron Wall was a strategy that was first formulated by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionist Zionism. In 1923 Jabotinsky published an article entitled 'On the Iron Wall.' He argued that it was naïve to expect Arab nationalists to welcome a Jewish state in Palestine. Negotiations with the Arabs in the early stages would be futile. The only way to realize the Zionist project was behind an iron wall of Jewish military strength. In his article, Shlaim writes that Jabotinsky incorporated a 'sophisticated theory of change – a change in Arab attitudes to a Jewish state' envisaged across two stages. The first stage was to build the iron wall. This was expected to compel the Arabs to abandon any hope of destroying the Jewish state. The shift towards moderation or realism on the Arab side was to be followed by stage II, negotiations – negotiations with the Palestinian Arabs about their status and national rights in Palestine. In his book, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, Shlaim argues that that Jabotinsky's strategy was adopted in all but name by his Labour Party opponents, led by David Ben-Gurion, and became the cornerstone of Zionist strategy in the conflict.

these arguments, working chronologically to a post 2014 context, supplementing my points with a number of visual examples that shape and feed into these arguments. In doing so, I will also point towards a largely unacknowledged history of Palestinian steadfastness and civil resistance. Linking historical events with a consistent process of non-violent resistance on the part of a larger Palestinian community situates these processes in a wider cycle of contention (Norman, 2010). In this way, the thesis is in part a comparative study across time rather than place, recognizing that the act of occupying and the responses to it are not homogenous, but vary from site and situation. By adopting this approach it will allow me to assess and situate the emergence, dynamics and outcomes of nonviolent struggle in response to an already well documented history. The importance of this approach is particularly beneficial as a way to distinguish the various modes of civil resistance and the language applied throughout my writing, as a means of differentiating the objective of each of my subsequent cases. Thus, I will firstly outline some of the key terms and their representative practices before moving onto my historical overview.

1.3 Modes of Civil Resistance

In an interview with Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh, at Bethlehem University⁷ in September 2013, the various modes of resistance that Palestinians had adopted were discussed; first under British rule between 1920-1948, and secondly, under the rule of the then newly established Israeli State. The same afternoon, by good fortune, Qumsiyeh was giving a talk to a Norwegian University group on the very same topic. A well respected biochemist, Qumsiyeh is also staunchly committed to the development of a free Palestinian State in addition to promoting the long history of peaceful Palestinian resistance to occupation.

An active participant in a number of protests and demonstrations, including the 2011 Palestinian Freedom Rides, Qumsiyeh outlined the necessity for resistance

⁷ Qumsiyeh is a professor of Bio-chemistry but has also written on popular resistance in Palestine including his 2006, *A History of Hope and Empowerment*, and is a committed activist and anti-Zionist.

and its possibilities, specifically in a context that limits mass mobilisation. The potential to resist, he suggested, was firstly about realising the strength of one's determination and the power of the mind.

If you believe that there's no mental occupation, which is the most dangerous kind of occupation, much more dangerous than restriction of movements, much more dangerous than ethnic cleansing, anything else – If they colonise your mind it's finished... (Qumsiyeh,2013)

The want and desire to persist with nonviolent means requires a mental strength that has long been associated with Palestinian resistance. Due to the general spatial separation of Israelis and Palestinians, any form of nonviolent resistance, be that direct action, noncooperation or protest, is often largely unnoticed by Israelis. In addition, the daily struggle to remain on the land and to be present under such conditions, a notion often referred to as 'sumud' or steadfastness, is characterized by Palestinian resilience. In addition to this daily, embodied mode of resistance, the Palestinian struggle has emerged as part of multifaceted strategy that responds to the specificities of an event as well as addressing the general nature of their conditions. According to Gene Sharp, the strategic use of nonviolence as a form of resistance is based on the idea that 'the exercise of power depends on the consent of the ruled who, by withdrawing consent, can control and even destroy their opponent' (1973: 4). For Palestinians within Gaza and the West Bank, the withdrawal of consent has been a long-established form of civil resistance against the Israeli occupation. Following Julie Norman (2010) and Stephen Zunes (2004), my definition of civil resistance is premised upon unarmed, community based struggle. A term that is often applied interchangeably with popular resistance depending on the community or scale of the action, the notion of nonviolence is more broadly applied as a form of resistance that challenges authorities by relying on tactics other than arms as the primary means of struggle (Norman, 2010: 2).

Popular struggle, in this regard, is more unambiguous and is specific to an action coordinated and carried out by civilians rather than militia or militants. In the case of Palestinian territories, 'popular struggle' typically refers to resistance

that is organised independently of either a Palestinian governing body, such as the Palestinian Authority or any armed resistance groups.⁸ In this way, popular resistance is drawn from the strength and determination of the people and is directly formed by bottom up, grassroots processes, such as those discussed in Chapter Four. This approach is often pragmatic, principled and creative. The later has become more prevalent in a post-Second Intifada period (2005 – present) with actions largely created with a remote, often international spectatorship in mind. Narrowcasting their activities, the Popular Committee of Bil'in and later the Freedom Riders as discussed in the Chapters Four and Five can, in this age of a multiplatform shared visibility be considered as early proponents of civil resistance as a form of visual activism.

Direct action, a nonviolent strategy that seeks to deliberately challenge the authority of the oppressor, has been the most visible form of popular resistance. Referring to Brazilian theorist, Paulo Freire who notes that 'there would be no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation. Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons - not by those who are oppressed, exploited and unrecognised' (1996: 55). As a way to draw attention to this often-subtle oppression, Palestinians have adopted direct action as the most visible form of resistance by performing acts that they are not usually expected or allowed to perform (Sharp, 1973). One of the most mediated and therefore widely visible examples of this kind of direct action has occurred since 2005 in the West Bank village of Bil'in. The village of Bil'in has gained international attention for the range of protest strategies it employs. By incorporating 'protest', which Norman defines as a 'public action such as a mass demonstration, march or vigil that may include symbolic acts such as displaying flags and symbols in addition to communicative acts such as hanging banners or distributing newspapers and leaflets' (Norman, 2010: 9), the direct action of Bil'in has also been referred to as a form of theatre (Jawad, 2011).

⁸ Palestinian groups that have been recognized as using politically motivated violence include the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Abu Nidal Organization, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and Hamas.

This characterization of ‘theatre’ is best articulated in Figure 3. Adopting the symbolic and iconic motif of the striped pajamas, an image synonymous with the Holocaust of Nazi Germany during World War II, the Popular Committee of Bil’in have successfully repurposed culturally and historically resonant imagery as a means of drawing attention to their struggle. Replacing the symbolic yellow star, that identified Jews from Germans during World War II, with a tag that reads “Gazan”, the Popular Committee used direct action to problematize the role of the occupation before the watching gaze of international press and citizen journalists whilst drawing attention to a wider oppressed population. In doing so, the direct action invites spectators to critically analyse their situation and, the broader conditions of the occupation. In this regard, the work of the popular committee in Bil’in as well as the other action discussed in this thesis is also a persuasive action that calls attention to a situation in an effort to increase international solidarity and response.



Figure 3: Bil’in protest: Nonviolent creative protest. Residents from the village of Bil’in dress in

Holocaust style stripy pyjamas.

Another form of civil resistance specific to this thesis is noncooperation. Considered to be the most powerful form of nonviolent action (Helvey, 2004), noncooperation is most evident in the civil resistance discussed in Chapters Three and Five, in both a political and economic capacity. In relation to Chapter Three, where I look at the Bedouin village of Susiya, noncooperation is best articulated through the refusal, on the part of the villagers, to neither leave their land nor submit to the ongoing torment brought about by the neighboring settlers. This political noncompliance is manifest by the rejection of the authority of the occupying power and the persistent rejection of Israeli directives to leave their land. In this regard, this refusal is also a form of steadfastness, articulated by the commitment to continue in an everyday capacity whilst under duress.

In Chapter Five the Freedom Riders assert their civil resistance by refusing to leave an Israeli only bus that connects Jewish settlements in the West Bank to Jerusalem. As part of their disobedient act, the Palestinian activists refused to leave the bus citing discrimination and inequality as their reasoning. Moreover, like many of the cases throughout this thesis, the Freedom Riders' act of civil resistance was multi-intentional. By co-opting a broad spectrum of media attention, including traditional and informal media producers such as video-activists and citizen journalists through the issue of a pre-event press call, the Freedom Riders' held a pre-event conference to highlight their action but also their call for Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions (BDS) of Israeli and international companies. Specifically the Freedom Riders pre-event address focused on Egged, Israel's largest transport company, and the French owned company, Veolia, both of which operated the Israeli settler service but also operate internationally. The Freedom Riders' press release stated that,

We also aim to expose two of the companies that profit from Israel's apartheid policies and encourage global boycott of and divestment from them. The Israeli Egged and French Veolia bus companies operate dozens of segregated lines that run through the occupied West Bank, including

East Jerusalem, many of them subsidized by the state.

The Freedom Riders' also employed intervention as a nonviolent tactic, maximizing the capacity of handheld cameras to document and live stream their sit in to an international audience. Perhaps the most confrontational form of nonviolent civil resistance, interventions represent the greatest risk of violent repression, arrest and injury. Thus, those who took part in the Freedom Rides, chosen because of their history and experience of protest, were aware that physical confrontation would ensue. Yet it is this knowing confrontation that produces the engaging 'image-event' that affirms their political action. By refusing to leave the bus, the predetermined outcome was a staged act of protest designed for media dissemination' (Delicath & DeLuca, 2003). Due to the provocation, 'interventionist actions are sometimes more effective than other tactics in forcing attention to an issue (Norman, 2010: 10). As outlined in Chapter Five, by provoking violent responses by occupying forces, interventionist practices can work to undermine the occupying power, and convince external bodies either to lend support, or in the case of BDS, withdraw their involvement.⁹

While the focus here has been on the use and development of a number of nonviolent modes of civil resistance, it would be remiss to suggest that each epoch of time since the emergence of the Israeli State and the subsequent developments thereafter, have passed without violent or armed resistance from within or outside the demarcated boundaries of the OPT. Historically, violence and armed resistance has been employed as a mechanism by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) prior to Oslo as a way to incorporate the majority of Palestinians into the liberation struggle over the disposition of their land. Used as an organisational tool, top down rather than bottom up, arming was seen as an 'emancipatory response to the 20 years (1948–1967) of dependence on Arab states to liberate Palestine that climaxed with the 1967 defeat of the Arab states and Israeli de facto annexation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem'

⁹ For a copy of the full press release please see: <https://bdsmovement.net/news/palestinian-freedom-riders-board-settler-buses-jerusalem>

(Alazzeah, 10: 2015). The visibility of violence offered a form of agency, internationally, drawing attention to the Palestinian plight and political demands of the PLO; who operated from Lebanon before being expelled in 1982 and reestablishing themselves in Tunis. Fighting the occupation during this period (between 1967 and the beginning of the First Intifada in 1987) also helped to situate national symbols of liberation such as the Palestinian flag and the keffiyeh (traditional Arab scarf) within the public consciences. Prior to Oslo, the PLO, operating outside of the OPT, functioned as an organization that sought to liberate its land and people through violence. Locating power in the hands of the people was a strong driving force in PLO political culture. As Ala Alazzeah suggests, organizing and arming the refugee populations in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria were part of a 'grand vision of liberation, and the notion of a people's war was a major conceptual and political project dating to the formation of PLO factions in exile' (2015: 10). While violence was an important tool for the PLO as a means of exhorting their visibility and political, in a post-Oslo era the culture of the PLO changed, becoming more hierarchal. With the emergence of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994 came a shift in practice. The desire to liberate was replaced with a process of state building. The notion of mass mobilization disappeared from the popular lexicon as private-sector growth and the desires for statehood took precedent. What was once a signifier of resistance and national identity, such as the Palestinian flag, became meaningless, as it was no longer illegitimate as it was pre-Oslo, however conditions on the ground and Palestinian statehood was never fully recognized. Moreover, The OPT became awash with international money and NGOs that supported pacification rather than resistance, creating what Lori Alan called 'industrialization of human rights' within the OPT (Alan, 2013). The breakdown of resistance techniques, grassroots resistance culture was further hindered by a new range of obstacles for Palestinian mass participation that Jacob Høigilt (2015) refers to as the 'double repression'. Such a repression, which includes the fragmentation of space and the denial of mass movement as a consequence of what Jeff Halper (2000) refers to as the 'matrix of control' over the Palestinian body and space by the Israeli State was qualified further by fractional Palestinian politics. The emergence of their own quasi-sovereign authorities, in the form of the (PA) in the West Bank

and the Hamas government in the Gaza strip, ultimately produced cynicism (Alan 2013) towards the peace process, PA and the capacity for international support to intervene (Alan, 2011).

It is out of these developments that the violent uprising of the Second Intifada grew. Those familiar with the various modes of civil resistance were generationally removed from those who grew up during a failed peace agreement and saw pacification and acceptance as a dominant narrative. Unable to mass mobilize due to the ongoing developments of settlements, the matrix of control from a colonial authority and growing political elite and middle class within the OPT are just a number of reasons for the violent uprising of the Second Intifada as well as its failings.

These acts of civil resistance and the logic for their application characterize much of the tactics addressed in this thesis. While the thesis does further explore these strategies in the following chapters, ultimately the purpose of this research is to consider how these strategies challenge existing regimes of visibility and operate as part of a wider performance, this is visual activism. However, before I move onto outlining the social and political stratification of visibility concerning Israel/Palestine and its management, the next section of my conceptual framework will highlight some of the key historical events that have shaped how the conflict is visualized. In addition, I will also address the resulting civil resistance that materialized as a consequence.

1.4 From Early Zionism and the British Mandate to 1967

Modern Zionism descended from the European Jewish diaspora of the late nineteenth century. Brought about by a growing sense of alienation in their adopted nations, Eastern European Jews fled oppression and pogroms, moving west to central Europe, the United States, South America, and Palestine. The latter sought to revive their religious lineage, seeking to settle in their 'ancestral home after nearly two thousand years of exile' (Shlaim, 2000: 1). The Zionist movement, led by Theodor Herzl, author of *Der Judenstaat* (the Jewish State)

published in 1896, promoted political Zionism on the pretext that a Jewish state be created in Palestine. One year later at the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897, Herzl outlined these desires to resettle Jews in their ancient biblical land. In Zionist vocabulary, the Land of Israel (Eretz Israel) was described as a huge wasteland, waiting for pioneers to come and redeem it (Rosen, 2007: 23). In responding to this call, settlers began to cultivate the land, building settlements and paving roads. Imposing their 'western standards on the local environment and its inhabitants', Jochai Rosen notes that, 'the settlers instigated a conflict with both' (2007: 23). The relationship with the landscape, as I will detail, is especially significant to the narrative of occupation, not only in the physicality of the dispute, but also in the emotive rhetoric that shaped how it was and still is valorised.

Central to the Israeli experience, the territorializing of space and landscape within the discourse of the Jewish diaspora was, by the 1920s, beginning to be transformed from Herzl's 'Labour Zionism' to a more radical 'revisionist' model promoted by Ze've Jabotinsky. While early Zionism was positioned as a relatively peaceful form of co-existence (King, 2007), the colonial presence of the British, first with the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement that divided the Ottoman Empire into British and French 'spheres of influence', followed by the post World War I British Mandate for Palestine in 1922, was not just a chapter in history, but the essential background to contemporary politics (Shlaim, 1994: 18). The outcome of these events, Shlaim asserts, were the root cause for countless clashes, territorial disputes, struggles for national liberation and the intense wars that have become a familiar feature of the politics of today's Middle East (1994: 18).

With the secret pact to overthrow the Ottoman rulers successful, the British and French outlined their new geographic boundaries. Britain was also committed to ensuring the establishment of a Jewish homeland within the region. Outlined in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Arthur James Balfour, the then British Foreign Secretary, expressed his support for the 'establishment in Palestine of a nation home for the Jewish people' in a letter to leading British Zionist Lord Rothschild. The basis of the Balfour declaration was founded on an agreement made between Chaim Weizmann, the elected leader of the World Zionist Organization

and British diplomats. Weizmann, who had lived and worked in London during the First World War, used his powerful position to 'minimize the danger of organized Arab resistance' in Mandate Palestine by canvassing for an ambiguous 'Jewish commonwealth' within (Shlaim, 2000: 7). His efforts were rewarded with Balfour's letter, a political gesture that represented a triumph for Zionist diplomacy. Problematically, Balfour's statement neglected to consider the political position of the 600,000 strong Arab population in the region, which was a 90% majority when compared to the 56,000 Jewish population. Balfour's declaration handed Weizmann and the World Zionist Organization the key with which to unlock the doors to Palestine and to make them masters of the country (Shlaim, 2000: 7).

With the key for the door, the mobilization of Zionist myths perpetuated much of the popular discourse related to the eventual establishment of Israel in 1948. Often closely linked to the notion of non-Jewish population 'transfer' (Shlaim, 2004), Jabotinsky and his followers subscribed to the concept of a Greater Israel. Accompanying this was the idea that prior to Israeli settlement, Palestine was an 'empty' landscape. A symbolic entity and a product of the developing national political imaginary, the New Historians outlined how much of the Zionist rhetoric became heavily influenced by the fictitious rhetoric of reclaiming and redeeming the ancient biblical land. By mythologizing Eretz Israel the Israeli populace arguably began to assert a paradoxical 'double vision' that reflects how Israelis look at the landscape but do not see Palestinians. This double vision can be identified through a number of political and military practices whereby the occupation helps to mitigate the process of erasure. As the example of the Gilo wall outlines in the introduction, the Israeli visual field is shaped by physical objects, fragmented geographies and Zionist claims to the land which all contribute to what is made visible or removed from sight.

Thus, after the formation of Israel, those Palestinians who temporarily fled their homes became known as 'present absentees'. A term that refers to Palestinians who were internally displaced during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war but not allowed to return to their homes. As Palestinian scholar, Nur Masalha notes, the present absentee is a 'paradoxical title' because it refers to one who has 'had their

property and homes taken by the state, making them refugees and exiles in their own homeland (2005: 13). As internal refugees, present absentees find themselves in a unique situation. Despite their historical, geographic, cultural and national ties with the Palestinian people and as well as sharing a special situation with Palestinians outside of the 1948 Israeli borders, they still maintain Israeli citizenship, a status that distinguishes them from all other Palestinian refugees in the region (2005: 13). In addition to a precarious identity of people within the 1949 border as both 'present and absent', Israel also replaced original Arabic town names with Hebrew and planted trees over the ruins of Palestinian homes and estates. While Israeli societies have undergone a 'collective amnesia', which is then replaced by a 'master narrative that suppress marginal and competing histories' (Gordon, 2012), Palestinians have adopted symbols such as the key as a commemorative icon of their loss and potential return. Working to undo this process of removal, denial and erasure with specific attention to challenging the contested duality between sight/site, is the work of Palestinian Bedouin photographer Ahlam Shibli. A photographer who explicitly focuses on Bedouin communities, Shibli's work exemplifies an ongoing critical practice that seeks to highlight the wider and lesser known historical condition of Palestinians in Israel. Focusing on unrecognized Bedouin villages and their counterpart, 'recognized townships'¹⁰ the vast majority of Shibli's work gives attention to the liveliness of communities and spaces that exist but are unrecognized by the Israeli State and often removed from Israeli vision. Both *Goter* (2002-03), a 44

¹⁰ In an interview with the newspaper Ha'aretz in 1963, Moshe Dayan, an Israeli chief of staff and former agriculture minister under Ben-Gurion in 1959, said of the Bedouin community of the Negev, an area within Israel's 1947 borders that is largely uninhabited except for the Palestinian Bedouins who have lived there for centuries, that "we should transform the Bedouin into an urban proletariat in industry, services, construction and agriculture. 88% of the Israeli population are not farmers, let the Bedouin be like them. Indeed, this will be a radical move which means that the Bedouin would not live on his land with his herds, but would become an urban person... This would be a revolution, but it may be fixed within two generations. Without coercion but with government direction... this phenomenon of the Bedouin will disappear". Original source: *Ahlam Shibli exhibition essay, Goter by Ulrich Loock, 2003*. At the end of the 1960s, the Israeli government started a policy of concentrating the Bedouin population in seven townships (Tel-Sheva, Rahat, 'Ar'ara, Kseifa, Segev Shalom, Hura and Laqiya) that were planned largely without consulting the people concerned. Currently, more than half of the approximately 130,000 Bedouin in the Negev live in these townships. More recently, the Praver-Begin plan (2011) limits Bedouin settlement to specific areas that is part of an effort to disrupt any 'territorial contiguity between Hebron and Gaza' by removing them from their land. A comparison of both the 1959 policy incited by Dayan, and the more recent legal efforts by Benjamin Netanyahu's government can be read here: <http://972mag.com/the-military-face-behind-the-praver-plans-civilian-mask/83305/>

black and white series of images shot in the Al-Naqab or *Unrecognized* (2000), a 24 series of colour images documenting the Arab Al-N'aim' region, attest to the precarity of a community who live their days in a perpetual state of expectation, to borrow from Agamben (2004)¹¹ (see Figures 4 and 5). Engaging in the 'representational complexities of documentary photography' (Demos, 2008: 124) Shibli negotiates the tensions between aesthetics and politics, visibility and invisibility related to the representation of politics and the politics of representing a difficult matter.

As the Gilo Wall and Shibli's work suggests, the effect of historical narratives and political discourse has, and still shapes politico-historical vision within Israel. The idea of reclaiming the empty land, as exemplified in the slogans a 'land without people for a people without land' and working to 'make the desert bloom', runs counter to much of the material made available in the Israeli State Archive. While the New Historians worked through the documentation, exploring the notion of the 'refugee problem' and debating whether the Arab communities fled as the 1948 War unfolded, or left as a consequence of Jordanian radio transmissions advising them to flee, or were expelled, more recent visually orientated scholarship has also contributed to the debate.

¹¹ Within Agamben's 2004 text *State of Exception* he addresses the conditions of a society in a state of emergency whereby the state of exception is produced. Such a condition he argues is a condition where constitutional rights can be diminished superseded and rejected. The Palestinian condition has routinely been referred to as a state on exception based on their governance by the Israeli State vis-à-vis their lack of citizenry rights. In this regard, Palestinians are in a constant state of emergency where constitutional rights are diminished whilst still being governed.



Figure 4: Untitled, Alahm Shibli - *Goter* (2002-03).



Figure 5: Untitled, Alahm Shibli - *Goter* (2002-03).

Ariella Azoulay suggests that by revisiting and exhibiting¹² photographs produced between 1920-1948, one can see the unfolding of a disaster; the visible measures of expulsion, dispossession and destruction related to “others”, inflicted by one (often privileged) population upon another (Azoulay, 2013: 550). Alongside the rhetoric of the emergent right wing in pre-state Israel, and the debate over the materialization of the refugee problem, such a disaster, Azoulay writes,

would have been invisible to this population of citizens who are mobilized to partake in it, especially because it is not *perceived* (emphasis added) as a disaster; they do not perceive themselves as those who inflict such a disaster or are responsible for its outcome (2013: 550).

A process that she defines as ‘regime-made disaster’, Azoulay argues that the transfer of Palestinians unfolded, slowly, as a pre-state process and thereafter, from the 1948 war, in such a way that it was almost unnoticed. Applied by the Israeli State over time, this regime-made disaster is, she argues, still unraveling today (2012) and ensures that those responsible are conditioned, maybe even encouraged to not recognize it because it is only ever a ‘consequence of reasonable and justified deeds’. Described as a process of pre-conceived circumstances initiated by democratic institutions in full public view; such a process is rarely identified as a disaster per se.

What Azoulay asserts through her discussions about archival photographs is evidence of an action, almost invisible because of the Zionist history, that shapes the interpretation of the photographs but also the archive. This invisibility is, perhaps significantly, wrapped up in the mythologizing of both the land and the self-image of Jewish Israelis. One period that Azoulay explores encompasses 1947, the ensuing run up to Israeli independence on 14 May 1948 and the end of the war in 1949. During this period, approximately 400 Palestinian villages were depopulated, and 700,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes, or left to flee the fighting (Morris, 2004: 342). In this context, Azoulay’s use of archival photography and more contemporary examples (2008) is framed as an ethical

¹² In Tel-Aviv and London, the exhibition was entitled ‘*From Palestine to Israel Archive*’ (2013).

demand for those who engage with the photos to take responsibility for what we are seeing and for how they respond in reaction to it. That ‘most historians simply do not perceive the photographs as reliable or informative’ and that ‘photographs are not objects of easy investigation’ because they ‘do not speak for themselves’, cannot, Azoulay writes, be an excuse for why the historians ignore them (2013: 556).

Her contention is that, while the photographs do not explicitly show the demolition of homes, or the expulsion of thousands, the photographs do put an impending and ‘unfolding disaster’ before the public eye. One example of this is a black and white image of the Palestinian village of Lubyia, retrieved from the Golni Archive (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Arab village of Lubyia 1948: Archival image from Azoulay’s exhibition ‘From Palestine to Israel Archive’.

In an effort to ‘make historical moments *reappear*’ (emphasis added) Azoulay (2013: 551) organises images in an archive to demonstrate the potential for ‘alternative options’ that could have been chosen. By presenting the photos in such a way, Azoulay presents a challenge to the received histories of the time and

the development of a 'master narrative'. Key to this argument is the retrieval and presentation of a photograph taken at the time Israel invaded Lubyia. Highlighting two features within the photo, Azoulay points to the Palestinian man holding the white flag of surrender: a clear indicator of nonviolence and the fact that the village is still standing. Lubyia, now referred to as Lavi, an Israeli town northeast of the original village was demolished upon capture in 1948.

In presenting photographs in such a way, we are required, as spectators, to engage in a process that is in short, an ethics of spectatorship. That is to say, we are asked, or expected to consider the relationship between knowledge, communicated to the spectator through the 'performance' of Azoulay's exhibition of images, and action, that is, our expected response to that which is being presented.¹³ Presented with images in this way, in the context of an exhibition or confronted with them in an online archive can produce a discordant effect that is at odds with conventional or expected reactions to images of conventional suffering or disaster, or a feeling of 'not quite knowing what we are looking at or being unable to feel what we are supposed to feel' (Kozol, 2014). By presenting images in such a way, Azoulay is attempting to build a better impression of a culture that, she would argue, is in denial. The unpacking of this denial has been the underpinning rationale of the New Historians and their multi-disciplinary contemporaries.

¹³ For a discussion on the performance and the ethics of watching, see Lisa Fitzpatrick, 2011 'Performance of Violence and the Ethics of Spectatorship' in *Performance Research* (2011: 59-67). One argument by Kozal (2014) is ethical spectatorship, therefore, cannot simply hinge on the spectator's responses to the image of the suffering subject. Nor can it focus exclusively on that subject, who is unlikely to (ever) be fully present or interactive with the spectator. Instead, ethical spectatorship occurs, or can occur, when viewers attend to their relationships with the subjects at whom they are looking. Focusing exclusively on the spectators' feelings obscures the other's subjectivity. Focusing exclusively on the other, on the pain they must be feeling, risks objectifying that other and occluding the spectators' complex yet discordant ties to the image or event. Instead, Kozal notes that "ethical spectatorship can occur in those moments that foster a critical consideration of those ties, a thoughtful dwelling in the relationships that the photograph inaugurates between the spectator and the subject of the image."



Figure 7: Install photo from Azoulay's exhibition 'From Palestine to Israel Archive', The Mosaic Rooms, London 04-25 November, 2011.

These efforts to question myths have also been taken up by Norman Finkelstein who points to the myth of 'purity of arms'. In his unpacking of Israeli historian Anita Shapira's *Land and Power* (1992), Finkelstein explores how the notion of 'self-defense' graduates from settlement to outright conquest (1995: 99) and secondly that the Jewish attitude towards physical violence shifts from 'abhor[ring] violence in any form' to one that is 'identified with military might and does not hesitate to resort to force when deemed necessary' (1995: 110). This narrative is further excavated by Finkelstein who again refers to Shapira's own text, citing 'that [Arab's] respected strength and that the language of physical force was the only idiom he understood', continuing that 'a correspondent from Palestine in 1886 wrote that his Zionist comrades did not regard the fellahin (people of the land) as human beings; and for every small thing they beat and punish them with whips (1995: 111).

Myths of this kind stigmatized (Goffman, 1963) the Palestinian as 'lazy, sly, underhanded, cunning, immoral and donkey like' (Finkelstein, 1995: 11). Such stereotypes have since been explored as qualifiers of 'Arab culture' and challenged by Edward Said in his text, *Orientalism* (1978). The relationship between ethnicity and intelligence has, as Sander Gilman points out, a long and disturbing history whereby stereotypes can permeate society, finding expression

in a variety of systems (Gillman, 1997). A sentiment ardently presented Said in his forward to *After the Last Sky* (1986), when he notes that, 'hardly a day passes without some mention of Palestinians in the press, but they remain virtually unknown'.

With the above in mind, one can think about the New Historians' approach, and that which followed, as a concerted effort to re-evaluate Israeli nation building as a process that shaped the present national image in addition to laying the foundations for the stratification of visibility related to Palestinian identity. By highlighting the long-established process of negative moral characterization of Arabs by Israelis, Finkelstein highlighted how the designation of Palestinians was essentially shaped through what Andrea Brighenti refers to as 'interactional visibility' (Brighenti, 2010: 52). A process of visibility making defined by the engagement with the thing, text or processes' (Brighenti, 2010: 52), I argue that Finkelstein's work highlights the long-established process of negative moral characterization of Arabs as a result of this process. As a consequence the stigmatization of Arabs and Palestinians shifted from a 'constructed' visual difference into 'culturally formed moral dimension' (Goffman, 1963) of difference.

This visualization of culture, between Arab and Jew, through an arrangement of political processes and varying power dynamics did not favor Palestinians and has persisted to frame their culture as weak and untrustworthy, problematic and most recently hostile, as I will outline in Chapter Seven. As these processes were unfolding, the image of the Jew was transformed with contrasting overtones. These are perhaps best articulated by Samuel Hirszenberg's painting *The Wandering Jew* (1899) in which the central figure is seen running through a pogrom surrounded by suffering and death (Figure 8). Hirszenberg's painting represented the last, dark phase of the Jewish fate before Zionist redemption. Fifty years later, as Pfingst notes, 'the frightened old man of the Jewish diaspora had been banished, replaced by the strong, energetic, athletic 'free', 'new' [and] unsullied by the shameful weakness of exile' (Pfingst, 2008).



Figure 8: *The Wandering Jew* (1899) Samuel Hirszenberg.

The emergence of the 'new post-diasporic Jew' was now established. From the early Zionist movement the Jewish man, in particular, was understood to be redeemed. Unlike his 'feminine predecessor, the new Jewish man would engage in agriculture, war and athletics' (Massad, 2006: 27). The first two areas of activity were denied to most European Jews at varying times of their residency in Europe. Moreover, Paul Breinies notes how 'statelessness, according to Zionism, is the cause of meekness, frailty, passivity, humiliation, pogroms, futile appeals to treason and dialogue – in short, Jewish weakness' (Breinies, 1991: 47). Derived from the then dominant anti-Semitic discourse of Europe, the new Jewish man was revitalised in pre-State Israel as land worker, warrior and athlete (as Figures 9 and 10 suggest).



Cover of Haitztadion (the Stadium). The scroll on the right states: "Get ready for the Maccabiah in the Spring of 1932." Joseph Yekutieli Maccabi Sports Archive, www.maccabi.org/museum.

Communicating the implied spirit of the times and the rationale of the Zionist vision, Figure 9 (Left) reads, "With one hand he does his work, in the other he holds his weapon. Creativity – Struggle." This applies a typical Hebrew verse from Nehemia 4:11, marrying the Jewish relationship with the landscape and its biblical connotations. The second image, Figure 10 (Right) is of the first Eretz Israel Maccabah Games (1932) held in Tel-Aviv. Both posters depict masculinity as a central to the developing relationship, and identity of the Jew.

1.5 The Six-Day War

The self-image of the new Israeli Jew, particularly in terms of how Israel positioned itself militaristically, was consolidated after the Six Day War of June 1967. This is perhaps best articulated by Said who noted that in a post-1967 cult of 'Israeli prowess, the occupation of Arab land, the unbroken string of Israeli assaults on Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria amplified and gave rise to a view of the Jew as super-hero' (Said, 1995: 56). In addition to altering how Israelis perceived themselves, the Six Day war also established Israel as the regional powerhouse.

The Six Day War was the result of a perceived Arab threat. Led by Chief of Staff, Yitzhak Rabin, Israel made a pre-emptive strike against Egypt, Jordan and Syria on 5 June 1967. Engaging battle on multiple fronts, via ground and air, in a six-day period Israel captured the present day West Bank, including East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt. In addition, Israel also seized control of the Golan Heights from Syria and the Sinai Peninsula, which they eventually returned to Egypt in the 1979 Camp David Accords. A vast territorial expansion, the third of its short history, the Six Day War was a clear assertion of Israel's claim to sovereignty over what it perceived to be its ancient, biblical homeland with 'Greater Jerusalem' as its capital.

In the aftermath of the war and with Israel refusing to part with its newly acquired lands, the UN passed resolution 242 on 22 November 1967, which stated:

Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area [Middle East] can live in security.

The resolution thus requires:

- Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict
- Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for acknowledging of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.

Furthermore stating a desire to see a:

- Just settlement for the refugee problem
- Guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of

demilitarized zones.¹⁴

In addition to the UN Security Council communication, Azoulay points to the terminology used to describe an occupation before 1967 (2005: 74). Azoulay refers to The International Court of Justice (ICJ) (1907) and the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) as unequivocal in their definition and understanding of an occupation. Contextualized here alongside the UN resolution of 1967, Israel's status over the OPT is defined as such:

A territory is considered occupied when it is de facto under the authority of the hostile army" (Fourth Geneva Convention, Paragraph 42). The occupation of inhabited territory, then, is always temporary, and not only because the regulations point to the horizon of its conclusion – "when peace shall be made" – but because of the presence in the occupied territory of a population that cannot be occupied. "It is forbidden," says Paragraph in 45, "to force the inhabitants of the occupied territory to swear allegiance to the hostile ruling power."

Yet with these long standing legal advisories in place Israel has maintained its hold over the Palestinian territories reflecting the Zionist desire to unite the Jewish Kingdom with Zion, the ancient name for Jerusalem, at its heart.

1.6 The Consequences of the Six Day war in terms of Palestinian Visibility

The question of visibility and vision, particularly the ability to be able to see, militaristically, from an Israeli perspective and need to be seen, from a Palestinian position, has, since 1967, become a visually contested arena. Failures to *see* Palestinians, as I have argued above, have been encouraged and socialized into a number of everyday processes. In tandem to this, the development of a new nation state and a new national identity, whose inhabitants had themselves,

¹⁴ See UN Security Council for the full resolution – accessible here:

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/palestine/ch3.pdf>

prior to their arrival in Palestine, struggled over how to be seen, has given rise to a very specific dynamic of Palestinian erasure and concealment alongside a long process of re-representation for Israelis. For Israelis, the active mythologizing of the land, bring together a diaspora in a 'land without people' for 'people without a land' required a willful blindness to ignore, remove, paint out, conceal and dehumanize the existing Arab population.

As Said famously remarked, 'the whole history of the Palestinian struggle has to do with the desire to be visible' (2006: 2); the effect of the Six Day War can be said to have further complicated this desire. With visibility contingent to function and directly related to the power of the gaze (Brighenti, 2010), how Palestinians *were* seen within the OPT by Israelis became selective practice based on who decided to look. For the military and the settlers, the visibility of Palestinians was principally based upon provisional surveillance. Beyond being watched, Palestinian visibility was largely removed, their desire to become visible gradually lessened until the First Intifada of 1987.

To think about visibility, and the study of this in a post 1967 context allows us to enhance our understanding of the social, political and material environment that developed as a result of the Six Day war. With the annexation of East Jerusalem and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian struggle for visibility has become a battle over perceptibility. The wanting desires to be recognized and to have their claims for rights qualified became a central commitment to Palestinian justice. Yet, while Palestinians have struggled to bring their grievance into the Israeli and international field of vision, Israel has worked to diminish this effort by composing a 'vast array of vision-blocking mechanisms' (Hochberg, 2015: 17). In a post-1967 context the mythology of the Jewish land became one of the foremost political factors in the development of the Israeli settlements and a means to further stake a claim to the newly sized territories. Thus, as Roland Barthes notes, 'everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse', he continues to suggest that myth is not defined by the object of the message 'but by the way in which it utters this message' (2009: 131). These 'utterances' are manifest in many ways and Barthes thus reserved the notion that ultimately, 'every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state,

open to appropriation by society, for there is no law, whether natural or not which forbids talking about things' (2009: 132). Seen then, as an ideological tool that enables new meanings to be ascribed to objects and identities, Israel continued to mobilize historical narrative and myth as a way to manage the visual and spatial configuration of its newly acquired land. As I will now explain, this mythologizing underpinned the way Israelis acted, how Palestinians were seen or made visible and also how space and architecture become 'appropriated' into the discourse of security as a response to these developments.

Within the West Bank in particular, the visibility of Palestinians became characterized by a 'one way hierarchy of vision' in which Israelis were allowed to look, should they wish, while Palestinians were only ever looked at (Weizman, 2007: 133). This exercise in visual management was first development through the settler movement of the late 1970s. As a means of managing the new land and the Palestinian population within it, Israel looked to the religious settlement movement (discussed in Chapter Three), and later, the more secular settlers (discussed in Chapter Five) as valuable political commodities. While the latter can, for the most part, be categorised as economic settlers who make use of the favourable government subsidies for living beyond the Green Line.¹⁵ The former are typically Israeli and American Jews who have chosen to settle for ideological reasons.

As a process of spatial and visual management, settlements interrupt the topology of the West Bank and disrupt any sense of territorial continuity for the Palestinians (Hazan, 2007: 89). Home to more than 560,000 Israeli settlers, the West Bank (and Gaza until 2005) is divided into cantons or 'blocs' with an array of Israeli only service roads that link settlement to settlement. The interweaving of settlements across the West Bank, exclusively for Israeli travel, is supplemented by a complex secondary road system that allows Jews to pass Israeli checkpoints points while Palestinians are routinely stopped, further dividing up the space whilst affirming an imbalance of status.

¹⁵ For one specific report on Israeli settlement subsidies see the Washington Post online accessible here: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-expands-settlement-subsidies/2013/08/04/b01a4faa-fd1d-11e2-96a8-d3b921c0924a_story.html accessed 23/08/2014.

As a movement, the settlement 'enterprise' as it was known, became popular after the 1977 election of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Establishing ties between his Likud party and the new nationalist messianic settler movement, Gush Emunim (Block of Faith)¹⁶ the settlement movement was politically important to the development and management of space within the West Bank. Established by Rabbi Avaram Yitzak Kook, the principle rabbi of Palestine before the formation of Israel, Kook and his successor Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, were pivotal in the development of the movement through their teachings and writings. In addition to Gush Emunim, there was an American movement known as Kach. Headed up by a Brooklyn born rabbi, Meir Kahane, Kach drew its ideological influences from the aggressive Zionism of Ze've Jabotinsky.¹⁷ While Kahane and his views have been seen as threatening by the Israeli State and deemed illegal in Israel, Gush Emunim have been framed as an acceptable political movement with their voters highly influencing possible outcomes at the electoral polls.

The relationship between religiously zealous settlers and the Israeli government allowed for the implementation of settlements deep into the mountainous regions of the West Bank. Playing upon the 'biblical redemption messianic sentiments' within the landscape, Eyal Weizman points out that the arrival of these settlers had a 'beneficial military logic' (2006) Wanting to remove themselves from the distractions of modern Jewish culture, the religious settlements are 'conceptually constructed as re-establishing the relation between the terrain and the sacred biblical text of the Bible, so that prospective settlers could see themselves as returning exiles to the land' (Apel, 2012: 187). Thus the hilltops of the West Bank were understood as both physical entities and 'imagined mythical geographies' that legitimise their Jewishness, whilst having immense political and military value.

Understood more broadly in terms of Israeli militarised architecture, the arrangement of settlements along the West Bank landscape can be considered as

¹⁶ For more on this, the rise of the political and intellectual left in response to the heightened settler movement before the break out of the first intifada see Shulman's (2005) *Dark Hope*.

¹⁷ For an extended discussion of the extreme right settler movement see Zertal & Eldar's (2007) *Lords of the Land: The War Over Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007*.

part of the emergent regimes of visibility that produced contingent compositions of unofficial lookouts. Functioning as alarm tools, the settlers became a 'self-organising system' of control and surveillance which, along with a range of technologies and strategies including satellites, checkpoints, watchtowers and numerous categorisation processes used to manage individuals and administer large portions of space, fed into a program that rendered Palestinians visible at all times to Israeli military. The importance of this as a means of control cannot be underestimated. Not only were the Palestinians visible to those within the settlements and watchtowers, who looked out and often down upon them below, the physical structures of the hilltop settlements were also hyper visible providing a one-way panoptical gaze.

With full visual domination over the Palestinian population residing below, the settlement program was also a site of visual domination. Often built in circular fashion with homes constructed in rings around the summit to reinforce communal identity vis-à-vis the Palestinian communities around them, the settlements also created a twofold form of visual exclusion.



Figure 11: Untitled. Yazan Khalili's *Landscape of Darkness* (2010).



Figure 12: Untitled. Yazan Khalili's *Landscape of Darkness* (2010).

Firstly, the settlements dominate the landscape, fulfilling Ariel Sharon's 1979 desire that 'Arabs should see a Jewish light every night 500 meters from them'.¹⁸ As Yazan Khalili's photographs from the series *Landscape of Darkness* (2010) attest, the inequality of power is both metaphorically as well as developmentally visible, pointing to the separation in equality between Israelis and Palestinians. Lit up with immense brightness, Israeli settlements are not only markers of military power within the landscape but also reflect the disparity in economics and services, such as access to water and electricity.

Inviting us into the layers of darkness between Palestinian land and the highly illuminated Israeli settlements, the darkness of Khalili's photographs also stands in symbolically for the removal or exclusion of Palestinians. Khalili's images, like those I will explore in Chapter Six by Italian photographer Gianluca Panella (2014), present the spectator with an anti-representational logic of photography that plays whereby the spectator is presented with darkness, much like Khalili's, as a way to communicate a visual inequality.

Secondly, the settlement program challenges the Palestinian 'right to look'.

¹⁸ Quote from Gil Hochberg; Sharon was lead engineer on the settlement program in 1979.

While the settlements are immensely illuminated, blocking ones ability to see in while enabling those within to see out, the hierarchy of vision concerning settlements also extends to the 'legal right to look'. As Weizman observes, 'according to rules of engagement issued by the occupying forces at the end of 2003, soldiers may shoot to kill any Palestinian caught observing settlements with binoculars or in any other 'suspicious manner'. Palestinians should presumably avoid looking at settlements at all' (Weizman, 2007: 132-133).

Considered in this way, looking and watching is also a form of 'subject making'. Looking, Brighenti notes, 'enables the viewer to assert himself as ontologically superior to the viewed' (2010: 27). Moreover, in the context of the occupation and the post-1967 developments in power dynamics between Palestinians and Israelis, Merleau-Ponty's (1968)¹⁹ contention that vision is an 'act' not a thought is equally valuable. Given the unequal privileges afforded to settlers within the West Bank as well as their role within the uneven distribution of vision, as an act, looking or gazing without regard or thought, especially when unchallenged, is wholly objectifying. This objectification is sustained through checkpoints and one-way glass, surveillance cameras, watchtowers and the repeated checking of identity cards that is part of the everyday experience of living in an occupied territory that has become an institutionalized temporality.

As this regime of visual and spatial management was made manifest, Palestinians - girls, boys, men, woman, university students, labour unionists and prisoners - were involved in collective action (King, 2007: 118-125). Born from local working committees that spread from town to village and refugee camp, these committees became social organizations and civic associations that established a tradition of civic participation in Palestine that later functioned as centres for political organizing during the First Intifada (Norman, 2010: 22). The multi-functionality of these movements was responsive action that reflected the demands placed upon the communities as a result of the occupation, such as childcare needs and taking care of the elderly. Largely set up by women, these

¹⁹ Originally published in French in 1964, entitled *Le Visible et l'invisible* I am taking my notes from the 1968 Northwestern University reprint in English, *The Visible and the Invisible*, (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

local committees, according to King, became the main way for women to become involved in national politics while also working to address the shortcomings in female education (King, 2007: 94), these female groups were the first to put civilian mobilization into action, illustrating the potential capacity for widespread, strategic resistance (Norman, 2010: 23). In addition, youth movements such as Fatah's Al-Shabiba (Young People) took an active role in West Bank politics, particularly those from Birzeit University, as well as other West Bank universities, engaging in youth and social work, serving as versatile networks for political mobilization. A process of organization, that fed into other groups like those noted above, enabled the development of nongovernmental political spaces to flourish in a host of contexts for a multitude of purposes. Both because, and in spite of, the military occupation, the development of alternative institutions, movements and activities, largely by female and educated constituencies became the cornerstone for civil action in the First Intifada.

1.7 In/Visibility in the First and Second Intifada (1987-1993) & (2000-2005)

The civic based actions of the First Intifada 'did not emerge spontaneously but rather grew from the spirit of civic participation that emerged in the networks and organizations' (Norman, 2010: 24) mentioned above. Building leadership structures from the organizing of a civil society, the framework of these processes have come back as central motifs for the development of nonviolent popular resistance and visual activism, which I explore in my following chapters. Throughout the First Intifada Palestinians undertook widespread acts of civil disobedience including acts of noncompliance such as refusing to pay bills printed in Hebrew, eating only locally produced products and refusing to support the Israeli economy, refusing to open their shops and working during alternative business hours in an effort to shake off (the literal translation of the word Intifada) the occupation. Coupled with widespread protests across the territories, Palestinians also conducted other acts of civil disobedience including sit-ins, marches, teach-ins, industrial walk-outs, downing tools on Israeli farms

and building sites in addition to hunger strikes, all of which brought attention to the Palestinian cause and the occupation. As Ackerman and DuVall acknowledge, 'all these steps were designed to amplify the spirit of resistance and make it impossible for the Israelis to conduct business as usual' (2000: 410). Every aspect of the civil resistance was to *show* that Palestinian life continued. In an effort to build a self-sufficient economy Palestinians developed rooftop gardens, when the Israelis closed the schools Palestinians held classes in homes; seizing the opportunity for popular education of Palestinian history and society of the sort prohibited in the Israeli-mandated schools (Bishara, 2010: 68). Every effort was to destabilize and undermine Israeli control. In addition, youth movements had significant impact on the development and value of nonviolent, cooperative resistance. Works by Norman (2010), Allan (2015) and King (2007) have all acknowledged the significance of youth participation, which ultimately represented a wholly committed approach to resistance, and included intellectuals, academics, political party members being joined with savvy young street organizers with a common cause (King, 2007: 222).

After twenty years of occupation, Palestinians also began to mobilize a number of visual tropes in an effort to challenge the erasure of their national identity. As will be discussed in Chapters Three and Five, the adoption of the Palestinian flag, which was illegal, became a common activity as well as wearing the checkered Palestinian Kuffiyeh (traditional scarf). The value of these actions, specifically as international media attention grew throughout the First Intifada, and latterly the emergence of citizen journalism and the ability to self-publish, became highly recognizable markers of identity and resistance.

Quoting anthropologist Julie Peteet, Alham Bishara points to the way graffiti became a key visual medium of political discourse. Conducting fieldwork within the West Bank during the First Intifada, Peteet notes how one respondent told her that reading graffiti was 'kind of like reading the newspaper' (Peteet, 1996: 151). With political declarations like 'No taxes without representation' (Peteet, 1996: 142), as well as instructions about collective actions and statements by particular political parties, writing and reading graffiti was part of Palestinians' constitution of themselves as a society committed to resisting military

occupation (Bishara, 2010). The importance of these activities cannot be underestimated when one considers the visual inequality and processes of removal implemented by the occupying Israelis between 1967 and the beginning of the First Intifada in 1987.

Part way through the First Intifada, in June 1989, Israel implemented the first of a series of restrictions on movement. Originally, from 1967 onwards, Palestinians living in the newly occupied territories were allowed to move freely between their designated administrative spaces of either Gaza or the West Bank to Israel on the proviso that they returned home between 1am and 5am. In June 1989, Israel imposed a magnetic-card system whereby only those with such a card were allowed to leave the Gaza Strip. By not issuing magnetic cards to released prisoners, former administrative detainees, or even Palestinians who had been detained and released without charges being filed against them, Israel began to shift its approach to managing Palestinian populations. Emphasized by Neve Gordon (2008) as the beginning of the 'separation phases' – the abandonment of efforts to administer the lives of the colonized population in terms of their wellbeing, shifting from a politics of life to a politics of death.²⁰ The limitations of movement to exclusively within a space of unfolding 'catastrophe', to borrow a phrase from Azoulay, underscores the structural dimensions of Israel's military rule during the time, which Gordon argues were a combination of sovereign, disciplinary and bio-political models of control (Gordon, 2008: 11). While disciplinary power was continuous and spread out over time, shaping the norms and practices of control with curfews and arrests, so too did it attempt to normalize individuals and communities in an effort to render Palestinians into homogeneous, docile populations. Counter to this were the already ubiquitous efforts by Palestinians to challenge these mechanisms through the nonviolent approaches to resistance during the First Intifada. Dealing with the population as opposed to the individual in political terms, Bio-power integrates and modifies

²⁰ Neve Gordon notes that after the outbreak of the Second Intifada Israel periodically stopped the flow of water and electricity supplies to Palestinian refugee camps, destroying much of the scant infrastructure it had put in place previously. The first two decades since 1967, Gordon notes that Israel worked to manage the population by raising living standards and sought to assimilate the population into Israeli, however after the Second Intifada it moved to a politics of 'death an repression'. For more see Neve Gordon *Israel's Occupation* (2008) pp 88-89.

disciplinary power at a different scale. Applied as a way to constitute Palestinians as a subject to the occupying power while not being a citizen of the state, Israeli bio-management of the OPT included the regulation of medical care, the welfare state and the economy, including the movement of goods, whilst diminishing Palestinian autonomy. Alongside sovereign power, including the use and distribution of a two-tier legal system that operates by distinguishing two different kinds of people, “Israeli citizens with full rights and non-Israeli citizens with no rights” (Zertal & Eldar, 2007: 368) further determined how Palestinians were seen or made visible.

With a rise in settlement activity in the withholding of political autonomy and worsening economy throughout the 1990s [in part the result of frequent border closures due to militant attacks by groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad but also due to Israel control over goods and resources such as water], the period that followed the Oslo Agreement did not provide the change it promised. Furthermore, the erasure of the Green Line for Israelis, through the ongoing development of transport and communication infrastructure in the West Bank, created a ‘liquid boundary’ (Weizmann, 2007) both in practice and psychologically. This disappearance of the Green Line ensured that Israeli Jews living within the West Bank began to see themselves as existing within a continuous and uninterrupted Israeli state. Moreover these populations in the settlements were subject to Israeli civil law, rather than the military law imposed by the occupation upon the land where they actually resided, further removing them from the Palestinian experience.

This process of removal, particularly in terms of the visual, was intensified during the Second Intifada, between 2000-2005. After a failed peace process, which for many saw resistance replaced by ‘peace-building’ (Allan, 2015), the Second Intifada reflected the frustration of the political breakdown between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and the intensification of Israeli settlement programs. Moreover, the influx of international NGOs post Oslo represented a euphemism for normalisation or reconciliation, stripping away the integrity of the nonviolent activism as an integral part of the wider sphere of resistance for

First Intifada activists. This perception is echoed by Amaney Jamal (2009: 68) who states that,

After Oslo, donors almost exclusively funded associations and projects that were linked to or supportive of the goals of the Accords. Funding for coexistence projects and people-to-people initiatives with the European Union alone contributing \$10million a year into organisations promoting dialogue and 'nonviolence', supporting an average of 15 programmes per year.

The suggestion here is that the focus on nonviolence shifted attention away from civic-based resistance and activism, to pacification and acceptance, which Norman (2010) suggests has been the lasting impact of the Oslo Accords and unified endeavours towards nonviolent resistance.

The violent uprising of the Second Intifada, in light of the above failures, afforded Israel the opportunity to further mobilize their argument for a definable and defensible border.²¹ Much like the 1967 Six Day War, Israel, it could be argued, was acting 'preemptively' when, in 2002, Israel's then Defence Minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer cut the ribbon on the first section of the separation barrier near the West Bank village of Salem. The separation barrier, Simon Faulkner argues (2012) has functioned as an effective and powerful image within the media-economy of the conflict. Although its concrete sections constitute only a portion of the barrier, which also includes a series of fences and gates, razor-wire, ditches and a military patrol road system that accounts for the vast majority of the 650kmm partition, it is the concrete aspect of the barrier that is often most photographed. Critical approaches to representing the separation barrier include work by the Israeli photographer, Miki Kratsman. In his 2003 photo entitled '*Abu Dis*', (Figure 13) Faulkner points to Kratsman's visual

²¹ In Michael Sorken's forward to his edited collection, *Against the Wall* (2005), Sorken notes Benjamin Netanyahu's letter to the New York Times (July 2004) where Netanyahu defends the 'security' aspect of the barrier, suggesting its removal would be 'cheered by the terrorists who would kill Israeli citizens'.

'comment' on the oppressiveness on the barrier through his framing and composition (Faulkner, 2012). Framed as it is, Kratsman draws attention to the length and depth of the barrier against the diminutive presence of the Palestinian woman. However, it is the materiality of the separation barrier that also limits the depth of the discussion related to the specifics of the occupation, often replacing much of the political tension of the region, thereby reducing the occupation down to a simple dispute over borders.



Figure 13: Abu Dis – separation barrier photographed by Miki Kratsman (2003)

Michael Sorken (2005: 5) describes how the separation barrier 'compresses Palestinian space along all axes, boxing Palestine in and allowing Israeli sovereignty to flow through it on every side... [supported] by a growing system of highway overpasses and underpasses that thread Israeli space above and below Palestinian territory'. Perhaps more critically, Gil Hochberg (2015) argues that the ambition of these processes is to 'not simply render Palestinians invisible to Israeli eyes but further render the very process of erasure invisible as well' (Hochberg, 2015: 18). The separation barrier, then, is just one aspect of a process that, since 2000, has gradually made the majority of Palestinians living

in the West Bank invisible to Israelis in and outside the West Bank. Since the 2005 disengagement from Gaza, the West Bank has become a 'parallel spatial and geopolitical reality within one geographical territorial space [managed by Israel] to keep Palestinians almost completely invisible to Israeli eyes, even as Israelis travel through the West Bank' (Hochberg, 2015: 18).

1.8 Visual Activism Post Second Intifada

Returning to my introductory example with the AWW at the separation barrier at Abu Dis in 2004, it was only two years after the first segment of the separation barrier was erected that visual activists had begun to challenge the barrier's assertive and dominant presence in terms of the visual and relational inequality it produces.

Unlike the critical tones of the graffiti that quickly filled up spaces on the barrier's façade, often close to sites of transit such as checkpoints, visual activists employed digital technologies and communication platforms such as the Internet and later, social media, to marshal the visual in service of a wider political effort. These efforts were attempts to raise questions about how to critique the various regimes of visibility in play, as well as expanding the boundaries of activism as intervention, as nonviolent resistance and as a creative practice that was flexible to change, engaging, communicative and distributable.

As I have outlined in my introduction, the effects of visibility are contingent upon the type of regime in which it is situated. Moreover, visibility is not homogenous. Varying registers of visibility, which I have referred to as regimes, differ from context to context and are managed through a host of thresholds formed around a number of political, military and social mechanisms. Thus, visual activism and those efforts that will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, ask questions pertaining to what is possible to see and how that visibility is constructed, knowing that each outcome is closely aligned with the distribution of power. These efforts, in the asymmetric context of a military and administrative occupation, where the relationship between politics and the distribution of sovereign power are negotiated on a daily basis, require visual activism to be flexible and responsive to these rapidly changing conditions.

To be flexible, engaging, communicative and distributable in this context attests to the multifaceted approach within which activism of this kind operates. Invisibility is, as I argue, built into the occupation as a form of control. Thus, those operating to challenge it must work at the margins of its visual field, intervening, repurposing and reevaluating the structures of control and the means of distribution, seeking to draw in a common gaze. In an effort to critically and artistically engage with aspects of political absence, visual activists ultimately seek to promote a widening of the space in which politics can be conceived, performed and represented. In this regard, visual activism also challenges what is largely recognized as the dominant field of vision. This too is part of the 'process' of visual activism.

As Activestills photographer Karen Manor said when we spoke in Tel-Aviv (Manor, 2013),

Of course the mainstream media in Israel give the public what they want. Basically the mainstream media is talking about the conflict from mainly one narrative, which is the Israeli narrative. This means that in most of the mainstream media channels you will only hear stories about Palestinians when it will be mostly related to issues of violence.²²

Established one year after the AWW event in 2005, the Activestills photography collective chose to operate outside the representational frame that largely shapes the political visibility of the occupation; working to challenge the prevailing representation that defines the Palestinian, as well as other peripheral communities²³ within popular Israeli visual culture such as print media and television. Since all that is made visible within the frame is often constituted by what is left out, framing is an exercise of state power, a power that actively

²² A sentiment that is shared on their website... Israeli public opinion is shaped, first and foremost, by the mainstream media, which is shifting to become more racist and violent. The impact of this shift is evident in increased public support for violent military operations, racist legislation, and discriminatory policies. We wish to challenge these changes with our work. Each time our photos are published, either in the mainstream media or in alternative channels, they convey messages that challenge oppression and bring the voices of the unheard into public discourse.

²³ The work of Activestills also documents African refugees in Israel, the LGBT community, squatters and animal rights activists.

excludes, often leaving the public to assume only one view of reality.

As activists advocating social change, Activestills recognizes the potential for mainstream media to ignore them; dooming them to invisibility and nonexistence or framing them negatively (Gitlin, 1980; McChesney, 1999). Thus, like any group wishing to broaden its reach, Activestills employ a variety of strategies that will enable them to circumvent, if necessary, governments, armies, corporations, or publics, through a skillful deployment of visual images (Mclagan, 2006: 192) while also wanting to broaden the limited or selective Israeli field of vision.

While the collective have a rich collection of images on their website, an archive which exceeds 20,000 photos uploaded from a range of events, the collective also produce public displays of their work in an effort to challenge the dominant visibility of Palestinians and other issues within Israel. These images are often pasted onto the streets of major Israeli cities, such as Tel-Aviv and Jaffa, then subsequently are ripped off the walls by angry Israelis (Figure 14) as a means of rejecting what is being presented to them. Invited to exhibit some photos at an academic conference entitled "*Visual Culture Between Obedience and Resistance*", held at the Shenker College of Engineering and Design in Israel during March 2014, (Figure 15) the exhibition was allegedly ripped down by students of the college, who responded by hanging a 'counter-exhibition' directly over the original images. In an effort to reposition the political and perceived emotional tone of the original exhibition, the counter images included Israeli soldiers crying and Israeli medics tending to injured children (Figure 16).



Figure 14: A defaced and 'rejected' Activestills street exhibition, Tel-Aviv 2007.



Figure 15: Original Activestills exhibition content at the Shenker College of Engineering and Design in Israel during March 2014.



Figure 16: Israeli student counter exhibition at the Shenker College of Engineering and Design in Israel during March 2014.

In 2015, Activestills used their website www.activestills.org to engage their website visitors to download a specific set of images from their website and create their own impromptu street exhibition, to draw attention to some of the 2,200 dead Palestinians as a result of the Israeli siege of 2014. Entitled #ObliteratedFamilies their website statement called...

Upon activists and persons of conscience to spread these photos in their communities by making available an exhibition kit including digital images ready to be printed. The exhibit features family photos of those killed and portraits of survivors. In return, we ask that you to send photos of the street exhibits, with the location so we can invite people to see it; and to put it on social media with the #ObliteratedFamilies.²⁴

Adopting social media in this way, as well as asking for their photos to be

²⁴ For a copy of the full statement and additional images, please see: http://activestills.org/node.php?node=exhibition_307

exhibited in any possible location, attests to the circuitry nature of social media as a platform to facilitate an extended visibility of a specific event. Working across multiple locations, both on and offline, the Activestills exhibited images on their website and also exhibited physically in a number of international locations. Thereafter images of the exhibited photos were reposted on the Activestills website,²⁵ creating a picture that contains another picture of a different kind, and thus re-frames or recontextualizes the inner picture as 'nested' inside of a larger, outer picture in what WJT Mitchell calls a metapicture; a picture that is used to reflect on the nature of pictures.²⁶ Finally, the images exhibited on the streets, as well as on the Activestills website, circulated on social media under the searchable and equally self-referential hashtag #ObliteratedFamilies.



Figure 17: An example of the pop-up #ObliteratedFamilies exhibition, as displayed on the Activestills website. This exhibition is in Boston, MA (USA) dated 14 July 2015.

Intervening into public space with images to disrupt the sensible, as well as

²⁵Image available here at: <http://www.activestills.org>

²⁶ WJT's fill interview and discussion met is available here: <http://www.visual-studies.com/interviews/mitchell.html>

utilizing the networked potential of new media technologies, is characteristic of the way visual activism is currently being adopted. However, one can also not imply a straightforward measure of 'effectiveness' with each of these events, or those that follow in the subsequent chapters. Nor do they have a 'clearly articulated end-goal and could be judged according to some rigid rubric of failure or success' (Wilson, 2015: 142). Rather, visual activism is, as I have suggested, a political process, often collaborative and in some senses, a performance. The performance, as a commonly associated theme through the thesis, is to articulate the complexity of Palestinian struggle. These performances are also two-way and as such, the collaborative aspect of visual activism is sometimes premised upon a reaction or a rebuttal to affirm the intentionality of the activist action. As a result, it is often not instantaneous, it might require time to be conceived and fully realised as a success, because, if not for anything else, it must first be recognised as an act. So while it might be technologically abetted it is not always immediate. For example, the pursuit of a specific Palestinian visibility that reflects their struggle and steadfast commitment to remaining on their land but also their claim for the right to have rights is not an easily conceived project.

As I will also outline, issues over representation and power are also determining factors to the success of visual activism. As I will note in Chapter Three, the issue over who has the right to represent whom is greatly problematic. Equally, visual activism does not always have to be resolved. As with each case, the act of visibility making is only one aspect of their on-going struggle. Nor, as I will detail, is it the most effective tool for drawing in the necessary attention, but again, if considered as a process, visual activism lends itself to being more than just the final outcome. As we shall see in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, the outcomes of collaborative, artistic and activist processes also have the potential for future impact or as a future document is testament to the struggle at the time which may be looked back upon as a contributing factor to a revised future history.

This thesis will explore visual activism across four individual and thematic chapters, knitting together an interrelated notion of how visibility is managed in relation to the structure and dynamic of the occupation within the OPT and Gaza. While it has been noted that the mode of control over Gaza since the Israeli

'Disengagement' of 2005 has been remote, rather than directly influenced by 'boots on the ground', the inclusion of a discussion of this territory, in Chapter Six, is justified as a means of comparison, and in light of the developments that transpired whilst I was writing this thesis throughout 2014.

In the next chapter, *Methodology and Fieldwork* I will address the theoretical and methodological approaches that have been applied to this research. These approaches will be reflected upon again in my final chapter where I will situate the processes used throughout this thesis within the broader framework of my conclusion as well as outlining their potential role for my future research. The second section, 'Fieldwork' reflects upon my method in relation to my fieldwork, which included a research trip to Israel/Palestine and a selection of interviews. In this regard, *Methodology and Fieldwork* are corresponding texts that can be read as an extension of this conceptual framework.

Chapter 2 - Methodology and Fieldwork Overview

The purpose of this section is to outline the research methods used throughout this thesis, including web archiving and the image/content analysis of specific visual material uploaded online, participant interviews, photo elicitation in addition to the methodological underpinning that framed how I approached my image analysis fieldwork findings. This will be followed by a discussion of my fieldwork; which was (mostly) conducted in Tel-Aviv, Greater Jerusalem and the West Bank in addition to interviews carried out online via Skype. This will be followed by a reflective written element (3:5) entitled '*Getting a Sense of the Space*' and an analysis of the field sites. The importance of this is to give the reader a sense of the space and variation in contexts in which the visual activism was conducted, as well as a better overview of the stratification of vision/space between Israelis, Palestinians and internationals on the ground. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of why Gaza was not chosen as fieldwork site.

While it should be stressed that my research was primarily focused on the analysis of images and video material online as a form of visibility making, the importance of visiting Israel and the West Bank, and encountering those contested spaces that are presented throughout my thesis, to see the context and better understand the fragmentation of space and vision, enriched my understanding of the activist process/practice. In the section sub-headed '*Getting a Sense of the Space*', I reflect upon the 'value and impact' of my experience as an outsider/observer, supplemented by a relatively unique perspective afforded to me through a specific position of privilege as the friend of a journalist. As a result, I was also able to make judgements on the aspects of the operational nature of the occupation, related to the spaces, people and contexts I encountered, in three specific ways. Firstly, at points, I was simply a tourist moving between borders, checkpoints and locations in a relatively inconspicuous fashion. Secondly, I moved between specific sites, locations and spoke to local Israelis and Palestinians as a researcher. Due in part to my ethnicity and education this presented limitations and advantages, as I will later expand upon.

Thirdly, Emily, my friend and host while in Jerusalem, was a Middle-Eastern news correspondent for a global news agency. This third dynamic opened up a new space through which I could consider and reflect upon the varying proximate relationships I had with the authorities, stratifying my vision vis-à-vis the mechanics of the occupation. However, I will begin with an overview of my desk research and specifically the process of being a 'web-historian' (Brügger, 2010).

2.1 The Wayback Machine – Internet Archiving and Web Decay

As the research and argument of Chapter Four addresses, the intention of my enquiry was to examine the use, function and content of the Bil'in village website as a visibility making and sustaining entity. By localizing, mapping and explaining the driving force behind the creation and development of the website. However, this process was not without its complications.

By undertaking an initial survey of the website, which had gone 'stale' since 2011, I worked through the image galleries, taking written notes and archiving a portion of the images as I worked through the multiple galleries and the thousands of images. This process was supplemented by an exploration of the design and development of the website since its inception in 2005. Framed as a small web history exercise, I sought to outline the developmental progress of the website over a six year period. Documenting unstable material, such as a website, in order to map its aesthetic characteristics is part of a new field of web archiving (Brügger, 2010) that is methodologically and theoretically underdeveloped. Similarly, web-historians, those who seek to archive, locate or retrieve digital data in the interest of future research, like myself, are operating without a defined toolkit. Lacking an established research infrastructure I set about exploring the website, conducting an initial survey of the images, looking for commonalities and themes, and categorising images and videos into thematic folders. However, such is the volatile nature of the web that after three years of inactivity, the Bil'in website disappeared without trace in late 2014.

With no retrievable data, I opted to explore the website through a web-archive tool. My approach was to seek out as much data as possible through the *Internet Archive Wayback Machine* - <http://archive.org/web/>. An open access program, the Internet Archive Tool is a non-profit web-based project that offers ‘permanent access for researchers, historians, scholars, people with disabilities, and the general public to historical collections that exist in digital format’.¹ Knowing that ‘no matter how an archived web document has been created, and no matter the archive in which it is found, web historians cannot expect it [the website] to be an identical copy on a 1:1 scale of what was actually on the web at that given time (Brügger, 2010: 6), I altered my approach. By using the Internet Archive Tool, I was only able to find a specific number of webpages related to the Bil’in website on specific dates in which the Web Archive Tool made a data capture (See Figure 18).

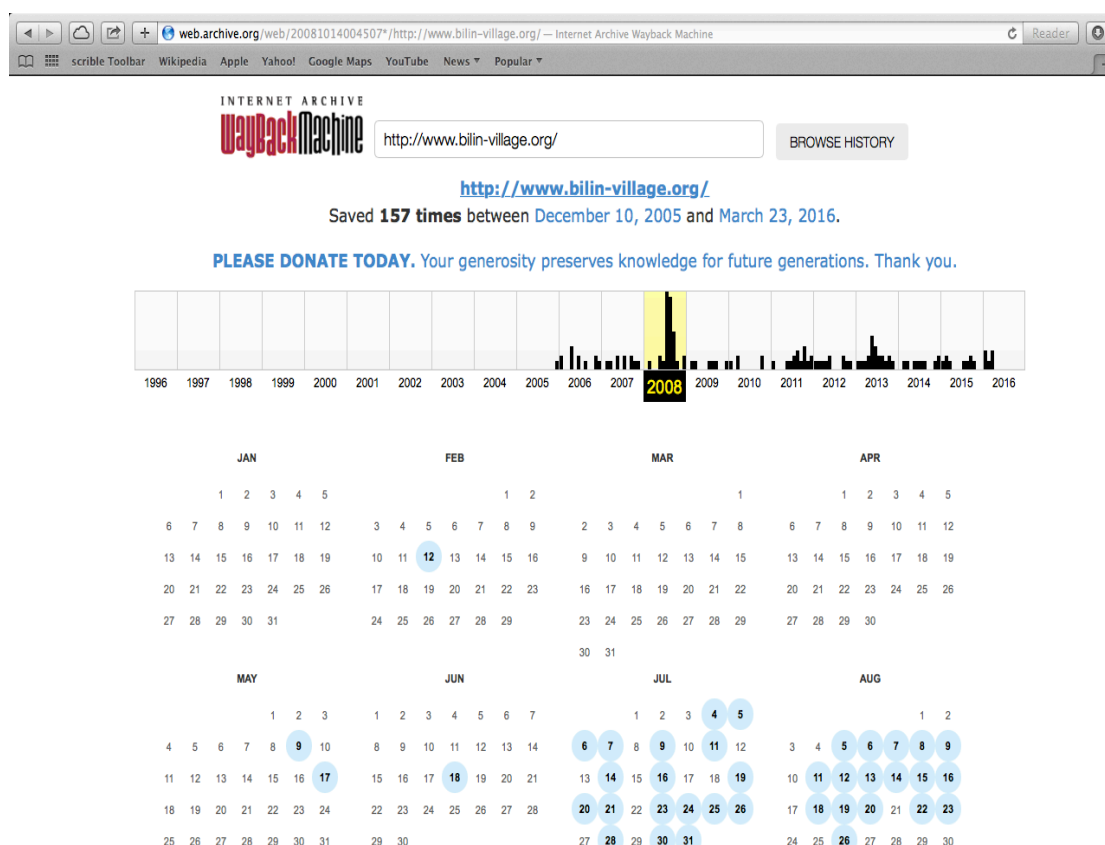


Figure 18: A sample of the data captures of the Bil’in website from 2008.

¹ More information about this tool can be found here: <https://archive.org/about/>

As shown in Figure 18, the archival tool made 157 unique data captures of the web link: <http://www.bilin-village.org/>, highlighted by the blue circles on the individually labelled calendar months. By using the Internet Archive Tool, I created a unique version of the page rather than a copy, as each pre-determined data capture is only a 'version' of the original. Thus, I approached these captures knowing that the retrievable data may not appear in the form it actually took on the web. Moreover, the problematic nature of web-archiving through a third-party tool is that the archived capture often produced deficient pages due to technical (soft and hardware) issues with the original website, or is unable to successfully retrieve data from a website that no longer existed. In these regards, the data was at best an 'impression' of the data and web design that was intended to be seen. For example, words, images, graphics and moving images were often missing, broken and non-functional. In this regard, the web-archive captured the HTML of the page, but not always the data embedded within as the process below outlines (Figure 19).

Example: data retrieval processes with deficient capture:

Sample: 'Conference 2006, one year of nonviolent resistance'

Data capture URL: <http://www.bilin-village.org/english/photos/>

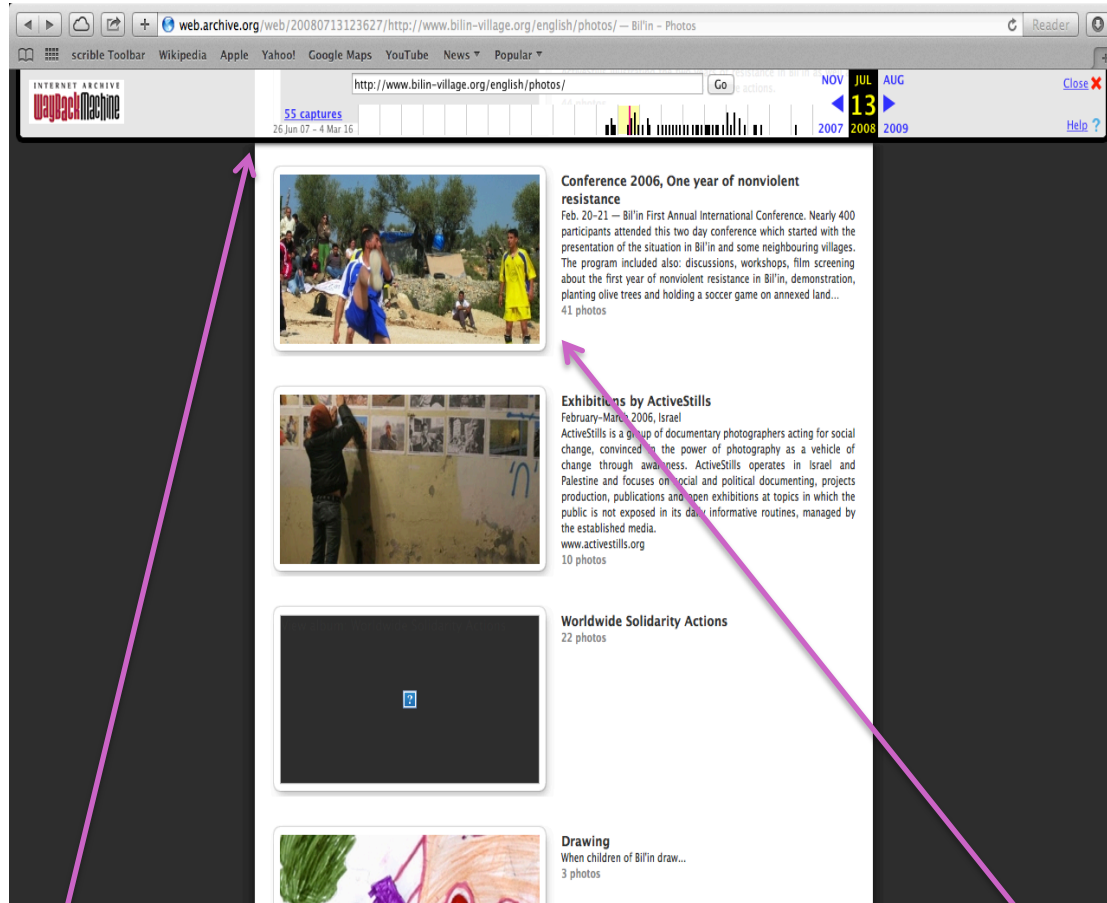


Figure 19: Sample Bil'in website data capture from 2008.

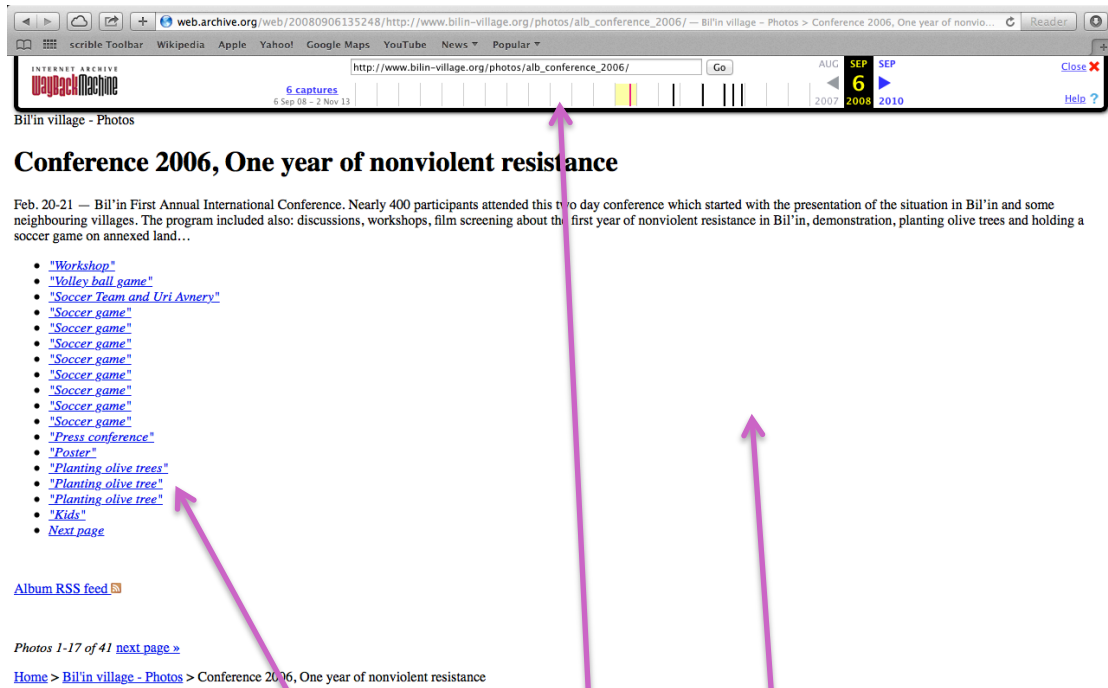
Step 1:

Sample date: 13 July 2008: Bil'in Village Photo Gallery accessed via the English language tab.

As noted at the top 55 data captures from 26 June 2007 – 4 March 2016

Step 2:

After I have identified which image gallery I want to explore, in this instance, 'Conference 2006, One Year of Nonviolent Resistance' at the top of the page I would click on the link as normal.

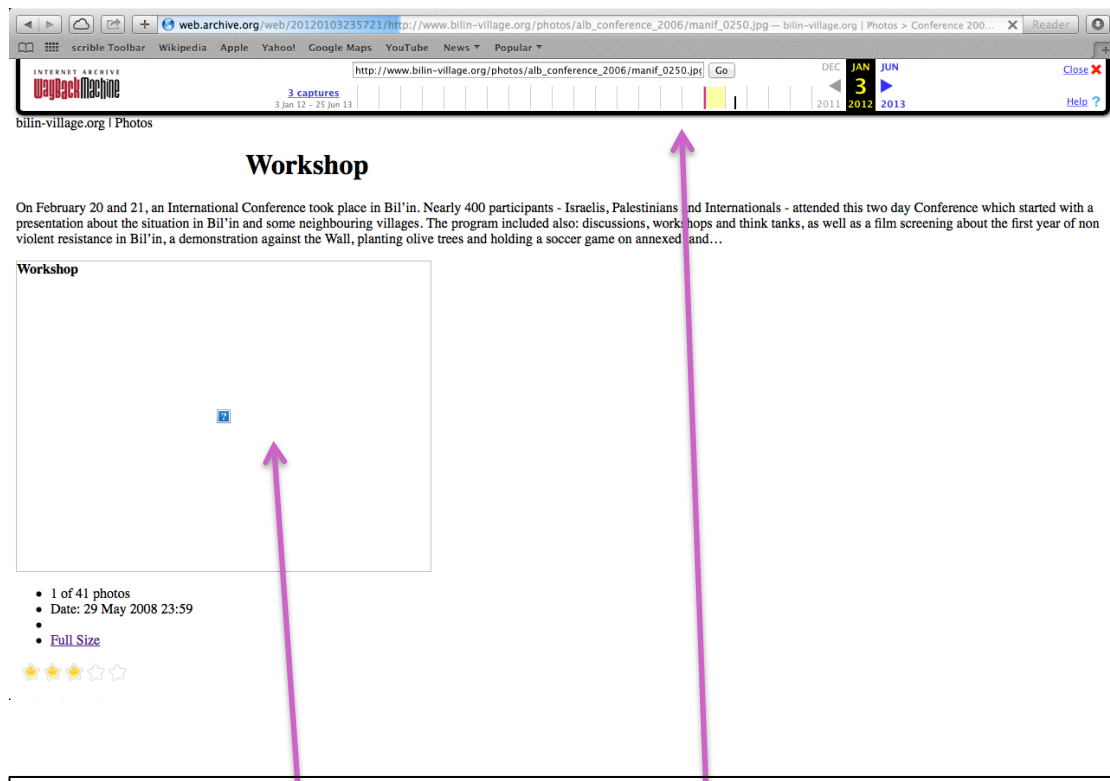


Step 3:
Rather than a gallery of images, as one might expect to see on an image-sharing platform such as Flickr, the image titles are presented in a list with a hyper link.

Step 4:
The website has changed from black to white indicating that some of the content, including colour, maybe text or images have been lost.

Step 5:
The website also displays that this specific page has been captured 6 times from **6 September 2008 to 2 November 2013**. Here we have an example of the unsystematic logic of the captures as evidenced by the time line and the variants in dates/captures

Figure 20: Sample Bil'in website data capture with data retrieval failures from 2008.



Step 6:
 Lastly, as was often the case at this point, when I clicked on the hyperlink the image was also irretrievable with even less attempted captures.

Figure 21: Sample Bil'in website data capture with data retrieval failures from 2008.

While this posed some issues in terms of content analysis, the methodological approach to my work on the website was by no means exhaustive. As such, the potential to go back to the website, and other similar sites linked to West Bank popular movements that have since disappeared. With many questions unanswered, such as why the website stopped being updated on 21 November 2011 and why other websites continued, however irregularly, there exists the potential to extend my fieldwork, drawing comparisons across a number of West Bank villages who share a common goal and challenge vis-à-vis the separation barrier and political visibility.

Despite the drawback of losing my primary source material and the limitations of the Internet Archive Tool, it still offered the opportunity to investigate a document that would otherwise be lost. Methodologically, the management of a web-archive is perhaps the most complicated aspect for media historians. Thus

the ability to make conclusive statements about publication dates was possibly the most challenging aspect, specifically when trying to make associations with events on the ground and the response by a website to publish, highlight or reflect on an event. For instance, newspaper historians list the newspapers in a collection, just as a radio or television historian does with the programmes s/he intends to study (Brügger 2010). When making a register of newspapers or television programmes it is easy to identify the date of publication as well as the start and stop time of a programme, however, with a register of websites the start and stop time as well as the interval between them are more complicated to determine in a clear-cut manner. Unlike newspapers and television programmes, websites do not often communicate the publication date, but rather they simply exist.

Yet with these issues in mind, I was able to pull together enough material to make a succinct and chronological study of the website's life and function. This ability to map the three phases of the homepage, the village's relationship with the international solidarity movement, and the shift from French language to English then multilingual provided me with the platform to view this surmise that the attention to the village via the Internet was significant and transnational. This shift was reflected in the development of photographic material and the content, which included international flags thus indicating a broader international presence that was mapped alongside the development of the Popular Committee's protest activity.

While the website was created in 2005, the same year YouTube invited us to "Broadcast Yourself", the means and methods for self-broadcasting have increased exponentially. Responding to the rise of accessible digital technologies, be that smart phones with the means of photographic production or the proliferation of cheap digital cameras, the development of networked mobile telecommunication devices, infrastructures, apps and platforms such as Yahoo's Flickr (2005) as well as social media sites including Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), Tumblr (2006) amongst others may have played a part, the fact that the website developed so broadly over the 5 year period, is very significant. Utilizing

the implicit functions of a website in comparison to social media, such as posting and archive news articles, the ability to upload field reports and outline their agenda, as well as the significance of having a recognizable domain name (something which is aligned with recognition) is, as I outline in the following chapter, worthy of continued examination.

2.2 Data Collection

The data collection was based on a mixed methods approach, including interviews, the image analysis of photo and video material uploaded to the Bil'in and Susiya websites, as well as content analysis concerning video uploads to YouTube. This was supplemented by my own participatory experience, that informed what Clifford Geertz (1977) would consider a 'thick description', enabling me to underpin my approach to Israel-Palestine through first-hand experiences, interpretations and 'meaning making' from my secondary research. This is best articulated in Chapter Three where my field notes are presented alongside a discussion of one of my own photographs to substantiate my argument. This approach is further elucidated by semi-structured interviews and a number of secondary contextualising literature. Moreover, the notion of a rich or 'thick' outcome was furthered through the use of photo elicitation with one photographer from Activstills, Keren Manor, reflecting on their own images or the images produced by activists as a result of their activism. This approach helped to generate additional modes of analysis through co-examination and reflection that in turn elicited greater knowledge and contextualisation.

In the following section, I explain the methods and approach taken for image analysis, specifically the categorisation process I employed, which in turn informed the content and trajectory of my semi-structured interviews in the field through forms of elicitation (Prosser, 1998; Pink, 2012; Harper, 2012; Gariglio, 2015). I will then discuss the interview process and resulting data analysis, my fieldwork analysis, experience and the potential for researcher influences. To conclude I will explain why I did not travel to Gaza.

2:3 Image Analysis and Categorisation

Knowing that visual images are never innocent, but are always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledge (Rose, 2012: 17), I approached my image selection and analysis with a consideration for the social and political practices that underpinned their existence as well as their presentation. Within this thesis, every image I have selected for analysis is politically and ideologically loaded by the context in which it is produced, the intention of its being and, as I will outline, its content, be that overt or otherwise. While I dealt with a host of images, namely photographs uploaded to specific websites, which were the focus of my attention, I also explored material uploaded to YouTube. Either raw video footage taken from a protest site or short, narrative based material with basic editing, these videos, addressed in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, did not require any additional coding as the sample/search/return was so specific and limited.

For example, typing the key words 'Palestine Avatar' into YouTube's search box produced 8 relatable videos, while 'Bil'in Avatar' produced 5. However, each search returned the same 2 videos, recorded live at the event of the Bil'in Avatar themed protest on the 12 February 2010, which I focus on in Chapter Four (Bil'in). The additional video material generated in both searches were either 'mash-up' style videos remixing the original footage with still images of Israeli violence, or Israeli produced news and current affairs responses to the event. While interesting as artefacts, the additional material did not fit with the scope of the research. The same simple search process was applied to Susiya Chapter Four and the Freedom Riders event in Chapter Five (Freedom Riders), using various permutations of key search terms. In both cases the related video material generated via the search was lower than ten unique uploads. Viewing figures, content analysis and an extended analysis related to the specifics of each case study and the broader themes of the thesis, can be found in their respective chapter.

While coding and categorisation was not necessary for my video analysis, an aspect of categorisation was employed for the study of a specific set of images discussed in Chapter 3, Susiya; the collaborative photography project between the female villagers of Susiya and a member of the Activestills photography collective, Keren Manor. Underpinned by a sociological enquiry as to how Israelis, and more broadly internationals, choose or are instructed, institutionally or otherwise, to see the occupation, the framework applied to each case study was to consider what society does to a specific community in addition to what a community of people do in a society and what their political or creative response is to this. As Pitor Sztompka (2015) notes, there is not much more to society than what people do, individually and collectively. And most of what they do is visible (2015: 4), but, as I suggest, it is not always seen or as obvious as one might suspect. This was no more evident than the case for Susiya.

The Susiyan female photography project was conceived as a participatory photography workshop. This social engagement tool resulted in the production of photographs which were a visual departure from much of the work typically produced and exhibited by Activestills on their website. This departure was also consistent from the additional material and subsequent outputs uploaded to the Susiya blog site. While I was aware of the village's precarious future I was unable to speak at length with the participants via the Internet prior to my field trip. Supported by only a small blurb on the Activestills website my desire to understand the images required a thematic categorisation analysis; organising the images and the data within into broader themes through the development of organisational and elementary categories (Maxwell, 2005: 97). According to Maxwell, organisational categories are 'anticipated topics' that function primarily as "bins" to sort and organise themes for further analysis (Maxwell, 2005: 97).

Applying this approach I printed the images from the Activestills website and placed them on my office wall (Figure 22). The images appeared on the Activestills website in no specific order and can be found within the Activestills archive under the title '*Women Documenting their Lives in Susiya*'. Once printed, I

then divided up the images, based on the basic denotative content within the frame. Following a conventional content analysis approach I categorized the images as follows: (1) sleeping (2) family inside (3) landscape (4) farming (5) women/domestic space (6) women/outside (7) children.

The value of this categorisation was to draw correlations between any visual data produced by the multiple women in an effort to identify themes, but also to situate my own external perspective of the cultural and social contexts/'discourses' in which the images were produced. In doing so, the categorization process, in addition to image analysis techniques (Rose, 2012; Harper, 2012), enabled me to look 'behind the pictures' rather than 'at or 'through' the pictures' (Wright, 2008).



Figure 22: Research process – Image categorisation. Photo by author (2012).

By and large, the images avoid any overly obvious acknowledgement of the occupation, such as the presence of the Israeli defense force (IDF), house

demolitions or settler attacks, motifs that are characteristic of photographs by Activestills or peace activist imagery; specifically in the region of Hebron.² Chosen by the women of the village, the images presented online represent 'their' visibility. Yet, rather than turning the camera onto the external attributes that shape their lives and threaten their wellbeing, such as the neighboring settlers or IDF patrols, the categorization suggested that the women focused on the domesticity of their lives, their children and their homes, denying any aspect of the occupation testimony.

2.4 Categorization, photo elicitation and holistic processes

Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview. The difference between interviews using images and text, and interviews using words alone, lies in the ways we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation (Harper, 2002: 13). As a process, elicitation is not simply a means of information extraction but also evokes a different kind of information. As Jon Prosser recognizes, 'images [can] provide researchers with a different order of data and, more importantly, an alternative to the way we have perceived data in the past' (Prosser 1998: 1). Photo elicitation was first adopted as a research technique, by John Collier at Cornell University, as a means to examine the environmental basis of psychological stress (Harper, 2002: 14). Collier and Collier (1967) were the first to outline photo elicitation as a research tool within interviews. Generally described as 'the use of photographs during the interview process' (Lapenta, 2011: 201); photo elicitation interviews can be designed as either an open-ended interview variation or a semi-structured interview (Gariglio, 2015) with the researcher, the subjects, or both being able to

² One such example, in addition to the photography work of Activestills, is the 'fieldwork' of Israeli NGO a Ta'ayush. An Israeli peace activist group, *Ta'ayush* (Partnership in Hebrew) do much of their supportive work with Palestinians in the field, helping them to safely harvest their crops or tend to their livestock. Their presence as Israelis is intended to act as a deterrent to settlers and the IDF attacks. Moreover, the peace group document their work with images and film, creating an archive of material that is largely representative of the images produced by activists and peace workers operating in Hebron. The Ta'ayush website can be accessed here: <http://www.taayush.org>

produce the images that are used in the interview. This approach is particularly useful as a means of producing 'thicker' (Geertz, 1973) research, specifically as a means of introducing new layers of data into the research framework.

Prior to interviewing Keren Manor, the lead photographer on the Susiya project, I revisited the images recognizing that 10 of the 33 images had connotative references to water (carrying, decanting or transfer of) that pointed towards the structural violence that blights the region.³

Other images within the collection, including group 5, 'women/domestic space', as well as group 6, 'women/outside', are consistent with vernacular, snapshot photography that is attributed to the documentation of the everyday life. However, through image analysis and categorization, the emphasis on water, its preservation and significance, is clearly marked by the actions adopted by the women within the frame (Figure 23) and also their surroundings (Figure 24).

³ See the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNWRA) website for full report on water shortages and sanitization issues across the West Bank – information accessible here: <http://www.unrwa.org/resources/about-unrwa/west-bank-wash-programme>



Figure 23: Villager decanting water, image courtesy of Activestills (2011).



Figure 24: Villager taking water from a well, images courtesy of Activestills (2011).

My point is that until I revisited the images anew, neither myself or the photographer from the photography collective who facilitated the workshops, really considered what Douglas Harper refers to as a ‘wider symbolic universe’ within an image, or a collection (Harper, 2012: 251). The photography project

was, for the women and the organizers, a way to exclude the occupation, if only momentarily. The project was not about confrontation, settler attackers or IDF patrols. However, when slippages between the intended focus of the frame and that which is intentionally excluded did appear within shot, they are framed from a distance, in a telling way that reiterates that the nature of the project was not about them but 'us'. By looking within the image the photographs helped to communicate revealing aspects of the occupation that are otherwise less visible and harder to communicate.

Throughout the interview process the images helped to co-construct knowledge and deepen the narrative analysis of the interview, which fed into a wider holistic approach to my research; specifically as I was able to 'connect statements and events within a context of a coherent whole' (Maxwell, 2005: 98). This approach, in addition to my other interviews, helped to identify connections between various narratives, unknown discussions and actions, further identifying the logic and intention of their ultimate presentation. This approach allowed for an examination of the 'already immersed' and 'always-already' capacity of the everyday (Gardiner, 2009 quoted in Pink 2012: 31) to be examined as a telling aspect of the occupation, even when the photographers did not intend it. In doing so, the holistic consideration of image analysis, interview notes and transcripts allowed for the emergence of connecting relationships within a very specific context that would otherwise be completely unknown.

2.5 Interviews

The data collection was based on a mixed methods approach including semi-structured interviews, participant observation and photo elicitation.

2.5.1 Interviewees

I conducted 3 interviews during my main fieldwork period of October 2013, with a number of informal follow-up interviews and off the record accounts during my time in Israel and the West Bank. I also conducted one formal recorded Skype interview in 2014, in addition to email exchanges with contacts and activists

over the course of my PhD research, specifically with the NGO The Village Group. In addition, I can draw contextual reference from two interviews, which were conducted either off record or later, and were at the request of the interviewees formally removed from this study. The interviews included (Appendix 1-3), in this thesis were with two men and one female participant, however this ratio does not reflect the gender participation of the case studies I examined. For example, the direct action outlined in Chapter 5 the Freedom Riders, was organised by the International Solidarity Movement co-founder, Huwaida Arraf. Aside from my Skype interview, one interview was conducted in the University of Bethlehem, within the West Bank, and the other in Tel-Aviv in accordance with the location and the restrictions on movement for one of my participants.

2.5.2 The Interview process:

The interviews began with a verbal agreement that they could be recorded with a voice recorder and that I could make notes throughout, with the transcriptions used for research and publication. 3 of my 5 formal interviewees agreed to this and have been used accordingly. As such, they acknowledge the possible risk they might face from Israeli security officials seeking to minimise resistance activities, incriminate those interviewed for previous activities, potential loss of jobs based on political points of view that may not be representative of their employer. Each interview was also pre-organised, often over the Internet or via telephone conversation once I was in Israel/Palestine. As such, the context and nature of my research was established long before the interview process was conducted. As a formality, when I met the participant I reiterated my intentions and their voluntary participation stating that they could end the interview at any time they so wished.

Every interview was conducted in English with all recordings transcribed verbatim. Some exceptions in the text exist where changes are made to improve comprehension, this is specifically the case for quotes applied within the body of the research. Within the appendix these structural errors are kept for authenticity as well as aspects of the transcription where comments are

inaudible or unclear. Rough transcriptions were made as soon as possible, usually within the same day to ensure interviewee statements and interviewer observations were as accurate as possible. As all were recorded, I went back over these transcriptions a number of times, specifically for the longer transcriptions.

Due to the nature of each interviewee's specific experiences, each interview was non-standardised. Thus, while I established the focus of the interview, the actual order and content of the question remained flexible, and in some cases, left unasked while other questions or points of discussion emerged during the interview. In accordance with this model I pre-prepared a set of questions for each interview, but the content, wording and variation of enquiry with the question changed in accordance to way the interview was conducted. This was specifically pertinent with my use of the word 'visibility' in my interview with Mazin Qumsiyeh, whereby I opted to change the wording and trajectory of my enquiry in an effort to reduce linguistic barriers.

The nature of a semi-structured interview is useful for understanding the individual experiences of each interviewee, while allowing them to expand and develop pertinent themes freely. This approach also allows the researcher to take a holistic approach, as noted above, enabling one to make comparisons and generalisations between themes, events and processes. In this instance this related to Israeli processes (military or administrative), in their efforts to deny visibility, or its subversive potential as well as allowing me to gain a better understanding of the conditions of Palestinian life living under occupation. Defined by its conversational nature, this also helped to establish a positive rapport between the interviewee and myself that fostered a safe space for the discussion of politics, activism and emotion. For example, when interviewing David Lister from the Village Group the dynamic between interviewee and interviewer allowed for a broad discussion over 2 hours in length on a range of interrelated topics. The option to not standardise provided a diversity that reflected the participants and suited the breath of the study. I welcomed lengthy discussions and felt it was desirable to create a comfortable, conversational dynamic given the nature of my enquiry.

2.6 Data Analysis

2.6.1 Qualitative data analysis – categorization processes

Reviewing, re-reading and organising my data, in terms of organising my rough notes and transcribing my field notes, was the first step in my analysis towards developing ideas about relationships and trends in the data; much in the same way I used Maxwell's (2005) notion of 'data bins'. Reviewing my interviews, outlining categorised themes, as well as holistic themes, that unfolded from the semi-structured process helped me to draw links between actions and processes. Thus, both Manor and Qumsiyeh noted the relationship with the Israeli public 'blindness' to the conditions of the occupation. Moreover, both interviewees also affirmed how the visibility of the occupation, when it is made visible, is often embedded in broader hegemonic discourses and power struggles. As Manor noted, 'much of what is produced in the Israeli press is often always framed within a security discourse'. Linking this idea to Gil Hochberg's notion of 'concealment' and the relationship with the discourse of power and the struggles that it represents within an Israeli-Palestinian context helped me to think about Zygmunt Bauman's contention that,

'blindness is induced and contrived... through the institutionalization of the distinction between socially described strategies, deployed respectively in the treatment of those named by law, and for those for whom the law keeps silent' (2002: 203)

Thus, by highlighting a set of key words throughout my interviews (and noted from informal discussions, which I will highlight below) I was able to reliably assert connections between my interviewees, the intentionality of their actions and the conditions to which they opposed.

2.7 Field Work - Getting a sense of the space

While the majority of my research was conducted online, examining websites and the visual material that the anti-occupation activists produced and uploaded to the Internet, I also visited Israel and the West Bank to interview those who participated or organised the events. Through these interviews I was able to gather further data and achieved a greater sense of contextualisation. In addition, I took this opportunity to allow myself to get a better sense of the geography that these practices are linked to or respond to. While my thesis is not ethnographic and anthropological, I felt the need to have some degree of the understanding of the organisation of space between Israel and the West Bank in addition to seeing how space is also organised *within* the West Bank. By traversing it I feel I now have a better understanding of how the visual representations of those spaces actually function or should be read in a way that I could not get if I had not been. Thus, during my fieldwork I spent a great deal of time observing, making field notes and taking photos. While photography is subjective, the photographic and first hand accounts that supplement this research are intended to serve as complements, helping to narrate and depict the prosaic detail of everyday life under occupation as best I could from an outsider perspective.

What was difficult to express in words is, as Inglis (2005) suggests, the taken-for-grantedness of the everyday or the embodied dispositions placed beyond the grasp of consciousness (Bourdieu, 2000: 94). By experiencing the space I was able to better 'see' the intention of each case study. Moreover, my experience within these spaces, specifically the West Bank, enabled me to see the dynamics of power between Israelis and Palestinians; allowing me to better understand how this disproportionate power shapes how and what can be seen. This is best articulated in my opening statement in Chapter 3: '*Susiya - Field Notes*' where the generally known conditions are always visible but rarely recognized because of their ubiquity and routine - this is, I argue, part of the trap of visibility. By using photography to supplement my fieldwork, my images and writing were part of my holistic approach to research (see Figure 25).

This experience was also enhanced by a 'third dynamic' that afforded a varying proximate relationship to what I had already seen, as a tourist/un-aided researcher. During my stay in Israel/Palestine my travel experience consisted of moving between Israel and the OPT by bus, in order to experience the routes and also the checkpoints, or between Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv by sherut (Israeli shared taxi) where I had many candid conversations. During my stay in Jerusalem I was fortunate to have a friend (Emily) who worked for a global news network, thus, in addition to the travel mentioned above, I did, when possible, travel with Emily. Moving between Jerusalem and various other locations, crossing checkpoints, meeting other journalists, NGOs and HRO workers, as a person of privilege with others of privilege, enabled me to see and gain a useful insight into how and what is 'made' visible. Moreover, I was able to experience how checkpoints procedures can be eased or further complicated by this privileged status.

I cannot make a claim to know exactly how the various people I met responded to my background or identity, though these attributes do require reflection. In this section I will conclude by reflecting on three notable aspects of my identity that could have influenced the shape of my research: that I am a person of privilege, that I am an outsider and my appearance.

Throughout my time researching this subject I was frequently asked, "have you been to Israel [or] Palestine?" Often these comments were subtle ways of questioning the validity of my statements and the depth of my research. These questions arose in a number of contexts, either in academic conferences or in social conversations. Thus, it was telling that when I arrived to do my fieldwork, speaking to the interviewees, friends, or with those with whom I found myself in polite conversation with, I was often told, "well now you are here, you can see it for yourself". 'It' varied from person to person, ideologically loaded or politically framed, my position as an outsider with a perceived privileged status meant that I might have been presented with impressions as much as I was presented with information or knowledge.



Figure 25: Fieldwork: walking towards an Israeli checkpoint within the West Bank. Photo by Author (2013).

Being an outsider, with no direct ties to Israel or Palestine, had both a negative and positive effect. One on hand, I recognise that as an outsider I may have been given information that I wanted to hear, or presented with narratives that people may have seemingly thought would meet my expectations (Bishara, 2012), or

that I was seen as an addressee who should be told certain kinds of things such as the national position or conversely the perspective of just one community and their specific struggle. Equally, while I did not overtly claim objectivity, my outsider identity may have allowed those who I met to feel comfortable with eliciting a more honest response.

In addition to my status as an outsider, both nationally and religiously, my position as researcher enabled me to move between spaces with a relative freedom that others might have not. Thus, no matter how much I may have tried to immerse myself into a situation, as an international I also knew I could always leave, or that I had a 'secure' place to return to. This sense of privilege was always with me, particularly in the OPT. As such, I felt then, as I do now, that I can never truly 'see "it" for myself'. While I could walk through checkpoints with relative ease, and move between cities and borders, to be able to talk with soldiers, to be knowingly at ease with Palestinians and Israelis, my outsider status, specifically my appearance as a white, European male, was also problematic. While my position as a well-educated European allowed me to access to varied individuals and events, it also put me in a different socioeconomic position from some of those I met and spoke with, which in turn may have affected the dynamic of the meeting.

2.8 Field sites in Israel

2.8.1 Jerusalem

According to UN data the population of Jerusalem is approximately 809,122⁴ of which 64% are Jewish and 'non-Arab' which includes Christians with the remaining 36% Palestinian Muslim. Between 1949 and 1967 the city was divided, with West Jerusalem, the capital of Israel and East Jerusalem belonging to Jordan. Gaining control over East Jerusalem during the 'Six Day War', Israel

⁴Data taken from the UN statistical database for populations. Website accessible here: <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode%3A240> Ddate accessed 15/07/2014

claimed sovereignty over the East of the city and immediately annexed the land. In 1980 the Israeli Knesset declared Jerusalem the 'complete and unified' capital of Israel. This declaration prompted many of the foreign embassies to relocate to Tel-Aviv, the de facto capital. The current status of Jerusalem is still undecided. The ultimate breakdown of the Oslo Accords in 2000, and the failure of the Camp David Summit, left the road map to peace and any potential future agreement over Jerusalem in doubt.

The daily life of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem differs from that of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Regarding their legal status "most Palestinians living in Jerusalem hold the same status of "permanent resident" of the state of Israel, which is the same status given to immigrants to Israel, and is distinct from citizenship" (Norman, 2010: 131). These Palestinians face fewer issues when compared to Palestinians within the West Bank, specifically in terms of freedom of movement. However, rising tension within Israel, specifically since 2014 as I will address in Chapter Six has affected Palestinians within the Green Line. The increase in political tensions has led to a restriction on their movement, house demolitions by Israeli authorities amongst a growing culture of tit-for-tat attacks between some Palestinians and right wing Israelis.

Jerusalem was my base while conducting my fieldwork. I lived in the affluent German quarter, a predominately Jewish suburb of the city, which prior to the 1948 Al-Nakba, Palestinian expulsion, was predominantly an Arab district. Whilst there I had many informal discussions with residents curious to my presence in the local cafés. This base was a transit point for my travels to and from different cities in Israel and the West Bank. Due to the close proximity to Jerusalem bus station I often walked to the city and used the East Jerusalem buses to travel between Bethlehem and Ramallah, here I would find other services and share taxis to travel beyond these destinations, including my attempted journey to Susiya. Using communal services enabled me to interact on a daily basis with both mainstream Israelis and Palestinians. This interaction, in Jerusalem cafés, the regular bus trips in and out of the West Bank, passing through checkpoints, meeting students at Bethlehem University whilst visiting

Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh, attending his lecture with international students from Norway and taking taxis once inside the West Bank, were all useful aspects of engagement that fed into my experiences.

2.8.2 Tel-Aviv

A cosmopolitan and densely populated city, Tel-Aviv is architecturally and culturally removed from the slower and more conservative city space of Jerusalem. A Mediterranean coastal city and port, it sits north of Gaza and the majority Arab city of Jaffa. Tel-Aviv is a relatively new city, built by Jewish immigrants at the turn of the 20th century as an extension of Jaffa. Critically, Sharon Rothbard has described how, after 1948 and the birth of Israel, Tel-Aviv pushed anything unwanted into Jaffa, the shadow city that it was born from. Described in her book as the 'Black City', Rothbard (2015) explains how the slow violence of architecture, which Eyal Weizman (2007) refers to as 'frontier architecture', has been a commonly attributed process of the occupation. Whence space, topography and buildings have slowly governed the dynamics of power and control, Sharon Rothbard (2015) notes that Tel-Aviv's whiteness came at a cost to Jaffa, where everything unwanted in the 'white city' was relegated to the Black...

Garbage dumps, sewage pipes, high voltage transformers, towing lots and overcrowded central bus stations; noise and air pollution factories and small industries; illegal establishments like brothels, casinos and sex shops; unwelcoming and intimidating public institutions such as the police headquarters, jails, pathological institutes and methadone clinics; and finally, a complete ragtag of municipal outcasts and social pariahs — new immigrants, foreign workers, drug addicts and the homeless.

I include this excerpt here, because as I moved around Tel-Aviv, my field notes and photography reflected this gentrification, however, close to the bus station where I often operated from, once could see the unseen, the pariahs and outcasts, which has become known as 'foreigner land'. As an interview originally

published in Hebrew (26/09/2015) on Haokets,⁵ a website dedicated to providing critically orientated discussions on Israeli culture, and republished on the online political blog, +972 (11/11/2014) one resident close to the bus station stated that,

Countless times, I've heard: 'there are no residents there, only foreigners.' And I try with all my might to show that I was born there and still live there, and there are thousands like me. *Why can't you see us?!* (Emphasis added). Our existence there as residents and old-timers there is wiped out in one fell swoop, and the migrant workers and asylum seekers have "gained" notoriety as foreigners.⁶

This quote underpins the social dynamic of visibility, particularly in Tel-Aviv, as I argue in Chapter Five. As the resident claims, they 'can't be seen' because of the duality between the management of vision and geography. During my time in Tel-Aviv, where I interviewed Activestills photographer and activist, Keren Manor, in a café close to Habimi Square, this division of culture vis-à-vis space became a subject of our discussion and a telling aspect of how the politics of separation is manifest in a number of ways.

2.9 The West Bank

The population of the West Bank is routinely contested, with figures varying from 1.5 million to 2.5 million depending on the source and the political and ideological position of the report.⁷ Located to the east of Israel, the West Bank is considered an occupied territory under international law and is regulated by Israeli maintained checkpoints and border controls. A richly diverse area, the de

⁵ <http://www.haokets.org/2014/09/26/אחוריו-הצרות-אביב-תל-ודרום-חולות-מתקן/>

⁶ <https://972mag.com/israels-backyards-first-south-tel-aviv-then-holot/98664/>

⁷ Article originally published for the Israeli daily newspaper, Ha'aretz (30 Jun 2013). Accessible web link here: <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.532703> Date accessed 14 Jan 2016.

facto capital is Ramallah, considered to be the cultural hub of the territory and the home of the Fatah run Palestinian Authority. My travels within the West Bank ranged from the Southern Hebron Hills and as far north as Nablus, with Jericho being the only other major city I did not visit.

Each city I visited within the West Bank has its own unique character. Much of my time was principally spent between Bethlehem (10 Kilometres distance from Jerusalem) and Hebron (29 kilometres). In comparison to the perceived hubris of Ramallah, both Bethlehem and Hebron were far more subdued.

2.9.1 Bethlehem

Areas near to the universities and the Old City, close to the Nativity Square, were busy with a raft of international visitors making use of the local gift shops. However, elsewhere in the city, particularly the areas close to the development of the separation barrier by Rachel's Tomb checkpoint, many shops were empty or closed. The construction of the separation barrier in the early period of the Second Intifada affected many workers, cutting them off from their jobs, students from their studies and farmers from their land. Thus much criticism has been aimed at the route and placement of the barrier. As part of my fieldwork I spent a portion of my time exploring the spatial configurations of the barrier and examining the seemingly illogical route (see Figure 26).



Figure 26: Photograph of the illogical route of the separation barrier. Photo by Author (2013).

Many critical texts have already discussed the impact of the barrier, specifically as a form of land appropriation (Weizman, 2007) or as a mode of economic violence (Azoulay & Ophir, 2005). The necessity to see the barrier, to experience its materiality and scale and to document it (Faulkner, 2012) fed into my efforts to better understand the conditions of the occupation, spatially, and visually, including the multiple mechanisms that shape and control vision.

This was most telling as I walked the route of the barrier from within Bethlehem and observed the barrier from the Israeli side. Once outside Bethlehem it is clear that one specific function of the barrier is, like Gilo, to screen off that which is on the other side whilst leaving an unspoilt rural vista beyond the barrier's limits (see image 28). Blocking any view of Palestinian existence, like a screen from within Bethlehem, the separation barrier diminishes the privilege of space, light and visibility for those that it impedes while at the same time extending the

inequality of Israeli military vision within the enclosed West Bank space (see Figure 27).



Figure 27: The close proximity of the barrier to Palestinian homes. Figure 28 shows an image of the same portion of the barrier from the other side. The barrier blocks light and space while at the same time, a watchtower overlooks the property too. Photo by Author (2013).



Figure 28: Photograph of the vast Palestinian landscape from within the Green Line and the separation barrier in the distance. To the left of the frame, just above the barrier we can see Palestinian homes immediately next to the barrier (see Figure 27). Photo by Author (2013).

2.9.2 Hebron

My first visit to Hebron was as part of a prearranged guided tour of the city by a Palestinian tour operator. Located in the south of the West Bank, Hebron faces significant economic and political challenges due to its administrative status, but also as a consequence of the radical settler population that occupies the centre of the Old City and the resultant IDF forces.

Under the Oslo Accords, Hebron was partitioned into two zones, the first zone H1 accounts for 80% of the city. H1 is home to 120,000 Palestinians and is controlled by the Palestinian Authority. The second zone is H2, which is completely under Israeli control. H2 occupies the remaining 20% of Hebron and is home to about 700 Jewish settlers and 32,000 Palestinians. Encircling the holy sites in the centre of the old city, H2 stretches out to the eastern edge of the city limit, linking up to series of Jewish settlements. A visibly divided city, H2 showcases the stark reality of military domination, including checkpoints,

barriers, concrete blocks, watchtowers, army bases and segregated roads. Nowhere was this more visible than on Al-Shuhada Street (Figure 29).



Figure 29 Al-Shuhada Street in Hebron. Closed by the Israelis since 1995, the economic effect of the closure has been vast. To the right of the frame are shops, which have not been open since the military closure. Photo by author (2013).

Closed to Palestinians since 1995, after the Palestinian riots following the Cave of Patriarchs massacre by American-Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein, the minority settler population exert a disproportionate influence, as will be discussed in chapter 5. This settler influence is exercised as a result of the remote status of the settlement to mainstream Israeli society and the highly charged religious value of the site within Jewish culture. Consequently, my time there was spent documenting these ‘third spaces’. Like my time in Bethlehem, my days spent in Hebron enabled me to further build links between my interviews and observations within specific spaces that fed into my holistic, participatory approach. Moreover, taking photos allowed me to return to these locations when transcribing my interviews and reading my field notes.

Against the geography of stable, static places and the fixed sovereign borders I had visited prior to Hebron, e.g. Tel-Aviv, Ramallah, exist deeply penetrative

frontiers and elastic territories that can only be understood when they are witnessed and considered. These temporary lines are often marked by makeshift boundaries (Weizman, 2007). Such boundaries are not limited to the edge of political space; instead they blur the distinction between what is 'inside' and 'outside', or 'us' and 'them'. Hebron reflected this more than anywhere else. Like a 'frontier', its distance from Tel-Aviv, geographically and visually produces a psychological distancing that removes Israelis from the reality of the occupation (Faulkner, 2009; Struk, 2011).

As a British citizen I was afforded the opportunity to explore this makeshift boundary; I was both inside and outside at the same time while loitering skeptically on the boundary (Eagleton, 2004: 40). Revisiting the photo (Figure. 30) I could sense the atmosphere, more specifically a friction that is not overtly evident in the first instance. A definition of friction is 'the resistance that one surface or object encounters when moving over another' (OED, 2012). As I looked back upon these images and notes, the friction became more evident in the detail of everyday forms of resistance that had perhaps presented itself maybe only hours before.

Stones on the ground, pitted dints on the cabin and pink paint splashed against the window all testify to the friction of one sovereign object moving over the surface of another (Figure 30). Two Israeli flags bookend the cabin and lay claim to the contested space, the coil of barbed wire and improvised fence discreetly attest to its volatile nature.



Figure 30: Israeli checkpoint in the heart of Hebron, closing off access to a portion of the Old City. Photo by Author (2013).

2.10 Gaza

Gaza was not included for a number of reasons. Firstly, the initial remit of my research was to only consider ‘occupied territories’ of East Jerusalem and the West Bank. However, after the 2014 military incursion into the strip, a number of artistic responses and activist orientated efforts to make the scale of the destruction visible prompted reconsideration. While working on the thesis, and specifically at the time of my fieldwork, I had also anticipated logistical issues regarding entry. At the time of my fieldwork, access to Gaza was limited to international journalists and humanitarian workers, attainable via special permits issued by the Israeli government.

Secondly, while it was not initially on my research agenda, the conflict dynamics in Gaza, in terms of the relationship with Israel as well as internally, amongst Hamas and Fatah, were particularly fraught with the intensified fractional fighting and the ultimate expulsion of Fatah forces by Hamas in 2007 still an on-going issue.

The next chapter is the first case study of this thesis. Focusing on the Bedouin village of Susiya, I will open the discussion with a reflection on an aspect of my fieldwork undertaken in 2013 and a failed attempt to reach the village. The failure to reach the village reflects the division of inequality within the West Bank and is a metaphor for the ongoing Palestinian struggle on their land, but also to be seen, internationally while Israeli efforts, however incongruous, disrupt vision on a daily basis. Thereafter I will examine a range of visibility making efforts by a host of HROs and NGOs in the wake of a demolition order against all the structures in the village.

Chapter 3: Case Study 1: The Unrecognised Palestinian Village of Susiya



Figure 31: Photography of a seemingly impromptu settler picnic, which caused a road closure. Photo by Author (2013).

It is October and the beginning of the olive harvest season. I know this because my driver encourages me to take in the heavy smell of oil that hangs in the air as we whistled through the Hebron Hills. The largely arid landscape is peppered with greenery and from time to time I spot farmers in their fields tending to their land. Wanting to get a better sense of the geography of the West Bank I set out to the village of Susiya. The village, which is the focus of this chapter, is an isolated Bedouin community. Around 400 people from 45 shepherd and farming families currently live in these hills and have done so since the late 19th century. As I drove from Bethlehem towards Hebron and beyond I could sense their isolation, the impression of remoteness became more apparent. The image above (Figure 31) was taken from the car as we were waved back the way we came. The road was closed due to a seemingly impromptu settler picnic. Eight Jewish settlers,

four women, three men and a child sit at the junction with the Susiyan hills just beyond the horizon. In the background an IDF soldier can be seen, while out of frame a military patrol sits directly opposite the gathering. I never got to visit Susiya. By stopping me from seeing Susiya, this example raises the issue about the control of the field of vision in relation to the occupied West Bank. The makeshift blue canopy is representative of the logic and thrust of the extremist settler movement within the West Bank. Sitting by the roadside, drinking water with only symbols of their nationalism for decoration, the appropriation of the space appears ad hoc and hastily constructed. The location is also not the most scenic. Situated next to a dusty Palestinian road below a key access route to the Southern Hebron Hills, their small numbers, matched by the military presence struck me as an act of deliberate disruption of potential Palestinian movement.

The act recorded in the photograph has an ephemeral nature. The picnic will have been a short-lived event that is unlikely to have had any lasting effect on the space within the frame of the photograph because eventually the road will have been reopened and 'normality' restored. Yet the photograph does not overtly represent the closing down of roads and denial of non-Israeli movement. The visual record is by necessity, one of fragmentation and trace (Harriman, 2012). In this sense, the photograph fails in its expected capacity as a truth-telling tool. Seen as one aspect of a greater whole of representational practices within the West Bank and specifically in the case of Susiya, this photograph can be considered within a wider body of image making that draws out how Israeli settlers operate under an extreme condition of inequality between occupied and occupier that shapes the sensible environment between those with rights for those who are without. This system of military partitioning and administration includes its own conditions of visibility. Denying my gaze and asking me to 'move along' maintains the unequal control over space whilst also being explained away as an insignificant and ordinary event. Such conditions are hard to make visible with any sense of immediacy in relation to their effect. This act of disruption and spatial control prioritises a few over many and is symptomatic of the closing down of space around the village. Such acts of the closing down of space have prompted communities in the West Bank to make use of the Internet

as a communicative platform with the potential to bypass the authoritative command on the ground to 'move along'. To think about the efforts that have been made to render the Palestinian village of Susiya visible, I will elucidate a set of interrelated, on and offline practices by the villagers and anti-occupation activists where the ultimate goal was to ensure the villagers remained on their land.

3.1 Introduction

You learn from the images more than you do the movies. You are not trying to sell anything, its not selling emotions, or looking for support, the images speak and the quality doesn't matter, because it's not trying to sell Susiya.

David Lister - Village Group member (2014)

In the summer of 2011, a group of 40 women from Susiya documented their lives as part of a participatory photography project in collaboration with two professional photographers: Keren Manor from the Israel/Palestinebased photography collective ActiveStills and German documentary photographer Mareike Lauken. The collaboration resulted in an unspecified amount of photographs, of which 46 were subsequently displayed on the ActiveStills website in 2014 as shown in Figure 32.

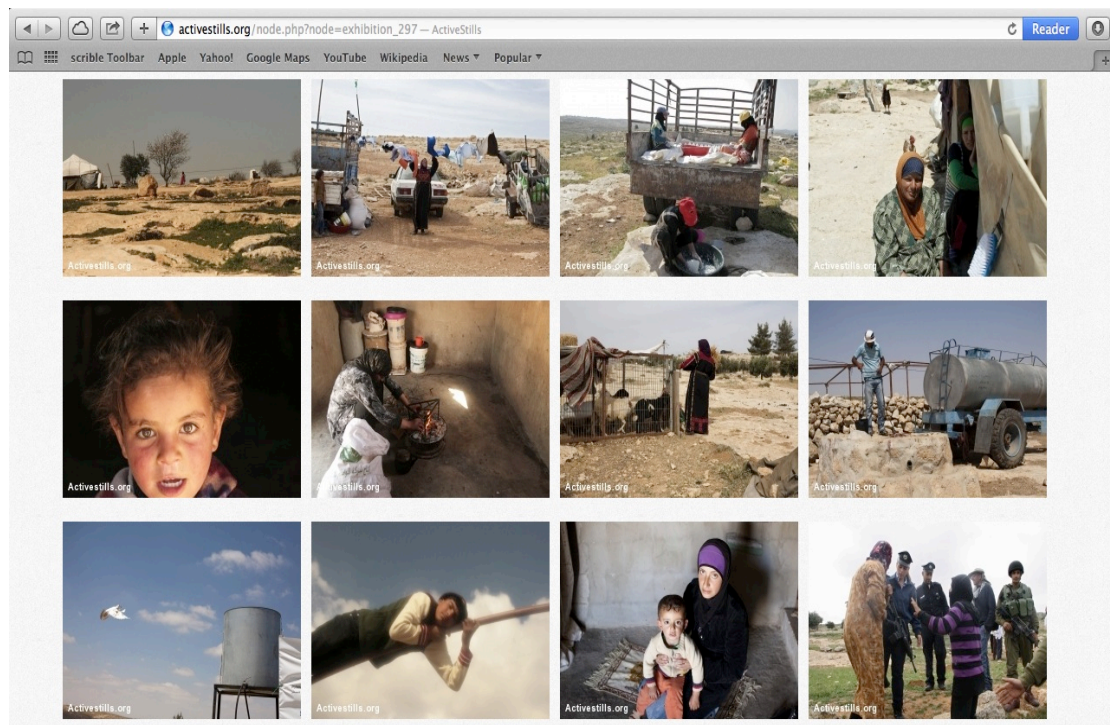


Figure 32: Screen grab from the ActiveStills website of the Susiya photography collection – accessed March 2014.

This project was one aspect of a yearlong initiative that sought to strengthen Susiya as a community and to develop links between the village and international visitors. Throughout the summer months the professional photographers held one-to-one photography tutorials with each female participant from the village. Working with the photographers, the women learnt how to use cameras to tell the stories of their daily lives in a small village, repeatedly under threat of demolition and surrounded by Jewish settlements, as well as the ever-present Israeli army.

The participatory photography project, along with other activities were coordinated by an Israeli humanitarian collective *The Village Group*. The group sought to bring an assembly of creative practitioners including photographers, craft-makers, poets and educators to the village throughout the year in an effort to help the villagers to continue to exist in their current location because of the threat of demolition. The Village Group had operated in the West Bank region since 2002, working, over time, to slowly build trust and relations with a number of villages. According to the Village Group blog, their practice is based on

developing a ‘concerted and holistic relationship’ with Palestinian communities, specifically disconnected and remote communities like Susiya; with whom they began working in 2009.

Originating from a loose grouping of twelve Israeli volunteers with a varying range of humanitarian experience, the Village Group, as they later become known, came into being as a ‘moral objection to closing down of Palestinian Territories during Operation Defensive Shield, in 2002’ (Village Group, 2014). Responding to this closure, the group worked alongside Israeli NGO *Physicians for Human Rights* delivering medical treatment to remote Palestinian villagers immobilized by the military curfew. In an effort to address the widening gap between Palestinians and Israelis due to the Second Intifada, the group began working in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the aim of ‘improving awareness and familiarity between Palestinians and Israelis...[and] wanting to reestablish the ‘human relationships’ [that] existed only a generation before’¹ (Village Group, 2014).

On Tuesday 12 June 2012, the Israeli Civil Administration distributed demolition orders to over 50 structures in the village. This order included the makeshift clinic, the Creative and Learning centre, solar panels as well as every family tent. The order prompted a rapid and multifaceted effort to make the plight of the village visible to as wide a constituency as possible. In reaction to the demolition orders, the Village Group, with support from a network of friends and

¹ The ‘human relationship’ refers to the pre-Oslo era when there was a greater sense of contact between Israelis and Palestinians during the ‘open-passage phase’ of the occupation from 1967 until the First *Intifada* (Palestinian uprising) in the late 1980’s, the Israeli authorities pursued what was known as “the open-passage policy”. Palestinian work inside Israel was enabled and encouraged, and therefore passage of Occupied Palestinians from their Territories to Israel and back was almost completely unhindered. As noted on the Village Group website, a human relationship based on the ability of each (Israeli and Palestinian) to see the quality and good in one another is now totally gone. Although the occupation was still uneven, “Many Palestinians (mostly men) who came of age during the open-passage phase have become acquainted not only with the military and fanatic (settler) aspects of Israeli society, but also with its civil and human aspects. Many of these Palestinians have become fluent in Hebrew, have traveled across the country and met a wide variety of Israelis. Moreover, the strong economic interdependence between Israelis and Palestinians during that phase, and the fact that Palestinians stayed for extended periods in Israeli towns and villages while working there, and were frequent visitors (albeit as laborers) inside Israeli homes, mandated a web of familiarity relationships between Palestinian laborers and many Israelis” (Village Group website – about page). For the Village Group, during the ‘Separation Phases’ of 2000 onwards, there was a need to try to rebuild this relationship, voluntarily, whilst also trying to engage a generation of Palestinians who missed the opportunity to see/meet non-aggressive Israelis.

sympathetic, anti-occupation individuals, initiated a series of solidarity campaigns and activities. These included the development of the village's own dedicated WordPress blog, *Susiya Forever*, and a multiplatform social media campaign entitled, '*Stop the Demolition*'. The Village Group also reached out to third party organizations, including the Israeli HRO, *Rabbis for Human Rights* (RHR), who worked to deliver legal aid for the villagers, and Activestills. The result of these two independent collaborations will be highlighted in this chapter, specifically in terms of the varied visibility that ensued.

In this chapter, I'm going to look at a range of visual materials produced by and also for the 'Save Susiya' campaign. I am going to concentrate on the photographic project, engaged in by Activestills, and the 'Save Susiya' WordPress blog (SusiyaForever.wordpress.com), set up by the Village Group, on behalf of the Susiyan community. In addition, I will explore additional material produced by third party organisations that responded to the demolition order in an effort to raise further attention to the villagers' plight.

The chronology of the investigation will begin with a pre-demolition order activity in 2011, known as the 'Day of Celebration'. The purpose of this is to firstly address the context in which the female participatory project was first conceived and developed. Initiated as one of a number of social engagement activities by the Village Group in an effort to 'remove the occupation, if only briefly, from their daily lives' (David Lister, 2014). With supporting information obtained through participant interviews with David Lister from the Village Group and Keren Manor, Activestills photographer, I will outline the approach and purpose of the image making activity as a way to further understand the intention of the images. This is important as there is little information on the Susiya Forever blog indicating when the images were produced. Thus, knowing they were produced one year before the demolition order was issued is significant to their reading. Moreover, the images can be set aside, contextually and functionally, from the other material on the blog produced in response to the order. This enabled me to address the varying outputs, vis-à-vis the relationship with villagers and external visibility making organisations in terms of what 'kind'

of visibility was produced, and to distinguish the effect this truly represented the village and the community within. Thereafter, I will work chronologically through the Susiya Forever blog from 2012, when it was established, considering its initial conception and highlighting the various material produced *for it* in response *to* the demolition order including the social media campaign. Integrated into the blog as part of a multiplatform effort to engage Internet users, the Susiya Forever blog can be considered as a repository of visual material related to Susiya in an effort to represent the residents and village life, highlighting their basic agrarian existence as Bedouin farmers, but also their creativity and struggle until it went static in early 2013.

While the photography project was initially a tool of engagement, it later became part of the online campaign to help achieve a degree of visibility for the village. Eventually adopted as the main representation for the village by a number of online blogs, news sites and e-campaigns, the photography project will be compared to other representational practices carried out in the village that eventually fed into the overall visual construct of the village.

In doing so, the chapter will examine the problematic nature over who and how to produce the 'right image' of the village. I will outline how, in an effort to overcome the separation between audience and distant spectator, the multiple contributors to the village blog ultimately weakened the representation of the villagers (Tomlinson, 1999). Focusing on activist imagery, including the *Rabbis for Human Rights* video blogs (one of which was published on the blog, the others were left off) amongst others, I will highlight how much of the content *created for* Susiya and hastily compiled onto the website, produced conflicting and at times clichéd narratives of Palestinian victimhood. In conclusion, I will suggest that it is through the eventual circulation of the female photography project that one can consider how the production of more subtle visual resistance developed *with* rather than *for* Palestinians can be measured against the emotional and affect laden practices adopted by the HROs; a practice that became prevalent during the Second Intifada (Allen, 2008).

3.2 The Day of Celebration



Figure 33: Image of the 'Day of Celebration' in the Susiya Village. Author unknown (2011) – Image provided to me by David Lister from the Village Group.

Between 2010 and 2011 members of the Susiya village community participated in a number of activities including model making, photography, filmmaking and poetry, organized by the Village Group in collaboration with the village leaders. The range of activities were mutually developed with the villagers based on their desires and needs. One such desire, highlighted by the villagers, was to learn or improve their Hebrew. Such a request would enable them to speak the language of power in the absence of internationals or activists when confronted by settlers, the military or the Israeli Civil Administration. In addition to the practical, an emphasis was placed on creative activities as an organizational tool which all hoped would bring the village together through engaging and creative events. The workshops and classes were held at the newly developed Susiya Creative and Learning Centre: a large, semi-permanent communal tent with tables, chairs and basic ICT facilities that ran off the villagers' power generated by solar panels; these were fitted by the Village Group a year earlier.

The philosophy and rationale of the space was to promote cohesion within the

village, offering an open and democratic space for the villagers to work on community issues while having the ability to host internationals, with a similar effect to the Bil'in 'international house' as discussed in the Bil'in chapter. The latter aspect sought to draw on the attendance of internationals as a source of income and a means of security, while also offering another way for the village to make itself visible via the subsequent images produced by visitors (Figure 33). The creative aspect of this new relationship with Israelis and internationals culminated in a day of celebration, marking the one-year anniversary of the centre.

The day of celebration, on 17 May 2011, was a success and, according to one source, attracted over 500 visitors.² Attended by a number of Israeli based anti-occupation groups including *Rabbis for Human Rights* and *Breaking the Silence* as well as Israeli-Arab peace partnership collective, *Taayush*. As much as the day was a celebration of the previous year's successes it also achieved a level of participation by Israelis and internationals never seen before within the village.

Images of the day, albeit it only a handful, were posted to the photo sharing platform *Flickr* and were searchable via the term 'Susiya', while other images were Tweeted and posted on the Village Group's own homepage. Taken by *Activestills* on the day, the images on Flickr are entitled '*Susiya Festival, Southern Hebron Hills, 28.05.2011*'. *Activestills*' photos (images 5 of the 7 from the Figure 34) depict a range of participants, including members of *The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army* (CIRCA).

²Alternative news, a not for profit alternative news provider reported 500 attendees – link here: <http://alternativenews.org/archive/index.php/regions/hebron/3624-hundreds-attend-susiya-creative-learning-center-celebration-in-south-hebron-hills-3624> Date accessed 30/01/14.

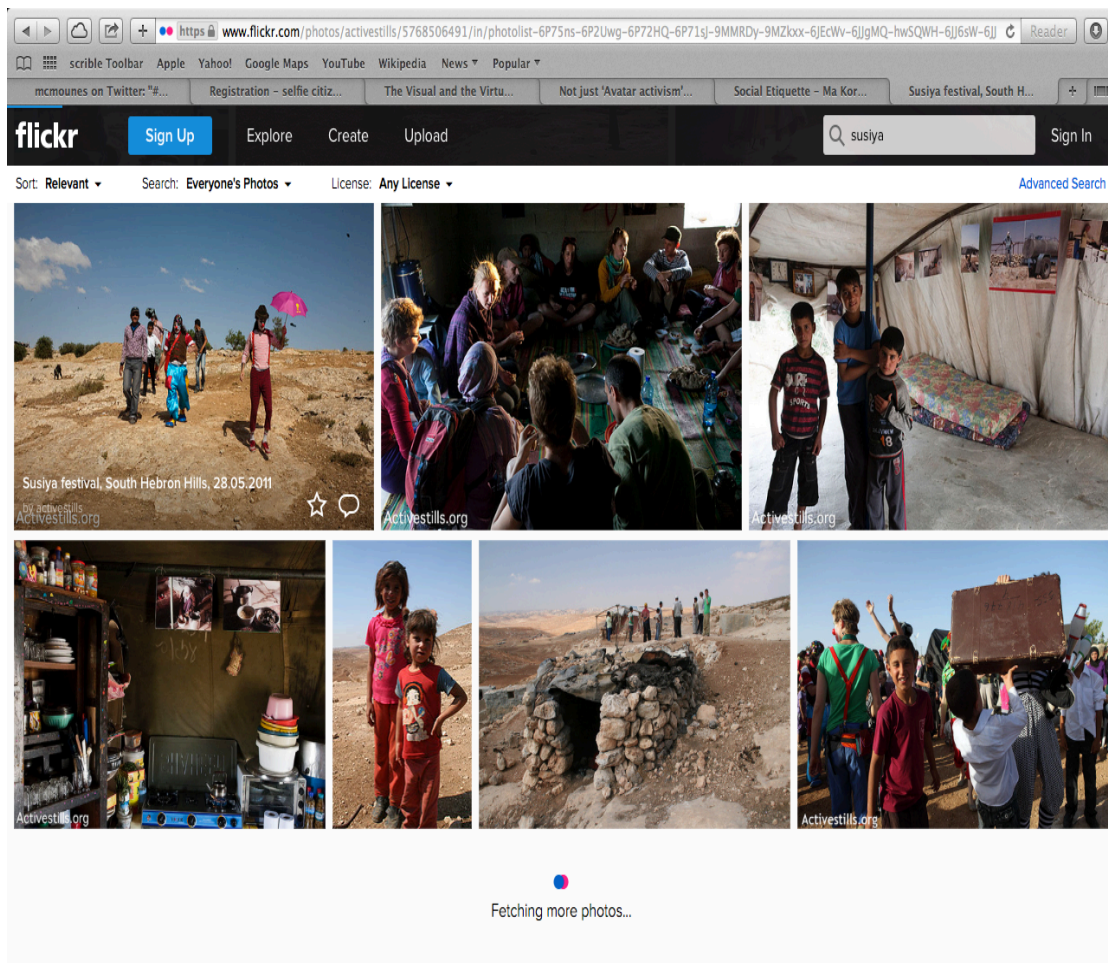


Figure 34: Screen grab from Flickr with the image results from the search term “Susiya”, search date 20/07/2014.

The images show a UK based anti-authoritarian activist group (top left), a sit-down gathering of internationals and villagers in a tent (centre, top) and a group of Palestinian boys stood in front of the display of participatory photography exhibited for the day in a number of family tents (top, right).

The result of this event allowed the village to become visible in a different kind of way to the residents of the surrounding settlements of Maon, Carmel and Susya, the latter being a settlement established in the 1980s on the villagers’ original lodging, close to the caves of the Southern Hebron hills, who are able to see the events unfold. The influx of people, arriving in buses and cars, presented the village as site of interest to people from elsewhere (which included both Israelis from within the Green Line and internationals). While such a visibility is always only temporary, and contingent upon firstly being seen, the attendance of Israelis and internationals was of specific importance for the Bedouin Palestinians in

Area C because of their outright lack of citizenry rights and the official Israeli refusal to acknowledge their presence on the land.

As Andrea Brighenti rightly observes, visibilities lies in the intersection of two domains of aesthetics (relations of perception) and politics (power) (Brighenti, 2007: 324). Seeing the effect of the day of celebration in this regard, the event could be considered as a small rupture in the visual field, which for a short time enabled Susiya to 'appear' in a number of ways to different spectators. This was achieved firstly, by addressing the international attendees as a form of primary visibility and secondly, through the capacity to record and move images of the event across the attendees' social networks, including Facebook, Twitter and Flickr (see Figure 33). Thirdly, the event provided something akin to a spectacle, which attracted the attention of settlers and Israeli authorities, both of whom observed the day's events from afar.

In an interview with one of the event organizers and Village Group member David Lister, via Skype in 2013, David explained how his own presence within the village over a period of time offered a modicum of security from settlers and the military. "Attacks happen...but less so if we are there, this is part of the village's struggle" (Lister, 2014). By increasing the volume and frequency of internationals to the site, the strategy was simple, to produce a specific visibility that was "immediate and directed towards the settlers and the IDF who would see a community making art and solving their own problems. That was the position from which we operated and the community centre was pivotal in that regard" (Lister, 2014). As a quality, visibility can be predicated on sites, subjects and effects (Brighenti, 2007). Some sites and some subjects are more visible than others. Because sites and subjects interact relationally, as was the case with the day of celebration event, social effects of visibility depend on who is more visible in which site, but also what sort of visibility a subject might attract. Lister and the large group of non-Palestinians within the village during the day of celebration became a valuable asset in the battle over political perceptibility. For the most part the physical and political environment of Susiya dictates how and who is made visible. As has been suggested, mediated vision is always imperfect, events like the day of celebration become part of the political effort to make the

sites, and its subjects visible, if only for a short time. As a consequence, the day of celebration, and the smaller projects that were built around it altered, if only temporarily, the way in which the site and different subjects interacted relationally to build an impression that the village was 'recognized'.³

The commitment by those Israelis who attended the day of celebration to stand with the Palestinian villagers did not bring about a break in the presupposed distribution of positions between the one who exercises power and the one subject to it (Rancière, 2001: 4). The day of celebration was instead, a process that sought to draw strength from the social effect of visibility. The presence of internationals and Israelis was part of that slow process where their visibility, it was hoped, would feedback from the event and contribute to the visibility of the village within the immediate environment.

3.3 Participatory workshop female photos – the everyday as activism

As part of the celebrations on 17 May 2011 each woman involved in the Participatory Photography project opened up her family tent, welcoming in international visitors and Israeli anti-occupation activists, effectively turning their homes into temporary exhibition spaces for the images they had taken (Figure 35).

³ The notion of recognition is a complex issue. For the specifics of Susiya and other Bedouin villages across the West Bank, their unrecognized state by Israeli law is based on the conditions of their habitation (cave dwellers and transient farming communities) as well as their locations. Often Bedouin communities exist within territories that are considered sites of interest to Israel. This might include areas of the Negev for example that could be built upon or taken for their natural resources. In a specific case for Susiya the villagers lack of recognition is linked to their proximity to an ancient archeological site of interest but arguably part of the slow violence of the occupation to move communities off land in the hope they might simple transfer into concentrated populations. Lastly, Palestinians who were displaced after 1948 but did not leave Israel, who became 'present absentees' have also set up villages within the Green Line that are still not recognized although they do have Israeli citizenship.



Figure 35: Example of the photo exhibition in the villager's tent (2011).

In the wake of the 2012 demolition order these images were uploaded to the Forever Susiya blog under the photos tab, with the description,

The majority of photographs presented are taken by the women of Susiya as part of the activities of the Creative and Learning Center during 2010-2011. The project was part of a photography workshop conducted by ActiveStills.⁴

The photos on the Susiya Forever blog were seemingly mixed in with a range of photographic material, including photos detailing the development of the Creative and Learning centre and images that resemble frames taken from the RHR's video project. However, on the Activestills website the images are located under the 'exhibition' tab and appear as a more coherently identifiable collection of photos. Entitled, *Women Documenting Their Lives in Susiya*, the photos are anomalous to Activestills' practice in relation to the other content on their website. Presented in a fashion consistent with all the other image galleries on

⁴ <https://susiyaforever.wordpress.com/photos/>

the website, the photos are arranged in a typical grid-like fashion in rows of four, without a title or number. As the only participatory project undertaken by its members, and thus, the only body of non-professional photography on the website, the conventions associated with participatory photography are identifiable in the form of the photos.

Referring to the photographs produced during workshops, the photos communicate the everyday routine of the women and their families and transcend the boundaries between documentary style photography and family photography that is often evident in photovoice projects (Wang, 1999). Premised upon giving people cameras to represent their experiences and perspectives on a given topic such as community strengths and problems, photovoice projects usually culminate with a discussion of the photos and a participant-led output (e.g. book, exhibit). Moreover, the process and outcome, which is typically led by an expert practitioner can, as Esther Prins suggests, help inform community projects and advocate for their interests (Prins, 2010: 427).

The general context in which these workshops were being conducted was one of opposition to the conditions of the occupation. It is interesting to note that the original purpose of the workshops were not to advocate or give 'voice'. Conducted prior to the demolition notice issued by the Israeli Civil Administration, the project was nothing more than an activity to engage the female members of the village and a tool to build good relations between the Village Group and the wider community in Susiya. Thus it is no surprise that when I spoke to Keren Manor, who delivered the photography sessions to the women, she was quick to highlight the contradictions between 'silencing' and 'giving voice' (Lykes et al., 2003) stating that, 'I don't like the idea of *giving voice*, each woman has her own voice - I don't give them nothing'. Manor's effort to deny the potential of the camera as an a-cultural, intrinsically liberating technology (Prins, 2010) can be considered in relation to the time and events of their production. Not produced under the context of urgency that prompted later representation of and for the village, it is useful to consider the site of production and the dynamics that brought about the creation of the photos and the workshops. Additionally, as Gillian Rose has noted, as researchers we must

approach image analysis with a consideration for the intended audience (Rose, 2007) of the given visual output. Thus, knowing that the photos were later repurposed for a much wider constituency I will firstly explain in greater detail how the images were created and chosen for selection on the Activestills website, before being circulated in a wider context.



Figure 36: Example of an image from the female photography workshop tent exhibition (2011).

Photographs, John Radley writes, 'are not just pictures of the world (as it is), but are also resources for communicating how it might have been and what it could be in the future' (Radley, 2010: 268). For Susiya, the photos do just this. Representing the routines of those within the village as being caught in a cycle that points to a tumultuous past, but equally, a less than positive future.

As such, pictures are more than representations, because they are also resources, mediators that, along with words, give shape to ideas. This is true not only of a society that is photo-literate but also of cultures where the use of cameras is less common. For the villagers of Susiya, and specifically the women, who are arguably one of the most marginalized and underrepresented groups in the West Bank, the opportunity was a new experience for each participant (Manor, 2013). Although Bedouin communities have been represented

elsewhere by other photographers⁵ WJT Mitchell's (1995) statement pertaining to how 'extraordinarily limited the image of the Palestinian is', is particularly prescient when one applies it to the Bedouin communities, both within and outside of Israel. Writing in relation to Edward Said and Jean Mohr's project, *After the Last Sky*, Mitchell (1995) notes how Palestinians are obscured from the dominant field of vision. Removed and misrepresented, Mitchell refers to the photographic practice of Mohr as a series of 'visual facts' which everyone knows in theory, but is rarely seen in practice. The Palestinian woman, the domestic space and children are subsequently constituted as 'icons' of an unseen reality that underpin the occupation (Mitchell, 1995: 313). Taking Mitchell's interpretation of Mohr's work as possibly re-ordering the dominant representation, I suggest the work of Activestills enabled a similar visibility. While this is not the intended function of the photographs, however, from a different perspective we can interpret the photos as a means of unearthing these unseen realities.

Prioritised around the daily lives of the female participants, the photography workshops functioned in such a way that the demands of taking photos did not interfere with their familial and domestic tasks. Due to the familial configuration of the village, which is known as *hamula*, an extended or 'big' family that is often patronymic and made up of several patrilineages (Johnson, 2006: 62), the workshops had to 'work' for the women's routine. The close spatial relationship between ones extended kin and patriarchal system (Hilal, 2006), meant that female villagers found accessing the original series of workshops, whereby varying practitioners came to the village, increasingly difficult. As originally planned, the Village Group had organised a number of on-going workshops, which included learning Hebrew as well as music and craft workshops, held in the communal village tent. Balancing their roles as homemakers, which includes looking after the children, cooking, collecting water, and the laborious task of preparing meals including baking bread from raw, locally farmed ingredients, the female villagers were often unable to engage in the activities as originally

See Miki Kratsman's work 'All About US (Sternburg Press, 2011) and Alham Shibli's ongoing work with Bedioun communities in the Negev region, specifically, Goter (2002-3), which was referenced in this thesis, pp45-47.

planned as to the time required away from the family home posed issues with their responsibilities. Unable to take part in the originally scheduled activities it was decided that a female photography workshop would be arranged around the women's daily routine; allowing the women to take a camera with them for the day and record their activities. Thus, one day a week Manor and Lauken spent an entire day with a specific family and the female members by

Splitting the day into two with a basic training session in the morning and had a conversation about what could be taken; we had no expectations, we just wanted to share our time with the women and offer them an opportunity-it was up to them what they did and how they did it (Keren Manor 2013).

At midday, the participant would return to Manor and Lauken where they uploaded the photos to a laptop. Using the laptops the women would look at the photos and discuss their shots and the rationale behind the decisions they made. Selecting the photos, the women crafted a specific narrative of domesticity akin to the visual language of the family snapshot.

Demonstrating some of the key conventions related to typical family snapshot, including close ups of smiling loved ones, off-centre framing and posed family images, the photos selected for exhibition are both familial, reflecting the intimate nature of the project and the participants as well as telling depictions of everyday life as a Palestinian, Bedouin woman. Located in a number of domestic settings the photos attested to the conventions of vernacular photography while the actions recorded are indicative of everyday activities: preparing meals, hanging out the washing and relaxing with the family. Examining the framing and construction of the images it could be argued that the resulting outcomes could be considered as artefacts that mobilise the production of geographical knowledge within the domestic sphere. Often the multiple readings of a family snap or setting in which they are produced is dependent on both the photograph's context and who the images eventually appear before. Often, family snaps are presented in family albums or presented via various display technologies; firstly, the projector and later on computers or via file sharing

websites. However, produced as a result of a series of workshop sessions, that was a consequence of the occupation, we must think about these images somewhat differently. Originally presented before anti-occupation visitors to a Bedouin village under occupation and exhibited in the makeshift tents, the photos can also be considered as political commentaries brought about through an active process of political and cultural engagement.

As a result of the intervention of the Village Group and Activestills, the use of the camera becomes a tool of memory making rather than a tool of surveillance or testimony (Stein, 2013). While it is common that cameras given to Palestinians in the Hebron Hills are often associated with counter-surveillance and testimony, this project was not about documenting confrontation, settler attackers or IDF patrols. Rather this was a project about their lives. Consequently the women chose to focus on their families and their relationship with their immediate environment, documenting the routine nature of their domestic roles. However, when the occupation does come into visibility, it is recorded at a distance, as a telling photographic slippage as seen in Figure 37.

Sat on the ground, legs crossed, an elderly man from the village of Susiya is foregrounded in the frame of the photo while the green grass of the landscape consumes the middle space of the photo. Tending to his land on a cloudless summers day, both the male villager and photographer may be blissfully unaware of an IDF patrol walking right to left across the hill in the background.



Figure 37: Bedouin villager sits on the ground – Susiya Female Photography Project (2011).

The photo is thus a discreet reminder of the violence of the occupation, which feeds into the everydayness of the project. The Israeli presence is neither spectacular nor exceptional and in a telling way reiterates how the women wanted to use the camera to shape their own visibility. Looking again, the image might also be understood as an act of defiance, the male villager sitting on his land as sign of resistance. However we know that this is not likely to be the case – the truth of the event is in its banality – the occupation is ever-present and often unspectacular. The violence is instead, what Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir refer to as, ‘withheld’ (2013: 127-39), not only reflected in the distant military presence, but also in the space they occupy. As Eyal Weizman (2007) suggest, the operational capacity of hilltops is integral to maintaining control over Palestinian populations and space. The construction of settlements and military watcher towers on West Bank hilltops allows for a panoptic mode for the surveillance designed to discipline subjects, by placing them under a watchful gaze that renders those beneath in a vulnerable position (Foucault, 1975).

Although a predominately family orientated collection of photographs, some of the women also choose to do more than denote the family relationship and their private space and objects, opting to communicate ideas that could be more

openly interpreted. The anomalous photo of the dove flying over the water tank could be easily translated as a symbol of peace, freedom and unrestricted movement. Perhaps drawn in by the potential symbolic weight of the dove, the photographer chooses to juxtapose the bird in flight alongside the water tower. Such a representational practice appeals to an aesthetic that draws upon the practices of photography as art, a certain 'functional aesthetic', where the clarity of its intent is used as a measure of its success as a 'kind of picture' (Bourdieu, 1990). This photo does more than depict a dove and a water tower, in a way each object in the frame communicates the emotive energy behind its capture and framing. Such a photograph might well be said to 'stand up on its own' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994) as an aesthetic picture, if it were framed and put on the wall, detached from its specific context, it would still have a universal reading.



Figure 38: Dove next to water tank - Susiya Female Photography Project (2011).

Looking at what Douglas Harper (2012) refers to as the 'wider symbolic universe' within an image, the efforts to overtly exclude the occupation by focusing on the family or through symbolic language, critically one is still able to see the effect of the occupation within the images. This is best articulated by the series of images below.

When applying conventional content analysis, 8 photos out of the 46 included water, either its preservation through the focus on water tanks and wells or an emphasis on its safe and considered transfer.



Figure 39: Female villager carefully decants water into a sack - Susiya Female Photography Project (2011).

By choosing to document family life, the female villagers' images represent only the positive things in their lives: family shots, smiling faces, and togetherness in an effort to create their own visual narrative, not one on their behalf. Yet by looking within the image, we can understand the photographs help to communicate telling aspects of the occupation that are otherwise less visible and harder to communicate. Gil Pasternak suggests that a commonly overlooked aspect of family photography is the implication of taking pictures within landscapes of conflict by families for whom the terrain simultaneously signifies "home" as well as a politically charged and contested geography (Pasternak, 2013: 45). With images focusing on everyday routines, I suggest that the disproportionate emphasis on tasks and chores related to the management and safe transfer of water maintains their subversive potential as a political commentary. As we shall see in the second part of this chapter, the photos later stood in as a form of resistance and agency that communicated practices whereby people were seen to manage, adapt and get by (Allen, 2008: 457).

Getting by, in this context, is closely linked to the Palestinians notion of stoicism, steadfastness or *sumud* that is performed as resistance by still maintaining their ability and right to exist on the land and, I argue, can be read as underlying theme in the female photographs. In this light, the suggestive reading of the images render visible the subject of invisibility by making the occupation visible even though this may have not been the aim. However, in the same act, it can be argued that by rendering those objects visible, the workshop and tent exhibition made visible their everyday reality and their everyday resistance (Pink, 2012).

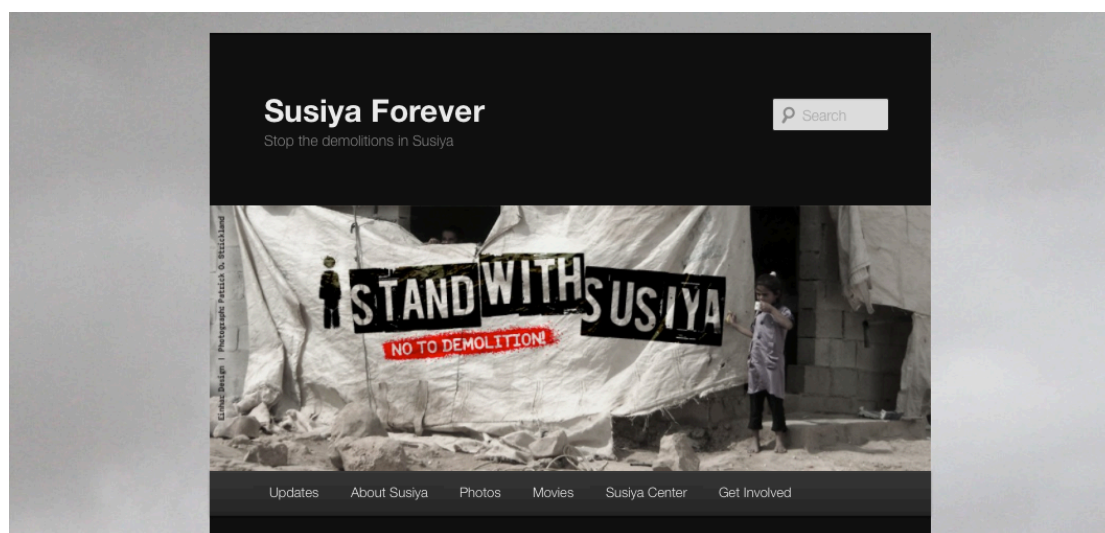


Figure 40: Screen grab of the Susiya Forever WordPress home page (2013).

3.4 The blog

On 16 June 2012 the Susiya village blog was launched. Set up by David Lister from the Village Group, the website, www.susiyaforever.wordpress.com went live in response to six immediate demolition orders issued by the Israeli Civil Administration. The orders, which were originally drafted in 2001 but not issued or acted upon until 12 June 2012, earmarked over fifty structures for demolition.

From the first post on 16 June a succession of posts appeared, on 17 June, entitled '*Stop the Demolition*' in English and Hebrew as well as a stop-motion film produced in collaboration with Activestills and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolition. Using edited footage of demolitions in Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah, Um-Al Kheir and Susiya, the short film was narrated with voice over sound bites from the residents of Palestinian towns and villages. Alongside photos from the

Activestills archive, the film chronicled the emotional effect of demolitions, the fear of settler attacks and their hopes for the future.

On 19 June another two posts were uploaded, both pieces of reportage focusing on the demolition order vis-à-vis the village, one from Israeli journalist Amira Hass, originally published in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. The second was a feature written by Nasser Nawaj'ah, a Susiya resident and a field researcher for B'Tselem that originally appeared in Hebrew on the Israeli based news site Ynet. Finally, a report by Assaf Oren of the Village Group, originally posted on the Village Group blog on 17 March 2012, was copied and pasted on the Susiya Forever blog with some additional content that contextualized the events in the village over the previous months. One effective aspect of the web post was the explanation that an Israeli settler NGO, Regavism, had sought to force through the demolition of Susiya on the grounds that the Palestinian village of Susiya is an 'illegal outpost'. The post continued, outlining how the Regavism group, acting on behalf of the neighboring settlement, stated that the Palestinian residents are squatting on Israeli land, threatening the livestock of the Jewish community and pose a security risk'. Three further posts, two on 24 June and one on 25 June; address the Susiya solidarity demonstration in the wake of the demolition order. Organized by the Village Group in collaboration with other organizations, the solidarity demonstration was conceived in an effort to show the village of Susiya that the demolition order had not gone unnoticed.

The first post entitled '*Solidarity Demo in the Village of Susiya, South Hebron, 22.06.12*' has a short text that reads,

On Tuesday, 12 June 2012, Israel's Civil Administration distributed demolition orders to over 50 structures in the village. There are also demolition orders for a shop, a clinic, a community center and solar panels.. The residents did appeal and obtained a two-weeks freeze order. The village of Susiya, located in area C, is surrounded by settlements and has faced countless attacks by settlers and harassment by the Israeli

army.⁶



Figure 41: Image of Susiya demonstration, held on 24 June 2012.

The text is accompanied by 8 photos, 7 taken by Activestills denoted by the Activestills watermark in the bottom left corner of the image, and one photo that is unaccredited. The next post is a short video of the demonstration, uploaded to YouTube⁷ with 5,617 views and 14 comments. 10 of the 14 comments are explicitly pro-settler, the most recent, posted by the YouTube user, *Iron Lion Zion* refers to the villagers as a bunch of “fukn sand monkeys these fakestines are.....”. Beginning with an establishing shot, the camera pans across the landscape to introduce the arriving protesters and the already present border police and IDF personnel. The editing of the video is typically fast and within the first minute of the 7 minute video we are aware of the context, the Susiyan living conditions and

⁶ <https://susiyaforever.wordpress.com/2012/06/24/solidarity-demo-in-the-village-of-susiya-south-hebron-22-06-2012/>

⁷ YouTube video is accessible here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQyQos-9prE> Date accessed 04/04/2013

the purpose of the gathering as a large group of mixed Israeli and Palestinian women, men and children file past the camera chanting in response to a singular voice projected by a megaphone. Waving flags and carrying signs in Hebrew, the group make their way to an unspecified site.⁸ The remaining 5 minutes of footage make up a fast montage of arrests, medium shots of soldiers, attempted arrests, jovial groups of young Palestinian women in traditional dress singing and protesting and Palestinian men lined up on the ground praying before we are again presented with images of border police and IDF soldiers confronting the protesters.

The sequencing of events recorded and edited into the YouTube post, when compared to the vast archive of material related to Bil'in is symptomatic of Susiya's inability to construct a visually arresting image of resistance. Bil'in is spatially unique with a long road leading out of the village and up to the separation barrier; both the road and the barrier provide sufficient space for the narrative of the protest to play out. Walking down the road, towards the barrier, anti-occupation activists can be recorded as they act out their protest action, their collective movement suggesting that they are marching to a specific point. In contrast to this the video of the Susiya protest, with its hap-hazardous continuity editing seems anomalous to the typically predictable and programmatic performances of other sites of protest in the West Bank.

David Shulman, a prominent activist with Ta'ayush and an academic, writes the third post on the Susiya blog of the same date (24 June). Detailing the day of action with the villagers, Shulman outlines the purpose of the demonstration and the day's events, illustrated by 5 images. From 5 June 2012 – 5 February 2013 a total of thirteen more posts are made to the Susiya Forever Blog which include an unauthored poem of support entitled '*A Poem to Susiya*' – 5 July 2012, to a number of articles reiterating the conditions of the village including '*Disconnected: A Story of a Palestinian village without basic infrastructure*' posted on 23 Jan 2013 (Figure 42).

⁸ This unspecified site was later identified as the neighboring settlement in a following blog post

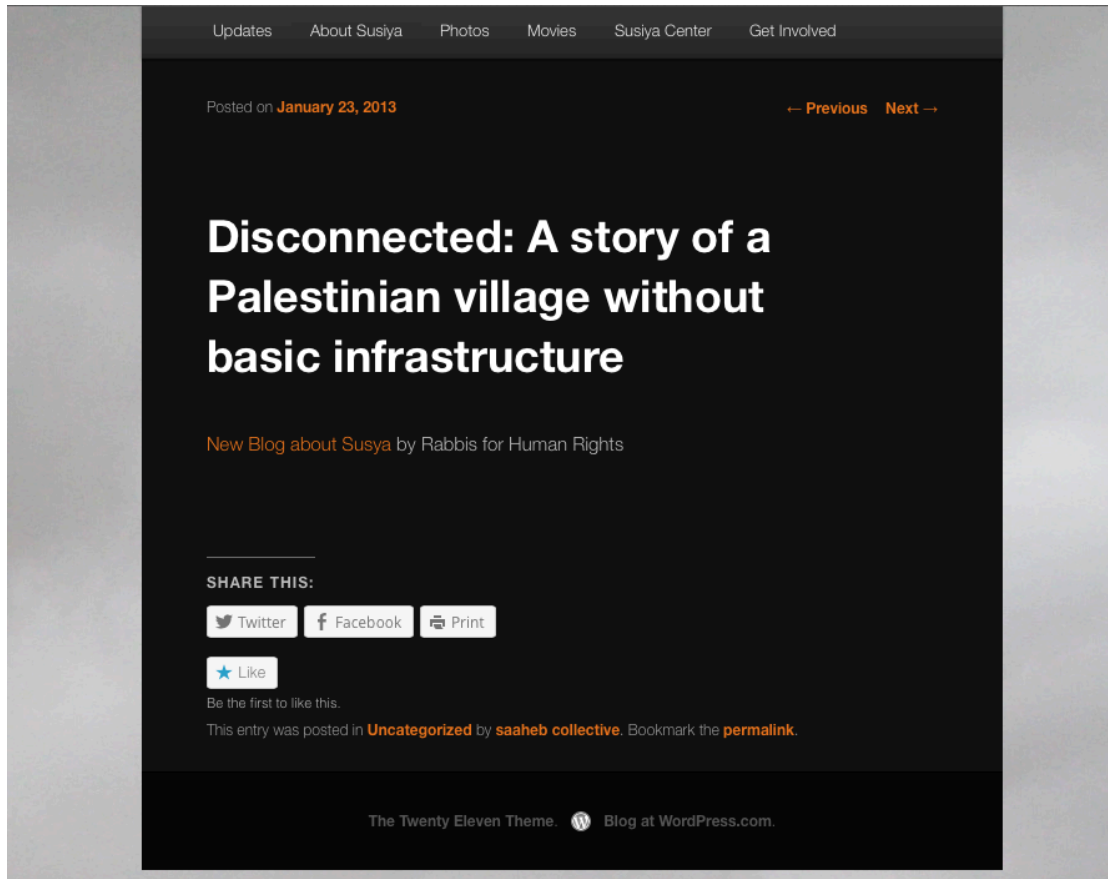


Figure 42: Screen grab from the Susiya Forever WordPress blog - 'Disconnected: A Story of a Palestinian village without basic infrastructure' posted on 23 January 2013.

Between the day of celebration, in May 2011, and the solidarity demonstration, on 22 June 2012, there is no record of any other protest having taken place in or in relation to the village, or since (March 2015).

Sensing only imperfect possibilities for exchange with audiences beyond the already active, but small community of campaigners who had already contributed to on and offline protest action, David Lister, took the decision to make the Susiya blog static in early 2013. Unable to sustain interesting activity in terms of blogging on behalf of the village, or unable to continuously generate news, without being engaging that they could repeat or build upon, the Susiya village blog ran out of steam in less than a year.

If we compare Susiya to Bil'in, the latter was a joint-struggle between Palestinians and left wing Israelis in which their nonviolent protests had been

enhanced by the participation of international activists. Aided by a close proximity to key transport hubs, including Ramallah in the West Bank and Tel Aviv in Israel, Bil'in is more accessible. Secondly, because Susiya is geographically distanced from the struggle over the separation barrier, the village and its supporters are unable to entice spectatorship through image events and symbolic challenges to the occupation like other West Bank villages. Recognised, opportunistically, as an inviting backdrop, the separation barrier functions as a space that has the capacity to engage multiple audiences from outside of the region (Bishara, 2013). As we already know, the contingency of Palestinian visibility, specifically in terms of generating positive representations for peaceful protest action, can, as Amahl Bishara notes, 'make for disappointing politics' (Bishara, 2013: 169).

In the case for Susiya, there exists a number of reasons as to why their efforts were less appealing or visible which are not just about the village's lack of proximity to the separation barrier. The weekly demonstrations at Bil'in, which led to the eventual rerouting of the separation barrier in 2009, were highly mediated events. However for Susiya, the community is lacking a 'stage' against which to make visible an assertive political claim against the effects of the occupation. Other noteworthy factors include, the fact that Susiya is a small and isolated community. Almost an hour by car from Jerusalem, even those delivering aid, food and blankets in the winter months are impeded by border police and IDF patrols. Requiring those making the delivery to leave their vehicles, David Shulman writes in relation to one specific attempted aid delivery,

We set off at 10:30am...it is perhaps 20 minutes, perhaps less, until the next roadblock, and this one is serious. Negotiations begin with the police, this time in earnest. We get the occasional briefing us from loudspeakers...by now there is no doubt that the whole cruel process has been carefully premeditated...eventually it becomes clear that we will have to act in the face of opposition by the police. We march past the blockade. I hear the residual shreds of singing; the police are yelling through their megaphones, we break through the first line of police and settlers... By 4pm we reach the village (Shulman, 2005: 15-22).

Bil'in is a large village by comparison. With over 2,000 residents, the status of the village is also secure, rather it is their livelihood, as a result of the separation barrier built on confiscated land, that the Popular Committee are contesting. Bil'in is a fixed, built environment with houses, amenities, a mosque and a school. Susiya's presence on the landscape is much less imposing, resulting in an affective viewing of the community that bespeaks temporariness (see Figure 43). Like Nabi Saleh and Nil'in, the spatial configuration of Bil'in determines the form of the protest, which in turn effects how villagers within their respective village present their struggle. For the residents of Nil'in, Bil'in and Nabi Saleh, who have attended their protests each Friday afternoon after prayers, they make their way to a precise point, before routinely setting off, en masse to a specific site that is being contested. For Nabi Saleh it is access to a fresh water spring, for Nil'in and Bil'in it is the presence of the separation barrier on their land. Lastly, Bil'in, Nil'in and Nabi Saleh are all located in Area B of the West Bank and are only subject to Israeli military control whereas Susiya is governed by both Israeli military and administrative control. The consequence is the intensification of the village's precarious status, resulting it in having little to no sense of permanence.



Figure 43: Susiya landscape – Author and year unknown.

Likening the Bil'in protests to 'theatre like performances' Rania Jawad (2010) stated the media attention within diminished when the Israeli army began

dismantling a section of the barrier for rerouting, as a result of the village's successes in the Israeli High Court of Appeal.⁹ These forms of nonviolent protest are in part designed for media dissemination, functioning as 'image events' that foster public discussions by offering fresh, new ways to look at a given subject (Faulkner, 2013). As visual theorist Yates Mckee suggests, "in order to circulate, images must conform to aesthetic and formal modes that allow them to be recognised by discursive norms of the world in which they travel and to become politically visible" (Mckee, 2012: 11). Thus demonstrations of this kind, such as direct-action protests organised by village popular committees, can be understood in terms of their normative structure. Beginning with movement of bodies, often from a village to a site of contestation, the protesters cheer, chant and wave flags. This is followed by some form of confrontation with Israeli border police or IDF and concluded by the stone throwing shabab (young men). However, given the diminutive size of Susiya, with very few teenagers in the village, and the villagers' lack of involvement in popular nonviolent protest historically, as they have until recently been removed from the impact of the occupation due to their nomadic culture, Susiya also lacks the recognised routine and readable iconography of Palestinian protest. A characteristic that has since the late 1970s been reproduced through the production of photographs and other kinds of pictures of these actions (Faulkner, 2013: 9) within the West Bank and have been given a form in print and image.

At the height of its protest activity, Bil'in commanded attention in both the mainstream media and via alternative news platforms, both of which often focus on the violent aspects of the demonstrations including how many demonstrators, of which a proportion are often international, are injured or detained. Marching to the separation barrier from the village, whilst adopting specific themes of topical relevance, including a World Cup themed protest (2006) and dressing up as the blue Na'vis from James Cameron's cinematic blockbuster, *Avatar* (2009), are multifunctional in their visibility making practice. Yet for the villagers of

⁹ A report on the Israeli dismantlement of the separation barrier can be found here: <http://mondoweiss.net/2011/06/israeli-army-begins-dismantling-the-wall-in-bilin> Date accessed 08/23/2013.

Susiya, trying to create modes of resistance, this involved a broader consideration of their own specific strengths, needs and possibilities not least because of the village's remote location. Such a sentiment was reiterated by David Lister from the Village Group who stated in an exchange on Skype that, 'doing protest once a week doesn't work, on the contrary, our main form of resistance is occupying the land; living there' (Lister 2014). Similarly, such a tactic was adopted by the farmers and activists in the small West Bank town of Mas'ha, located 8km from the Green Line border, where they constructed a protest camp that was prompted by the news that the Israeli government were to begin building the security barrier on the town's agricultural land in March 2003.

Much like Susiya, the activities of Mas'ha were centred on a tent that functioned as a site of protest, later an information centre and more broadly, one of many tents that eventually made up a protest camp, as additional activists came in support of the villagers struggle. The first of many subsequent site-specific protests along the trajectory of the separation barrier as it developed across the West Bank, Mas'ha achieved a small amount of media attention before it was dismantled.

As has already been highlighted, when an action or event does attract media attention the outcome is often not what was desired. For all the media attention afforded to the OPT, Palestinians see very few positive actions taken by the international community. In the case of Mas'ha, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the camp struggled to present the flow of information in a succinct way, lacking any sense of coherence and coordination to how it managed its own visibility until much later, after the camp was removed and the barrier built.¹⁰

Perhaps with Mas'ha in mind, David Lister, from the Village Group stated how he was mindful of how the village of Susiya functioned in relation to those who

¹⁰ The Mas'ha website was established in 2009 with 10 data captures via the Internet archive Machine from 15 August 2013 to 10 Jan 2016 and is accessible here: <http://www.mashawall.org>

visited, and specifically in terms of how the village could adapt and continue to be visible as a 'site of protest' without routine demonstrations. In response to Bil'in, and the creative space that came as a result of the barrier's presence David noted that for Susiya, the focus had to be around developing the community centre and maintaining this sense of togetherness; a togetherness between Israelis and Palestinians in the face of threat,

What we [the Village Group] tried to do with the Susiya centre was occupation can exist and occupation can disappear, but the everyday life of community doesn't disappear that fast. And it continues, and as long as you keep creativity and open-mindedness and invite people then that's what the resistance is all about. It's not about anymore if the wall is this or not it's about what kind of life can you envision for yourself. It's a very liberating tool when you know that you're creative and when you wake up you have some sort of control over your life and not one that is always deterministic and decided by somebody else. In Bil'in the creativity and everything was decided by the Israeli forces not by the villagers. And in Susiya, I would say, it's less of that (Lister, 2014).

From an initially small, intimate relationship based on an outreach project, the Village Group's operational model dramatically altered in the wake of the June 2012 demolition order. Prompted to act on the villagers' behalf, the Village Group, as urban Israelis shifted their modus-operandi from simply supporting the community as a humanitarian and peace building exercise to coordinating a media and legal campaign. This new, outwardly facing aspect began to consider the villagers legal battle to remain on the land, as well as their everyday safety as something intrinsically linked to the development of a stronger visible presence of Israeli and international activists within the village.

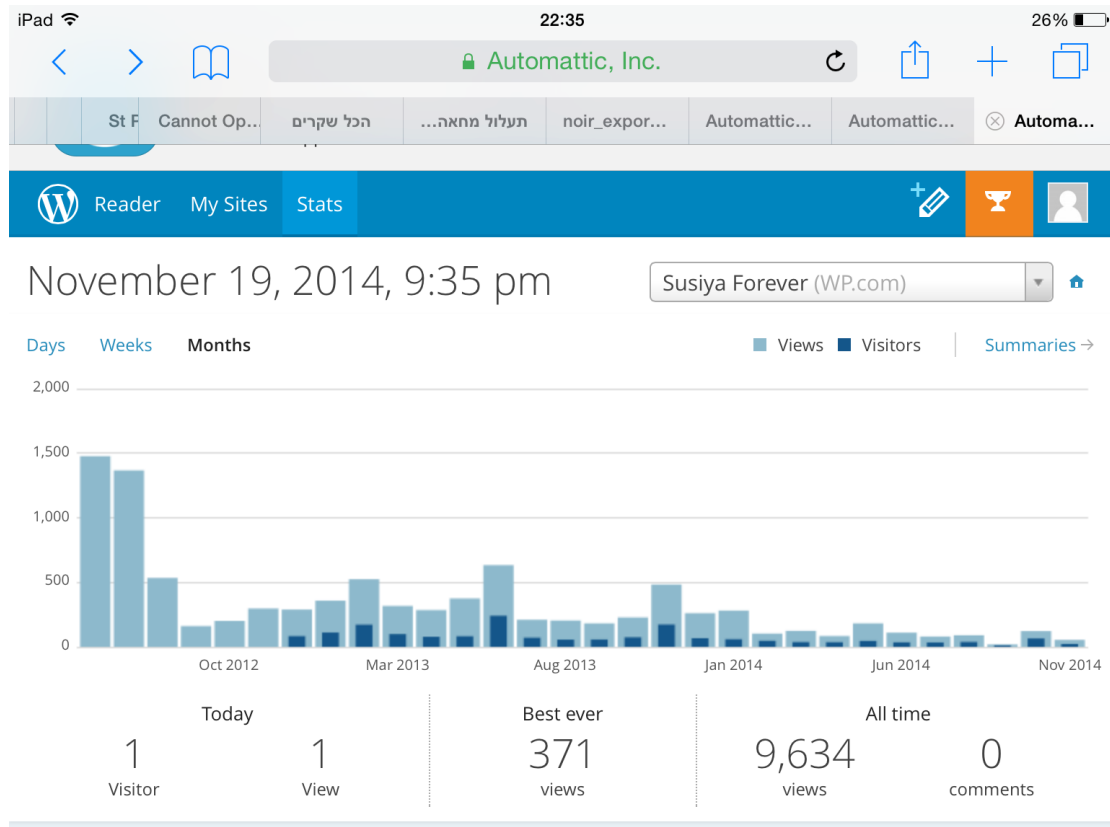


Figure 44: Data capture of the visitor traffic to the Susiya Forever blog.

3.5 The Online effort

Before their adoption of an online practice, Susiya and organisations acting on their behalf, had never used the Internet as a tool to cultivate a community of concern by promoting participation and action through lobbying, e-petition signing and through acts of networked visual activism. Working horizontally across the web, the disparate collection of campaigners included the Rabbis for Human Rights, the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (UK), the Village Group as well as individuals pro-actively canvassed on behalf of the village. However they did this with little sense of cohesion or centralised coordination.

It is in this final section of the chapter that I deal directly with a number of online efforts to make Susiya visible. Firstly, I will deal with a selection of campaigners that responded directly to the demolition orders imposed on the village during 2012, then later, I will address how the women's photography project images, produced a year earlier, became visible online, adopting a new

sense of agency. As images produced by female villagers, the participatory photographs were, I argue, framed through the inherent themes of domesticity, female space and the family unit, post June 2012. Thus, while this was not the intentioned aim of the image, the reappearance of the images online and framed within the context of an impending demolition altered their reading.

However, the multiplicity of images circulating online, through a number of blogs, campaigns, and even housed on the Susiya blog under the film and photography tabs, I would argue, failed to produce a stable and consistent representation of the village or its inhabitants.

For communities under duress or who have in the past, been subject to intense attention, how their visibility is conceptualised matters. For Palestinians, specifically in the West Bank and Gaza, affirmative images produced in opposition to clearly identifiable acts of injustice, help to counter the common assumption that Israel is even handily maintaining 'security' whilst acting ethically and morally. These visibility making practices are in great measure the outcome of relentless organising efforts by activists to draw in attention. In doing so, these activists, for the most part, also control their own representation and mediation. To do so, I argue, works in some small way to also stabilise the representation of Palestinian political action as resilient, creative and enduring, particularly in relation to pre-existing signs. These signs were usefully adopted as leverage, firstly in Bil'in via the repurposing of culturally relevant themes that drew attention and prompted multiple modes of address via YouTube videos, on the news, and in scholarly discussions. For the Freedom Riders, the overt adoption of the Palestinian scarf and the image of, was produced and circulated within popular Palestinian culture, coupled with the civil rights movement of the US, provided a tangible and transposable framework through which to situate their own action. In each case, there was an active process of self-mediation

3.5.1 Post-humanitarian action

The idea of post-humanitarian communication is, Lillie Chouliaraki (2010) asserts, a 'break with the emotional repertoire of pity and privileges a short-term and low-intensity form of agency, which is no longer inspired by an intellectual agenda but momentarily engages us in practices of playful self-reflection' (2010: 107-109). Identified as an emerging style of appeal that, though not replacing emotion-oriented forms of humanitarian communication, breaks with pity in favour of a potentially effective activism of 'effortless immediacy' (Chouliaraki 2010). Demonstrated most effectively by the recent rise of celebrity endorsed campaigns that leave the suffering 'other' out of the image and avoids a specific sufferer, replacing it with a general concern, Chouliaraki's ideas can be applied to Susiya in terms of the strategies employed to gain attention, but also because the threat to the village is not entirely visible. Unlike images of famine stricken children, or the post-disaster scenes of earthquakes and tsunami hit towns of the global south, Susiya does not look *at* overt risk or too dissimilar for many sites across the world. Coupled with this, the 'consumerist' approach to showing solidarity by 'clicking and shopping' (Chouliaraki 2010) diminishes the sense of attachment to a campaign. One specific example is the Greek MSF (Médecines Sans Frontières) viral campaign with Spanish celebrity Javier Bardem who calls for the funding as a way to 'buy pain relief for others' (Figure 45). Characterized by textual games, low intensity emotional regimes and the sense of instant gratification through 'clickivism' a 'post-humanitarian' mode of communication was initiated in support of the village.



Figure 45: Example of a post-humanitarian campaign - Greek MSF's (Médecines Sans Frontières) viral campaign with Spanish celebrity Javier Bardem who calls for the funding as a way to 'buy pain relief for others' (2010).

As a concept, such an approach can be forgiven as having potential, specifically in relation to Susiya, whereby the villagers cannot mobilise their own representation or 'perform human rights' like those in the chapters that will follow. Moreover, with criticisms of the transnational human rights framework within the OPT since the 1990s Lori Allen (2013: 2) suggests that Palestinians have inadvertently developed the vocabulary of Human Rights to explain their position as people living without justice. This sense of personal and national appeal has extended, Allen writes, to calls for international assistance, whilst also being deserving of independence. This well-honed form of humanitarian/political communication is a by-product of how human rights organisations have come to shape how Palestinians see themselves as 'needing' assistance, communicated through tropes of victimisation and subjugation. Equally, a plethora of HROs acting within the West Bank have for many, Allen writes, become nothing more than an industry where the potential for money means that a human rights 'label can be sewn on for show, easily affixed to an office, or a workshop' (2013: 15) and it will be funded. The post-Oslo (1993 onwards) professionalization of human rights also produced a cynicism and distrust by some in terms of its effectiveness within the Israeli/Palestinian

context (Norman, 2010; Allen, 2013). More broadly, criticism has been levied at some HROs and their communications because they could be seen as being 'in the service of political interests' (Boltanski, 2000: 1-3) rather than of those they exist to help.

While Human Rights has come under much criticism in the OPT, the efforts to support Susiya were managed at a far smaller level, often remotely, by socially engaged web-users. Thus, the first aspect of post-humanitarian activism could be seen as ineffectual, due to the village's almost non-existent profile. It is interesting to note that some online engagement did manifest, and it is without doubt that the visibility of the village and its struggle did reach a broader audience.

3.5.2 Take Action and Stop the Susiya Demolition

A post to the Susiya Forever blog dated 5 July 2012 entitled '*Take Action and Stop the Susiya Demolition*' provided a three point memorandum (Figure 46) instructing web visitors to follow the Facebook link attached and do the following tasks:

1. Take Facebook Action!
2. Sign the online petition
3. Read more, learn more, spread the word

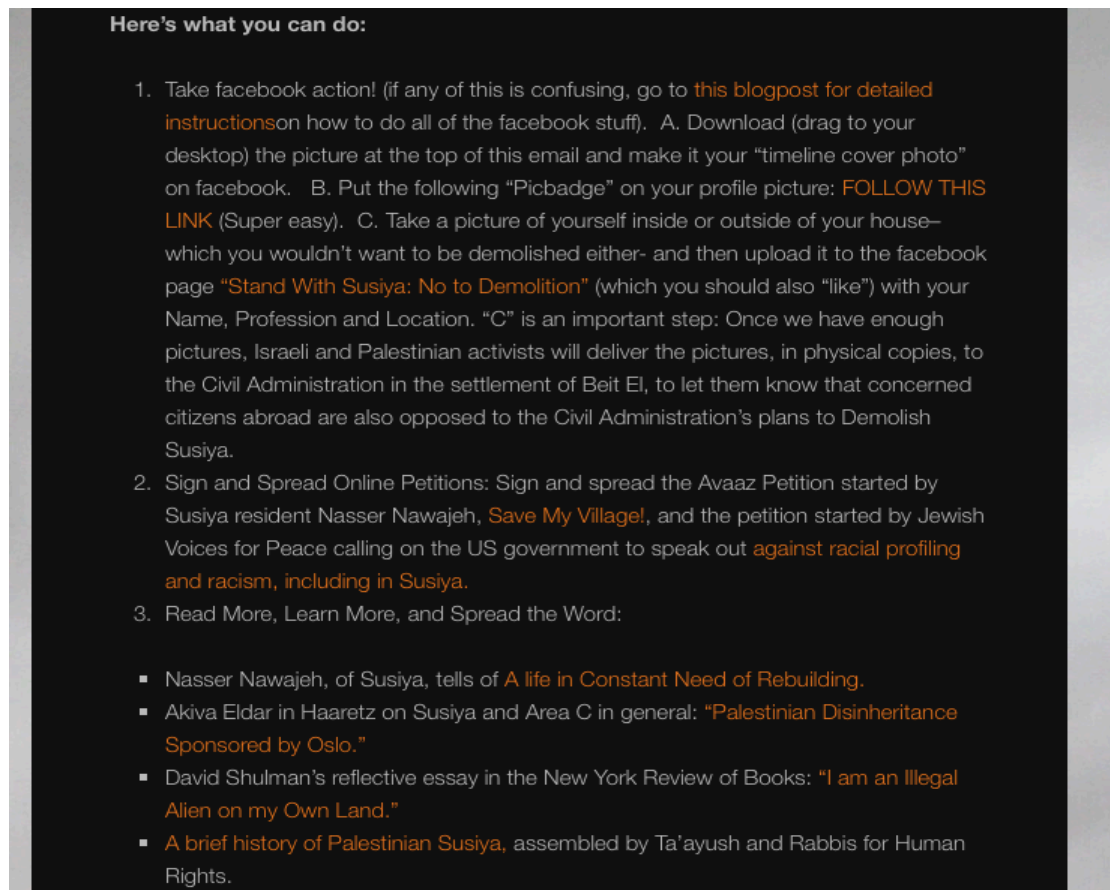


Figure 46: Screen grab from the Susiya Forever WordPress blog outlining how to take online action – 5 July 2012.

Set up by Tel-Aviv resident and Israeli activist, Moriel Rothman-Zecher, the Facebook page called *Stand with Susiya – Say No to Demolition* (Figure 47) shows 771 “likes”. The Facebook campaign took up two specific themes. The images uploaded in relation to both of these themes are of the Facebook user themselves. The first type of images are profile images that have adopted sharable and embeddable ‘pic badges’ created by Shir Harel.

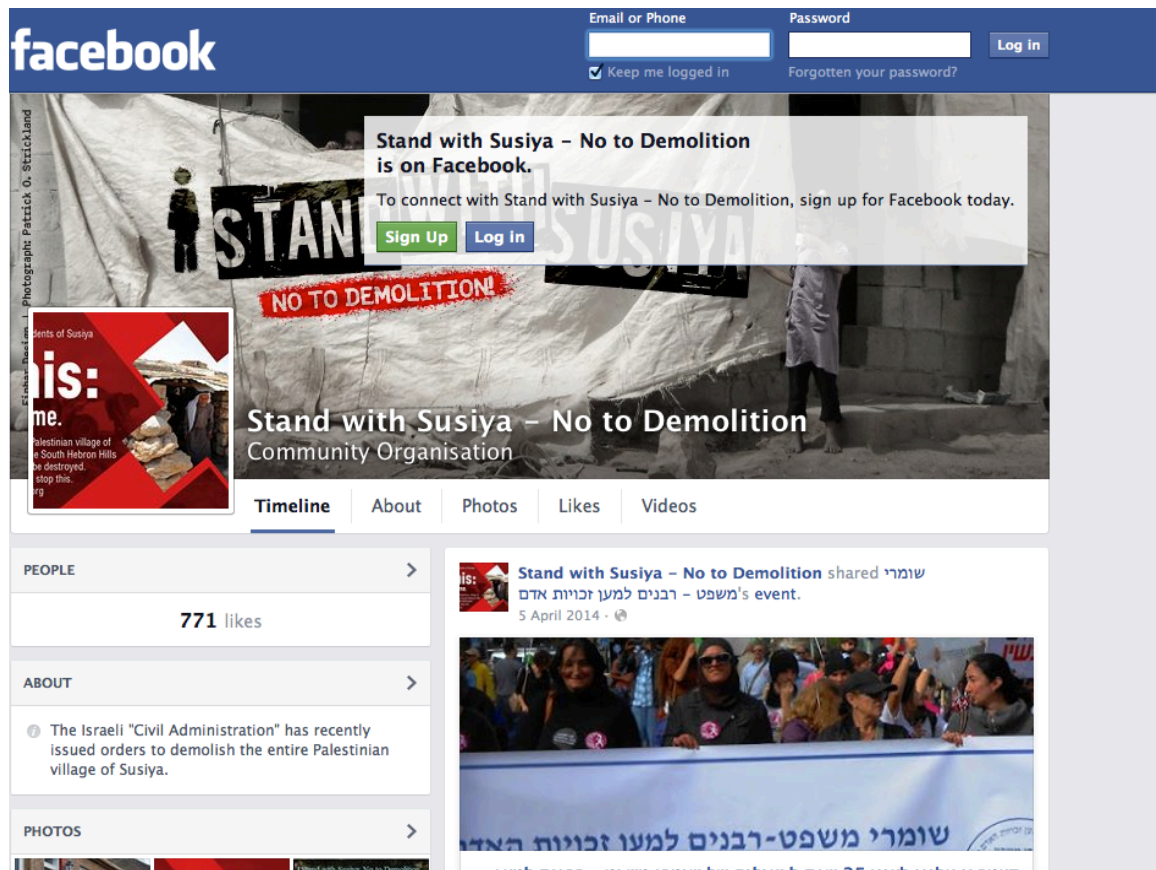


Figure 47: Screen grab of the *Stand with Susiya – Say No to Demolition* Facebook page – 5 July 2012.

The pic badge, which also reads, *Stand with Susiya – Say No to Demolition* is a digitally downloadable image with resembles a traditional pin badge. The pin image is a social media version of a traditional means of communicating ones political position. It sits in the corner of your Facebook profile photo and is visible to those who can see your picture (Figure 48). The second type of image (Figure 49) depicts a Facebook user holding up a written sign that reads “I Stand with Susiya”. This later directive required social media users to hold the sign in or outside their own homes in an effort to communicate the significance of a home as a universalizing ideal and basic human right.

Both forms of communication employ visual strategies that feed into a networked system of image circulation whereby the Facebook user uploads an image that directly addresses their own community of presumably likeminded users. It can be suggested that the anti-occupation communities are involved in the production, organization and circulation of their own images which are in

turn formed by the social and political systems through which they are interpreted and valued (Poole, 1997). Focusing on the visual as a performance (Campbell, 2007), rather than simply focusing on the representative or iconographic nature of the image, calls attention to the potential role of the visual and its production as a means of establishing the possibilities for political responses. This practice is specifically significant when engaging with diasporic Palestinian online communities (Aouragh, 2011) as well as communities who feel an affinity with the Palestinian national cause. One such example has been the acts of transnational solidarity between occupied Palestinians and the black community in the US, specifically in the wake of the Ferguson (Missouri) riots of December 2014, as will be further discussed in my Freedom Riders chapter. Palestinians, using Twitter and the searchable hashtag ‘#FromPalestineToFerguson’, displayed messages of solidarity in relation to the political and economic inequality and racial subjection resonant (though not exact) between the two communities (Figure 50). These communications also extended to giving those engaged in civil disobedience in Ferguson practical advice for dealing with tear-gas attacks by the authorities (Figure 51).



Figure 48: Example of the Susiya Pic Badge used for a social media profile – screen grab from the

Stand with Susiya – No to Demolition Facebook gallery (July 2012).

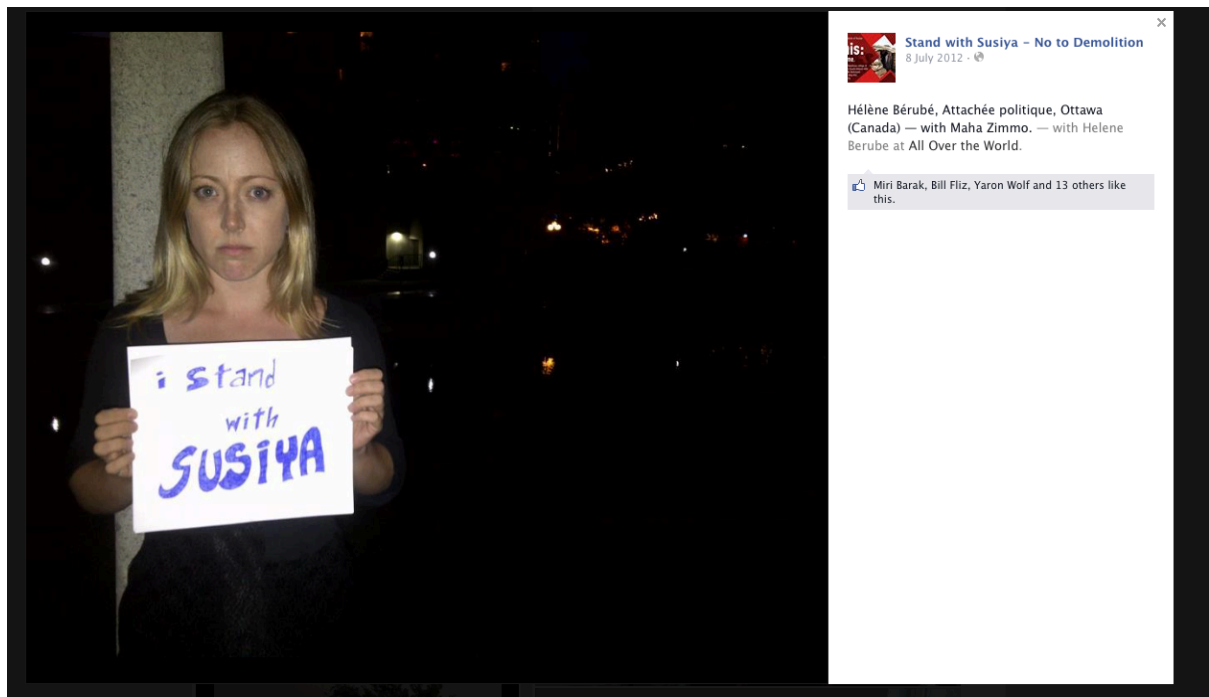


Figure 49: Example of the selfie communication used for a social media profile – screen grab from the Stand with Susiya – No to Demolition Facebook gallery (July 2012).



Figure 50: Hamde Abu Rahame using a Selfie as a way to communicate with those protesting in Ferguson, Missouri (August 2014).



Figure 51: Social media users taking to live tweet to communicate how to deal with tear gas attacks during protests (August 2014).

Since YouTube invited us to “Broadcast Yourself” in 2005, the means and methods for self-broadcasting have increased exponentially. The rise of accessible digital technologies, be that networked camera phones or the proliferation of cheap digital cameras, and the development of networked mobile telecommunication devices, social media and specifically the selfie has become as prevalent tool in grassroots political communication. Enabling users to develop a social and political visibility by attracting attention to events and social groups who may be on ‘the margins of the global system of violence’ (Hariman, 2014: 151), including Palestinians who lack social and political equality.

Understood as having a specific visual syntax,¹¹ the selfie invites attention to the pictorial conventions underpinning its generic identity. These conventions call upon its producers and viewers to make inferences concerning what Paul Frosh

¹¹ In a general sense it is high angle shot at arms length with a maximum two third body depiction, as well as an effort to show a specific place or and one’s presence – I am here, right now.

refers to as the ‘nondepictive technocultural conditions’ in which an image is made (Frosh, 2015). In this sense, those who view a selfie must understand what it represents; firstly, a person, namely the author of the image from which the image is made visible. Secondly, they must also be sufficiently socialized to recognize the selfie’s possible function as a self-representation of the photographer. Yet within these, the selfie may have a social, commercial or political value that is at odds with the conventional notion that selfies are narcissistic processes. Reading the selfie also requires the spectator to comprehend how the image can also be a gestural performance that bespeaks a set of specific compositional themes.¹² These compositional themes are often supported by the additional communicative action; the hashtag. The hashtagging of specific words or phrases and/or hyperlinking of an image can situate it in relation to a specific real-time event or in response to a particular participatory action where you ‘show yourself’ to be taking part in support of something currently happening. Lastly, the image itself can include signs and symbols, often handwritten, which address the spectator, drawing them into a minimal social relationship. Doing so, the written sign, specifically, has the capacity to evoke an awareness of a distant other communicating about an event or topic from a different perspective in a different location.

The stand with Susiya selfies, like other selfie political communication, can be considered part of a ‘live medium’ that is becoming part and parcel of everyday photography. Taking these conventions as discussed, Facebook users posted their image to the Susiya Facebook page holding a written sign, using a pic badge or both. The resulting action fed into a digital network that connected interlocutors together with a sense of immediacy. This was evident when one looks at the response time vis-à-vis the call to action on the Facebook page, evident in the time/date of user upload to the Facebook that initially followed the initiative.

¹² See Frosh on Alex Chacon and Murad Osmann’s ‘Follow me’. This can include situating the spectator as the possible photographer of a photo or to propose a kind of social interaction by giving the impression that the spectator has taken up a position of companionship through a gesture of inclusion, to ‘look, be with and act’ alongside the photographer, yet all the while, knowing that this is not the case.

By calling attention to the role of visibility making, this form of visual activism sought to narrow the gap between the audience and distant suffering through mediation rather than representation. By trying to ‘overcome distance in communication’ (Tomlinson, 1999: 154) the use of communication through images on Facebook stood to mediate rather than represent the situation in the village, much in the same way post-humanitarian online campaigns deny the image of suffering by calling upon others to perform an action. In doing so, this political act redefined the spatiotemporal context of home and loss felt by the villagers of Susiya to an international audience.

The second directive was to sign Nasser’s online e-petition. As of 2014, the e-petition had reached a total of 9,759 (Figure 52), with the most recent signatures from Greece, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Save My Village!

Created by **Nasser N.** Palestine

To be delivered to: **Benjamin Netanyahu** Israel Prime Minister

SIGN THE PETITION

“ Israel-- don't demolish my village, Susiya in the Hebron hills. We've won a temporary reprieve in the High Court, now we need the stability to remain in our village and be granted building permits so that we don't have to live in tents anymore.

Enter your email address:

Email

Why this is important to me (optional)

9,759 / 20,000

9,759 signers. Let's reach 20,000

Why this is important

My name is Nasser Nawajah, I'm 30 years old and a resident of a Palestinian village called Susiya in the occupied West Bank. My home is here in the Hebron hills that Israel calls an "illegal outpost" and they have demolished our town five times since 1985, even poisoning our wells. **I'm writing to ask for your help to stopping the next demolition of my village in just days.**

An ultra right wing zionist group successfully petitioned the High Court to have our village demolished -- but with help from friendly groups in Israel, we've won a brief reprieve of two weeks. **But the bulldozers are due to tear down our homes in days.** My people have lived on this land for generations -- it's time to stop the forced evictions and occupation of mv land. Not one more village should

RECENT SIGNERS

- more than a month ago Voula, Greece
- more than a month ago Eva-Maria Tönnemann, Germany
- more than a month ago Amy Morgan, United Kingdom

Figure 52: Screen grab of Nasser’s ‘Save my Village’ e-petition (2014).

The e-petition was the second of a range of affiliate actions that tried to promote the visibility and vulnerability of the village. Launched on 21 June 2012 the text on the page is written in first person, directly from Nasser on behalf of his village. Featuring prominently on both the Susiya blog, as noted above, and in the social media campaigns, due to his ability to speak Hebrew and also in part because of his role as a B'Tselem Camera Ambassador, Nasser, more than most in the village, understood the importance of connecting with communities (Lister, 2014).

As the village ambassador, Nasser's personal and direct appeal to '*Save my Village*' required 20,000 signatures to be able to be presented to Gabriela Shalev, the permanent Israeli representative to the United Nations. Achieving 20,000 signatures would subsequently ensure the petition would be debated as a matter of national and legal consideration within an international context. Failing to reach half the required amount, the e-petition signatures matched the volume of traffic recorded on the Susiya Blog, which as noted in Figure 44 displays 9,634 visitors to the Susiya Forever blog.¹³

Both the *Stand With Susiya – Say no to Demolition* social media campaign and *Nasser's e-petition* can be said to have had the capacity to overcome the distance between audiences and 'suffering others'.¹⁴ Such addresses 'challenge entrenched hierarchies of human life' (Scott, 2014: 162) by reducing the time and investment usually required to engage in such campaigns. In this specific case, the new media technology allowed Nasser to speak for himself, directly to the audience, in an appeal that asked 'you', the addressee, to help save 'my home'. The personalisation of the appeal afforded through the medium of the

¹³ Due to the scope and reach of the internet, and the presumed address to an international audience, rather than an immediate, local audience, the failings of the petition affirm some concerns re visibility of the village, or, conversely, interest in their cause and the emotional reach of Nasser's appeal. While petitions go viral, the lack of traction to Nasser's appeal is something that cannot be considered in the context of this thesis. As a comparison, since the [epetitions.direct.gov.uk](http://www.epetitions.direct.gov.uk) site was launched in August 2011, 14,092 e-petitions have been accepted and there have been three million unique signatures on the site. The first petition to hit the 100,000-signature threshold did so in just five days and in the first 100 days of operation an average of 18 people signed an e-petition every minute. There is clearly a public appetite for this form of political engagement (Hansard Society, *Whats next for E-petitions* - <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/What-next-for-e-petitions.pdf>).

¹⁴ For more on suffering others see Lillie Chouliaraki's *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (2006)

web-page gives the village a voice and agency. In his appeal photos Nasser appears more like 'us'. Stood front-on, in non-traditional Arab attire, in the presence of western company, Nasser's image seeks to confound any existing stereotypes. In doing so, the aesthetic construct of his appeal invites the audience to acknowledge, to some extent, a sense of humanity between themselves and the subject of the appeal, denying the reductionist dangerous 'other' or bad Arab, which has been argued as belonging to an already constructed system of knowledge (Said, 1978: 306).

Both Nasser's e-petition and the *Stand with Susiya – Say no to Demolition* social media campaign also appeal to our sense of empathy and seek to enable us to situate ourselves in their situation. In terms of realising an opportunity to make a real change, the e-petition can also be argued to have promoted nothing more than an illusion of involvement while also failing to reach its goal. Perhaps nothing more than what Malcolm Gladwell (2010) refers to as non-committal mouse clicks, Martin Scott identifies how the simplicity of such campaigns, including e-petitions have become a key feature in post-humanitarian communications (Scott, 2014: 154). The 'instant gratification' and low-intensity aspect of the appeal is founded in the taking part. Making reference to the Oxfam 2013 '*Food For All*' campaign, Scott notes that the 'major requirement for taking part was to 'spread the word' by picking and sharing your favourite fruit' (2014: 154). As an act of visibility making, the appeals registered some levels of participation. Both Nasser's e-petition and the *Stand With Susiya – Say no to Demolition* social media campaign broke with both the aesthetic conventions and moral mechanisms of convectional humanitarian appeals such as 'shock effect' (Benthall, 2010) or deliberate positivism (Scott, 2014). While Gladwell et al. (2010) have critiqued the use of online platforms for raising political awareness, in terms of a visual construct of human suffering, such approaches denied the reductionist, affect-laden approach taken by HROs during the Second Intifada and beyond (Allen, 2012). Opting to take engaging and 'low intensity emotional regimes' (Chouliaraki, 2010: 119) efforts like Nasser's, supported by the Village Group, deny the universal discourse concerning emotional responses based on shock and guilt. In doing so the low-intensity mediations encourage

contemplation through alternative aesthetic conventions such as the sign writing and the adoption of the pic badge.

As of June 2015 the Facebook page has 771 likes and 32 photos of solidarity uploaded to the image gallery. Of the 32 images uploaded, some adopted the pic badge, while others wrote signs stating that they 'Stood with Susiya'. 11 of the 32 images uploaded were simply profile photos of Facebook users either in, or outside a location, that one could only assume they would 'not like to have demolished', though this is not explicitly evident, it is the visibility produced from their participation in the act of presenting themselves, that is ultimately significant. Relying on the denial of violence, the post-humanitarian approach framework applied online represented one aspect of how to positively engage and support a community who is suffering at distance.

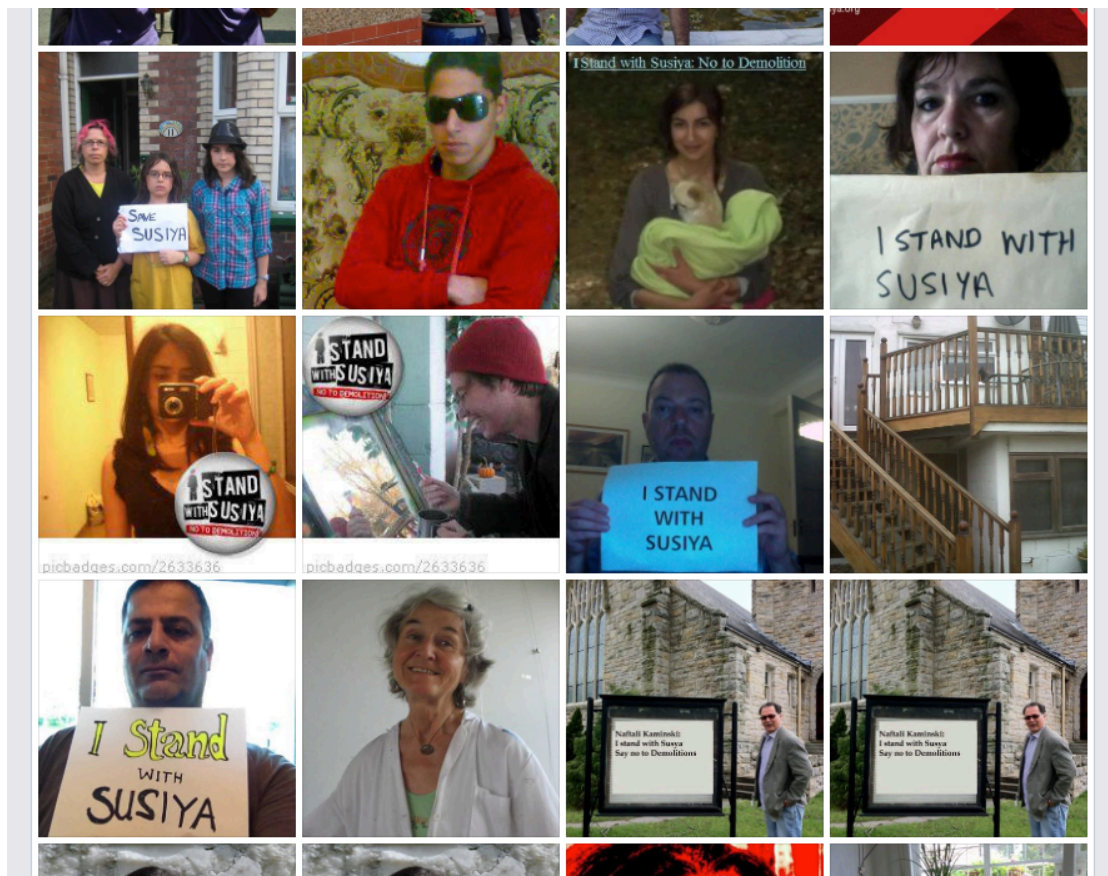


Figure 53. Screen grab of the *Stand with Susiya – No to Demolition* Facebook image gallery of campaigners visualising their solidarity (June 2015).

Dependent on realistic imagery (in general terms, the poor, the wounded or those in precarious living conditions), the key feature of post-humanitarianism lies precisely in its loosening up of this 'necessary' link between seeing suffering and feeling for the sufferer (Chouliaraki, 2010:17). As well as e-petitions and Facebook pages produced on the villagers' behalf the village also became, if only for a short time, the setting for a number of on-site NGO appeals that brought about a series of similarly problematic compromises in an effort to make Susiya and their struggle visible. Under the *Movies* tab on the Susiya village blog exists fourteen embedded YouTube videos and one housed on the media platform, Vimeo. Of the fourteen videos, four were made in response to the demolition orders, and dated post June 2012 while the other ten videos range from 2007 to 2011.

The videos uploaded to the Susiya blog are not in chronological order and, with little if any contextualisation aside from their titles, suggest that at the time of making the blog the videos were submitted or pulled in from a number of external sources as a way of adding additional visual content to the blog. The content, tone and intent of these videos vary. One is an amateur film shot by a hand-held video recording device that films a house demolition by the IDF. Uploaded by the Village Group, the unedited footage is consistent with the visual motifs of video activism, namely a shaky frame and no evidence of post-production editing. Other videos include documentary format short films that focus on the archaeological site where the village once stood and an *Alternative Information Centre* (AIC) news piece reflecting on the 'Susiya Day of Celebration' to acknowledge the one year anniversary of the Susiya Creative and Learning Centre. Of the four videos only one is made by the residents of Susiya, the remaining three are produced by Israeli (HRO); two are made by the Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), while the final film is a made by the independent Israeli media organization and NGO, Israel Social TV. Starting with the first film, a film shot and produced by Ibrahim Nawaja, a Susiya villager, I will explain how those advocating on behalf of the village failed to highlight the villagers' stoicism and their long-term struggle on the land, which has lasted for generations.

3.6 Video work

The first film made in response to the demolition order is a short documentary shot by local community leader, Ibrahim Nawaja, and reiterates the importance of the village for the residents through a number of personal accounts. The short video addresses the effects of the settlements, the restriction on movement and the repeated demolition of living accommodation.

Supported by the Village Group and their fundraising campaign, Najawa enrolled at the Dar Al Kalima College in Bethlehem to study documentary filmmaking in 2011.¹⁵ As a result of his media training Nawaja produced his own video entitled *'My Home is Everything'*. The short documentary film, which is located on the Susiya blog and also available on YouTube with 1,999 views as of November 2014, is shot in a classic point of view format, and subtitled in English (See Figure 54). Nawaja, acting as cameraman and interviewer asks five women and four men in Susiya three prescriptive questions:

- What is your name?
- How long have you lived here?
- What does home mean to you?

The interviewees are all adults and in response to Nawaja's questions, share their feelings and fears about living under threat of demolition. This provided the villagers with an opportunity to reiterate their historical claim to the land. One

¹⁵ A statement from the Village Group website states that, "For the past four years, the on-going aid of [US-Omen](#) has enabled us to support about 20 students from South Mt. Hebron each semester. The great majority of these students study at the branch of Al-Quds Open University located in their near home town of Yatta. The cost of the scholarships provided to each of those students, one that covers most of their tuition fees, is 500 Euros (650 Dollars) on average. As the case of Ibrahim's studies is different and exceptional both in terms of the location of the academic institute and the overall cost, we found ourselves this time in need to bring it to our friends' attention in a separate appeal. One of the important aspects of the work of the Villages Group is to strengthen the communities by enabling individuals to develop and realize their abilities for themselves and their communities. This is one of the Villages Group ways of defeating the Occupation – by encouraging inner strength."

participant, Mariam Muhamed Khalil-Alnawjae, replies, “I’ve been here for over 50 years”. A sentiment shared in a similar interview shot for Israel Social TV, where one villager addresses the camera and states, “I was born here in a cave, I was born on August 26 1961-where was the Susiya settlement then, where was it?”¹⁶



Figure 54: YouTube screen grab of Nawaja’s video project.

By being able to attend college, Nawaja, supported the Village Group by giving some context to the overall long-term role the Village Group play within the development of the village, in addition to their efforts to remain on the land and become visible. It is no surprise that being afforded the opportunity to go and study, Nawaja choose to take up documentary video production. A tool of the weak and a weapon of empowerment within the OPT; the camera is nothing less than a political necessity when engaging in the networked court of public opinion (Stein, 2013). No more so has this been evident in the OPT than the through the B’Tselem ‘video advocacy project’ which begun in 2007. An Israeli-based HRO, the “video advocacy” of B’Tselem brings the reality in which the Palestinians live in to the public. The footage has the visual quality of “amateur

¹⁶ Video is accessible here via Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?x-yt-ts=1422327029&x-yt-cl=84838260&v=rLyvUYbM82k#t=168>

photojournalism" and "citizen journalism" similar to that produced by the Village Group in their video of a demolition in Susiya and also of Nawaja's documentary project. B'Tselem's Camera Project, like Nawaja's film, helps to produce solidarity by showing the violent event from the viewpoint of the victim, both as a form of visibility making that adopts the notion of "photovoice" and as a mode of address that is both authentic and direct. As a form of visual communication from within a community, "photovoice" helps people to represent their experiences and perspectives on a given topic. These projects can challenge hierarchical professional-participant relationships, by enabling ordinary people to investigate and represent their own lives.¹⁷ From the Village Group's perspective, it was this form of visibility making that was most warmly received from within the village because it was made by themselves,

it's not professional, the lens suck[sic], the audio wasn't recorded properly because, we had an inter microphone, and it was windy. But you learn more about that film, about those images and about that movie than I would say all the other movies and photos that have been taken from there. Those ones you learn more about because you're not trying to sell anything... (Lister, Village Group, 2014)

In addition to Najawa's film, two Israeli NGOs made three additional contributions to the blog. The first video (Figure 55), created by Israeli Social TV, entitled '*Susya - A Glance Within*'¹⁸ dated 27.8.2012, took the form of an extended news report that blends on-site interviews with residents and activists, archive material taken from YouTube and footage shot on location.

¹⁷ The B'Tselem camera project can be found here: <http://www.btselem.org/video-channel/camera-project>

¹⁸ Note that the spelling of 'Susya' in both the Israeli Social TV and the RHR videos titles. This is how Israelis typically spell Susiya, and differs from the rest of the content on the site and the site domain name 'www.susiyaforever.wordpress.com'.

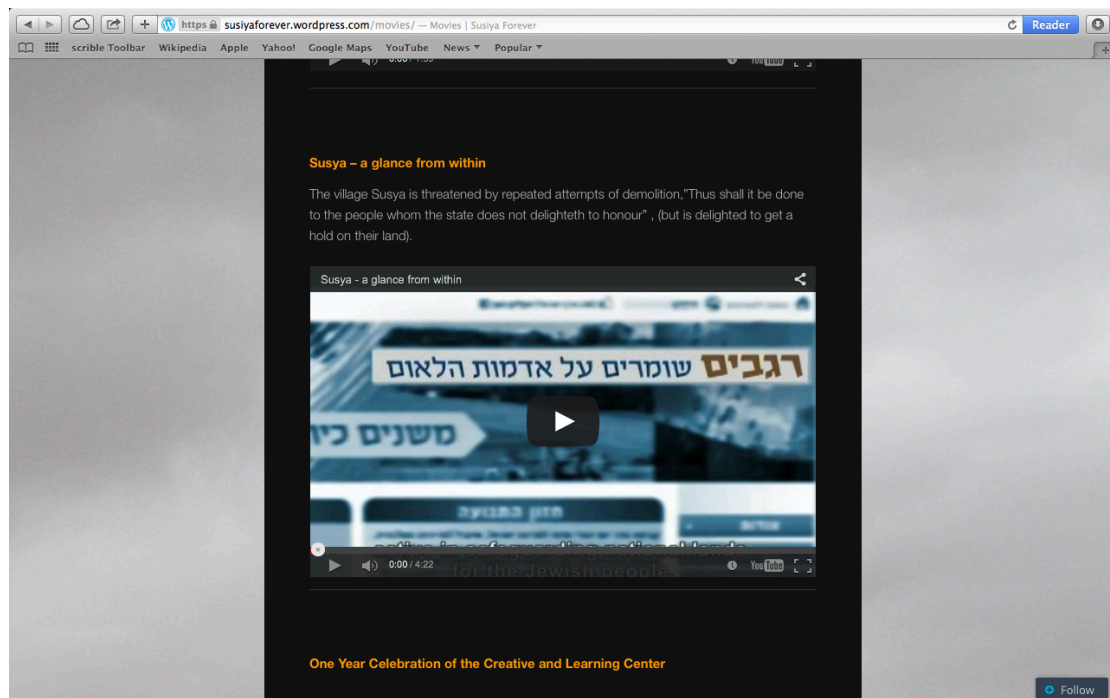


Figure 55: Embedded screenshot of the Israeli Social TV report within the Susiya blog page.

Narrated in Hebrew with English subtitles the report splices typical news reportage with strategies of humanitarian communication that attempt to close the gap between the audience and distant suffering. Mixing between mutually dependent dimensions of immediacy and hypermediacy, the Israeli Social TV operated between two representational schemas that sought to engage the viewer in 'shock effect' (Benthall, 2010; Chouliaraki, 2010) representations that were embedded in a news report formula. This multi-modal approach mixed a dominant form of humanitarian communication used by an NGO within the framework of a news feature, is typical of Israeli Social TV's mode of communication, as both an NGO and an alternative news provider.

An effort is made to make the viewer forget the presence of the medium through the extended and repetitive focus on the landscape and the villagers living conditions, including long establishing shots of the tents and shacks. This form of immediacy, which momentarily takes the viewer *into* the village to reflect upon its conditions through edited moments of silence, is juxtaposed by hypermediated visual signifiers that are consistent with tele-communicated news reporting. These include the use of digital maps and graphics, on screen ribbons and the frame invading news-reporter microphone to authenticate the reporter's presence and to govern the authority of the comments made by those

interviewed.

Originally uploaded to their YouTube channel on 20 August 2012, the Israeli Social TV news report has been viewed 231 times, with two 'likes' and one 'dislike'. Established in 2006, Israel's Social TV is an Israeli based NGO that focuses on social justice and human rights issues and activism. With an archive of over 2,000 videos, Israel Social TV broadcasts locally on Israeli television channel 98, and the Hala Arabic channel on a biweekly basis, reaching 75,000 viewers per month on both television platforms as well as through its own YouTube channel, Facebook page and website that can be accessed in both Hebrew and English.¹⁹ Like B'Tselem, Social TV sees itself as 'part of the human rights and social change community in Israel' (Social TV website) that uses new media, and specifically video as vehicle to achieve its goal of challenging the existing social order in Israel...that offers 'only an 'us v them' paradigm of reality' (Social TV). With a running time of 4 minutes and 21 seconds, *Susya – A Glance Within* opens with an emotively charged sound-bed that resonates throughout the entire video piece. Defined by John Cameron and Anna Haanstra (2008: 1476) as an effort to 'provoke feelings of guilt and pity in Western audience through the appearance of extreme material poverty and suffering', 'shock effect' campaigns seek to document the 'plain reality' or 'raw realism' (Chouliaraki, 2011: 110) of the sufferer and their circumstance.

¹⁹ For more information on the Israeli Social TV group, the about us section of their website is available here: <http://tv.social.org.il/eng/about-us>

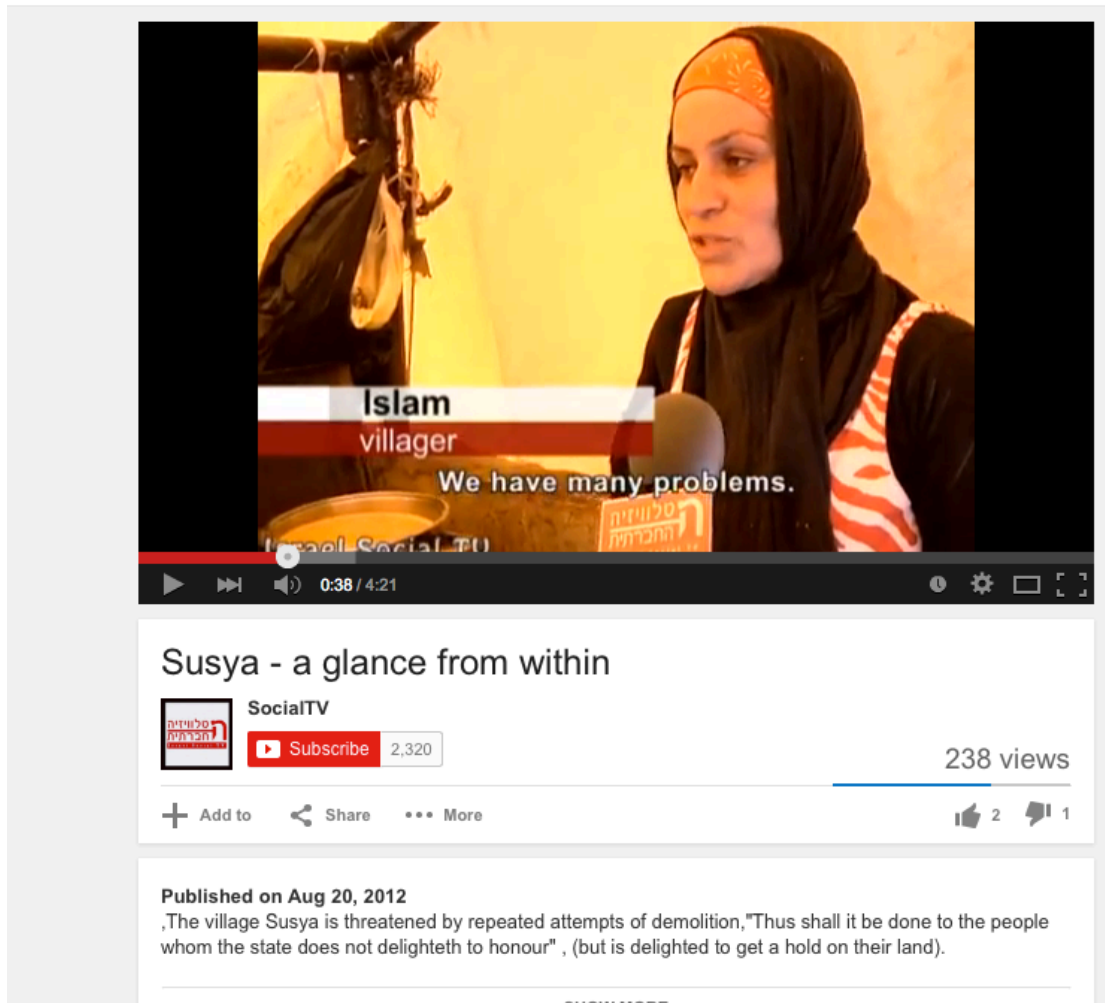


Figure 56: Screen grab from Social TV's feature on Susiya – 'A Glance From Within'.

From the opening sequence of the video, the viewer is immediately presented with compelling evidence of the physical conditions of suffering. Panning across the barren landscape from left to right, the camera allows the viewer to take in the remote and desolate conditions of the scene. Followed by a quick montage of dilapidated tents, the immediacy of the opening sequence attempts to bridge the gap between the presumably Israeli and western viewer and the distant sufferer through confronting the viewer 'with the 'bare life' of faraway strangers' (Scott, 2014: 141).



Figure 57: Screen grab from Social TV's feature on Susiya – 'A Glance From Within'.

The same can be said for both video blogs created by RHR. The two videos, entitled *Disconnected: Video blog from Palestinian village of Susya #1 – Introducing the Children of Susya*, which is 2:09 in length and has 1,608 views with 10 likes and 1 dislike, and video upload two, *Disconnected: Video blog from Palestinian village of Susya #2 – Susya's Elementary School*, running at 1min 59 seconds with 1,109 views, 6 likes and 1 dislike, as of November 2014 were the first two videos of a subsequent 6 part series.²⁰ The first two films were made available online via YouTube in December 2012. The most recent video blog of the series, entitled '*Episode #6: Right-wing extremists violent through the eyes of the children in Palestinian Susya*' was uploaded to YouTube on 28 April 2013.

While the video series was prompted by the Save Susiya campaign, only two of the videos were produced and made available via YouTube within the timeframe

²⁰ The remaining four videos can be found on the Rabbis for Human Rights website: <http://rhr.org.il/eng/>

of the village's online activity. However the two videos that are available on the Susiya blog are typical of the entire corpus of video blogs produced in the series by RHR.

Both RHR and Israeli Social TV focus on the representation of the villagers as victims; victims of the asymmetric conditions of their governance as non-citizens, victims of Israeli settler abuse and victims as a result of their Palestinians/Bedouin status. Yet this designation is consciously constructed through the representation of an 'ideal victim' (Benthall, 2010) in the form of those most vulnerable; namely women and children. In an effort to generate the strongest possible response, humanitarian communications often focus on victims that are seen to be the most helpless and innocent (Scott, 2014). Ideal candidates for compassion, both Israeli Social TV and the RHR focus on the safety of the children, their education (linked to the future of the village) and the impending demolitions as one concurrent theme.

After the viewer is introduced to the arid landscape and ramshackle living conditions of the villagers, the introductory narrative of the Israeli Social TV report opens with a universalizing address to parents at the start of a new academic year that appeals to the parenting instincts of care and protection vis-à-vis their vulnerability and innocence. Such an approach coopts another standard of shock effect communication by placing an emphasis on the emotional response of pity and guilt, generated through the focus on 'raw reality' (Boltanski, 1999). However, by this token, pity is not passed as a natural sentiment of love and care, as expressed by a parent or guardian over ones children. Rather, through the mediation of suffering, pity is more akin to a 'socially constructed disposition' that spectators do not possess, but it is in fact shaped by the values embedded into the production and narrative of the representation (Chouliaraki, 2006: 11). This is affirmed by the opening dialogue and subtitles that read,

At a time when *Israeli* [emphasis added] parents decide about the variety of kindergartens, parents in the Palestinian village of Susya are hoping

that this tent, which will serve as a kindergarten in the upcoming year, will survive and not be destroyed.



Figure 58: Screen grab from Social TV's feature on Susiya – 'A Glance From Within'.



Figure 59: Screen grab from Social TV's feature on Susiya – 'A Glance From Within'.

The focus on the *Israeli* parent provides a geopolitical binary through which the viewer can further make sense of the situation. While the Israeli Social TV report does offer an explanation to the situation in relation to giving background information on the current and historical situation of the villagers, both examples are utterly victim centered. For Israeli Social TV the focus on women and children is 4-to-1 in relation to the ratio of female/male villager interviewees, while two children, each from the largest families in the village, narrate the first RHR video blog. Muhammad, who has 5 siblings and Haddia, who has 7, both introduce their families while speaking about the situation 'as they see it' (Figure 60).



Episode #1: Introducing the Children of Susya



רבנים למען זכויות האדם

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Published on Dec 18, 2012

In this video-post you will get to know the children of the Nawaja and Shuneran families, the two largest families in Susya. You can observe the difficulty of growing up in a deprived village under constant threat of demolition. The population of Susya is impoverished, existing on the margins of Palestinian society.

Figure 60: Screen grab from RHR's YouTube video entitled 'Introducing the Children of Susiya'.

In each case, the video blogs give precedence to the immediate suffering and the immediacy of the villagers' conditions over any effort to explain fully to long-term structural causes of the suffering or offering any possible solution. While the Israeli Social TV offers quantifiable facts that have underpinned the Susiya legal battle, as well as addressing elements of the villagers steadfastness in their efforts to remain on the land, ultimately both videos focus on the victim and the narrative of helplessness that fits within the typical 'humanitarian narrative' that shock effect campaigns conform to (Scott, 2014: 144). The Israeli Social TV video as a representation is structured around interviews with villagers and activists operating in the village, as well as drawing on archival footage and research that poses a critique of the situation that fits within their (Israeli Social TV) operational framework by...

Working to promote social change, human rights, social justice and equality [by]... amplifying marginalized groups and voices that may represent unpopular opinions, providing them with visibility and coverage they do not receive from mainstream media.

The RHR videos depict a localized problem, rather than a national, geo-political and historical issue, that signifies 'stories of social suffering that have become stories of humanitarian intervention' (Cohen, 2001: 177). In *Disconnected: Video blog from Palestinian village of Susya #1 - Introducing the Children of Susya*, Mohammed's final words to the camera read, "They threaten to demolish [our homes] in order to live here in our place" located at 1 minute 27seconds on the video (see Figure 61). At 1 minute 28 the children's narrative is over. Cutting away from Mohammed, the viewer sees members of RHR walk into the village. This is followed by another cutaway, shot from the perspective of the RHR group as they enter the village, where Mohammed shakes their hands (see Figure 62). The investment in multi-cam production reflects RHRs effort to produce a specific experience for the viewer that offers a seamless, cinematic form where aesthetics were key to the storytelling experience.

Either greeting or thanking the group, Mohammed and his closing statement bespeak a representation that reinforces the criticism concerning the notion of northern/western/hierarchal supremacy reinforced through the representation of aid from those with, to those who are without. Aid, in this instance, is also visibility. Yet, this effort to make the village visible, clearly distinguishes between what appears to be Mohammed's problem and powerlessness and the RHR's as the primary source of his (and the village's) solution.



Episode #1: Introducing the Children of Susya



רבנים למען זכויות האדם

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Figure 61: Screen grab from RHR's YouTube video entitled 'Introducing the Children of Susiya'.



Episode #1: Introducing the Children of Susya



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Figure 62: Screen grab from RHR's YouTube video entitled 'Introducing the Children of Susiya'.

The public and private communications media largely exercises the power of making things seen or unseen, which can be conceptualized as part of a system of 'symbolic power' (Bourdieu, 1991) In Figure 62, the formality of Mohammad who offers out his hand and the attention afforded to it, because of course, its inclusion into the film is a matter of choice, not necessity, reflects a dynamic that is unevenly balanced. Through the overt focus on the children, both the RHR and Israeli Social TV isolate the conditions of the village down to the most vulnerable group. While both sets of videos did not reduce the focus of the mediation down to precise bodily parts, as is common in shock effect communications specifically in relation to the representation of children and famine, the reduction of an entire village community down to children, and for the most part their narratives, equates to mediation through fragmentation (Hall, 1997). Fragmentation, Hall claimed, is a practice of representation that reduces humans to their parts and in turn, reduces them into objects, into fetishes (1997: 226).

Originally applied to the study of race in sociology in his earlier work, specifically the unstable dynamic features of 'racial' identities, Hall asserted that while 'blackness' may have been used by politically oppressed groups to refer to common marginalisations, the 'black experience' was unsettled, partly through its diasporic nature (Hall, 1997). In this context, racial identities are never unified, but fragmented, across different, often antagonistic discourse, practices and positions (Hall, 1997). Reminding us that fetishism is a symbolic condition for making cultural difference, often through the prism of race, and 'otherness', I too, suggest that difference is formed when an aesthetic and emotive decision is made to represent suffering through vehicles that stand in for the sum of a greater parts. In this regard, the use of children is then an effort to reduce any sense of ambivalence to the conditions of the village, and in turn 'semiotises' the appeal (Chouliaraki, 2006: 124) and universalizes the conditions of suffering. The 'semiotisation' is played out through classic tropes of insecurity to education and the future, manifest in those who 'appear' most vulnerable.

3.7 Accessibility and the Ongoing Network of Care

Access to visibility is a central political question, as Andrea Brighenti notes; to access a place of visibility, is the precondition for having a voice in the production of representations. More precisely, it is not simply 'access' that matters, but rather the styles and modes of access afforded to those where visibility is lacking (Brighenti, 2007: 333). The idea of 'access' is significant, specifically when we look back at the efforts to make Susiya visible in an online capacity. The need for appropriate access in relation to the space, to understand it and to represent it requires an acute understanding of the situation and the people directly affected; in effect, access to an embodied or lived knowledge. As David Lister said while we spoke over Skype, the 'essence of what we do is grounded in partnership, and the strengthening of partnership is built over time' (Lister, 2014).

Unable to build these relationships due to the urgency of the events, the multiple visibility making practices, on the whole, did not, David suggested, reflect the character of the village. Unhappy with most of the work, David felt that those who 'came into the village' missed much of the struggle within the residents, instead focusing on the threat, not the resistance or the creativity. Ultimately weakening the representation of the villagers, producing conflicting and at times clichéd narratives of Palestinian victimhood that were at odds with content generated by the villagers themselves. One specific issue that was addressed by David and Keren, was the issue of 'voice' and who controls it. In both interviews, the topic of voice and representation emerged again and again. Numerous discussions related to the affordance of voice are often reduced to the issue of ethics and power (Milne, 2012; Wang, 2001; Prins, 2010) For example, those without 'voice' are often afforded it through a dynamic of 'privilege', whereby those who do not have the capacity to speak, *must* work with those who *allow* it (emphasis added) (Fenton & Barassi, 2011: 179). An argument specifically aimed at participatory media and humanitarian advocacy, such a position points to the issue that by not having 'access' either by invitation or through privilege limits your capacity for social or political visibility. With regards to the RHR video,

David referred to it as 'arrogance', continuing that, 'they come and they're going to make a movie. They come, they film the Palestinians and then they put it up [online] and they talk about the issue but not the people'.

Access to the villagers in terms of exporting appropriate testimony and/or the mode of representation related to the village was not the only problematic issue. As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, the rhythm of the occupation is on the whole, slow and unspectacular. As Ariella Azoulay (2012) has pointed out, the time required for the fabrication of an outbreak of violence is part and parcel of the way Israel manage the Palestinian population. Often below the threshold of perceptibility, the violence that affects Susiya requires differing modes of behaviour in terms of how resistance is practiced sustained and mediated. Geographically distanced from the struggle over the separation barrier, Susiya and their media producers were unable to entice spectatorship through image events and symbolic challenges to the occupation like other West Bank villages, which resulted in an inability to compete for attention.

The conditions of the village, as well as the status of the residents as Bedouins had a great impact on the nature of the resistance. Coming from a traditional agrarian culture, the villagers' remote and isolated existence was detrimental to their capacity to network and mobilise en masse. Unlike Bil'in, as I will detail in the next chapter, the villagers lacked formal education, the experience and capacity to quickly organise themselves effectively as a mode of resistance, but instead were dependant on low-intensity networks of care, such as the initiatives led by David Shulman and his group who delivered blankets, or the Village Group who voluntarily made weekly humanitarian visits.

Equally, as I will outline, in terms of the Freedom Riders, the residents of Susiya were not technologically savvy, networked, and internationally astute. Without electricity, without the comparative freedom and capacity to travel (two of the Freedom Riders were dual US/Palestinian nationals), the village of Susiya not only lacked a 'stage' against which to make visible an assertive political claim against the effect of the occupation, they also lacked access to a range of basic

necessities, skills and amenities that compounded their situation, and undoubtedly effected the nature of the representations produced.

In opposition to the issues noted above, Manor and Lauken helped facilitate a form of visibility that invited us to see Susiya differently. By producing a different type of visual resistance, when considered against other representations uploaded to the Susiya Forever blog, the images from the female photography project became the stand out representation of the Susiya campaign. Eventually feeding into a wider eco-system of mediation that included the Activestills website as well as a number of alternative news sites and blogs including +972 and current affairs website, Jadaliyya (Figure 63). The circulation and subsequent representation across diverse media platforms provided an opportunity for the women to ‘speak back’ (Parry & Aiello, 2014) in diverse ways that are not always about ‘voice’ or ‘access’. Instead, these photos could be said to truly represent the conditions of the village without drawing on the emotional tropes of pity, shock or guilt that often underpin most human rights actions.



Figure 63: Screen grab of the Female Participatory Photography project on the Middle Eastern Cultural affairs website, Jadaliyya (13 November 2012).

Capturing the inaccessibility of the trauma of their situation, the appeal of the participatory project, in contrast to limiting narratives produced by Israeli TV

and the RHR video projects, is rendered by what Andrea Liss calls opaque mimesis: 'a desire to stage what can and can never be fully represented, a strategy of opaque mimesis constitutes a relation to others that refuses to claim knowledge over their experience and seeks to retain some of the event's incomprehensibility' (1998: 132). By focusing on family and habitus, the participatory project also invited the spectator to look at the village in a different way, where one could see their hardship but also the conviction to persist.

To persist is part of Palestinian culture. A persistence to remain on the land, to become visible and to challenge the occupation, in my next chapter on the village of Bil'in, I will detail how they have persisted to resist the occupation for over ten years with weekly protests, every Friday Afternoon. Defined by creative practices and visually engaging process, the village of Bil'in has adopted visual activism and the use of the web since 2005.

Chapter 4:

Case Study 2: Bil'in: Making Popular Struggle Visible Online, 2005 – 2011

Nowhere else in the world do you see an on-going story that is performing itself each week; the story becomes auto-referential, it keeps producing the same pictures and the same images...

Marco Langari – Chief Photographer AFP Jerusalem¹
(Langari 2011)

I find myself looking at an olive tree, and as I am looking at it, it transforms itself before my eyes into a symbol of the samidin, of our struggle, of our loss.

Raja Shehadeh – The Third Way
(Shehadeh 1982)

This chapter deals specifically with the now defunct Bil'in village website (<http://www.bilin-village.org>). Approaching it as an archive, I will explore the numerous photographs on the official village website, active between 2005-2011; the website was accessible until 2013. In addition to examining the visual material held within the website's pages, I map the pictorial development of the homepage through its three stages: 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007 onwards.

I will investigate the role of the website as one element in a visual strategy employed by the Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall; a group of village

¹ This quote was taken from Marco Langari, in an interview with Andrew Lampard during the filming of Lampard's documentary; 'The Ritual' (2011). The documentary film is an examination of Israel's photojournalism apparatus and the coverage of the weekly demonstrations around East Jerusalem and the West Bank, following two specific photographers.

residents set up as an action group in response to the proposed development of the separation barrier, as a way to promote their struggle against the separation barrier to as wide an audience as possible. By doing so, I will firstly highlight the reproduction of the presence of the international community within the village, pictorially and through published text, secondly in how they promoted images of assertive and courageous contestation and lastly the emphasis placed upon the visible representation of creative and peaceful assembly. In each case, I argue that the website offered an alternate visibility to the pathologization of Palestinian culture as violent.²

As a key context through which to mobilise my argument, I suggest that the Bil'in website and the representations within, provided a space to dispute the assumption that, 'as a society [Palestinians] cannot pretend to generate the façade of normalcy [and thus] often highlight images of armed conflict to make the conditions of living under occupation *visible* to others' (Hochberg, 2015:10). As an alternative to Gil Hochberg's assertion, the Bil'in website can be understood as a space that enabled spectators to recognize that which exists outside the frame concerning Palestinian representation, which is the systematic effect of the occupation upon their lives, challenging their perceived dependency on disadvantageous tropes. Borrowing from Judith Butler (2009), Butler argues that 'something exceeds the frame of a photography and troubles our sense of reality' (2009: 71). This troubling sense of reality that exists beyond visualization is paradoxically weighted against how and what is presented to us in the frame itself. Such framing has 'instrumentalised' a certain version of reality (Butler, 2009: 71), whereby Palestinian culture has largely been framed as violent. This process of selection in terms of how Palestinians have been visualized or discussed (Morris, 2004) becomes one element of the systemic violence of the occupation. To recognize that photographic processes, as well as

² In a 2004 interview with Ari Shavit for the Israeli daily newspaper, entitled 'Survival of the Fittest', Israeli Historian Benny Morris referred to Palestinians as needing to be caged. Shavit, A. (2004), 'Survival of the fittest: An interview with Benny Morris', *Ha'aretz*, 16 January, www.haaretz.com. Accessed 20 July 2014.

photographic objects, help to shape an impression, the Bil'in website worked to challenge what was seen and understood in relation to Palestinian resistance vis-à-vis the value of their visibility. As a tool, the website helped to widen the frame of their representation, much like a photographers contact sheet, in an effort to 'show' beyond the limits of a specific instance or to challenge a specific impression.

Acknowledging the difficulties of dealing with a vast and diverse collection, some seven thousand photos, and the limitations of the Internet recovery tool *Internet Archive Wayback Machine* (IAWB), the chapter is also built around an existing knowledge of the website.³ Examining the visual material in this way helps to situate the 'village' (the residents, organising committee members and internationals) and its actions beyond the highly visible weekly protests that the village has become recognised for, regionally and internationally.⁴ As such, the Bil'in website provided a host of material that reframed the resistance in a number of ways that exemplifies the narrow gap between the photography of everyday life and the performed event as a way to chronicle their own struggle.

³ When I undertook my PhD in October 2011 the Bil'in website was still fully visible; having last been updated in the summer of 2011. Over the course of my initial research, I was able to access all aspects of the website until it went offline (due to inactivity or subscription payment for web hosting) in 2015. Thereafter, I gained limited access to aspects of the website via Internet Archive Tool – see introduction of the thesis for a discussion on the limitations of the Web Archive Tool capture facility.

⁴ As will be noted later in this chapter, the village of Bil'in attracted international attention with reports, discussions and articles featuring in a host of publications including Time, New York Times, The Guardian and The Economist as well as Israeli national publications and regional outputs such as the Lebanon Daily Star e.g.: 'Is There No Arab Spring In Palestine' 11 November 2011 – accessed on 15 September 2013 <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Opinion/Commentary/2011/Nov-11/153683-is-there-no-arab-spring-in-palestine.ashx#axzz1dPuvr76m>

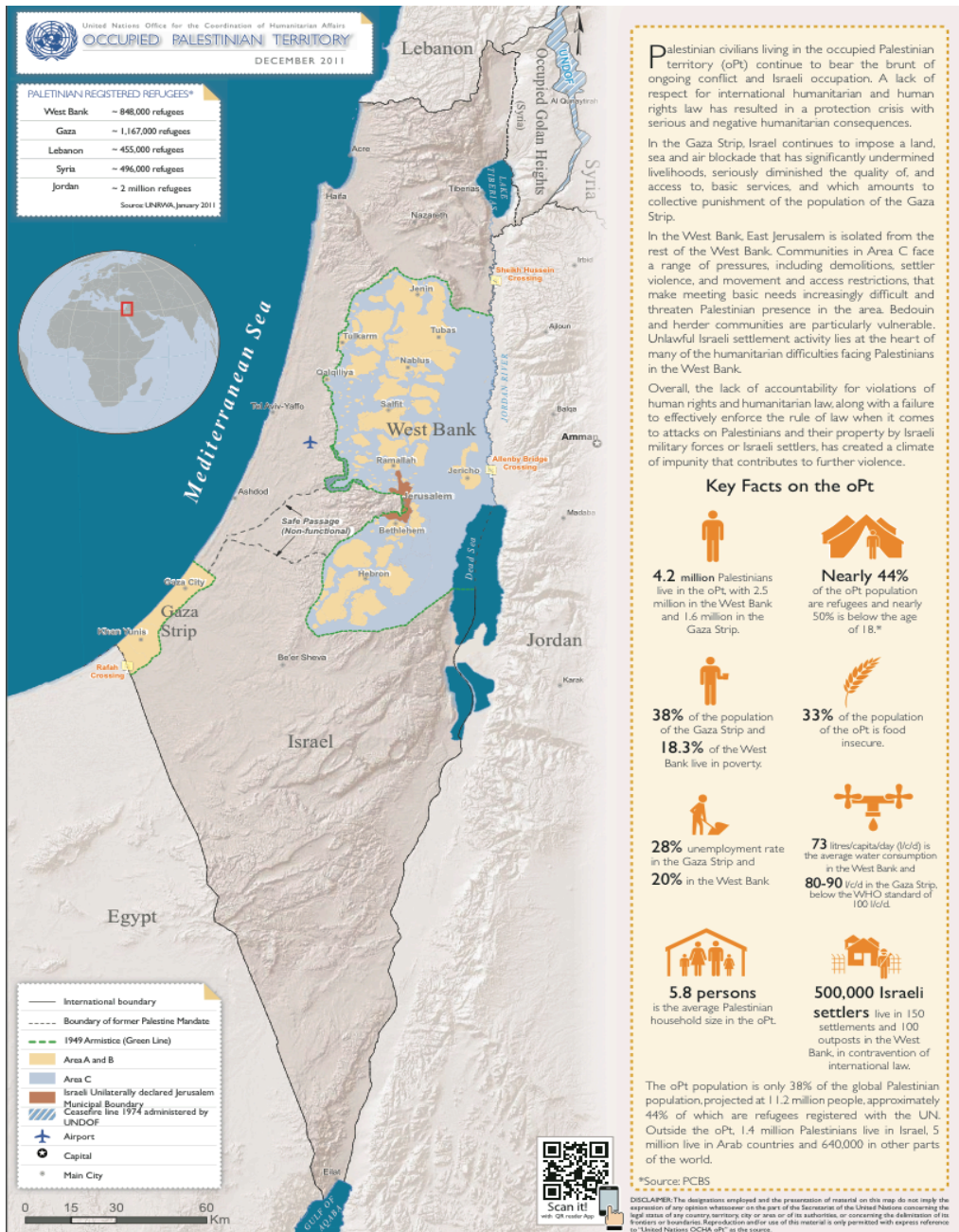


Figure 64: A map of the West Bank taken from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Source: https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ochaopt_atlas_opt_general_december2011.pdf – Map of the West Bank including the planned trajectory of the separation barrier. Accessed 7 July 2014.

4.1 From Mas'ha to Bil'in – Existing Literature and the Adoption of the Internet

Bil'in is a small agricultural village with roughly 1,800 residents. It is located 12 kilometers west of the city of Ramallah, the de-facto Palestinian capital. To the east stands the Israeli settlement of Modi'in Illit, which since the 1980s has consumed 55 percent of the village's 4,000 dunums (980 acres) as 'state land'. Just 4 kilometers east of the Green Line, Bil'in is also relatively close to Jerusalem. However, such proximity to Jerusalem and Ramallah does not guarantee the village is always accessible for those who are willing to participate in the weekly demonstrations held in the village.⁵ This lack, and often denial, of access to the village represents just one of a number of extreme inequalities at play in the OPT, and one of a number of challenges faced by the Popular Committee Against the Wall.

The Bil'in Popular Committee was established by two Bil'in residents, Abdallah Abu Rahma and Iyad Burnat, with support from the Israeli anti-occupation activists Anarchists Against the Wall (AAW).⁶ First called to action on 20th February 2005 when the first Israeli bulldozers came to uproot olive trees, making way for the construction of the separation barrier. Chaining themselves to the olive trees, a mainstay of rural Palestinian communities, Rahma and Burnat, along with some support from the village and AWW, prevented their uprooting and blocked the route of the bulldozers.

Decision making within the Popular Committee was delegated horizontally rather than a top down hierarchal fashion. More broadly, the Bil'in Committee operates in a non-hierarchical structure alongside committees from 12 neighboring villages

⁵ For an insightful and extensive discussion on the efforts and difficulties faced by Israelis and Internationals who try to reach Palestinian villages right across the West Bank see David Shulman (2007) *Dark Hope- Working for Peace in Israel and Palestine*. For a specific discussion outlining specific difficulties concerning Bil'in see Tanya Reinhart (2006) *The Road Map To Nowhere - Israel/Palestine since 2003*.

⁶See Laura Overmyer's interview with Abdallah Abu Rahma 21/11/2014 published in the German online political magazine, Qunatra.. Website: <https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-abdallah-abu-rahma-creative-resistance-to-barbed-wire-and-walls> Date accessed 06/12/2014.

known as the Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements.⁷ The addition of the word 'Settlement' to the broad title of this collective endeavor reflects the varied struggle and conditions of other West Bank villages within the committee. One specific case is the village of Nabi Saleh where the village's own popular committee conducts their weekly protests in response to the encroachment of Israeli settlements onto their agricultural land and the denial of access to the village spring.

The strength of this popular movement, specifically in Bil'in between 2004-2007, was built upon the way in which the Popular Committee Against the Wall, with the help of international solidarity activists, collectively applied a range of direct-action tactics during the construction of the separation barrier.⁸ Originally orientated around daily protests at the site of the barrier construction, Bil'in found its rhythm by moving to weekly protests. With the interim goals of the nonviolent resistance aimed at driving up the material costs of the barrier's construction, the protest helped to delay. Therefore this delay worked as a de facto stalling mechanism to provide additional time for those providing a legal challenge to the barrier's construction. In 2007, the Popular Committee's efforts were partly rewarded when, on 4 September, the Israeli High Court deemed the barrier's trajectory to be illegal and ordered the barrier to be re-routed. The separation barrier was eventually completed in 2011, however due to the court case, the new route of the barrier

⁷ There are varying accounts of the exact membership and which villages are included. Tanya Reinhart (2005: 200) refers to '9 villages' making explicit reference to Budrus, Rantis, Dir Balut, Niyalin, Midya, Kibya, Biddu, Bil'in between pages 198-217. In addition, The Bil'in homepage makes references, with hyperlinks to solidarity webpages for Abud, Iraq Burin, and Nil'in and the Popular Struggle website www.popularstruggle.org details how the coordination committee, in a similar vein to the Popular Committee, worked to unite Palestinian villages at threat of the expanding separation barrier, listing Bil'in, Ni'ilin and alMaasara in addition to Tulkarem and Nablus, which in total counts 13 villages. However, in an article, published on 14 July 2015 in Open Democracy entitled, *Nonviolent Resistance in Palestine: Steadfastness, Creativity and Hope*, authored by Katharine Hughes-Fraitekh, the article refers to "12 active villages in the West Bank, including Budrus, Nabi Saleh, and Nil'in, and the newest member, Khan Younis, Gaza", though no complete list is cited. As this is the latest publication, I have adopted the figure of 12 as a working number. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/civilresistance/katherine-hughesfraitekh/nonviolent-resistance-in-palestine-steadfastness-creativity-and-hope> accessed 20/07/2014.

⁸ An article citing 10 years of nonviolent resistance can be found here: <http://972mag.com/a-consciouness-free-of-occupation-bilin-marks-10-years-of-popular-struggle/103266/>

ensured that 600 dunams (148 acres) of agricultural land were relinquished back to the village.

4.2 Three Strategies of Struggle in the Village

Since the development of the separation barrier on village land in 2005, the village of Bil'in and their Popular Committee Against the Wall (from here on this will be referred to as the Popular Committee) have placed a great deal of importance on the production and management of imagery related to their non-violent resistance in opposition to its construction. By regularly engaging in a range of visual performances and protests the villagers, led by the Popular Committee, sought to disrupt the barrier's development and draw in media attention, highlighting the oppressive nature of the occupation and specifically its effects upon the village. Through their efforts, the Popular Committee has succeeded in gaining a degree of visibility for the village's cause, locally and internationally, which, before moving onto the website, can be identified in three specific ways.

4.2.1 Joint Struggle

Firstly, the Popular Committee worked to establish an image of the Israeli-Palestinian "joint struggle" (Hallward, 2009). As a useful linguistic and visual strategy, adopted throughout the Bil'in village website the term and the documented efforts of joint struggle afforded the village a different kind of visibility. Such an approach worked to position the village's resistance to the development of the separation barrier as a commonly perceived injustice and an affront to human rights, regardless of their nationality. Fostering the impression of a cohesive Jewish/Arab alliance in Bil'in functioned as a challenge to the fundamental binary between Arabs and Jews.



Figure 65: Internationals protest in Bil'in at the 4th International Conference on Grassroots Resistance, held in the name of Bassem Abu Rahmah, wearing Bassem Abu Rahmah t-shirts. These t-shirts were based on a design for a commemorative poster used in subsequent protests, which also became the basis for a memorial plaque placed in the Bil'in village Peace Gardens.

In doing so, the efforts of the joint struggle worked to secure the “mainstream attention of foreign eyes” (Loewenstein, 2012: 174) that had already been established during the early years of the Second Intifada, through the sheer intensity of the violence. Working to shift the focus of an existing spectatorship, and engage new communities of spectatorship, the well curated effort of the Bil'in website reinforced and mobilized the agency of joint-struggle; specifically in relation to the lack of positive visualizations of Palestinians. As one key aspect, the notion of joint struggle invited those who saw the issue of the occupation as a binary opposition of culture, to look anew.



Figure 66: Internationals protest in Bil'in at the 4th International Conference on Grassroots Resistance held in the name of Bassem Abu Rahmah, wearing Bassem Abu Rahmah t-shirts and holding the French national flag, the European Union flag and the commemorative poster of Bassem Abu Rahmah.

The visualization of an international presence within the village could be seen as a proximate indicator of the village's civility, openness and internationalism; such an inclusion extends the referential frame commonly associated to Palestinian culture. As each image on the Bil'in website is selected with specific communicative intent, both Figure 65 and Figure 66 are key examples of this process and represent two prominent themes within the website. While in Figure 65 the focus is on co-existence and exchange, both verbally and culturally, whereby the internationals or (Israeli's) are seen to share a moment that brings smiles, whilst wearing a Palestinian scarf or keffiyah as a sign of solidarity or recognition for their struggle. In Figure 66, internationals, denoted by their skin tone and the adoption of two flags, on the left of the frame a European Union flag and on the right, the French

national flag to signify their nationality, or some aspect of national inference to their relationship with the village. Significantly both images also depict non-Palestinians wearing a motif of Bassem Abu Rahmah, a village resident killed by Israeli forces during a protest in 2009. Presumably taken from the same day and event, the uniformity of the t-shirt bespeaks a sense of occasion, unity for a specific cause and the collective demand for justice, as well as a shared sense of memorialization for human loss in the face of ongoing Israeli injustice.

The focus upon Israeli's and internationals as part of the collective struggle against the development of the security barrier validated the claim of the Popular Committee. Standing in for the vacancy of a legitimate Palestinian visibility and voice within a number of visual fields (including press, politics and human rights), the use of joint struggle as a term and a visibility afforded a sense of eligibility to the life of the residents. Thus, the 'joint' aspect highlighted a Palestinian willingness that has long existed, but is rarely visualized. In addition, the development of Palestinian popular resistance, alongside anti-occupation support from the Israeli left and later international activists, also carried with it the possibility for profound 'social and educational value' as well as strong political sentiment (Svirsky, 2012: 121).

4.2.2 Repurposing Culturally Resonant Themes

Secondly, once established, the Popular Committee worked to successfully "repurpose popular culture towards social justice" (Jenkins 2010). Situating the plight of the village in relation to specific iconographic motifs resonated with a range of audiences through varied protests. Perhaps the most visible of these protests-cum-performances came on 12th February 2010 when the Popular Committee and internationals adopted the blue skinned motif of the Na'vi character from James Cameron's Hollywood blockbuster, *Avatar* (2009). As an easily 'spreadable' theme, the affordances of digital media provided a catalyst for reconceptualizing other aspects of the Bil'in village and its political condition that required spectators to rethink the effect of the separation barrier as well as being able to see the violence of the IDF to unarmed protesters.

Uploaded to YouTube in 2010 by two separate video activists, the first video is entitled *Bilin Reenacts Avatar Film 12-02-2010 By Haitham Al Katib* with a running length of 3:03 and 271,125 views at the time of writing.⁹



Figure 67: Screen grab of Haitham Al Katib's video upload to YouTube – accessed 27/02/2016.

A second video is entitled *Bilin Reenacts Avatar Film 12-02-2010 emadbornat* [sic], has a running length of 3:25 and 55,057 views. Emadbornat's video opens with one of the international protesters directly addressing the camera before the start of the protest; situating the forthcoming protest in the context of the Avatar film¹⁰ Drawing comparisons between the Palestinian dispossession of land and that of the Na'vi, splicing emotive scenes from the Avatar film, consistent with the scenes and actions played out across the West Bank, including the uprooting of trees and disproportionate use of power and violence against the 'natives' in the main both videos follow the conventions of village-based protest videos. In each case the visual

⁹ Full video uploaded to YouTube is accessible here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Chw32qG-M7E>

¹⁰ Full video uploaded to YouTube is accessible here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KStnbXWfnuk>

activist documents the protest from varying angles, beginning with a procession from the village to the site of the separation barrier before being dispersed by tear gas canisters fired by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF).



Figure 68: Screen grab of Emadbornat's video uploaded to YouTube accessed 27/02/2016.

Reproduced multiple times when searching the YouTube archive for Bil'in and other Palestinian villages, each video follows a narrative that is locked in the causality of events, between the limited role of the protesters and the default IDF response. Defined as 'Avatar Activism' by Henry Jenkins (2010) this action was one of many visual performances carried out at the site where the separation barrier stands. The repurposing of a popular culture motif preformed and recorded with the specific intention of remediation online, feeds into Henry Jenkins (2010) argument concerning the pervasive form of media circulation. This is similar to the strategies employed by civic media campaigners, who, unlike commercial producers, are not 'torn between their desire to create buzz and their interest in monetizing and regulating the flow of material' (Jenkins, 2010: 219). The directness of such an approach enables civic media producers, video activists and political action groups

like the Popular Committee to seek out participatory platforms in the hope that their message is moved on, reposted, shared and ultimately seen. Such a 'spreadability' allows these groups to design and circulate compelling media content, building stronger affiliations with a public, that Jenkins suggests, 'plays a much more active role in spreading their message' (Jenkins, 2010: 220).

Far from opportunistic, such visual performances are part of a more sophisticated understanding of what resources "politically weak agents can mobilize in a long term struggle against the power of a sovereign state" (Faulkner, 2010). While undoubtedly successful in drawing in international attention, this action is complemented by a wide-ranging repertoire of visual performances recorded and presented on the Bil'in village website. Thus reflecting the Popular Committee's commitment to visual performance as an engaging tool. Moreover, it bespoke of a knowing ability to draw on a host of motifs as well as iconic and contemporary events, opening up alternative ways for Palestinian actors to claim the right to remain on their land and establish their own state.

4.2.3 Migratory images, props and visual performances

Thirdly, the village developed a range of attention-grabbing theatrical nonviolent protests that stood alongside the adoption of identifiable, transnational motifs (such as peace signs and doves) or historic and contemporary events that were easily reframed. The latter included the adoption of Holocaust iconography including gold stars and striped clothing. Such strong images, produced in this specific context, reflect a sophisticated understanding of powerful imagery that produces strong reading for all who encounter it, via its mediated form online, and directly as it happens, offline.¹¹ Actions, like those mentioned, are discussed by Rania Jawad (2011) who notes that the Popular Committee, supported by village residents and

¹¹ For an extended discussion on this see Simon Faulkner's post, "Not just Avatar Activism" dated 18 September 2010: <https://simonsteachingblog.wordpress.com>

internationals, adopted a discourse of nonviolence underpinned by highly visible theatricality that continues to frame the Palestinian village of Bil'in and its residents' struggle against the Israeli confiscation of their lands (Jawad, 2011: 129). Noa Roei (2011) mobilizes the work of Jacques Rancière (2004) to discuss how the Popular Committee and the villagers use of props and sculptures allows for a new form of political subjectivity to emerge when considered in their original form, as a material part of the protest, but also when the objects are removed from their political context and reexamined in a gallery setting.¹² Building upon this, Simon Faulkner (2014) notes that these visual performances, when recorded by the multiplicity of spectators in situ, such as activists, documentarians and researchers, can nomadically move across varied media platforms. Developing upon Hans Belting's (2011) idea, Faulkner recognizes that the Committee and their performative action, props and sculptures are exemplar manifestations of 'pre-existing images traveling to and through image events' (Faulkner, 2014: 13). Working from the position that the image is not reducible to the medium, but instead, functions as a 'support, host and tool for the image' in question (Belting, 2011: 5), is useful in this context. As we shall see, the construction of the Bil'in homepage and the Bil'in websites' supplementary galleries were brought together from a diverse constituency of media users. Thus, by detailing how the images on the website have traveled across a number of digital platforms and between a range of media, I will suggest that these images represent the assemblage of sources that fed into the curatorial process undertaken by the Popular Committee and their ability to engage a multiplicity of spectators both on and offline.¹³

¹² The sculptures that were presented in the "Fence Art" exhibition at the *Minshar for Art* gallery in March 2006 were all part of these weekly demonstrations in the Village of Bil'in.

¹³ The various forms of spectatorship included, NGOs, local, national and sometimes international politicians, various media, outputs and representatives, protesters, Israeli police and IDF soldiers.

Visibility Making Practices

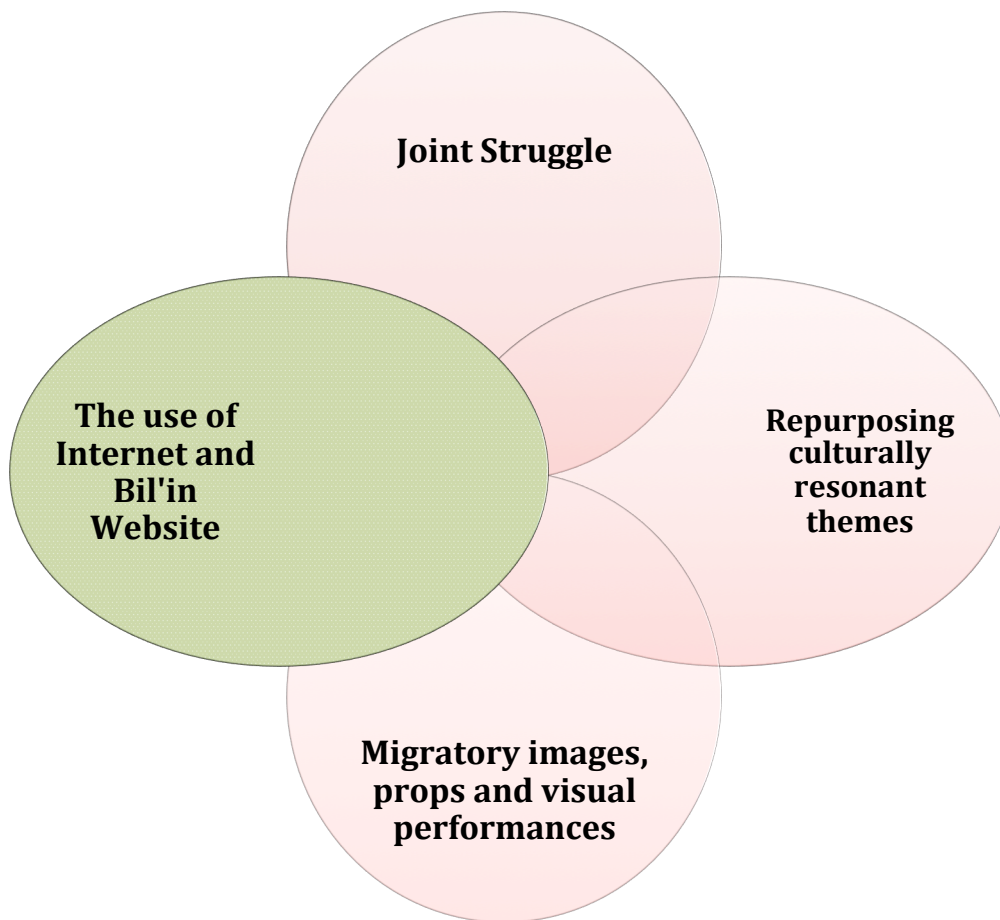


Figure 69: Diagram of 'Visibility Making Practices': The Bil'in Popular Committee's visual strategy, visualised as a cohesive interlinked strategy.

In order to recognize the relationship between the three aspects of the struggle, in relation to the website, Figure 69 highlights how the three visibility making practices, *Joint struggle*, *repurposing of culturally resonant themes* and the *migration of props and performances across space and time*, were all anchored by the Bil'in website. As the only medium that the Popular Committee had full control over, in terms of its mediation, framing and representation, the website pulled in each form of visibility making, knitting each practice together to communicate one coherent image and impression of resistance. While each aspect of the Popular Committee's

visual strategies have their own economies and have been considered in their own right, I suggest that each strategy is, without the website, just a fragment, disrupted by time and the everydayness of the occupation. Thus, it is my assertion that the website itself, as a site of investigation, requires interpretation and investigation as a space that holistically frames the village as a multifaceted site of resistance. Along with Friday afternoon protests, the staging of exhibitions or the release of a Hollywood blockbuster, each event is conceived within its own timeframe, relative to a series of external factors. These include the response of the IDF to their protest, limitations on movement both in the village and to/from as a result of blockades and embargos, as well as wider issues including the availability of gallery spaces or the ability of a global audience to understand the inter-textual relationship between Avatar and the OPT. Exploring the website as an additional strategy, as well as vehicle upon which the three interrelated visibility making approaches (joint struggle/repurposing of culturally resonate themes/migratory images, props and visual performances) provides a comprehensive overview of the Popular Committee's value judgment on the visual and the Internet as a communicative weapon.

While the website lacked the immediacy and presence of the three alternate approaches, Figure 69 as a political tool, reflects photography's bias towards a 'fragmentary eventfulness rather than coherent purposefulness' (Harrimen, 159: 2014). Borrowing from Harrimen's comment on the visualization of war in a general sense, in the context of slow, or disparate conflicts, such fragmentary processes, I argue, acquire additional significance when viewed as a comprehensive whole. Multiple images of various events can become a resource for revealing the nature of a situation, which when brought together, creates a narrative coherence produced in part by the audience's ability to see the bigger picture, and the Popular Committee's efforts to frame it.¹⁴

¹⁴ One such similar example is the analysis of drone imagery and the multiple sites in which the US is actively participating in air strikes. As of February 2016, the US military were present and active in 7 specific conflicts. Particularly useful in producing coherent information into submersible bites is the

The Popular Committee, its supporters and the villagers, were clearly informed media spectators who knowingly co-opted the spectatorial attention gained through their weekly Friday protests. In doing so the villagers sought to utilize the multiple media producers (national and international) in attendance. Alongside the three established visibility making practices (joint struggle, repurposing culturally resonant themes and migratory images, props and performances), which developed as a result of the Popular Committee's creative efforts, the establishment of their own web presence should also be considered as an additional dimension within the visual strategy of their outwardly facing mediations. What I refer to as the 'visual strategy' is represented by Figure 69 in a fundamental sense, as a range of visibility making exercises, but also helps us to think about how the interrelated value of each component works as part of one greater whole. The website makes up an important element of this visual strategy because it offered the Popular Committee a highly image orientated space which they could develop over time, alongside the other three elements addressed in the preceding literature review. Here, the recognition of how the Popular Committee worked both on and offline to curate an image reflects an acute understanding of the relationships between visibility making practices and visuality. Each of which point to a difference within the visual, as among how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein (Foster, 1988: ix).

Recognizing that images are more than representations, because they are also 'resources, mediators, that along with words, give shape to ideas and practices' (Radley, 2010: 268), the status of the image is therefore dependent upon a number of iterations. From a 'sociology of images perspective' (Burri, 2012), how the Popular Committee used the persuasive power of images and deployed them in communication reaffirms Foster's idea that vision/the visual is not homogenous.

recent use of data-visualizations related to large volumes of figures, contextual ways. For an Israel-Palestinian specific context see 'Visualizing Palestine' <http://visualizingpalestine.org/#about> presented in tangible and easily accessible way.

Asking what has been made visible and why, what has been kept hidden, unarticulated or unvoiced, made opaque or suggested, (Wagner, 2006) can also be examined as not just mere representation to-be-interpreted but as an active process of social and technological relations that feed into the visual strategy of the Popular Committee's action.

4.3 The Website

Visibility is not a free-floating aspect of social interaction. Rather it is subject to varying regimes and power dynamics. One of the most contested battlegrounds concerning political visibility in relation to Israel-Palestine is located at the interface between the domains of the technical and the social (see Kuntsman, 2015). In this regard, one of the characteristic features of late modern war is its mediatization. Recognizing the failures of the Mas'ha protest camp, in relation to its lack of centrality and dependence on traditional media outlets, the Popular Committee of Bil'in recognized that their image and control over its mediation could only be fully achieved through the conception of their own web-presence.

The Bil'in website was established in late 2005 and its first archived trace is dated at 10 December 2015 (see Figure 70). Originally a French language website, the homepage was a simple design with a very basic interface. A landscape image of olive groves placed at the top of the webpage, linked the web-user to information concerning: the village, activities, maps, testimonials, photos and video, other villages, links and finally, contacts.



Figure 70: Screen grab of the first Bil'in homepage, retrievable 10 December 2005.

Below the tabs, the website homepage was split into two sections, separated by six thumbnail images of activity in the village.

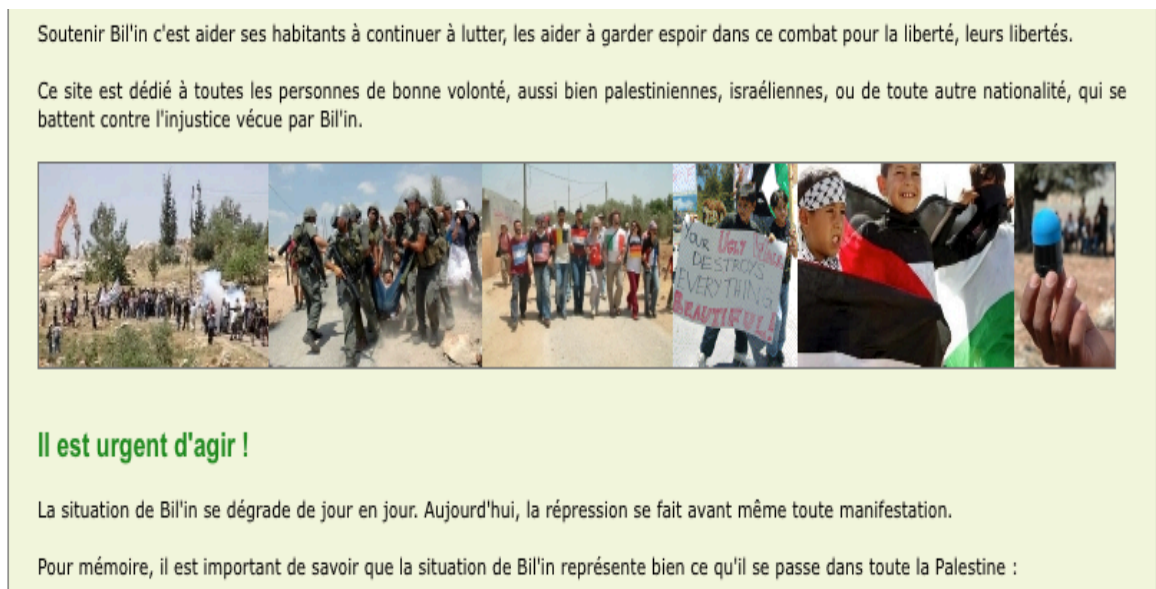


Figure 71: Mini gallery of images presented on the first home page in an effort to represent their struggle as a narrative.

The mini gallery of images (Figure 71) reflects the limited range of images available to the Popular Committee at the time of publishing (6 from a total of 47 photographs in the image gallery), but also efforts and consequences of their resistance. Reading the images from left to right, the first image characterises the formula of the then daily Bil'in village protests. Taken during the early phases of the separation barrier's development, the photographer captures a demonstration procession to what appears to be the site of the separation barrier's construction. Taken from a vantage point that affords the photographer and spectator a greater sense of perspective, the photograph hints at the separation barrier's development; in the distance we see the imperious presence of heavy machinery. A visually jarring object against the agrarian landscape, a melee of protesters tightly pack themselves on the path beneath, to the right of the photo a grey cloud rises from the ground. Through the repetitious nature of the protest, from its initiation at the village centre, down the path to the construction site, through to its eventual dispersal, we realise that the smoke is the result of an IDF tear gas canister, signalling the end of the peaceful protest. With the heavy machinery a telling sign of the disparity power, image 2 and the last, image 6 within Figure 71, reinforces the asymmetry of applied force. In image 2, we are presented with what we can assume is the arrest of a protester; forcefully removed from the scene by 7 IDF soldiers who pack the frame of the photo. To the right of the image a woman appears to hurriedly vacate the photographer's frame, perhaps moving out of the way of the oncoming IDF pack, loose dust is visible in the foreground suggesting that the arrest is carried out at pace. Armed with guns, each wearing a helmet, the militarisation of the space and the event is compounded by the final image within the collection in Figure 71 of a hand holding a discharged tear gas canister or sound grenade. Both typically used against Palestinians in the West Bank, the hand holds the object as a visual testimony of the force applied by the IDF. The evidential nature of the image is reflected in the tight framing of the object and the hand that presents it. Sharply focused within the foreground of the photo, the blurred background details the outline of a gathering under the shade of a tree. Images 3, 4 and 5 (within Figure 71)

offer an impression of what the IDF violently repress and a sample of the various forms of creativity that underpin the early anti-barrier protests. Image 3, a procession of protesters wearing international flags and walking towards the camera is perhaps one of the first creative actions undertaken in response to the development of the barrier, and an image which, as I will discuss later in this chapter, represents an effective visual theme that permeates across the lifespan of the Bil'in village website. In image 4 the viewer is introduced to the first of two separate images of children. Holding a handwritten sign, which reads, '*your ugly wall destroys everything beautiful!*' (see Figure 72) the poster represents a long history of oppositional slogans carried in protest contexts that reflect the nature and tone of the event.



Figure 72: Screen grab of a handwritten protest sign, which reads, '*your ugly wall destroys everything beautiful!*' taken from the first Bil'in homepage (Pixilation is due to the poor quality of image represented via the Internet Archive Tool).

Visual culture is a performance, those who engage in protest perform their politics, through action and voice in specific places that amplify their visibility or reinforce their position. Part of this performance is the handwritten sign, which is akin to Nicholas Mirzoeff's idea of visual thought/thinking (2015) in terms of the use of graffiti on the streets of Egypt during the 2011 Arab Spring. Produced as a seemingly spontaneous response to the day's event, the sign is handwritten and on paper; not the mass-produced signs often seen at professionally organised rallies like those witnessed in the UK in 2014 during and after Israel's military action against Gaza, *Operation Protective Edge* (Figures 73 and 74).



Figure 73: Image of hand held signs at an anti-occupation rally in London.



Figure 74: Images of hand held signs at an anti-occupation rally in London.

Held aloft by sticks to extend the visibility of the placards, the signs used to protest against *Operation Protective Edge* were almost all professionally produced, with graphic design elements, superimposed images with the national flags of Palestine and occasionally Israel, or an Israeli public figure, such as PM Benjamin Netanyahu, as seen in the right of Figure 74. By contrast, the poster is clearly a homemade object that fits in with a long-standing do it yourself (DIY) ethos to public protest in relation to communicating a message or anchoring the vision of a camera, spectator or opponent. Such handwritten signs, like those commonly found at spontaneous protests often invite dialogue. Who does the wall belong to, its ugliness, the notion of 'everything' and 'beauty' are all subjective and open to debate. The fifth image in the sequence of Figure 71, and the last to be examined, presents the web-user with the image of three small boys, smiling, and holding a Palestinian flag with one small boy hiding his face. Tightly framed, the boys look away from the camera, perhaps with the exception of the one who covers his face who may have recognised its presence. The use of children as mediators of a possible lost future, or to represent those who may one day achieve their own statehood, is inductive of the critical understanding of symbolic imagery as a powerful tool. To represent those who are

most at risk, women, children and the elderly function as a key register related to the emotional effect that is 'intended to act upon the emotional facilities of the spectator' (Cohen, 2001: 183).

As a constitutive whole, the six small images narrate the cycle of village life concerning the development of the barrier. They protest, with and without internationals, often creatively, in response to the barrier and the IDF, running the risk of detention, arrest and disproportionate violence; violence that is, so the sequence shows, often applied against children.

The top section of the homepage, under the title "*Meet, Talk, Share, Communicate about Bil'in*", listed a series of dates throughout November and December 2005 at locations across France where the Popular Committee leader, Mohamed Khatib, would speak about the village, the occupation and the popular resistance against the separation barrier.¹⁵ The final section of the homepage framed the Popular Committee's efforts, and the threat to the village related to a number of legal contexts. Pressing the web-visitor to 'urgently act', the homepage sketched out a number of key constitutional facts against which the Israeli State was culpable under the Geneva Convention, including the controlling military presence over Palestinian land.

On the early homepage there was a clear effort to situate the villagers' struggle within the wider context of the occupation of Palestinian land by the Israeli State. As stated on the homepage, below the direction to 'urgently act', visitors to the website were reminded that,

"For the record, it is important to know that the situation in Bil'in represents what is happening in the whole of Palestine" and that, "the occupation of

¹⁵ In addition to some general information on the village and its current conditions, including the efforts by the Israeli State to annex 60% of village land, the introductory text reiterated the peaceful and [at the time] daily demonstrations at, what the villagers referred to as, the "construction site of shame" (Bil'in-village.org 10.12.2005).

Palestine by the Israeli armed forces is an injustice recognized by the UN, the International Court of The Hague, as well as all international bodies (Bil'in-village.org 10.12.2005).

In this way, the website sought early on to 'set the record straight' through a number of mediums that helped articulate the efforts of the Popular Committee and its international support.

Bringing together a range of visual materials, including maps, photos and videos, assisted the communicative efforts of the Popular Committee, helping to make better sense of the contested space, the struggle and the economic and social impact of the separation barrier on their lives and livelihood. In conjuncture with the linguistic strategy of "joint struggle", this collective effort was also clearly visible throughout the website, reinforced by various imagery on the homepage and in the galleries (Figure 85). Albeit a French language site, the Internet offered the Popular Committee the first space dedicated to the effort on the ground. As the first step in the development of a situated online presence the very existence of the website, the nature of its content, such as Mohamed Khatib's tour of France and the early visual content, reflect a close partnership with international groups.

Quick to embrace and adopt international activists the symbols related to their national origin such as flags, the Popular Committee worked to leverage this relationship to a develop specific global/local interconnectedness that was evident in the inception of the website, its development and in the relationship between on and offline visibility making. As a result, the Popular Committee's struggle was "marketed" (Bob, 2005) all over the world. Those who participated in the weekly protest, namely activists from Europe, could speak English, French or Spanish fluently while being interviewed. Returning to their home countries, the international activists participated in information campaigns, offering firsthand testimonies and arranged meetings to spread the word and further extend their

action.¹⁶ This development is significant as it shows the early relationship with the French solidarity group, the *Campagne Civile Internationale Pour la Protection du Peuple Palestinien*, translated as the *International Civil Campaign for the Protection of the Palestinian People* (CCIPPP).

Using the web archive tool to view the website, it is evident that the Bil'in homepage was a French language website from its inception on 10 December 2005 until 2 April 2006. From 2005 through to the end of 2006, those exploring the website found regular references to CCIPPP along with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), with both non-profit organisations identified as two of 'many organisations that have set up civil missions in Palestine' (Bilin-village.org 03.05.2006). Providing web-links to the homepage of each organisation (the CCIPPP website and organisation now seem defunct) under the contact section of the Bil'in website offered international web-visitors a link to organisations who facilitated trips "to Palestine to observe and return to testify" (Bilin-village.org 03.05.2006). The use of witness testimony, specifically from the CCIPPP and the ISM as well as from other grassroots organisations such as Stop the Wall, Palestine Monitor and Indybay, an Independent, non-commercial 'Media Centre' located in the San Francisco Bay Area of the United States, made up the majority of the early field reports available on the Bil'in website and archived under the 'News' tab. Subcategorised under the heading "News of Bil'in (actions of nonviolent resistance, demonstrations, testimonies...)[sic]" the reports were listed in chronological order from December 2004 to December 2006 where the last retrievable content can be found through the Internet archive tool. The early content was sub-headed by

¹⁶ As part of the CCIPPP charter, volunteers were encouraged to go, witness and report back on their findings. A 10-point document that each volunteer was required to sign, the charter specifically stated that each volunteer must (translated from French): "Testify on the actions taken and the situation in Palestine and in particular, by producing documents to send to contact@protestion-palestine.org the CCIPP make public..." During the mission, sending information, whenever possible, in the form of telegrams or chronic, small photo reports as often are the only international witnesses of great emergency situations that the "conventional" media ignore; the daily meetings of the group may be a good place to prepare these items;...After my return, by telling the mission in the form of a report, folder, reflections, a photo report or film. See appendix for full Mission Statement and Charter.

month and year and followed the format of field reports and testimonies related to that specific day's action or protest. Varying in tone and content, the reports focused on early nonviolent protest activity, the destruction of olive groves by IDF patrols, attacks on women and children in addition to positive reflections, often by internationals (Figures 75 and 76).¹⁷ These publications worked to humanise the impression of the villagers and more broadly worked to reframe representation of Palestinians by reflecting on time spent in the village, the hospitality of the villagers, their courage and commitment.

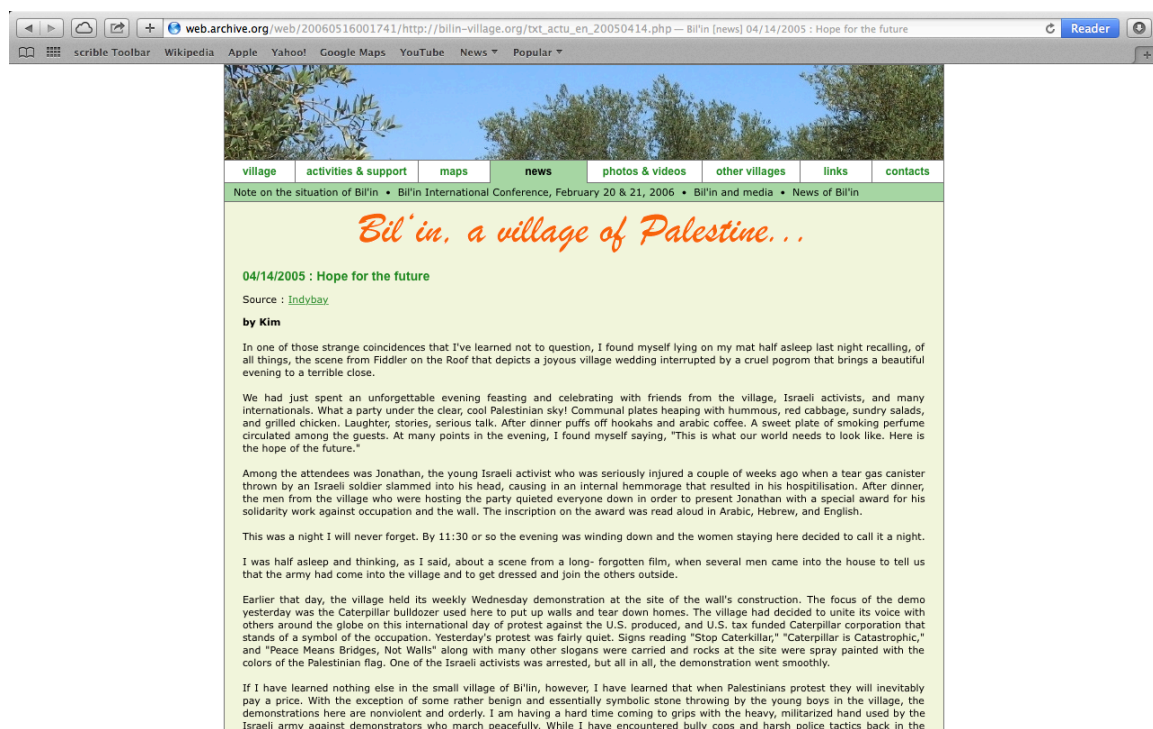


Figure 75: Testimony from an international visitor of their experience in Bil'in. Originally posted on Indybay, a politically left orientated American forum.

¹⁷ Original Indybay post by 'Kim' entitled 'Hope for the Future' 04.14.2005 can be found here: <http://web.archive.org/web/20060516231322/http://www.indybay.org/>



Figure 76: Testimony from an international visitor of their experience in Bil'in. Originally posted on Indybay, a politically left orientated American forum.

Both the ISM and CCIPPP were founded in 2001 and operated on 'Palestinian-led' issues (Palsolidarity.org 05.02.2006 & CCIPPP.org 05.02.2006) through the application of nonviolent, direct-action against the confiscation of land in the West Bank. Each group also promoted the will to document any injustices witnessed (visual or otherwise) as a means of addressing the perceived imbalance concerning Palestinian matters and/or unjust action by the Israeli State (Government IDF or the border police) or its representatives e.g. settler violence. The ISM clearly contributed to the development of multinationalism in the village by supporting villagers during protests and olive harvests, offering a modicum of protection to the residents by virtue of their presence and then disseminating material online, which is still a mainstay of the ISM movement. From the beginning, the form and content of the website was the result of the CCIPPP partnership with the Popular Committee. Much like the ISM, the CCIPPP existed to 'act, testify and break isolation' with and on behalf of the 'citizens of Palestine' working in part to send delegations to the OPT through their 'mission' project. As an anti-occupation, anti-neoliberal organisation, the CCIPPP mission was set up to enable 'Western Europeans' the opportunity to

experience the conditions of the Israeli occupation, 'to witness and document what they saw' and to 'work proactively on the ground to assist the Palestinian community in a number of actions including olive harvesting' (CCIPPP-org 14.07.2005).

To think about the Bil'in website, specifically the homepage as a 'support, host or tool' for images, helps us to think about the role of photography in terms of the relationship between image making and visibility making. Between 13 January 2006 and 2 April 2006 the Bil'in website was updated to include an enter-page (see Figure 77.). The enter-page replaced the original homepage as the first element of web content visible to a web-user via the web address www.bilin-village.org. Once loaded, the web-user was offered four different language options: French, English, Arabic and Hebrew. The shift from a French language only website to a quartet of languages that included Hebrew, Arabic and English reflected the perceived multinational traffic to the website, while mirroring the prevalent network of international solidarity activists associated with the village. This linguistic mirroring also echoed the four primary solidarity groups affiliated to the action in the village through the contact page, which by early to mid 2006 included the Palestinian/American ISM, Israeli peace activists, Gush Shalom and the French group, the CCIPP.



Figure 77: Second Bil'in homepage – Between 13 January 2006 and 2 April 2006.

The new homepage provided a slicker, cleaner and more professional first impression of the village through the website. Moreover a greater focus on the visual was placed upon the communication aspect of the website. Placing greater emphasis on images rather than text began to stand in for the aims and goals of the on-going resistance. Examining Figure 77, the web-user is met with the image of two Palestinian men, encircled by the frame of the image, standing at the top of an olive tree and waving the Palestinian national flag. The image's use and purpose fitted with the perceived visual logic of the Popular Committee. The image within the frame can be understood as representatively symbolic of the national struggle over land and Palestinian identity, in effect, metonymically standing in for decades of steadfast action, crafted through words and phrases by poets and scholars, as well as deed and image. The framing device used to present the image, taking the shape of an unbroken sphere surrounded by the multiple languages through which the website's content was made accessible, is another characteristic of the rhetorical power of images. The second homepage follows the visual rationale of its earlier predecessor, however, this time, the emphasis is on a singular image that is centrally

mounted on the homepage, atop of the now consistent, off-yellow background. The selective use of specific images on the various Bil'in homepages, chosen over the time period of the websites existence, represented a deliberate attempt to present an impression of resistance, steadfastness alongside an element of unjust victimization.¹⁸ By framing the villagers' struggle in terms of the relationship between the Israeli state and the occupied population, I shall outline in the concluding section of this chapter, the power of images, specifically grouped together to give a more holistic impression of life in the village vis-à-vis life under occupation. I will pay specific attention to the homepages and throughout the galleries to frame the impression of the residents and their supporters as resolute in their action.

Taking into account the social practices and contexts of image production the continued development of the Bil'in website can be identifiably linked to the early established relationship with the CCIPPP. Tracking the lineage of an image is sometimes obscure, but as Simon Faulkner (2013) writes, it is part of the nature of images as things that can "exist and be adapted over time, between multiple mediums and locations" (Faulkner, 17: 2013). What instigates this journey can be the result of a number of determining factors including ones technological capability to take, share and publish digital images. Thus, we must not only consider the impact of foreign assistance on the ground, as modicums of protection against settler attacks or IDF patrols or in their currency as social actors to draw in or enhance international attention, but also as carriers of word and image as proponents of web-communication.

Within the context of Bil'in, the early support of the CCIPPP provided the Popular Committee with the technology to quickly develop and maintain an early web presence while much of the OPT were subject to a range of 'infrastructural' modes of

¹⁸ This approach can be considered in contrast to the direct image of victimization alluded to by Lori Allen in her fieldwork in the West Bank during the same time period where she was presented with images of death by Palestinians, as a call for justice. See Lori Allen's article 'Martyr Bodies in the Media: Human Rights, Aesthetics and the Politics of Immediation in the Palestinian Intifada, 2009, p.161 in *American Ethnologist*.

violence that included import limitations on hardware and software ICTs as well as access to high speed Internet. Making comparisons with the restriction on Palestinian movement in a physical sense, Tawil-Souri (2011) identifies how, through a neo-liberal approach to Israeli development, the virtual world and specifically Palestinian digital movement is subject to 'checkpoints' and nodes that serve to limit, bind, and contain flows which she calls virtual or high-tech enclosures. These virtual walls and closures are identified in the numerous ways Israel manages and controls the usage of telephony communications, communication masts, digital and analogue exchanges amongst others (Tawil-Souri, 2011).

It is fair to suggest that during the mid to late stages of Second Intifada, the Bil'in website was established outside of the OPT, either in Israeli, where ICT software and the Internet was accessible, or abroad, in France. Around the same time as the development of the Bil'in website, the leader of the Palestinian authority, Mahmoud Abbas, declared at the World Summit Information Society in 2005 that, "Our Palestinian people have been suffering and continue to suffer from the deprivation of technological developments because of the continuation of the Israeli occupation". By outlining how Israel imposed "obstacles on the development and growth of the ICT and communication sector, and by depriving our people *live transmission* (emphasis added) in telecommunications and information technologies" (Dawes, 2014: 6), Abbas' comments run parallel to the physical and technical international support being fed into Bil'in. For the Internet to flourish, there is a need for economic and political independence. While Israel stifles the flow of information, people and goods through a system of checkpoints, closures and curfews, particularly in Gaza, the impediments had huge effects on the development of the Palestinian ICT sector (Aouragh, 2011: 229).

Developing relationships with external groups, including the CCIPPP, I suggest, boosted the Popular Committee's capacity to enhance their visibility. Such relationships can also be identified by not only drawing on the links between

language, image and the construct of the under-interface, but also in how the website is allowed to be seen. By undertaking a web-registration survey, one can trace the origins of the online hosting service and service provider for the Bil'in website. Documentation shows that the website is registered to a non-commercial, not-for-profit French-Canadian company in Quebec called 'web-alternative' (www.webalternative.ca), who also hosted the CCIPPP page who were the early supporters of the Bil'in village.

The striking image of two Palestinian men on the top of the olive tree (Figure 77) is, in the context of the Bil'in homepage, a very visually arresting image, and one that resonates with an established iconic motif of Palestinian national struggle. The image is both infused with the discursive characteristics that allow for the perception of visual information to be read in conjuncture with the events played out on the ground each Friday afternoon. The image appears blurred, suggesting that it has been hastily snapped, responding to an opportune moment where the men could scramble the tree and raise their national flag in defiance or in an effort to disrupt its uprooting.¹⁹ The selection of this specific image and its persuasive quality underlines the importance invested in the visual as a tool through which the Popular Committee narrated their resistance and struggle.

¹⁹ The process of olive grove uprooting or the destruction of trees/vegetation is a recurrent theme, and represents part of the violent systemic practice conducted by the Israeli authorities against Palestinians. Moreover, it is also carried out by extremist Israeli settlers as a 'price tag'. Furthermore, the symbolic nature of such acts carry with it the potential for subversive readings and appropriations in a political context – see Israeli graphic designer, David Tartakover's 2006 work, 'Greeting Card'.

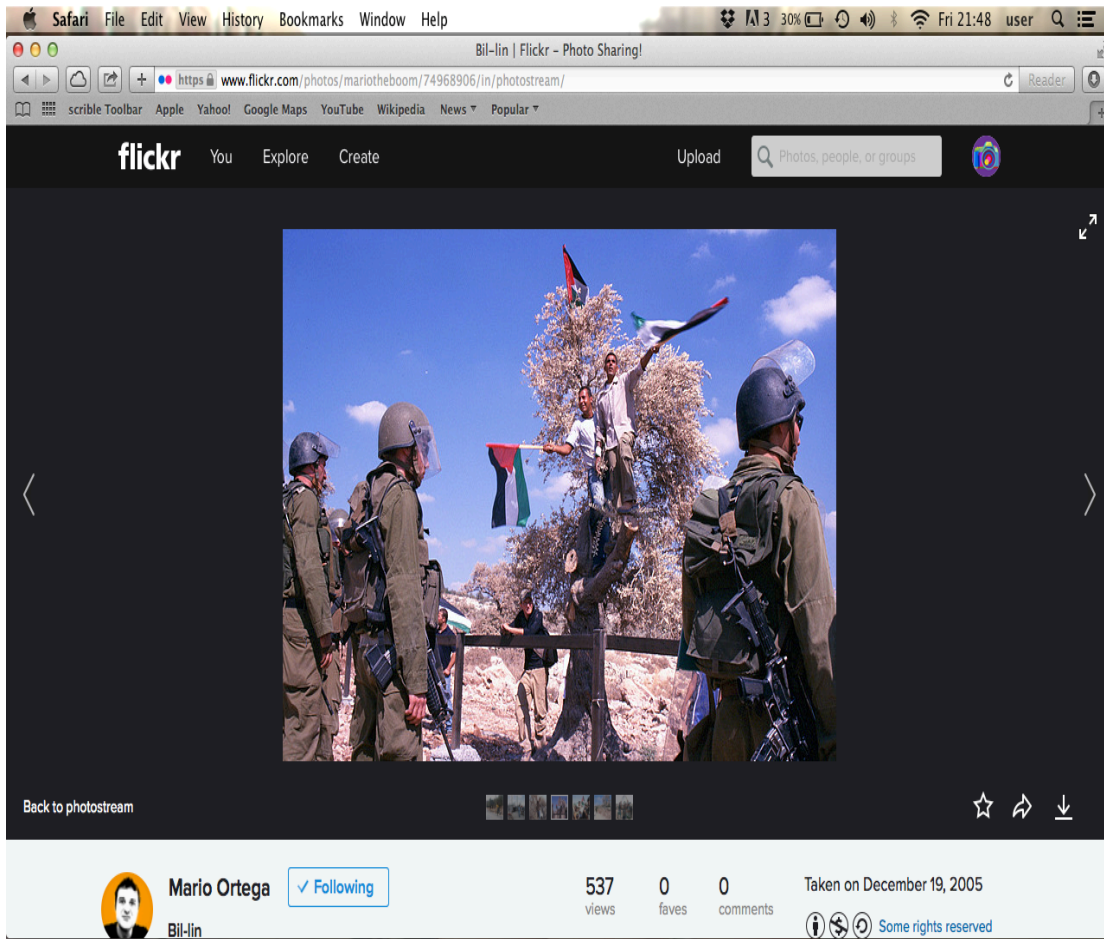


Figure 78: Screen grab from Mario Ortega's uploaded images to his Flickr page.

Nonetheless, vision is always socially constructed; it is not neutral and is always shaped and reconfigured by a dominant discourse (see Butler, 1993). Thus, to think about image as being nomadic helps us to understand how an image can fulfill a number of roles in a range of contexts over a multiple of platforms. Moreover, the investigation into the social practices that attest to an image's origins, as well as the relationships between its recording and reproduction, helps to give an image a new meaning, which is specifically useful when we further investigate the second homepage (Figure 77).

This is specifically true when we consider the life cycle of Figure 77 in relation to Figure 78 when, for example, we look at the collection of photos taken by Spanish national, Mario Ortega, in December 2005. As we already know the Bil'in homepage was updated between 13 January 2006 and 2 April 2006. As an unaccredited image

used on the homepage, the image is neither traceable throughout the Bil'in archives between the dates related to the homepage update or against the relevant data tags and photo albums in the website, such as 'Nonviolent Resistance', 'Weekly Protest' or 'Faces of Bil'in'. Yet, by looking at Ortega's 32 image series entitled 'Palestina', uploaded to the image-sharing platform, Flickr in December 2005, this enables us to narrow down and understand the original context of the image. Ortega's photos afford us the opportunity to see the action either side of the specific image used on the homepage.

While the actual image itself is not present in Ortega's series, the collection of relatable images from the same moment in time are present on his Flickr account. This allows the spectator to see the sequence of images taken in the same moment, from the same event, in a different way. The spectator has no empirical knowledge of the contents or the context that exists off frame. However, by looking at the Bil'in homepage and then Ortega's Flickr page, we are able to redefine the boundaries between the visible and the invisible; knowing that other shots were taken and exist elsewhere. Unlike film, which seals off whatever may lie beyond the frame, denying any spatial and temporal interactions between framed action and off-frame realities, the photographs, presented to us on the file sharing platform Flickr, enable us to see a sequence of images; including those that were perhaps discarded in terms of the image selection for the Bil'in website. Whereas, at first, we might assume that the image on the Bil'in homepage was maybe a singular frame, taken as part of an opportune moment, we are instead presented with something that is far less dramatic.

Finding Ortega's photo series on Flickr, involved searching the metadata tags on the file sharing website which including keyword searches for "*Palestine*", "*Wall*" and "*Demonstration*". This enabled me to find 4 discrete photos (see Figure 79) that resembled the same characters and scene as depicted on the Bil'in homepage between April 2006 and 11 May 2007. Originally written in Spanish, Ortega wrote on his Flickr account that he travelled to Bil'in to document his stay. Comparing his

upload date and the description of his visit, one can assert the likeliness of this arrival fitted with the arrival of internationals, particularly French and Spanish volunteers visiting Bil'in as part of the CCIPPP missions. This is also reflected in the similarity of the images used in the CCIPPP brochure (Figure 80).²⁰

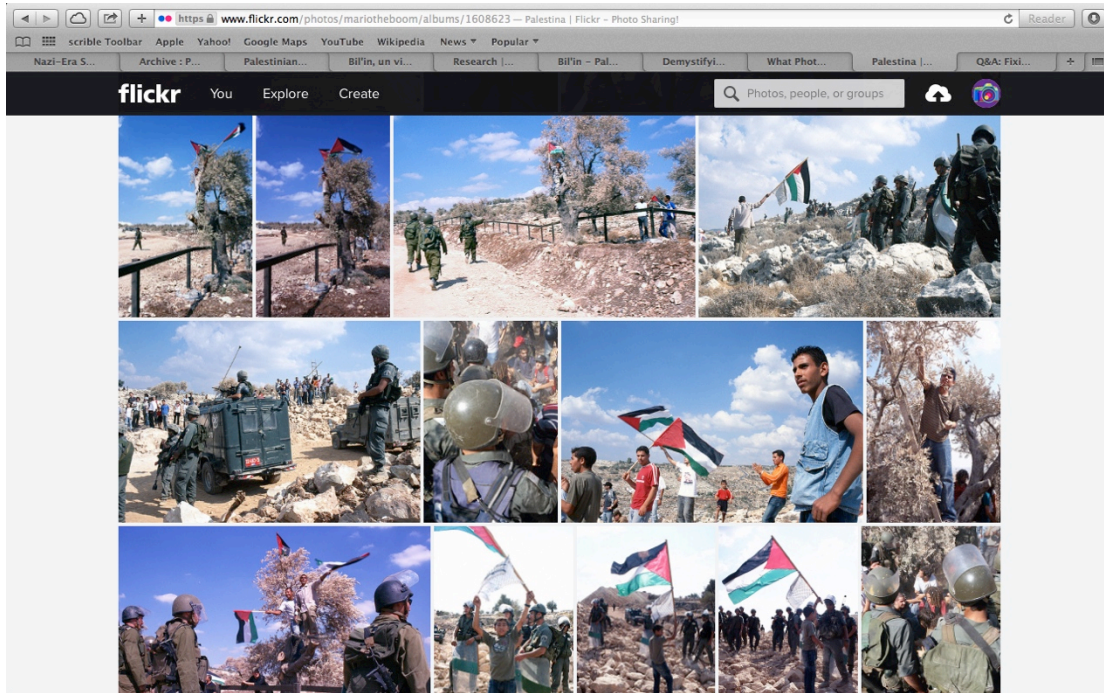


Figure 79: Screen grab of Ortega's Flickr gallery displaying 4 versions of the same image taken as displayed on the second Bil'in homepage.

Even the haphazard nature of how the images are presented on Flickr (as shown in Figure 79), as a result of a users uploading process, there appears an evident disparity between the might of the Israeli state and Palestinian steadfastness. To view the images as a whole, the eye is drawn to the centre of the collection where we are given the appearance of an opposing gaze, whereby the IDF soldier looks to his right, as the Palestinian man in the blue shirt looks back across the frame of his image.

²⁰ The CCIPPP website, written in French makes reference to southern France and northern Spain as places where mission groups were drawn from, and also reflects the CCIPPP's presence in specific southern French towns and cities.

Similarly, another unaccredited image of the same protesters in the tree appears in a CCIPPP brochure, located on the CCIPPP website under the title *Call For Mission: Go to Palestine*, published on 10 August 2006. The brochure promotes the humility of the Palestinian community in the face of Israeli brutality and calls for volunteers to engage ‘to protect’ to support the Palestinian people in nonviolent resistance (CCIPPP-org 10.08.2006). The similarity of the frame suggests that Ortega was part of the ICCCP, who in turn were present at the demonstration, and it is likely that they were responsible for the image selection of the second Bil’in home page.

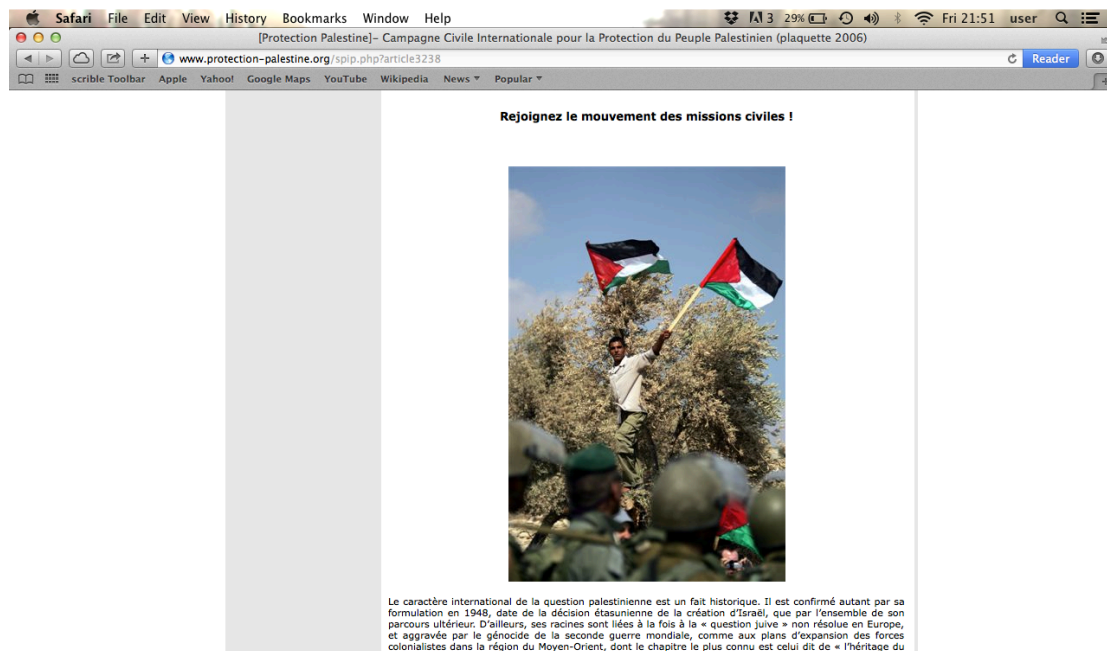


Figure 80: Through analysing the content within, I suggest this is another of Ortega’s images, used for the brochure to promote Bil’in to internationals, published shortly after he published his images online. The image is from the brochure for the ICCPPP who worked with Bil’in at the time and Ortega is a Spanish national who, by the account of his Flickr page, ‘visited Bil’in to help’.

Following Faulkner’s analysis of the life cycle of demonstration photographs, Ortega’s images testify to the documentation of an event in terms of its denotative capacity of the performances within, and its indexical relationship to what is pictured, but also that such images have the capacity to exist both through and beyond this denotative/indexical relationship (Faulkner, 2013: 10). Examining the

full 32 images within Ortega's folder not only helps us to think about the journey of an image but also attests to the Popular Committee's strategic use of visuals and the ability to 'construct' iconic images through framing, contextualization and specific visual motifs e.g. resistance and flag raising.

From the point of its production, the image travelled to a number of environments, and in each instance it was imbued with varying political significance, amplified by the host medium in which it appeared. Yet, by seeing the image in its original context, some of the potency of the homepage image is lost. What we see instead is a series of images that reflect the regularity of the situation. Ortega's images show the Palestinians smiling, addressing the camera and at ease with the IDF presence. The IDF have seen this all before – their focus unbroken on the developments out of shoot as the protesters goad their attention. This too, is part of the theatre of protest in Bil'in where a temporal and spatial order is defined by the roles each participant plays, including the image maker. It is in this regard that Marco Langari's comment on the 'auto-referentiality' of the situation is based, suggesting that perhaps image makers are often limited by the arena in which they operate, but also by the roles played out by those within it. Photos like Ortega's become daily life photos and everyday images, images and actions that become rituals.

4.4 Audience: A Local and Global Approach to Web Publishing

The emergence of the Bil'in website was shaped by the circumstances of the Second Intifada (2000-2004). The collective punishment of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, included curfews and closures as well as the military incursion into every West Bank city and the partial destruction of the Jenin refugee camp during March and April 2002. Known as Operation Defensive Shield, the Israeli military operation triggered what Miryam Aouragh (2011) outlines as a spike in political Palestinian web activity within the OPT as well as internationally. Knowing already that the CCIPPP and the ISM were some of the earliest groups formed in response to this event, reference to Aouragh's (2011) ethnographic fieldwork can enable us to

further explore the nature of their intentions, specifically related to the online visibility they wanted to construct. While Aouragh asserts that the result of this online activity produced two identifiable modes of publishing, either having globalising or localising narratives (2011: 155), the visual strategies employed by the Bil'in popular committee, including their external collaborative relations, produced a very nuanced space for visual and political articulations to be played out.

Following Aouragh's findings,²¹ locally based representations, including personal homepages by individual Palestinians and/or websites based on a particular local view, narrated through images of a specific town or village can be said to have functioned in two distinct ways. Firstly, the emergence of 'localising websites' were constructed with a personal objective, in the case of a family website or personal blog, and often shaped by a specific geographical location, as is the case for the site *Remembering Jenin* (Aouragh, 2011). In this way, the Internet increased possibilities for transnational communication, thereby widening what Aouragh refers to as the 'homeland' public sphere – the creation of an imagined, collective Palestinian national identity via web forums and pro-Palestinian websites. Alongside discussions related to the possibilities of the Internet as a tool through which a diasporic community can be engaged (Aouragh, 2008; Long, 2010), the increased presence of Palestinian websites also enabled a means of creating a reasonably stable visibility of Palestinian identity, shaped against the absence of such in the international media.

In contrast, the classification of 'globalising websites' had a clear international focus; born during the Intifada the aim was to counter dominant media bias and 're-humanise' the Palestinian. In an effort to make Palestinians appear as civil,

²¹ Miryam Aouragh conducted fieldwork and much of Aouragh's content analysis is from the West Bank (2001-2002), Jordan (2003) and Lebanon (2003-2004) with a focus on the user (gender, age, socio-informed background e.g. religion or class as well as urban or rural) as well as focusing on service providers like Internet café owners, ICT specialists and technological infrastructures. Exploring the construct of identity, either political or otherwise, Aouragh's extensive ethnographic work outlined how the Internet helped to connect users to their national identity in a variety of ways.

restrained and professional, globalising websites and their journalistic nature, such as *Palestinian Monitor* (established in 2000) and *The Electronic Intifada* (2001), began to produce web content that was pictorially rich and with immediacy. In each case, these websites allowed Palestinian writers details of the needs and desires of the Palestinian people, in response to Israeli actions, or the lack of international response for their conditions. Offering alternative commentaries on the situation, these websites become what Amahl Bishara (2010) calls, a 'network of care'. As information points on local and national issues, the websites provided on the ground information related to protests, closures and arrests, whilst also framing such reports to an international audience. Resembling professional news websites, each website sought to counter the dominant ways international communities could see the occupation (Campbell, 2009).²²

In each case it can be suggested that both localising and globalising formats of web publishing not only worked to present an 'impression' of Palestine, the people, the culture and the context of their current situation, but both practices also worked to construct stable Palestinian visibility that foregrounded its resistance, intellectualism, and creativity against unjust Israeli oppression. Through the use of visual content each process constructed a specific impression of resistance or humility in the face of political and social injustice, reiterating a desire to return and a connection to the land; much in the same way as popular Palestinian literature by Mahoud Darwish had provided in the past. The effect was one of writing/speaking/thinking the global Palestine into being; building a "country of words" to quote Darwish that now included a concentrated effort to 'visualize' Palestine.

While it was the Second Intifada that prompted the wave of representational and self-publishing material online, locating the process within a broader context helps

²² David Campbell alludes to how during the 2009 Military Operation in Gaza, named Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli government and military placed a blockade on international journalists reaching Gaza to make first hand reports. As a result, the journalists were distanced from the 'facts on the ground', reporting instead from what UK broadcaster, John Snow, referred to as 'the Hill of Shame'.

to recognise the value placed upon it, specifically as a visual tool of communication. Since the Oslo process (1993-2000), Israel's on-going occupation continued to limit Palestinian economic and national developments, yet concessions related to Palestinian run media within the Occupied Territories initiated the professionalization and development of Palestinian journalism, TV and radio broadcasting. Technological as well political developments in the region also generated a proliferation of non-official media that reflected the changing mediascape of the 1990s; initially through TV and radio production with attention shifting to the web as the decade went on. While TV and radio had a limited range, in terms of its potential audience, the Internet allowed websites like *Palestinian Monitor*, the *Electronic Intifada* and the *Bil'in village website* to visualize Palestinian suffering, creativity and steadfastness, juxtaposing it against Israeli state action like house demolitions, the denial of civil rights and military brutality.

To think of the Internet as a 'nonbounded' (Pickerill, 2004) space that affords media producers the potential to produce subjective and unchallenged reports, the Internet also changed how images and content were visualized and engaged with, as well as widening participation related to who might produce what? Constructed in response to the social relations on the ground and the visual strategies of the Popular Committee's efforts to engage as wide a spectatorship as possible through a number of channels. The Bil'in website maintained both localising and globalising frameworks that relied on text and images to speak to those within the OPT, in the Palestinian diaspora as well as to engage international viewers. These localising and globalising effects were achieved through the assemblage of news stories, images, HRO/NGO reports and testimonies. Due to the partitioning of Palestinian Territories the website can be said to have worked in different ways in different places. As a global platform, the website sought to inform the international community of the effects of the occupation upon Palestinian land, and specifically within the village. More locally, the website also spoke to Palestinians within the OPT as to what was explicitly happening within Bil'in, who, due to the restrictions on movement, were unable to see the effects of the Popular Committee's protest for themselves. Mixing a

locally constituted narrative of survival in addition to a range of external material, including international news articles (Figure 82) and public testimonies, signalled an active process of assembly. Thus connecting a host of media users, constituting an accumulated, multi-actor sense of engagement that was manifest in the additional visual strategies employed by the Popular Committee.

4.5 Identity Making: International Symbolism and Peaceful Assembly

The Popular Committee worked to visualise this accumulation by trying to reflect the diverse global attention they received, including the mobilization of international insignias within the protest context, by reproducing the images online (Figure 83). By 2 February 2007 the Bil'in website News hyperlink took the web-visitor to a chronological, sub-categorized page detailing a range of informative reports and media articles including press and TV references to their struggle. The sub-categorized sections included '*Notes on the situation in Bil'in*' and consisted of reports from NGOs including Amnesty International and HROs including the Israeli organization B'Tselem, who produced cartographic maps with supplementary legal texts (Figure 81) in response to the ongoing development of the separation barrier.

Other subsections on the website included notes on the *Bil'in International Conference* (see Figure 84) and *International News Articles and Public Testimonies*, however the bulk of the content on the News page featured a growing archive specifically displaying positive international attention received since the uptake of the Popular Committee's non-violent joint resistance. Identified by the national flags classifying the origin of the report, a total of 57 news articles were uploaded to the website in chronological order and hyperlinked to the respective news provider where the content was hosted (Figure 82). Articles were wide ranging in content, geographic location (USA, Germany, France, UK, Ireland) and international recognition and focused on the village's protest action, the development of the Israeli separation barrier, the economic effect on the village, and importantly, the joint effort between internationals, Israelis and Palestinians. As the attention grew

articles focusing on the village, its Popular Committee and their performative modes of resistance started to appear in major publications from the UK such as *The Guardian* and *The Independent* as well content from *The New York Times* in the USA. By the last available capture (23 August 2011), 744 news articles were uploaded to the website. In addition, the ‘testimonies’ had been separated and re-published under its own hyperlinked page and totalled some 492 entries across 24 pages. These testimonies were written by international visitors, NGOs, political and celebrity visitors including Former Democratic US president Jimmy Carter, academic Naomi Klein, and Catholic Archbishop Desmond Tutu, all of whom endorsed the Popular Committee’s actions or criticised Israel.

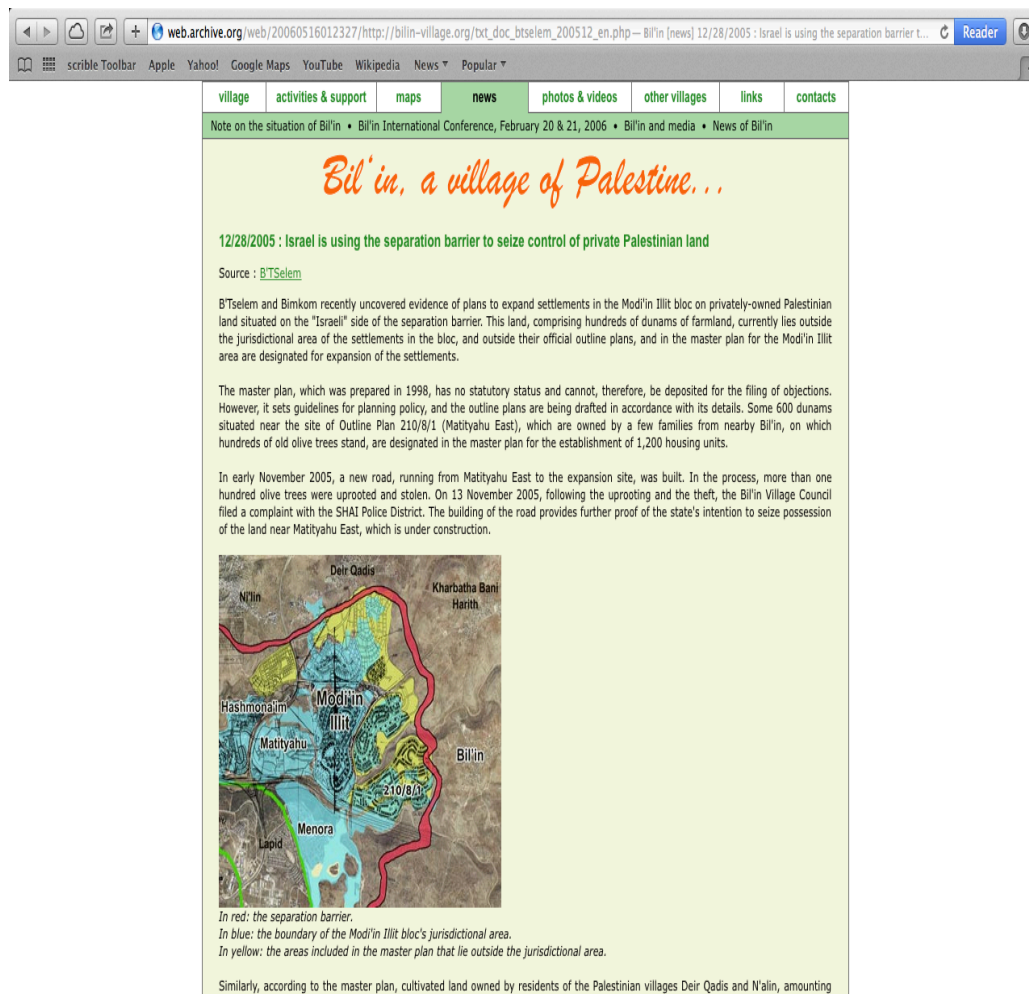


Figure 81: Screen grab example of a digital cartographic map produced by B'Tselem with supplementary legal texts in response to the ongoing development of the separation barrier, used on the Bil'in website to further contextualize, visualize and substantiate their argument. Dated 28.12.05.



Figure 82: Screen grab showing the use of national flags classifying the origin of the report. A total of 57 news articles were uploaded to the website in chronological order and hyperlinked to the respective news provider where the content was hosted.

As might be expected, the website was highly selective in its chosen examples. Like work undertaken by James Aulich (2011) on similar, politically divergent websites in post-communist Serbia that were established to draw in an alternate perspective to the perceived popular discourse of their national or social context, the Bil'in website did not present a singular narrative to a mass audience. Instead it confronted the individual with a montage of themes or categories within a carefully selected archive that could be perused at will. Similarly to Aulich's analysis of the Serbian websites, the Bil'in website allowed visitors to "navigate and select items according to individual interests, whether they accessed the site as an activist, a foreign journalist or a researcher" (Aulich, 2011: 14).

For those visiting the website for the first time between 2005 and 2006, and

thereafter, once the visitor navigated through the extensive image galleries, the prevalence of international insignia such as flags were highly and strategically visible.

As Figure 83 shows, one of six taken from the original homepage (see Figures 70 and 71) and also found on in the first Bil'in photo archive under the title "direct-action" (Bilin-village.org 10.12.2005), the Popular Committee's efforts to present creative and peaceful images of assembly became implicitly linked to their efforts to engage a national audience. Knowing that the Popular Committee built strong working relationships with international anti occupation activist groups, like the CCIPPP and the ISM, along with popular figures from politics and religion, the physical act of displaying recognizable flags within the protest context became standardized practice.



Figure 83: Image of protesters walking towards the Friday protest site, each with an individually pinned international flag attached to their chest.

Eight activists, five men and three women, walk side-by-side, hand in hand as part of a larger procession that is presumably striding towards the Israeli military on the outskirts of the village. Each participant has a national flag affixed to their chest and their mouths taped. The interpretation of the image is multiple, however the basic assumption is that the protesters are visually alluding to a denial of speech, or that perhaps the international community does not hear the Palestinian appeal. Wearing the national flags of Belgium, Egypt, Argentina, USA, Turkey, Italy, Germany and France the performance invites mediation as a compelling action within the context of a small Palestinian village. Three of the eight figures, located to the left of the frame, meet the gaze of the photographers lens while the other four sternly look ahead. Demonstrating the collective soft power approach applied by the village against the construction of the separation barrier, the symbolic use of the taped mouths could also be understood as representing the knowing silence of the international community or the inability of those specific national activists to effectively stake their claim on behalf of the villagers within their own national media.

The collective presence of the activists fills the width of the road and the frame of the photographer's lens. While the flags firstly address those in the immediate environment, namely the Israeli presence at the site of the separation barrier, the performance is also met by multiple gazes along the way. These performances are carried out with the hope that those in attendance record them. Like the image by Spanish photographer Mario Ortega, the images taken at the protests are also expected to travel – those in attendance record the event and share the spectacle in the hope that they also prompt some positive response. Walking to the separation barrier, the activists engage in a tête-à-tête with the IDF in a familiar and well practiced performance that inevitably concluded with the stone-throwing Palestinian Shabab (youth) being dispersed by IDF dispensed tear-gas, skunk water or noise-bombs.

Knowing that what is 'seen' is often shaped and reconfigured by a dominant discourse (Butler, 1993), how one is able to read and understand an image or event has a great deal to do with how different kinds of visibility are received. This includes the signs and symbols pertaining to an object or image's denotive quality as much as one must consider the medium through which it is made visible. As such, we all see and invest in objects, images, insignia in varied and multiple ways, yet it is the social construction of the object or artifact that shapes the reading. In this instance, the Popular Committee's use of international flags both on and offline could perhaps be thought about as a way to invite us, the spectator, to *see through* the flag in both senses of the verb: to use them to see more than we might see otherwise. We might instead re-examine this image in relation to the visual strategies of the Popular Committee as a way to engage a spectatorship through the use of international flags as something recognisable, but to then look beyond it – to consider the image as an invitation, appropriating general symbols of interests such as national flags and injustice, such as the taped mouths as a bricolage, all part of a strategic practice that makes the protest a touch more visible in the process.

4.6 Assertive and Courageous Contestation and Creative and Peaceful Assembly

As discussed in the introduction, like so many others committed to peace, the Popular Committee founders, Abdallah Abu Rahma and Iyad Burnat, have a long history of peace-activism that can be traced back to the 1980s.²³ Though peace and justice movements are largely removed from mainstream international media coverage on the issue of the occupation, both Israeli and Palestinian societies, on the whole, have a well-established culture of practicing nonviolent protests for social and political change.²⁴ By foregrounding peaceful activism and international

²³Interview with both Popular Committee members, retracing their historical association with nonviolence can be accessed here: www.972mag.com/a-consciouness-free-of-occupation-bilin-marks-10-years-of-popular-struggle/103266/ -Date accessed 13/04/15

²⁴ While recent efforts in Israel have sought to bring media and political attention to the housing crisis through the 'tent city movement' in the Israeli capital, Tel-Aviv in 2011. In 1997 the 'four

support, the website helped to bring together a number of themes to a perceived global audience that has been absent in much of the reporting, specifically during the Second Intifada. In doing so, it could be suggested that Popular Committee sought to overcome what Andrea Brighenti refers to 'second order visibility' (Brighenti, 2010: 64).

By seeking to frame the action of the villagers response to the separation barrier through images of peaceful, creative and collaborative resistance, the Popular Committee challenged what Brighenti would consider, the first order of visibility by eventually drawing attention to the village and its situation, vis-à-vis the legality and impact of the barrier. In doing so, over time, and through the website specifically, as an archive, the Popular Committee worked to enhance the representation of peaceful, multinational collaboration as one way to break into the 'second order' visibility. As Brighenti asserts, the pictures of the protest march, the strike and the picket are visualizations of social conflict but there are other important *dispositifs* of visibility that are connected to resistance. Such *dispositifs*, which Michel Foucault refers to as the various forms of apparatus that shape or maintain power in society today, often with a dominant strategic function, such as local authorities, prisons, even hospitals (Bussolini, 2010), can help to make visible mechanisms of control that are often hidden or removed, by altering ones focus. For Brighenti, 'when something invisible is perceived as concealed, we can say that its absence has been visibilised [sic]' (Brighenti, 2010: 65). Thus, the attention drawn to the village, because of the separation barrier, and sustained through various engaging acts of visual activism helped to make 'the occupation' visible – the lack of mobility, the lack of citizenry rights for Palestinians and the asymmetric modes of governances related to their status as an occupied population. To consider the photographic event as meaning making act, the Popular Committee's emphasis on international

mothers' anti-war vigils and media campaign concerning Israel's military activity in southern Lebanon had such an impact, within Israel, that it went onto shape national security policy and mobilize public opposition to the war that had begun in 1982 (Liberfield, 2009). Equally, Palestinians have often used nonviolent methods of strike, boycott, tax resistance, or direct action (Saleh, 2003: Norman, 2010) against the formal structures of control applied by Israel over Palestinian populations.

presence and recognition worked in opposition to what Butler refers to as the instrumentalised vision of reality. A reality that Butler says becomes the de-facto representation of a moment, place or population, while certain other visions of reality are de-legitimised and discarded (Butler, 2009: 71). To represent internationals and the limited number of Israelis promoted a sense of unity, but also pointed to the huge gulf in everyday relations, indicated by the IDF response, and the vilification of the political left as traitors in Israel (Shulman, 2007). Through the website spectators were able to see the everyday effect of the occupation in relation to the Friday spectacle. Such visibility making practices during the weekly protest helped to entice a spectatorship who, when visiting the Bil'in website, were then able to see that which was often ignored or missed.

From the website's first retrievable impression online, the Popular Committee placed emphasis on its markedly democratic character, opening up the invitation for communication and cooperation with international communities. The logic of this relationship was firstly to promote peace and coexistence in addition to noticeably visible anti-barrier, anti-occupation direct action and the direct action the Popular Committee also organised the annual *Bil'in International Conference* (see Figure 84) from 2006-2011. Building a collective network of international resistance to oppression, the first International Conference (21st and 22nd February 2006), held in the village public school, centred on discussions, workshops and think tanks as well as a film screening about the first year of non-violent resistance in Bil'in. The event concluded with a game of football and an olive tree planting activity (Bilin-village.org – 25.02.2006). The *Bil'in International Conference* functioned as a space for rigorous political dialogue, promoting the development of joint non-violent struggle and offering a place where activists could share their experiences and knowledge (Bilin-village.org – 19.02.2005).

A crucial part of the conference was the depiction of female villagers and international members having an active role within the movement from a planning perspective. The political message of the conference was strongly tied to the visual

construct of the website and more broadly the activities within the village, in terms of communicating an image of Palestinian culture that opposed orientalist stereotypes. According to Said (1994), Orientalism is 'a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European western experience' (1:1994). Orientalism is a sort of reflection of how the West perceives itself, in that we fit the Orient into a framework with Western models used as the standard of comparison. The Orient and Orientalism help to define what the West is not and, by extension, what is not Western. It defines and articulates what is 'the West' and 'the Other'. With specific reference to Israel/Palestine and the epistemological impact of the media, Said notes that, "hardly a day passes without some mention of Palestinians in the press, but they remain virtually unknown. Portrayed as either murderous terrorists or pitiful refugees, they have become prisoners of these images" (Said, 147:1986). Taking this notion one step further, Judith Butler asserts that Palestinians are beyond apathy, their existence is instead 'ungrievable' that is, they do not appear as human in a recognisable sense, but instead transformed, particularly in the Israeli war imagery as outright threats (Butler, 2010).²⁵ Thus, the need to develop a critical recognition for the representation of those who, Butler asserts, are not permitted to exist (Butler, 2009) is rationalized in the way the Popular Committee was committed to addressing their own status. Taking control of the mediation and distribution of their own representation, the strategy of the Popular Committee suggests that there was some effort to counter, what Edward Said referred to as, a culturally entrenched 'system of knowledge' (Said, 1994: 306). Part of this was also to foreground actions, which could be read as assertive and courageous contestation, often in concert with creative and peaceful assembly.

²⁵ In an interview with the Israeli newspaper, Ha'aretz Butler asserted that: "...any and all Palestinian lives that are killed or injured are understood no longer to be lives, no longer understood to be living, no longer understood to be human in a recognizable sense, they are artillery... Because everyone who is a living Palestinian is, in their being, a declaration of war, or a threat to the existence of Israel, or pure military artillery material... They have been transformed in the Israeli war imaginary, into pure war instruments. For the full interview see: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/judith-butler-as-a-jew-i-was-taught-it-was-ethically-imperative-to-speak-up-1.266243>

Spotlighting their political action in response to overt and disproportionate Israeli state power, these images, found throughout the archives and specifically on the Bil'in Conference page, are also perhaps efforts to represent the village's action as both creative and 'sophisticated'. Most recognisable is the focus on the International Conference's formal qualities. The Bil'in International Conference's workshops, discussions and knowledge exchange were supplemented with familiar images representing creative modes of protest alongside collective, multinational action. In addition, the web space dedicated to the Bil'in International Conference presented identifiable acts of democratic action such as speaking at podiums, participants in formal attire and the inclusion of group meetings held in settings that bespoke organisation, seriousness or authoritativeness.

For example, as the development of the Bil'in homepage progressed the strategic inclusion of images that challenged an 'orientalist' impression of Palestinians became prescient. Example of this potential practice are identifiable through the inclusion of additional images when one compares a screen shot of the report of the 2006 *Bil'in International Conference* in 2007 (see Figure 84) to the same post captured in May 2009, with three more additional photos included to the report (see Figures 85 and 86). Using the web archive application, we can see that as the website progressed chronologically, the Popular Committee revisited past events with the intention of adding additional images. These images built upon the existing three photographs to present a formalised view of their work, visualising not only the events, but the processes too. The inclusion of a classroom environment (Figure 86), evident by the chairs and chalkboard and a gathering of people from various ethnicities with Palestinian residents in formal attire, is neighboured by an image of two residents, one small child and a woman in traditional dress, planting olive trees, as an effort to maintain their heritage and culture.



Figure 84: Image on the Bil'in website representing the annual *Bil'in International Conference* held in the village.

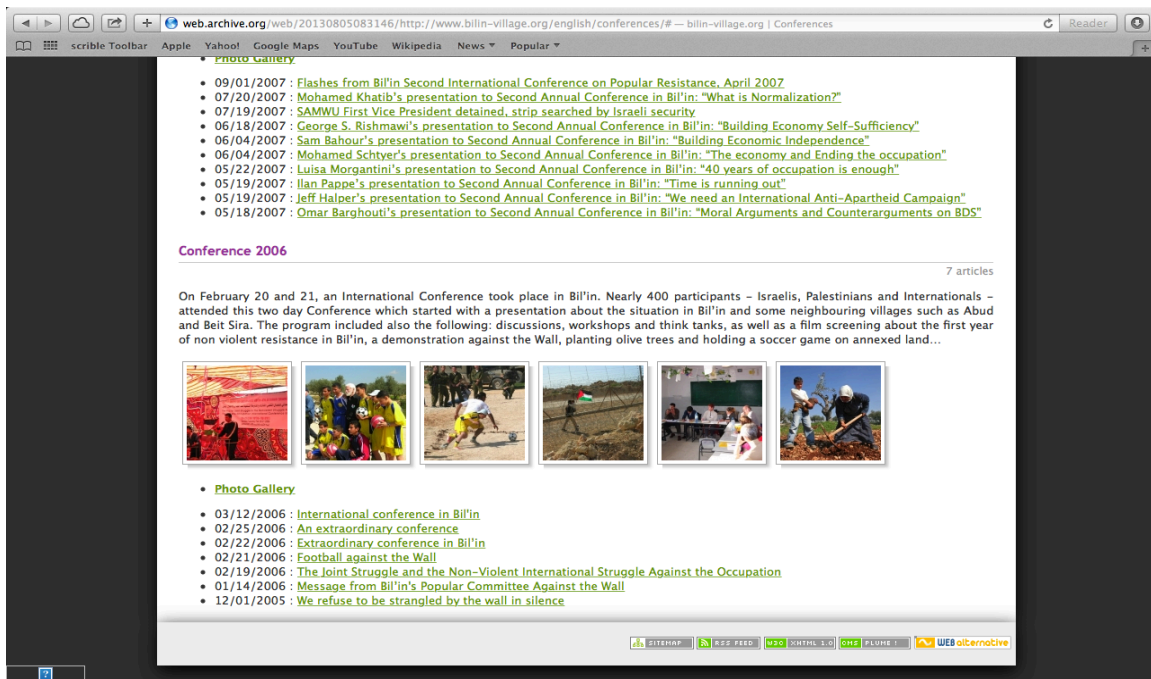


Figure 85: Screen grab demonstrating how the Popular Committee used their archive to continuously build up a visual profile of their activities.



Figure 86: Screen grab of an image showing a meeting taking place in a classroom. The use of a classroom is a clear signifier that the Popular Committee wanted to present themselves as civil and organized to a western spectatorship.

Even when popularity and interest in the village and its struggle waned after 2007, the less visible practice of resistance was regularly documented and given prominence on the Bil'in homepage as the website evolved and continued to humanize the village residents. Actions like the Bil'in International Conference, the documentation of regular meetings, the planting of olive trees and the construction of memorial sites for those lives lost during the peaceful protests, in addition to galleries entitled 'Faces of Bil'in' and 'Children of Bil'in' built upon the original, singular anti-barrier narrative. This is unambiguously evident when one chronologically maps the development of the Bil'in website from its earliest retrievable captures. Originally anchoring the content of the website in a very specific, situated experience of one small village's struggle against the confiscation of its land, and focusing much of its attention on the materiality of the separation barrier and action against it. Over time, the Popular Committee and the village residents overcame the impediment concerning second order visibilities through sustaining a media/activist presence, and were able to articulate the broader substantive concerns related to visualising daily Palestinian life under occupation. Having successfully caught the attention of an international audience (however far-

reaching), the lifespan of the website afforded the Popular Committee to also narrate the everyday action of the village life, which implicitly becomes, or can be framed as, a form of resistance.

This was no more evident than in the final Bil'in homepage, visible from May 21 2007 until its eventual decay in 2014. Reflecting the diversity of images held within the website archives, the homepage (Figure 87) presented a more holistic impression of village life, including settlement expansion, objects that reflected the asymmetric order to the occupation including bulldozers, well-equipped Israeli military personnel, the use of force and physical violence alongside smiling young faces and the prominence of the Palestinian flag.

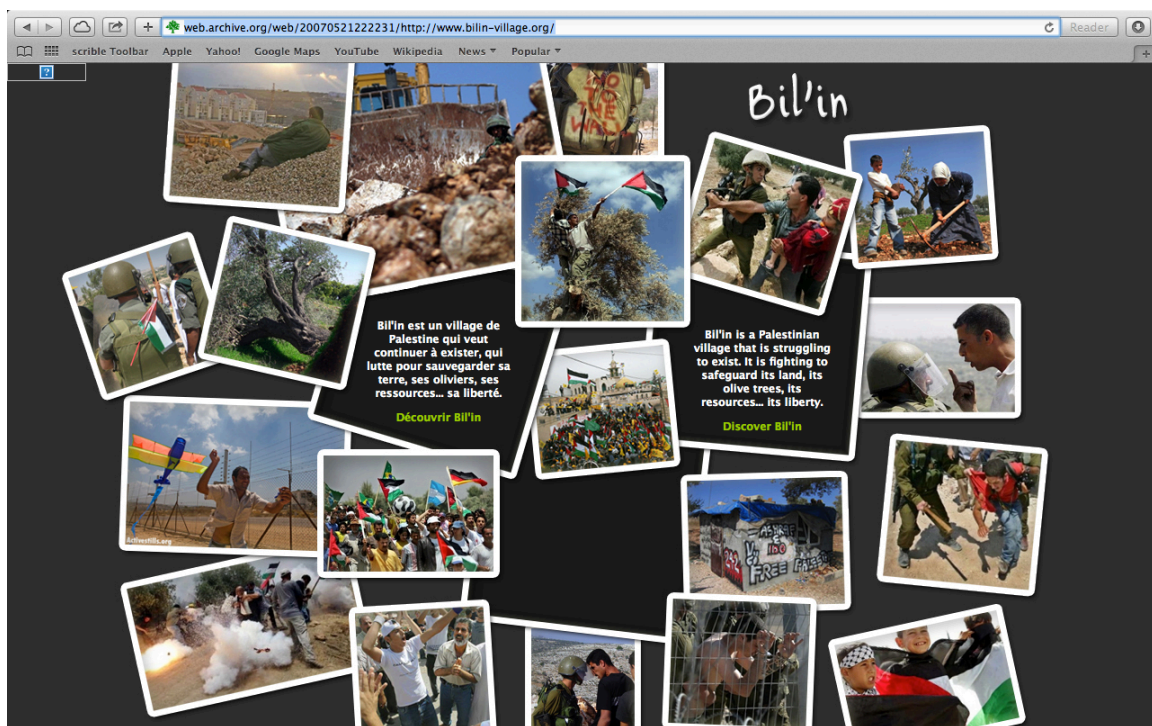


Figure 87: Final Bil'in homepage – present online from 21 May 2007 until 2011.

A 19-image collage, the last retrievable homepage presents windows or snapshots that reflect specific moments within the village related to the struggle against the separation barrier; consistent with the themes outlined in the introduction. The representative role of international symbols through flags alongside frames of

peaceful and creative assembly are bridged by depictions of assertive and courageous contestation, detailing moments where clear imbalances of power and force are applied by Israeli forces against unarmed activists. The choice of images on the final homepage point to a final point, that throughout the website there a lack of photographs of suffering and death, photographs that focus on the low quality of life and the harsh living conditions, which cannot be accidental. Although I am working with a limited number of images recovered through the Internet Archive Tool, my exploration of the website prior to its decay suggests that the Popular Committee foregrounded their political agency over images of suffering or images that reflected any kind of anti-Israeli sentiment. Instead, the vast majority of the photos uploaded to the archives, and the images used across the various homepages reiterate, through word such as sign holding, or performances such as direct-action, a struggle that is rooted in a political difference that can still be overcome through joint effort and realization that the current practice related to the occupation is unjust.



Figure 88: The first Palestinian outpost in the village of Bil'in.

Three specific images used on the final homepage best represent this logic. Firstly Figure 88, which depicts the 'first Palestinian outpost' or the 'Centre for the Joint Battle For Peace'. Imitating Israeli settler practice, the Bil'in outpost was initially built on 25 December 2005 and represented an affront to the Israeli development of Matityahu East on the village's land. The Bil'in outpost became a symbol, at least within the village and the network of supporters, of the ways in which the law of occupation was flawed and disproportionately advantageous to Israelis. After it was constructed, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) requested the construction to be dismantled because it did not sufficiently meet the appropriate regulations for habitation. After receiving the documentation, villagers along with activists rebuilt the unit for a third time and final time, meeting the desired requirements that included windows, a concrete roof and a water tank. Built to highlight the inequality and contradiction that Israel administers over Palestinians in the OPT, the building also represented a symbolic proclamation to ownership of the land by the villagers and to exercise civic rights on their land.

A second image, (Figure 89) portrays Bassem Abu Rahmah, a Bil'in resident who died in 2009 when Israeli forces shot a tear gas grenade at his chest from close range.²⁶ Rather than choosing to focus on his death, either by representing his memorial in the village, located close to the site where his was killed, or an image taken from videos of his death, Bassem Abu Rahmah is positively represented, laughing while flying a kite along the separation barrier on 25 July 2008.

²⁶ A video of the footage can be found here entitled '*The Murder of a Bil'in Protester*': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuPJHK6rQ4Q>



Figure 89: A photo of Bassem, taken by Activestills, as he nonviolently demonstrates along the separation barrier (which at the time was a wire fence).

Thirdly, alongside images of flags and images of assertive contestation in the face of military threat, the determination of this anti-occupation movement is also communicated most evidentially through the subtle use of the olive tree as a marker of cultural identity; an object that represents suffering and defiance in a very powerful way. The inclusion of the olive tree represents both the fertility and versatility of Palestinian land. Thus is it not surprising that as the Bil'in website developed, the image of the olive tree emerged as significantly contested site and features prominently in three images on the final Bil'in homepage, (located left-centre). Secondly, the image in the central image, which was previously the image of the second Bil'in homepage (January 2006 – May 2007), and lastly the repetitious

use of the image of the little boy and woman planning an olive tree (top right hand corner of Figure 90).

For the village, it was the olive tree that was first at threat, earmarked for clearance to make way for the construction of the separation barrier and that which the villagers and activists first clung onto, chaining themselves to the trees and blocking the Israeli bulldozers. In addition, the olive tree has often been the target of symbolic attacks by Israeli settlers, many of whom are religious extremists from outposts and settlements within the West Bank. Known as a “price tag” the object of the action is to dehumanize Palestinian populations through acts of targeted violence, including the blocking of farmers to their land, burning property and most prevalently, the hacking down of olive trees branches.²⁷



Figure 90: The visual emphasis on the olive tree as a symbolic and iconic feature of the landscape within the final Bil'in homepage.

As the struggle has continued the resolute appearance of the olive tree, in addition to efforts to replant them, can be understood as a way to represent the village's unwavering commitment to the land and the villagers fight to remain on it. The woman and child planting olive trees (Figure 86) can be read as part of that

²⁷ Price tags are revenge attacks, often carried out in response to Palestinians living on 'biblical lands' or in relation to illegal outposts being removed from a site, thus the price paid for such is an attack on ones property, farmland or life.

investment in the land, and specifically a future Palestine. A symbolically rich image, both participants are conduits for a future Palestinian state as much as the tree. The young boy represents the next generation of Palestinians who must carry on the steadfast tradition and the memory of the struggle while the woman, presumably his mother, is seen to represent the characterized notion of a caregiver, nurturing and giving life to the village. The image, like so many others also represents much of the mythic qualities unifying historic agents celebrated in Palestinian literature and art from the 1970s onwards (Swedenburg 1990: 18-20). Images of the peasant or *fellahin*, who is “close to the soil” are consistently reproduced throughout the Bil’in photographic archives as the website developed, whereby the naturalization of the Palestinian with the land, as a way of life becomes emblematic, working diametrically against the Israeli national political imaginary which is firmly anchored in the figurative rhetoric of reclaiming and “redeeming” the ancient biblical land of Judea and Samaria.²⁸ This image, along with the others on the homepage can be understood as performative in the sense that they are able to create real and lasting conditions through the events they themselves have portrayed. The assemblage of images speaks to a history of image-systems that are as highly contested as the land; the last homepage represents everything the village struggles for and against. The web visitor is presented with multiple images and multiple stories, counterpoising Israeli efforts to manage the distribution of violent images related to their presence in the OPT (Hochberg, 2015: 13). As we shall see in the next chapter, efforts by Israel to oversee their public relations, specifically to an international audience are engineered to counter suggestions that their army act in an unjust fashion. In respect of this, we must also consider the impact of the Bil’in website as a conduit for the production of slow violence – a mode of violence that systematically falls out of view is one type of visibility that could perhaps have the greatest bearing in years to come. Thus, is it not only Raja Shehadeh who finds himself presented with an image of an olive tree, which before his eyes is

²⁸ Although not internationally recognised as within Israeli territory, Israelis refer to the West Bank as Judea and Samaria. As I will further discuss in chapter 6, the use of semantics and power of language is important in terms of territorializing space, removing those within the landscape who do not fit with the specific religious discourse and building an identity.

transformed “into a symbol of struggle” as the opening quote suggests. Rather, it is made visible to all who visit the Bil’in website, but instead of loss, it represents hope.

4.7 Conclusion

In an interview with Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh, in Bethlehem during a research trip in 2013, the scholar, activist and Freedom Rider stated that ‘everything Palestinians do in our daily lives challenges the impression of what Israel want to present to the Israeli state as civil. When we eat, drink, teach our students is the complete antithesis of what Israel wanted to show’ (Qumsiyeh, 2013). While Israel go to great lengths to manage their public visibility, specifically related to their military PR and the distribution of conflict imagery, smaller scale repetitious events related to the Israeli state violence of the occupation, like weekly protests, have recently come under criticism. Criticism, particularly in the Israeli media, who have accused the Israeli military of providing ‘stage props’ and extras for weekly ‘Pollywood performances’.²⁹

Living and mediating an everyday existence, such as eating, drinking and planting trees that are investments in the future. These actions can be understood as modes of resistance that actually avoid open confrontation with the structures and the official organization being resisted, but can, nonetheless, be quite effective, taking place offstage or behind the scenes.³⁰ Thus, the selection of images used to represent the struggle of the Bil’in village, by the Popular Committee online and through their final homepage, represent a number of these offstage activities. These activities are promoted throughout the website as a way to show the village continuing to resist through self-organizing events like workshops or conferences. This ‘makes visible the fact that they belong to a shared world the other does not

²⁹ Pollywood is a term used to describe (critically) how Palestinian’s present themselves, theatrically before the camera as a way to visualize their conditions.

³⁰ Here I am thinking of Jacques Rancière’s analysis of the French mill workers who by night wrote poetry, thus challenging the distribution of the sensible order. See his text, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers’ Dream in Nineteenth-century France* (1989).

see' (Rancière, 2001: 10), reordering the boundaries of their social identities through the promotion of less direct forms of resistance.

The Bil'in website, like *The Electronic Intifada* and the *Palestinian Monitor* before it afforded web-users another way to see the effects of the occupation as well as the daily narratives of those who lived within and fought against it. For the web-user, the tabs on the homepage offered detailed descriptions of potential land loss, the economic impact upon the region supported by HRO reports, news articles from international media outlets which were often supported by persuasive images to reinforce this notion, including an archive of photo galleries. As such, the Bil'in website became a kind of counter-information platform akin to Harry Cleaver's (2012) analysis of the Zapatista movement in the Chiapas region of southern Mexico. Bil'in, like the Zapatista, used the web as a space to present information that 'opposed to the official reports of governments and official mass media'. By 2011 the website held 29 separate galleries and over 4,000 unique images. Gallery titles included, *Life in Bil'in*, *Faces of Bil'in*, *World Actions*, *Repressions and Arrests*, *Demonstrations and Actions*.

The use of the Internet and specifically the development of a web presence in terms of political action is a key soft-power mechanism that has the possibility to perform as an amplifier for those for whom visibility is strained or denied. Suffering from a de-facto public invisibility insofar that he/she cannot 'appear' before the law, but are subject to it, the village of Bil'in took to the Internet as a way to circumscribe the limitations imposed on their ability to appear as citizens for whom the right to have rights is denied. This is of crucial political importance because, as Jacques Rancière has observed, "politics is first of all a battle over perceptible and sensible material" (2004). Using photographs, as the Popular Committee did, to generate emotional resonance or knowledge in an audience was one of many aspects of their visual logic that represented the village politically and visually. As an act of visual activism, the logic of the Popular Committee was firstly to attract attention to their struggle and then to change its vision.

An integral aspect of the visual strategy underpinning the Popular Committee's overall practice was to address a varied constituency. For many marginal communities, visibility is often unnervingly distributed. For those that seek it, their presence can be resisted, altered or hyper-visualised. This later example can be considered as a specific component of an unequal political system that both under-represents a population or community while simultaneously making them visible through their exclusion. Imogen Tyler (2013) has addressed this hyper-visibility of the British underclass, represented as a waste population that are included through their exclusion in popular discourse, be that in the press or on TV (2013: 20). More specifically the process of hyper-visualizing Palestinian populations came in June 2014 when the Israeli government mobilised images of Palestinians framed by generalisations related to terror attacks on Israeli sovereignty. Distributed from official IDF Twitter and Instagram accounts, the highly networked social media platforms marked the first of many instances where the Israeli government utilised image and language to make collective distinctions along an 'us' and 'them' narrative preceding Operation Protective Edge.

In an effort to challenge this, the Popular Committee worked to establish a visibility that would entice spectatorship but also exceed the stereotypical image of Palestinian resistance (Faulkner, 2014).³¹ While gaining attention might attract active support, the emphasis on the creative or efforts to challenge the ethnonational divide through "joint struggle", the partnership work between the Popular Committee and its international supporters, also had to 'thwart expectation' and work to alter the already pre-prescribed distribution of possibilities and capacities of their image.

No other place was this best achieved than within the Bil'in village website. Prior to the emergence of the Bil'in website, the village and arguably the region had lacked a

³¹ For an interesting discussion on this, see Faulkner's (2014: 12) text, *Between States*.

focused and specific form of visibility, either online, or across traditional media platforms. Even when one compares the initial and symbolic Palestinian/Israeli cooperative effort against the separation barrier, brought about by the Mas'ha Camp where the focus was to document the development of the barrier and the destruction of the land, the reports, images and testimonies were spread across the websites of a loose network of likeminded grass-roots organisations and individuals that were often unconnected physically and virtually. Web pages, blog posts and bulletins on sites such as Indymedia gave rise to a web presence that lacked cohesion and reflected the transient and ephemeral nature of the camp and its participants.³²

The Bil'in website was a visual activist project that fitted in with the wider conceptions of their protest strategy. Collective and collaborative, containing archives, networks that mapped out the international reach of the village and the popular committee, their efforts were supported by research and a persuasiveness that underlined the importance of visual information in communication and the rhetorical power of images to work for change. In the next chapter, focusing on the Palestinian Freedom Riders, I will reflect upon the use of new media technologies as part of an intervention that lasted only a few hours. Taking control over ones visibility within the protest and its instant mediation rather than constructing it online as an archive, the Freedom Riders employed new media technologies that reflect the recent developments in socially networked image distribution that that is creating what John Thompson has referred to as the 'new visibility' (2005). The chapter will conclude with another form of intervention into space, to bring the occupation to another constituency by examining the practice of Israeli NGO, Breaking the Silence as they 'bring the occupation' to Tel-Aviv through the public display of images taken by IDF soldiers in the West Bank and Gaza during their military service.

³² The most comprehensive of the websites being:
<http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/ia/archivedsites/gushshalom010204/www.gush-shalom.org/thewall/gallery.html>

Chapter 5: Case Study 3: “I’m a Freedom Rider! I’m just trying to go to Jerusalem!” – The 2011 Palestinian Freedom Riders.

You are as responsible for everything you see as you are for what you do. The problem was that you didn't always know what you were seeing until later, maybe years later...

- Michael Herr – Dispatches From Vietnam (1977, 20)

Meanwhile, life in Israel goes on undisturbed... one of the best and most fascinating cities in the world lives its life about half an hour away from the occupied Territories while nothing, absolutely nothing links it to these territories. Most Israelis, and particularly Tel Avivians, have never set foot in the occupied territories. They have no interest in what happens there.

- Gideon Livy – A Slumbering Society (2011)

We want people to be aware, so they know what's going on. Even if people don't act on finding this truth, we believe at least that we can show them that there is this reality and they cannot claim they didn't know it...

- Mazin Qumsiyeh - Freedom Rider (2013)



Figure 91: The Palestinian Freedom Riders waiting to board an Israeli only settler bus on 15 November 2011 in protest. Photo by Dena Elian (2011).

Continuing to address the relationship between visibility, power and mediation this chapter explores how anti-occupation activists have worked to make visible and redistribute their image by challenging the 'normal appearance' (Goffman, 1971) of the Israeli State and the 'proper performances' (Goffman, 1990) of its military.¹ Taking the 'new visibility' (Thompson, 2005) as my starting point, the chapter will firstly examine the 2011 Palestinian Freedom Riders; an act of civil disobedience and non-violent resistance strategically premised upon making visible that, which is often hidden. The structure of the chapter will follow the Freedom Riders' visual performance across three stages; pre-event, the act itself and will conclude with the visual material uploaded to the Internet. Framing the Freedom Rides as an intervention into and manipulation of the visual field and physical space of the Israeli occupation over Palestinian territories, the chapter will conclude with two further examples of visual activist actions motivated by the same goals. Both initiated by *Breaking the Silence*, an Israeli NGO made up of ex IDF combatants, each example explores the disruptive disclosure of military impropriety, from a position of privilege.²

5.1 The Freedom Riders

On 15 November 2011, six Palestinian peace activists, including prominent youth campaigner Fadi Quran, International Solidary Movement (ISM) co-founder Hurriya Ziada and eminent Palestinian Professor, Mazin Qumsiyeh, boarded a segregated Israeli bus (number 148) that connects the Jewish settlement of Ariel

¹ I am broadly referring to the IDF, Border Guards and Security Forces as a collective body under the umbrella term 'military' to include all forms of military personnel. Moreover, this description is in line with a 2009 *Breaking the Silence* publication entitled *Women Soldiers' Testimonies* related to female only testimonies which state: "This booklet is a product of "Soldiers Speak Out"; the testimonies collection project of *Breaking the Silence*. Since 2004, we have collected hundreds of testimonies from those who have, during their service in the IDF, the Border Guard, and the Security Forces, played a role in the Occupied Territories." The PDF is available via the *Breaking the Silence* website: www.breakingthesilence.org.il

² Privilege, in this regard, is firstly defined by the notion of citizenship, by which Israelis have a privileged status over Palestinians, even within Israel proper in terms of their social status, but also specifically for those combatants who have the ability to see life within Gaza and the West Bank. For ex-combatants of a certain generation or those who have not carried out military service, such as the vast majority of the Hasidic Jewish population, with the exception of the Netzah Yehuda Battalion which supports ultra-Orthodox Jews within the military, a portion of the Israeli population will not have seen inside Gaza, been privy to military strategies and tactics, official or otherwise, or have tangible, firsthand experience of managing the occupation and an occupied population.

to Jerusalem. Boarding the bus at the Kokhav Ya'akov junction east of Ramallah, with hand-held recording devices, broadcasting their sit-in, live to a global audience, the Freedom Riders travelled for 15 minutes before arriving at the Hizmeh Checkpoint where they were forcefully removed and arrested.

Pointedly carried out on 15 November 2011, fifty years after the original Montgomery 'freedom rides' and also coinciding with the anniversary of the Palestinians' symbolic declaration of independence on the 15 November 1988, the Freedom Riders sought to garner as much visibility as possible, across a varied spectatorial constituency. This was achieved in a number of ways. In the first instance, the use of a press release issued on 13 November 2011, two days before the action took place, helped attract the attention of major international news outlets including *The BBC*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and *ABC News* (Australia). Each outlet ran, in their own journalistic way, a small review-like analysis of the event, detailing the Freedom Rider's intention and marrying descriptions of the day's action alongside selected quotes from both the press release and pre-event press conference, held at the bus stop before they boarded the bus.

Once on the bus the Freedom Rides event was streamed live, online via a web-broadcast as well as micro-blogged and regularly updated via a live Twitter feed. As a visibility making event, supported by the press and a number of video activists, the intervention used the bus as a way to focus international attention and solidarity on one of the central hardships of occupied life: the denial of the right to the freedom of movement and access to equivalent amenities.

By making a nonviolent political intervention onto the segregated bus, the Freedom Rider action set out to address two specific issues:

- Firstly, the event sought to draw attention to the segregated Israeli bus system that provided shuttle services exclusively for Jewish settlers within the West Bank to beyond the 1948 Green line; seamlessly linking Jewish settlers to Israel, in this specific case, Ariel to Jerusalem. In

contrast, Palestinians within the West Bank require a permit to visit Jerusalem in addition to having to pass Israeli military checkpoints where they might be held up or even denied access.

- Secondly, capitalizing on the potential of the visibility-making event, the Freedom Riders also used the issue of segregation and political inequality between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank as an opportunity to push the political issue of BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) as a nonviolent tactic against the State of Israel.

Importantly, I would assert that both these efforts were aimed towards engaging a Western audience. Firstly because of the channels of dissemination used to publicize the event, as I will outline below, and secondly, because BDS against Israel is largely mobilized in the West, specifically in the UK, US and mainland Europe.³

As a form of visual activism, the intervention and its success was presupposed on their ability to self-mediate as a primary form of communication, specifically on the bus. In this regard the Freedom Riders took control over their image and used the pre-event press address as a way to highlight the need for politically motivated boycotts of two specific bus operators.

In what follows I will further detail the context, geographically and politically, in which the event was held as well as discussing the processes and outcomes of their political action. More explicitly I will discuss the potential effect of their action in terms of enhancing a politicized spectatorship through the use of social media and the web, specifically in terms of politicizing their own visibility as a means of disrupting a 'normal' Israeli field of vision.

Here, it should be noted, and it will be further investigated, that 'normal' within the context of Israel/Palestine is stratified by regimes that shape what he or she might see, how they look and what or who they see. For both Israelis and Palestinians, these regimes are multiple and contextual, namely the geographic space one might reside or move within/from, as well as their political and

³ For more information on the BDS movement see their website: <https://bdsmovement.net>

religious perspective. However, what is without question is the dynamics of power through which Israelis would normally look and see one another. Shaped by the mechanism that determines their proximity to one another, Israelis within the Green Line, as will be discussed in the second part of the chapter, are for the most part blind to what is happening in the Occupied Territories; because they do not see *into* the West Bank. Israelis living within Tel-Aviv for example are physically distanced from the occupation, thus limiting their sense of normalisation. For settlers the arrangement is more complicated. Within the West Bank, settlers might see Palestinians from atop of their settlements or as they move along the network of Israeli only bypass routes; their experience of normality involves a greater sense of consciously engaged blindness or selective looking. Even Israeli government efforts to aid this blindness or conscious unseeing can, when observed critically; enhance the Palestinian presence within the landscape (Figure 92).

Yet, as I note, the efforts of the Freedom Riders were to present a visibility that sought to challenge a Western notion of 'normality' regarding civil rights, movement and citizenship. This was underpinned by their strategic approach to visualise the event: the channels used to do so and the rhetoric used to link their event to the civil rights movement of the US.

To reference Merleau-Ponty (1964) the *invisible* is not simply something visible that is contingently out of sight. Rather, the invisible is 'here without being an object'. What he suggests is that the invisible is intrinsic to the visible; it is what makes the visible possible. Thus I will argue, making visible what is often removed from sight, the Freedom Riders also wanted to unsettle the intimate relationship between 'seeing and knowing' (Berger, 1972). Firstly to the settlers on the bus and secondly, through their multiplatform broadcasting to an international audience who would never likely see such a situation again.



Figure 92: A portion of the separation barrier along Route 443 near Jerusalem is painted to deflect the walls function.

5.2 The Limitations of Seeing & The Pitfalls of Representation

Writing in *Dispatches* (1991), war correspondent Michael Herr's assertion that history and specifically the present is no longer straight forwardly referential, poignantly points to the contestable state of visibility and the struggle over it. As this chapter will detail, the visual record is frequently cast in a confounding conundrum. Such a conundrum is driven by an indexical realism bestowed to both photography and film whereby it is capable of bearing witness to the worst of human behavior and yet, because it is only capable of showing a fragment of reality it is doomed by its incapacity to tell "the whole story" (Lucaites, 2014).

While it is true that no medium is capable of "telling the whole story", and certainly not in an objective fashion, it is no less of an assertion that we all too often place the full "burden of representation", on film and photography (Tagg, 1988) without paying attention to what it might be accomplishing, despite its

limitations. These assertions are most obvious when one thinks about the investment in the camera, as well as video-recording technologies, as a 'truth telling device' premised upon the popular human rights idiom, 'seeing is believing'.

It is this conundrum that the Palestinian Freedom Riders, and others like them, find themselves in, for the context in which they operate, as visual activists, and the violence they seek to expose never fully reveals itself. Thus, contentiously, when a photograph (or film) fails to persuade, the assumption is that somehow the onus of blame resides solely with the photograph (or the photographer) rather than with the viewer or addressee. In instances like this, visual culture scholars such as Arellia Azoulay argue that we need to develop a 'civic skill' through which we can learn to read an image or photograph for the worst of human behavior or the traits of such, that might not be overtly obvious within the frame of the image. Moreover, from the perspective of visual activism, one must also consider the process – the act itself and to ask why, even if the event fails to show the full extent of the violence, what was the motivation or intention.

While the issue of a representational frame and the power to decide what is in or out has been discussed in the historical and conceptual framework, historically, as well as in my chapter on Bil'in, the case for the Freedom Riders is somewhat different.. As stated in a previous chapter (4), the function of the Bil'in website was as a container for the Popular Committee's multiple visibility making. However, the website also provide the web user with a holistic impression of the Bil'in residents' struggle and the variants of the occupation they struggled against. As a one off event, the Freedom Riders needed to break through a 'well organised and well ordered system of applied force' (Azoulay, 2012) that was also unspectacular. Looking towards the 'disruptive disclosures' as a means of subverting what might otherwise be understood as a 'normal appearance' to most western spectators, the value of their intervention was the knowing reality they would be forcefully removed and they would not only document it, but live-stream the event as it happened.

Thus, it is not withstanding that part of the argument is driven by the logic that the 'new visibility' has the 'potential' to exceed the evidential capacity of a single, or even series of photographs, no less, does it require a civic skill. As the case below details, the potential to visualize that, which is often hidden, is enhanced when the act of this visibility making is also a political and performative intervention into both the visual field and physical space of the occupation. In this regard, the performances bring a civic act 'into being' by disrupting the norms of visibility associated to the space or time. In doing so, the Freedom Riders, if only temporarily created a space that offers the 'possibility for appearance' where 'I appear to others as others appear to me' (Arendt, 1958: 198). Firstly, through their spatial intervention and secondly when witnessed by multiple others.

5.3 The Context

Located 20 kilometers east of the Green Line, Ariel sits at the heart of the West Bank and is the fourth largest Jewish settlement in the West Bank. In 2010, one year before the Freedom Ride event, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu controversially declared Ariel, a Jewish only city with a population almost 20,000, 'the capital of Sameria'. Illegal under international law due to its presence within the West Bank, Ariel city is part of a larger 'bloc' of settlements encompassing a cluster of four additional settlements totaling 44,000 Israeli-Jewish residents.⁴

⁴ Unification of municipalities & creation of a new urban entity in the "Ariel bloc" – the Israeli Minister of Interior recently decided to establish a new municipality in the West Bank, to encompass four settlements in the Ariel bloc, located in a cluster close to the Green Line, on the far western end of the Ariel bloc. The new municipality will be comprised of Elkana and Etz Efraim (religious settlements), and the mixed religious/secular settlements of Oranit (which lies directly along the Green Line) and Sha'arei Tikva, with a total population of more than 13,200 settlers. This ostensibly "technical" and "administrative" decision – which removes the four settlements from their traditional settlement regional authorities or council – will in fact strengthen the settlements individually and as a bloc, likely paving the way for further development and expansion in them. Merging these relatively small settlements into one relatively large municipality will likely impact the way the settlements and their inhabitants are viewed by Israelis and by Israeli authorities, making them, as a group, seem more strongly connected to Israel. <http://peacenow.org.il/eng/content/west-bank-“settlement-blocs”>

Accessible along Highway 60, a route that runs north to south across Israel and the West Bank and supported by a network of Israeli only bypass roads, the Israeli only bus system contributes to the settlers' uneven field of vision whilst feeding into the myth that the land of Israel is continuous and unbounded. For example, when an Israeli drives from Tel Aviv to Ariel (a settlement located deep inside the West Bank, but less than an hour's drive from Tel Aviv) or from Jerusalem to Ma'ale Adumim (a 10 minute drive), s/he will likely not see any sign that they have crossed into the West Bank, and s/he will likely see almost no Palestinian cars or houses.

As noted in my historical and conceptual framework, the sophisticated integration of bypass roads into existing and well-established highways systems blurs the distinction in political space between the 'here' of Israel and the 'there' of Palestinian Territories – eradicating the 'other' geographically, visually and psychologically.

Thus, commonplace objects like buses, roads and the movement of people become part of a visual and geographical form that feed into a political imaginary, shaping the 'fantasy of separation' between Israelis and Palestinians. Such everyday objects at first might seem inconsequential but are in fact supported by a complex system of spatial and political management that also act as meaningful conduits of political power, directed towards Palestinians.⁵

Underpinning this fantasy of separation is a matrix of control over Palestinians, involving three different aspects. Firstly, a legal framework ensures that half a million Israeli settlers living in the West Bank and roughly two million Palestinians operate within alternate legal structures. While Israeli law governs the Israeli settlers, Palestinians are forced to comply with military law. Secondly, Israeli only infrastructures prioritize Israeli amenities over its Palestinian equivalent in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This includes better access to communication services, such as the Internet, telephony systems and media in

⁵ For more on this see Simon Faulkner's (2009) text *What Are You Looking At?*

addition to better transportation access, and a greater freedom of movement.⁶ As stated in Chapter One, the presence of Israeli settlers within the West Bank also compromises Palestinian access to their own amenities, including their own agricultural land, which is often seized, declared a closed military zone or built upon. Additionally, the asymmetries of the occupation extend to the management of natural resources including access to water. Referring to a Human Rights Watch (HRW) publication in 2010, Israel controls *all water* [emphasis added] resources in the West Bank and decides how much water is provided to Palestinians. In contrast, the West Bank settler population (including East Jerusalem) consumes approximately six times more water than the entire Palestinian West Bank population of 2.6 million (HRW, 2010: 17).⁷ Approximately 313,000 Palestinians are not connected to any water network and are at high risk of water scarcity, most prevalent of which are the Bedouin villages of the Negev and South Hebron Hills, including Susiya, which were the focus of my writing in Chapter 4. In Area C of the West Bank, Palestinians' must gain permits from Israel to build roads, water and sewage pipes, schools or electricity and communication towers; which are often not granted. The third element of the matrix is the military infrastructure that includes checkpoints, military curfews and military orders.

5.4 Pre-Event Media Management, BDS and 'Civil Rights'

Prior to boarding the bus, the Freedom Riders had courted as much of the traditional media as they could. Seeking to address the lack of visibility related to Palestinian equality, as well as mobilizing divestment as a nonviolent political mechanism related to their event, the Freedom Riders called a pre-intervention press conference. Mobilizing the bus as a literal and symbolic vehicle for transmitting Palestinian political demands for freedom, the bus also helped focus the political attention of the international BDS movement. With reference to the

⁶ For more on this see Helga Tawil-Souri interview with Simon Daws (Networked Knowledge, 2014)

⁷ For more information see HRW website:

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/iopt1210webwcover_0.pdf

BDS movement website, BDS implores ‘international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world’⁸ to engage in boycotts of Israeli-made products, divestment initiatives, and demands for state-imposed embargoes. In doing so, the movement is premised on the notion that by deploying a unilateral boycott that effectively impacts the Israeli economy, or, in the case of the Freedom Riders, the ‘brand’ or ‘integrity’ of companies that operate in or with Israel, the BDS movement will avenge Palestinian human rights and pressure Israel to stop violating them. In this specific case, the companies targeted were the Israeli bus operator Egged and French company Veolia.

As a tactic, BDS reflects an important element within the grassroots strategy; specifically in a post Second Intifada timeframe with the rise of de-centralized political tactics when faith had been lost in their political leaders and political processes. Shifting the focus of political mobilization to an international civil society rather than governments, specifically in a social media age where connectivity amongst a number of other societies, groups and activists, is valuable as a means of pushing an agenda. By making direct connections to ‘people of conscience’ around the world, the BDS movement and others like it have the capacity to adopt a number of communicative approaches. This approaches varies, but can include ‘post-humanitarian’ (Chouliaraki, 2010) strategies including e-petitions, such as the 2015 UK academic boycott of Israel⁹ or more visually direct efforts like the visual activism adopted by the Freedom Riders.

⁸ For more information see BDS website: <https://bdsmovement.net/call>

⁹ One example being the academic boycott: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/27/uk-academics-boycott-universities-in-israel-to-fight-for-palestinians-rights>

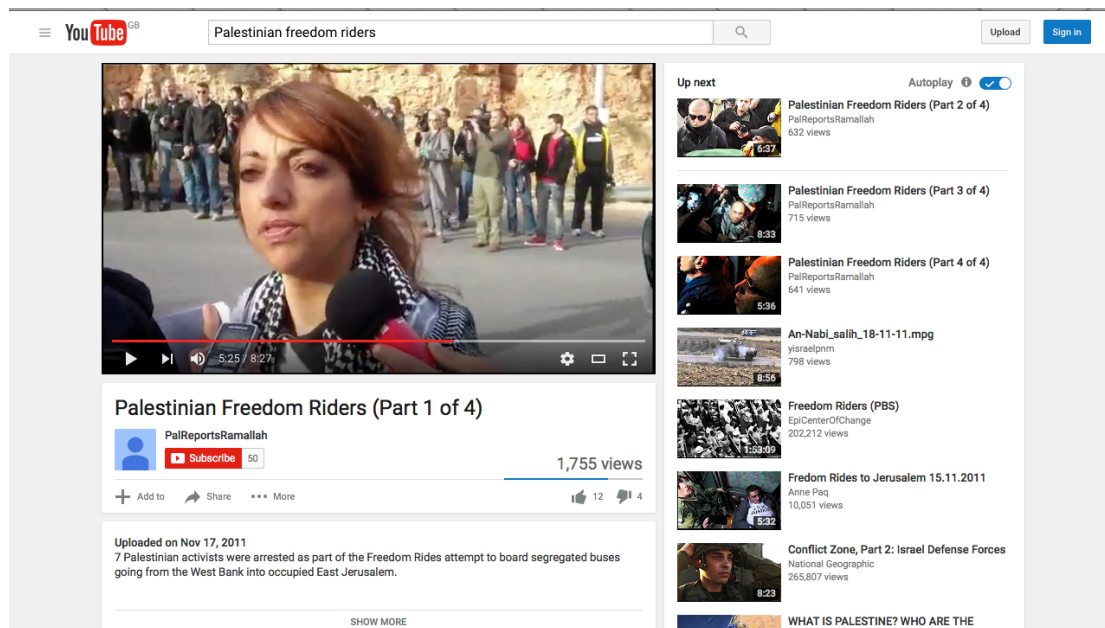


Figure 93: Screen grab of Huwaida Arraf conducting a pre-event press conference at the roadside prior to boarding the settler bus.

In their pre-event press conference, held at the roadside close to the bus stop where they were due to embark the bus, Huwaida Arraf, the only female member of the Freedom Riders, reminiscent of Leila Khaled, addressed the media as the Freedom Riders spokesperson. Arraf outlined that, “as part of our struggle for freedom, justice and dignity, we [the Palestinian] demand the ability to be able to travel freely on our own roads, on our own land, including the right to travel to Jerusalem.”¹⁰ Freedom, Arraf noted, was to ‘gain full participation in the system that conceives the law that one is subject to’. Justice, including ‘basic set of human rights, distributed equally’ to all Palestinians, and by definition, other non-citizens, including, ‘equal access to education, health-care and movement’. Lastly, human dignity, which was premised around the need for Israel to comply with the declaration of human rights; ensuring individuals are allowed to exist with freedom and equality.

In addition, the statement also addressed a complicit public including passengers and staff, all of who were deemed to be actively engaged in maintaining the

¹⁰ Ziada Hurriya’s full statement can be found here: <http://mondoweiss.net/2011/11/follow-the-freedom-rides>

occupation. Making a final link to the successful civil rights movement of America, Arraf concluded the Freedom Riders statement with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stating,

He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.

Borrowing from the success of the American civil rights movement enabled the Freedom Riders to present analogies to well known cases of historical injustice that were especially prescient to a western audience, and something that resonated with the mainly western news groups in attendance.

The Freedom Riders' act was symbolically loaded, blending traditional tropes of Palestinian steadfastness with the iconography of Rosa Parks' 1955 civil action. Refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery bus, Parks' action represented one of the few successful acts of modern civil disobedience and also social change, specifically in the U.S. The first Freedom Riders press release online [Tuesday, 13th November 2011] noted that they were 'asserting their right for liberty and dignity by disrupting the military regime of the Occupation through peaceful civil disobedience'. Moreover, the overt use of analogies to the US civil rights movement was also apparent from the first paragraph which read: 'On Tuesday, November 15th, 2011, Palestinian activists will reenact the US Civil Rights Movement's Freedom Rides to the American South by boarding segregated Israeli public transportation in the West Bank to travel to occupied East Jerusalem.'

Importantly, and unlike the original movement on which they modeled themselves, the Palestinian Freedom Riders were not seeking desegregation or equal access to the settler buses. They were so concerned their action might be read this way that they issued a second press release stating, 'Palestinians do not seek the desegregation of settler buses, as the presence of these colonizers and

the infrastructure that serves them is illegal and must be dismantled. As part of their struggle for freedom, justice and dignity, Palestinians demand the ability to be able to travel freely on their own roads, on their own land, including the right to travel to Jerusalem.'

A position held by Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh when I asked him about any potential misreading of their action, Qumsiyeh (2013) stated,

Our messaging is not that we want to be able to use Israeli buses to go to Jerusalem, that's not our message. If you look at our press release it was clear and unambiguous, it was why should, you know, somebody who is not from this country be able to come here and get automatic citizenship, essentially... We're shedding a light on this system, we're not asking for, you know, some sort of, you know, ability to use a bus you know.

The use of analogies and persuasively formed parallels between the government sanctioned racial segregation laws in the Southern United States, known as the Jim Crow Laws and the subsequent Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Freedom Riders actively framed their action around a tangible and globally accessible theme of racially engineered segregation. Through social media the Freedom Riders arguably began what later became a commonly associated theme, linking the historical and contemporary racial inequalities between black Americans and their white counterparts with the Palestinian situation. A more recent comparison can be made with the 2014 appearance of the social media campaign.

The #PalestineToFerguson campaign relates to death of Michael Brown, an unarmed 18 year old African-American US citizen, who was mortally shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri; a largely black suburb of St. Louis, on 9th August 2014. In response, protests and civil unrest ensued as residents of the majority black city took to the streets. Consequently, the town of Ferguson received considerable media attention concerning the relationship between law enforcement and minority groups. Firstly, in response to Brown's death and secondly in reaction to the militarized response by the state to the civil

movement that followed. Five days later an image of Hamdi Abu Rahma, a Palestinian photographer (as discussed in the previous chapter) holding a sign that read “The Palestinian people know what it means to be shot while unarmed because of your ethnicity”, was posted to the *New York Times* website¹¹ having originally been posted to his Facebook account where it received over 900 ‘likes’ and 400 ‘shares’.

Both the Freedom Riders action and Abu Rahma’s photo linked together two communities by exploiting Ferguson as a political issue, whilst almost making a statement of solidarity. Seeking to capitalise on the visibility of highly mediated political events in the US to bring about a platform for Palestinian political visibility, Rahma’s action, like the Freedom Riders, sought to project an image of steadfastness and national identity while making analogies to the Palestinian lack of civil rights in relation to black American representation, historically. For the Freedom Riders, this was achieved through meaningfully knitting the symbols of Palestinian resistance with tangible and transnationally recognizable images of civic resistance by borrowing from both Palestinian and US resistance culture. Firstly, the Freedom Riders employed the tactics and defiance of Rosa Parks and in doing so, worked to maximize their culturally symbolic impact. Through the use of symbolic framing, the Freedom Riders drew on the iconography (demonstrators holding signs, and the visual representation of sit-in’s) of the US civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. By directly addressing the unequal political structure of the Israeli occupation over Palestinian territory, including the restrictions on movement and lack of human rights afforded to Palestinians, the Freedom Riders levied their efforts against successful campaigns in the past. Adopted as a denotable tactic that could be understood in an international ‘language’ of civic rights, the bus acted both literally and metaphorically a vessel or carrier visualising discriminatory Israeli state practices. Secondly, staging their act of civil disobedience as a visually arresting event, that attracted media attention from international broadcasters

¹¹ New York Times report relating to the Police shooting of Michael Brown
http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/08/13/us/ferguson-missouri-town-under-siege-after-police-shooting.html?_r=1

to grass-roots narrowcasters, heavily linked to the era of Rosa Parks. Each rider wore the traditional black and white scarf (keffiyeh) that is symbolically associated with the image of Palestinian nationalism and also resistance; famously worn by former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and also by Leila Khaled, a female member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine who engaged in armed struggle during the 1960s (Figure 94)

Wearing a traditional black and white scarf is commonly recognized as an international marker of Palestinian-ness, with those who wear it often been reproduced numerous times in political and popular culture and is a sign of resistance (see Figure 96). In this vein the keffiyeh, along with the bus, acted as one of two punctums (Barthes, 1980) within the context of the pre-event press conference; each working to grab the spectator's attention, working in duality to reinforce the rider's images as a powerful form of visual thought and meaning.



Figure 94: Leila Khaled, a female member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, wearing a Keffiyeh during an interview (1974)



Figure 95: Fadi getting on the bus – an example of the media attention received.



Figure 96: Photo from the Author showing a graffiti image of Leila Khaled on the separation barrier.

The tactics, timing and pre-event publicity by the Freedom Riders highlighted a media savvy awareness that brought the attention of multiple spectators, who would in turn, pick up and hopefully circulate their efforts to a global audience. In this instance, the mediation of their intentions did to some extent draw attention to their BDS efforts against bus providers, Egged and Veolia. To this effect it can be suggested that the Freedom Riders successfully brought about a degree of exposure against both the companies and the existence of a segregated, settlement shuttle service within the West Bank. In the struggle over visibility, the Freedom Riders recognized that the greatest power of exposure lay, not in the attendant media who gathered at the bus stop, but instead in the reliance of the activists to record one another on the bus.

To take control over their own image and its subsequent mediation, would allow the Freedom Riders to have full control over the content and circulation of their protest activity *on a* segregated public space. Tweeting, Facebooking and most significantly, live streaming the protest from within the bus helped to extend the visibility of their action. More specifically, the live streaming of content also ensured that those alerted to the event through the press release, distributed via email and published on the English language alternative news website, *The Electronic Intifada*, which has a predominately western, politicized audience, could watch, comment and share the events unfold, in real-time.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will outline some of the effects of new media technologies, specifically in terms of exposure practices that in turn produced what John Thompson refers to as the 'new visibility' (2005), both generally and also with specific reference to the on-going battle over visibility in Israel/Palestine. Thereafter, I will outline the explicit effect of the Freedom Riders event as a process that, intentionally or otherwise, exposed the perceived normalcy (Goffman, 1971) of the Israeli State to a Western audience, before going on to highlight similar actions, which have happened since 2011.

5.5 New Visibility and Tools of Exposure

In the age of Web 2.0, the ascendancy of user-generated content and “democratized” information ushered in a new era of visibility that has the power to challenge state imposed control over the public sphere, principally through acts of disclosure. As Philip Howard has acknowledged, democracy and democratisation can no longer be effectively studied without some ‘attention paid to the role of digital information technologies’ (Howard, 2010: 132). For example, without such technologies, the popular uprisings across a number of Arab states during 2010 and 2011 would not have unfolded, nor gained such global attention. In a sense, those protesting against their respective long-standing autocratic regimes, the everyday citizens who were subject to decades of undemocratic governance, used social media to ‘disrupt the sensible’ in an effort to seek a change in government.

Defined by Larry Diamond (2010) as ‘liberation technologies’, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have the potential to widen the public sphere, creating a more pluralistic and autonomous arena of news, commentary and information. These tools, Diamond writes, are also ‘powerful instruments for transparency and accountability’ (2010: 71) that have the capacity to mobilize mass movements of people into political action. In previous instances of social movements much attention was given to the impact of text-based communications such as SMS and listserv programs to mobilise popular resistance movements and disseminate important, strategic information (Aulich, 2010). Speaking about nonviolent resistance and communication in a pre-digital era, Qumsiyeh notes that in an effort to achieve visibility, the reliance on technology to share messages was key, even during the First Intifada.

As the technology evolves you use the different technologies for example the 1987 uprising, which was a nonviolent uprising, that was happening here Palestinians used the fax machines to relay their messages abroad and they fax information and declarations and ideas. So technology is a tool that you use to achieve what to want to achieve to show the world what your life is like under occupation, under colonisation.

Throughout the popular uprisings of Northern Africa and the Middle East, global audiences observed how a new media ecosystem of ‘purposeful witnesses’¹² worked to manage and gather visual information in an effort to sustain compelling narratives. This was most pertinently applied to the 2011 Arab Spring, dubbed the ‘Facebook revolution’, where one activist in Cairo, protesting against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stated that, “we use Facebook to schedule our protests, Twitter to coordinate and YouTube to tell the world” (Meier, 2011).

While such technologies have the potential for the rapid circulation of content, including images and video, one must also consider that, due the proliferation of image sharing outlets and the volume of content produced, the significance may diminish rather than compel communities to act. Secondly, specifically relatable to the images of Palestinians, the image may not produce a response because there is an indifference, or intolerance to the subject (Butler, 2009). The audience more generally may be affected by a form of visual fatigue to the sign of suffering, through sheer volume (Sontag, 1977; Moeller, 1999) or as Susie Linfield (2010) has argued, ‘violence has become less tethered to its political aims’. In contrast to Sontag and Moeller’s argument of compassion fatigue,¹³ Linfield argues that the viewers of conflict or violence have become has lost in its ethical direction and political purpose. As a result, one’s own affective response to the image of suffering is emotionless, because, with the loss of political reason there is no possibility for a reliable political channel of action in retort – we just turn away.

With the proliferation of visibility making and sharing technologies it would be remiss to not consider the effect on those who are being represented, if they are not in control of the image or representation. As was discussed in Chapter Three, the accessibility of new media technologies allows any ‘organisation’ to

¹² The term a purposeful witness was used by Sam Gregory, director of Witness, during a conference at Stamford University, U.S.A, 5th May 2012.

¹³ See David Campbell on ‘myth and compassion’ <https://www.david-campbell.org/2012/02/29/the-myth-of-compassion-fatigue/>

intervene into an event or crisis and make an ethical plea without the relevant media training. Here, the 'new visibility' has the potential to frame the subject as passive and hapless (Allen, 2009) as much as it can create new political relations or mobilise action. Equally, the publication of protest imagery, where individuals are gathered, can in the hands of oppressive authorities aid in the identification of participants. Efforts to protect the anonymity of witnesses through the blurring of faces, both in testimony and through the use of new face-blurring technologies (Gregory, 2012), seek to minimize the vulnerability of the participants. However, the rise of the 'absent perpetrator' including the use of masks by IDF soldiers in the field, as well as state efforts to remove personal accountability for military action, hints at the complex political dynamic concerning the political visibility of 'proper performances' and wrongdoing in Israel/Palestine. As I will outline in the final section of this chapter, with the ubiquity of the camera and image sharing technologies at weekly demonstrations in the West Bank, IDF soldiers have taken to removing their identity from the field of vision, further distancing any sense of accountability or potential shaming.

5.6 Video Activism and Visibility

Visibility, related to protest, was first and foremost an experience of 'primary' observation. However developments in new media with the networked capacity for mass circulation have led to a significant rise in 'secondary' visibility (Goldsmith, 2010) of witnessing either online, on phones or shared via picture messaging. While visibility was originally wholly actual (or primarily) based on direct experience or observation, John Goldsmith notes that 'the development of mass circulation newspapers led to a significant secondary visibility through the publication of photographic material and narrative material' (Goldsmith, 2010: 914). He continues that the advent of television 'expanded this secondary visibility considerably wider, particularly as communication networks offered the capacity for visual material to be shared' (2010: 914) between one another in a host of locations and at varying times. Taking video activism as the focus of this chapter, the catalyst of such media witnessing and disruptive disclosures was arguably first brought to the global attention when a bystander, George Holiday,

using a hand held video camera captured the brutal beating of Rodney King Jr, a 26-year-old black American, by 12 Los Angeles policemen in 1991. Holiday's action, the process of 'capturing' and then sharing, albeit it via TV and news channels rather than independently, pointed to the capacity of this 'then new media' technology to operate in the service of activism and citizen witnessing. Its capacity to be seen by many rather than a few, and at multiple times over a range of times is indicative of the secondary visibility that we now live in, highlighted by the fact that the full 'Rodney King beating video' is accessible on YouTube and has been viewed 542,742 times since it was originally posted in 2015.

A threshold event, the 8 minute footage sparked widespread condemnation, prompting academics and civil rights activists to argue that the footage reflected an endemic, yet rarely seen problem, with US race-relations.¹⁴ Without the camcorder, such an event would have remained limited to the primary visibility of the bystander. Caught on camera, the footage of King's beating became visible across the world in an unprecedented manner. Coinciding with the rise of 24 hour news broadcasting, the video allowed millions of viewers often thousands of miles away from the incident to form a view about the propriety and rectitude of the police officers' actions.

¹⁴ A full clip of the footage (uploaded to YouTube) can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sb1WywlpUtY>



Figure 97: A still from the video footage of the Rodney King beating.

Since the Rodney King Jr incident, a number of initiatives specializing in producing/facilitating video testimonies of rights abuses have gone to great lengths to find ways to support communities, using video as its feature tool. Most notable of these has been the US based human rights organization, WITNESS. Created in the wake of the Rodney King incident, WITNESS has been providing video training to rights activists around the world; a noteworthy component of this process in an Israel/Palestine context has been B'Tselem, an Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. In 2007 B'Tselem launched a visual documentation project, giving 300 video cameras to Palestinians throughout the West Bank, enabling them to document abuses of their own rights and those they witness. While B'Tselem applies the same techniques as WITNESS, their motivations and aims differ. As a development, specifically in response to the limited capacity and distribution of Palestinian media in addition to the lasting effect of Israeli military regulations and press censorship (Bishara, 2010: 69), B'Tselem's video project works collaboratively to present evidence of rights violations. In the past when Palestinians accounts, collected by the rights organization, were measured in comparison to

testimonies of soldiers and Jewish settlers, Israeli authorities tended to 'prefer the latter' (Ginsburg, 2011). Operating in an asymmetric legal context, defined by a 'gentle hand and strong arm' approach that reflects the two-tier legal system that operates to the advantage of 'Israeli citizens with full rights and non-Israeli citizens with no rights' (Elders, 2007: 386), the B'Tselem camera project offers Palestinians a semblance of protection, as a deterrent to a potential attack as well as legally.

One specific incident recorded by a B'Tselem videographer in Susiya, located in the Hebron Hills of the West Bank, is particularly pertinent to the discussion of secondary visibility and the Israeli field of vision. Recorded on the on 8 June 2008, the short one minute video shows four Jewish settlers approaching from a neighboring settlement and confronting Palestinian shepherds. With their faces masked, and their hands wielding clubs, the shepherd's young wife captured the scene on film; her camera provided by the B'Tselem project. Discussed by Rebecca Stein on an online issue of the *Middle East Research and Information Project* published 20 March 2013 anomalous within the B'Tselem archive due to the 'masking' rather than the violence, noting that,

There are hundreds of videos uploaded to the B'Tselem website. But there are thousands more in the video archives considered unworthy of media attention or self-publication, including footage of political demonstrations, settler incursions and abuses by security forces'.

Alluding to the lack of attention the other videos in the B'Tselem archive received, Stein (2013) argues that this could be the result of their possibly poor quality in sound or vision or perhaps the violence was deemed too mundane for an Israeli viewing public; an audience weary of images of conflict due to saturation. However, it was perhaps the intentional masking of settler faces that helped to heighten the attention given to this video. Although masking is now common practice amongst settlers, the purpose is not to avoid legal retribution, as settlers are very rarely arrested, but rather, I argue as a way to remove oneself from the critical eye of an unknown audience.



Figures 98 and 99: Still footage from Muna-A-Nwajaa's B'tselem project video recording of the Hebron Hills capturing masked Israeli settlers attacking a farmer.

With Israel/Palestine in mind, much of how external viewers come to see the consequences of the occupation has to do with the different degrees of visibility ascribed to various modes of violence. As noted above, knitting together the proactive pursuit of human rights alongside the capacity to share a secondary visibility has the capability to challenge on-going violence carried out against

Palestinians, independent to larger scale violence. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, like in other parts of the world, there has been a decisive shift in the value of amateur photography that has coincided with a rise in visual activism and citizen journalism. The latter, like many similar practices, including 'photovoice', 'amateur photojournalism', or 'net-worked journalism' is significant because of its participatory nature. Allowing 'everyday people' to be able to take charge of their own story (Allan & Thorson, 2009: 30) the value of 'citizen journalism' is based on the opportunity for the lay community (citizen or non-state actor) to play an active role in producing, collecting and distributing the news through social media platforms. This is distinguishable from 'amateur photojournalism' who might only contribute image(s) to traditional news agencies and mainstream outlets.

A final noteworthy act is the notion of 'sousveillance' coined by Steve Mann (Goldsmith, 2010: 930) as surveillance from below. A mode of decentralised observation that Mann defines sousveillance as a means of 'recording an activity by a participant in the activity' to produce transparency in all directions... [in turn] seeking to reserve the otherwise one-sided panoptic gaze'. Mann's observations point to a practice that through the use of a camera and the embodied presence of an activist or observer in the protest arena, one might reclaim visibility as a form of resistance to governmental surveillance. Efforts to decentralise the power and direction of authoritative observation, in some cases, explicit watching, as experienced when moving through Israeli checkpoints, can be demonstrated by the formation of groups whose sole function is to expressly carry out counter-looking as activism. Most prevalent of these is the Israeli, female only volunteer group, Checkpoint Watch or Machsom Watch. According to their website, the group's aims are to monitor the behavior of soldiers and police at checkpoints; to ensure that the human and civil rights of Palestinians attempting to move within the West Bank are protected, and also to record and report the results of their observations to the widest possible audience.¹⁵ Working across a number of checkpoints at any one time, this direct observation

¹⁵ For more information see: <http://www.en.machsomwatch.org>

backed up by camera and/or video-recording technologies creates a systematic form of sousveillance.

Each of these video-based approaches to witnessing is nuanced by its own distinct function and capacity for exposing or witnessing; it could be suggested that we have entered into the 'synoptic age'. A 'situation where a large number [of people] focuses on something in common that is then condensed for consumption' (Mathiesen, 1997: 45), the 'mass' of the mass media routinized synoptic visibility as something, which filtered down rather than up. Remarking that the Rodney King Jr incident was a threshold event, more recent examples include ISIS execution videos or both 2015 Paris terror attacks. In every case, the footage relied upon the amplifying and disseminating capacity of mainstream media for their effect. In the context of Israel/Palestine, actions like 'Avatar Activism' in Chapter Three, or the Freedom Rides are less about producing news or witnessing events. Instead, these actions are 'performance like' forms, which I refer to as visual activism. Wanting to appear, politically, before others through intervention or rupture, these performances contest the regimes of visibility that shape the Israeli field of vision. These complex social, technical and political arrangements of segregation deny Palestinians either the space or context that make their plight recognisable or to directly engage with the Israeli public. Supplemented by the increased capacity for secondary visibility, which enables others, outside the context, to see the political function of the performance, as well as an effect of direct-address with those who often deny or are removed from 'seeing' Palestinians, is hugely important. Thus, Thompson's idea of a 'new visibility' is useful because it does not simply take into account that the availability of these technologies has accelerated or assisted the process of looking at events and content that would otherwise be inaccessible. Rather, Goldsmith (2010: 992) writes, that Thompson recognises that there exists, at least within a specific portion of society, a greater willingness, as well as a capability, to engage in 'disruptive disclosures', societies where such technologies are widely used.

What we have here, then, is a performance, rather than an act of media witnessing, that is motivated by political, social and visual inequality. We might think about visual activism and the use of photography, film and the Internet in this context as involving the 'right to look' in opposition to the visibility regimes of political power (Mirzoeff, 2011). While the act 'appearance' and the 'right to look' are explicit in how the performance was conducted, the remainder of this section will focus on the value of new media circulation and its effects, principally upon how the Israeli military were portrayed.

5.7 Circulating Images: Freedom Rides and Multiple Witnesses

The Freedom Riders were supported by various multimedia platforms, which worked to bring the hidden into perspective by engaging the audience in a technologically enabled performance against the segregation of space and transportation concealed within the occupation. The Freedom Riders communicative tools included live video streaming, in effect 'narrowcasting' the event to a global audience, reaching over 10,000 views and receiving messages of support throughout from numerous countries, including the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK, the US and Germany. These demographics represent the intended audience that the Freedom Riders sought to engage. This was underpinned by an efficient public relation process that included a press release, Facebook page, Twitter feed in English as well as being broadcast via the Electronic Intifada website.

The use of live-streaming, supported by textual updates whenever the connection had to reload, enabled the viewer to witness the event. Addressing the cameras on board the bus each Freedom Rider declared, in proficient English, their civic rights and denounced Israeli state practices. When the Israeli border police and IDF boarded the bus each Freedom Rider repeatedly and calmly stated, "I'm a Freedom Rider! I'm just trying to go to Jerusalem!" The link to the Freedom Riders' live-stream event had over three thousand 'likes' via Facebook with over two thousand 'likes' related to their official Facebook page. Their Twitter account amassed over two thousand followers in a 3 day period of

activity (13th November 2011 – 16th November 2011). A total of 153 tweets were registered to the account, of which 90% were posted live during the bus journey.



Figure 100: A Freedom Rider being forcibly removed from the settler shuttle bus on 15 November 2011. Photo: ActiveStills.

The ability to bypass media outlets, allowing for multiple forms of multiplatform self-publishing reduced the dependency on intermediaries to mediate material. These developments have, in turn, made it much ‘more difficult for political actors to throw a veil of secrecy around their activities’ and ‘much harder to control the images and information that appear in the public domain’ (Thompson, 2005: 49). Unable to completely police ‘their own visibility’, authorities and military personnel have found themselves more and more visible, caught up in performances where they no longer control who the audience might be, what they might see, or say. The result, Thomas Keenan (2004) asserts, is the capacity to mobilise shame amongst individuals via the impact of the ‘imagined public eye’.

The perception of an imagined public eye was enhanced by the live circulation of image and sound via multiple platforms, pushed along through differing networks and communities who followed the live Twitter feed and live stream

video broadcast from inside the bus; mixing what Thompson refers to as primary and secondary visibility. For Thompson, the notion of a secondly visibility is premised on the retrospective circulation of images by photographers and news outlets who might represent an event, thus opening up the scope for extended spectatorship, often retrospectively, much like the Rodney King incident. Thompson recognises the intent of a specific population and the capacity of the technology, but his writing does not consider the impact of such exposures brought about instantaneously through social media platforms. For instance, the still images throughout this chapter exist in separation to the live video footage recorded and streamed online, which have the capacity not only to expose, but to give a 'presentness' to proceedings. The intervention, into an otherwise segregated space of an Israeli only settler bus, created a web of gazes between Palestinian activists, Israeli activists, Israeli passengers, soldiers and online viewers that formed a mixed, even antagonistic, community of spectators. This spectatorship dramatically violates the state governed visual field at one of its most segregated sites. The antagonism was exposed through multiple representations. While the Freedom Riders broadcast their own video and sound, press were able to board the bus, interviewing both the activists and settlers leading to multiple mediations.

In addition, the platforms of circulation surrounding the event were multiple with photos and film, taken by photographers, activists, bystanders and news agencies, appearing on a number of websites including the Freedom Riders' blog, newspaper articles, nationally in Israel and internationally including the *Washington Post*, and on news websites such as the BBC. Calling the attention of local and national media through the press release added a significant weight to the event because of the additional presentation of the visual imagery in the news. Furthermore, alternative agencies helped contribute to the production and structuring of the activists political narrative. By reducing the dependency upon formal channels of media dissemination, the Freedom Riders, through the constitutive act of transmission, added a sense of performance to the mediation. Thus, the useful embedding of cameras and new media *into* or as part of the process of acting out their direct-action before a pre-arranged live audience

online altered the significance of each aspect in play – the military, the surrounding settlers on the bus, even the significance of the bus as a protest platform. The result is that the performativity of the Freedom Rides has to be considered as a cultural phenomenon that is tied to the creation of meaning and the relationships to everything around it, as well as the engaged online spectatorship through their constant communication in response to the events.

Tracing the movement of the Freedom Riders content across platforms, the experimentation between testimony and desire for publicity is obvious. Yates Mckee, writing in *Sensible Politics* (2011) remarks that many accounts that investigate the relation between visual culture and political transformation, have tended to isolate images from their production; a sentiment noted in my historical and conceptual framework with regards to archival research. Much like in Chapter Three on Bil'in, the production and movement of images is often as significant as their intended or final destination. Thus, image centred analysis, as well as scholarship on the potential of 'liberation technologies' often obscures the original context in which the cultural form (photo, film, painting) appear. Looking at the power of the new visibility in the context of the Freedom Rides, there exists a need to consider the architecture of circulation as much as there exists a need to focus on the disseminated images. Within recent scholarship in this multi-disciplinary field, a value is placed on the ways that technology defines how, who and what type of message is received. Specifically pertinent is Roger Hallas' (2010) recent work on new media ecologies and NGOs. Examining the development of multimedia software like Flash, Hallas argues, that such developments have permitted photojournalism to translate long-standing 'modes of presentation such as a slide show, the gallery wall display, the photo book, and the magazine spread into the digital environment" (Mckee, 2011). The emergence of multimedia mediations within photojournalism have produced new functionalities such as sound, moving images and cinematic editing. Digital photojournalism thus remediates both print photojournalism and documentary photography, to create what multimedia pioneers, Bjarke Myrthu and Brian

Strom, call the 'cinematic experience'.¹⁶ This experience, coupled with the space and flows of networked communities allows users of new media platforms to share and explore visual activism in such a way that the architecture that supports it also informs the experiences.

Thus, the media landscape within which the Freedom Rides played out offered an immediacy and liveness, which is presented in a shared time and space across distance. In the screen grab below (Figure 101), the live-stream also featured a view counter embedded into the feed (within the blue strip at the bottom of the screen). Coupled with an interactive chat forum, the feed allowed users from different locations to engage *in* the event, giving an impression of attendance. This affect was enhanced when those holding the camera were physically removed from the bus – taking both the activists and the spectator out of the protest.

5.8 Circulation and Networks of Solidarity

Neither social media platforms nor traditional news channels can be considered neutral spaces, each, through framing and context, produce and share images produced with some degree of political agency. In each instance these platforms demand particular representational forms, are coded with their own epistemological norms, and employ their own modes of address (Mckee, 2011: 17). The screen shot from the Electronic Intifada website in Figure 102 exemplifies Mckee's observation of non-neutral spaces of circulation. The event bypassed the formal structures and 'gate keepers' of information, and was instead written up as a retrospective news report in many of the major publications. However, alternative news providers, including the Electronic

¹⁹ The cinematic experience is perhaps best articulated in the Daily Telegraph's adoption of film, sound, multimedia in their 8-part online chaptered article, 'Meet the Settlers-A Journey through the West Bank with Jake Wallis Simons'. The web-experience differs from the typical new reading format of an online newspaper in that you move between 'pages' or 'screen's between segments. Moreover, if you hover over an image, a video related to it appears, if you continue to scroll on, the image/video retreats back into the 'page' of the newspaper. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/meetthesettlers/index.html>

Intifada website had a live-link to the online steaming page hosted by the Freedom Riders (Figure 101).

Evident here is the rapid acceleration of network societies, interrupting the monopoly of communication. The interconnection between cyberspace, which Castells refers to as the 'space of flow' and urban space, a 'space of places', the Freedom Riders' bypassed a total reliance on formal structures of mediation such as the press.

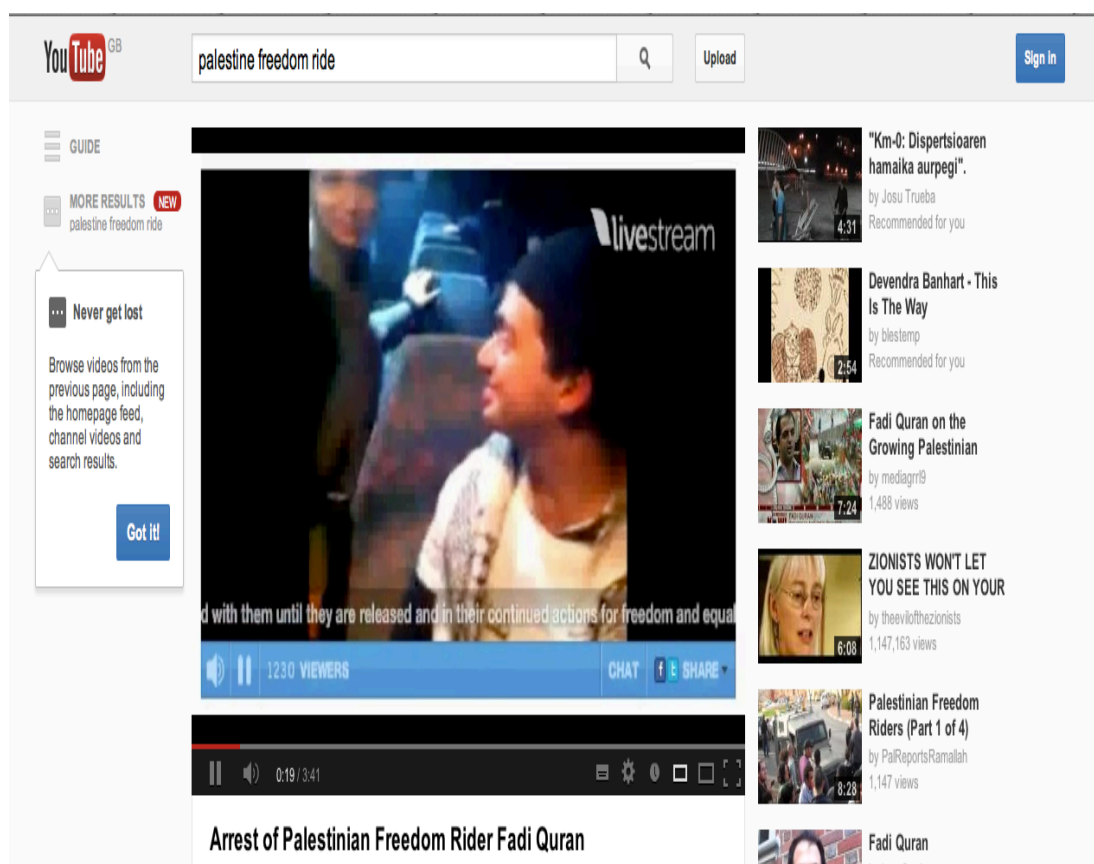


Figure 101: Screen grab of the live stream from inside the bus.

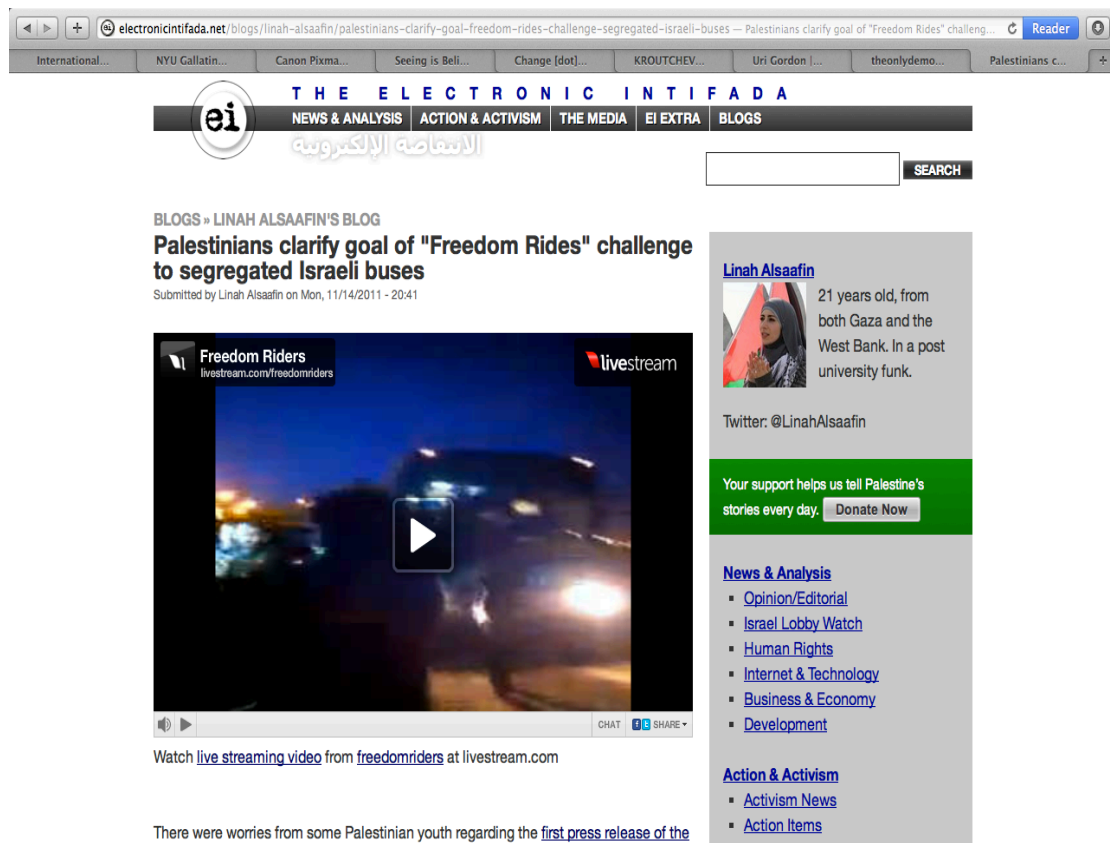


Figure 102: Screen grab from the live-feed event embedded in the 'Electronic Intifada' website.

As a Pro-Palestinian website, created by anti-occupation activists, and by writers and scholars from different countries, the Electronic Intifada became an online information centre related to Palestinian issues in the occupied territories and internationally. The website's development in 2001 was part of a web-based movement aimed at uncovering pro-Israeli reporting, while countering and challenging media bias in relation to the events of the Second Intifada (see Chapter 3). One of the website's major aims is to mobilize the international community to support the right of (territorial) Palestinian self-determination while *virtually* bringing together Palestinians and non-Palestinians (Aouragh, 2008: 24). By doing so, the Internet offered an alternative mobility and space for people who are not capable of engaging in direct activism or who lack *offline mobility*. As a global electronic space, or as a 'space of flows', the Internet brings people of different diasporic locations together, both physically and virtually, in coordinated movements such as those organized online. Perpetuating a sense of togetherness through shared values both on and offline, the Internet is, as

Castells (2012) argues, 'an ideal platform for dispersed communities such as transnational activist networks (TANs) and witnesses.

The outbreak of the Second Intifada forced organizations and activists to regroup and, most importantly, rethink their tactics due to the fragmentation of space by Israel, especially in the West Bank as well as fractures in the Palestinian political sphere between Fatah and Hamas. The emergence of websites, blogs, and access to new media technologies, either directly or with support of international activists and agencies, gave the Palestinians the ability to bypass political channels of communication and to organize, engage and coordinate more directly with internationals. The ability to share images and personal stories 'from within' is affirmed by an interview conducted by Miriyam Aouragh with a blogger from the Shatila refugee camp in the Lebanese capital of Beirut. Explaining the significance placed upon testimony and acts of witnessing:

If I tell you a story that I didn't really experience myself, you will not be affected as much as when it was indeed my experience. (Aouragh, 246: 2008).

As outlined in Aouragh's fieldwork above, testimony has maximum effect when experienced, in this instance, through what might be considered as 'new visibility witnessing'. Equally, narration in this instance is used in close relation to the event, helping to support and validate testimony. Thus the Freedom Riders' use of new media helped to extend and facilitate this process by releasing pre-event press releases to the media, creating a Facebook and Twitter account and hosting post-event press conferences and interviews online, which in turn created an online archive of events.

5.9 The Freedom Rides as a Networked Event

If we consider the construction of the Internet and social interaction by adopting Castells (2006) 'network society'— a societal form characterised by a transformation of live time and space, the emergence of new '*timeless time*' and

'space of flows' is significant when one considers the response and 'ripple effect' of a single event mediated through a 'network'. The network, in this conceptualisation, is no longer seen as a simple metaphor for a new social arrangement. Instead the network becomes a tool, which is defined by connections and more specifically, exchanges that helped the Freedom Riders to successfully publicise BDS to maximum effect. Although the event was witnessed by no more than twenty additional (present) supporters and a bus full of Jewish settlers, it was entirely choreographed and staged, inviting the onlooker to witness and observe the structures of the segregation of the Israeli occupation through a narrative (a typical day/journey on a bus).

At the time of looking (8 December 2014) there were fourteen additional YouTube submissions of different but synchronised events totalling over 20,000 hits, including three synchronised protests and boycott events concerning the Egged bus company operating in the Netherlands and two more in the US. These 'synchronised' acts of solidarity held in both countries on 15 November 2011, fulfilled a supplementary awareness-raising role, whereby each 'node' in the Freedom Ride became present in site-specific actions internationally. A necessary sign of global support, each action is more closely associated with an international call for BDS rather than seeking to visualize the hardship of Palestinian daily life, however, each event overlapped thus outlining its multi-functional value. Held in Los Angeles and Oakland US activists sought to draw attention to the French transport company Veolia, while protest actions (Figure 103) in Amsterdam sought to raise awareness about EBS, a subsidiary of the Israeli transport company Egged.

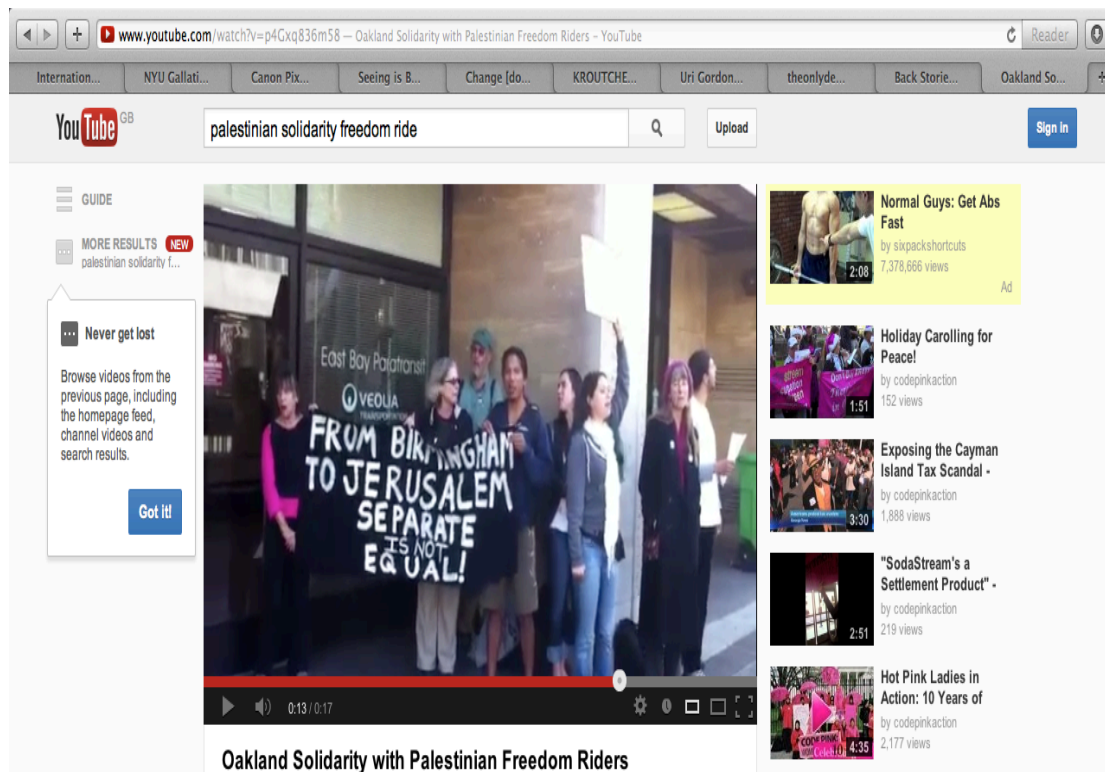


Figure 103: YouTube screen grab of footage uploaded from a synchronized solidary event in Oakland, US.

The result of the networked protest afforded those who are engaged directly in the protest performance on the bus the ability to share images and events, thus extending the reach of the content beyond one specific community. The multiplicity of the event also transformed audiences into distributors and producers, in effect, turning ‘witnessing publics into witnessing publicists’ (Torchin, 2012) by their ability to respond back to the event, share it and remediate it.

5.10 Acts of Exposure and Concealment

Ruthie Ginsburg writes that through photography exposure occurs above all when an object, a person or an event is present in front of the lens and registered in the camera (Ginsburg, 2014: 50). By means of the camera, things are exposed that otherwise, perhaps, would have remained unseen; and the manner of framing puts into relief things that may have been hidden or obscure (Benjamin, 1999). Following the Freedom Riders intervention onto the bus, a number of national and international news providers ran the story. In addition to the

written accounts each newspaper article chose to run with either one of two photographs taken aboard the bus by Reuters staff photographer, Ammar Awad.



Figure 104: Freedom Riders aboard the settler bus. Photo by Reuters staff photographer, Ammar Awad.

In Figure 104 the Freedom Riders are located at the front of the bus. Foregrounded in the images and unfurling a Palestinian flag across the walk way of the bus, Awad's snapshot style photograph reflects a sense of urgency on the part of both the protesters and the photographer to participate in the event. With Palestinian participants and Israeli commuters facing towards the camera, the compositional angle of Figure 104 suggests that Awad is perhaps stood in the foot well of the bus entrance. Another tightly framed shot, Figure 105 depicts an Israeli soldier addressing one of the Freedom Riders, this time at the back of the bus while Israeli-Jewish passengers look on, heads turned to face the camera. The use of photographs, like those noted above, is part of a conventional practice related to the way in which news organizations provide 'slices of reality' (Schudson, 2001; Thompson, 1995) that help enhance a public's understanding of an event. In their capacity to make visible, both the photographer and media outlets enact a form of exposure, registering images, reproducing them and putting them into circulation.



Figure 105: Photo of Freedom Riders from back of the bus. Photo by Reuters staff photographer, Ammar Awad.

Staying with Awad's photo, the image was also published online, for the Israeli publication, Ha'aretz, but in this instance, the IDF officer's face was pixelated out of focus (Figure 106). We are well acquainted with the visual representational form of blurred faces. They are typically presented to us as an ethical measure to protect those who speak out against state or cooperate wrongdoing, who, if not properly protected, face possible retribution as a consequence. A process adopted by news agencies and human rights organisations alike, the visual coding of a blurred face represents an authenticity that validates a claim or statement of revelation whilst protecting the claimant. Often part of a disclosure concerning something previously unknown, from the standpoint of those for whom the act of exposure is directed towards, these disclosures are subversive acts, which, typically, serve to protect human rights while promoting democratic ideals (Ginsburg, 2014).



Figure 106: Ha'aretz Israeli newspaper's photo of Ammar Awad's photos but with the IDF soldier's face pixelated.

The pixelation of the IDF officer represents an editorial or cultural value judgement that is highly contingent on the politics of those who are looking. To remove the identity of the IDF soldier, if we follow the logic of concealment noted above, is consistent with an effort to deny responsibility or association with the act being carried out, in effect, denying the act of occupation. In doing so, it could be argued that the Israeli press are complicit in this effort to re-order the status quo while defending the 'proper performances' of authority (Goffman, 1990). Goffman defines "proper" as being seen to be doing the right thing by the 'officially accredited values of society' (Goffman, 1990: 45). Prior to the rise in secondary visibility, accelerated through the development of easily accessible image and video recording technologies, 'the 'audience' for such performances, improper or otherwise, would vary, but in contrast, remained relatively intimate and reflecting the conditions of primary visibility only' (Goldsmith, 2010: 916).

Given the selective visual economy through which only certain situations come to be recognised or framed as violent (while on-going violence underlying the everyday existence in the occupied territories remains invisible), the public exposure of misdeeds or neglect has two potential, intertwined consequences.

Firstly, such exposures reflect badly on the police and the army as organisations. This in turn has a blowback effect on the State as their representatives ‘on the ground’. Secondly, exposure has the capacity to hold individuals accountable for specific actions that may be representative of a wider systemic problem within a specific state department or organisation. Exposure in this regard works as a two-way system where culpability is ultimately exchangeable.

The most recent high profile account of such an effect was a former IDF soldier publishing series of photos in August 2010 entitled “*The Military – The Best Time Of My Life*”. Posting two images on her publically accessible Facebook page, Eden Abergil’s images were seen and then published by HRO B’Tselem. The two photos (Figures 107 and 108) depict Abergil, posing for the camera in front of blindfolded and handcuffed Palestinian detainees.

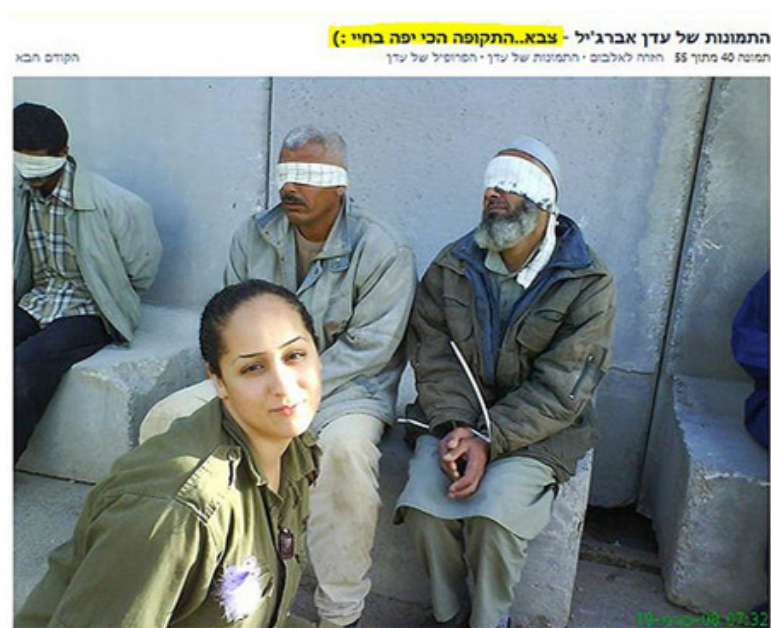


Figure 107: Personal photo from Israeli IDF soldier Eden Abergil’s “*The Military – The Best Time Of My Life*” Facebook account, shows Abergil posing in front of two detained, blindfolded Palestinian men.



Figure 108: Personal photo from Israeli IDF soldier Eden Abergil's *"The Military – The Best Time Of My Life"* Facebook account, shows Abergil posing in front of a detained, blindfolded Palestinian man.

Examining the images we can see that the two photographs were taken at the same time and not separate incidents from different sites or times and could be dismissed as a 'one off'. However, various commentators stated, at the time her photos came to light, that such actions were indeed pervasive. The rise in 'war trophies' images (Struk, 2011) over the last decade can be linked to the availability and access to cheap, portable digital cameras. As Simon Faulkner has observed, one of the main objections to Eden Abergil's photographs is the fact that she positions herself 'in the image', suggesting that she is in some way 'making light of the plight of the Palestinian detainees in a rather distasteful and callous way' (Faulkner, 2010).¹⁷ With little or no agency afforded to the blindfolded men, Faulkner suggests that being present in the image Abergil

¹⁷ For more on this see Simon Faulkner's short web based essay on his blog: www.simonsteachingblog.wordpress.com

brings the occupation into sight. The everydayness of her actions is clearly recognized within the banality of her photo album. Consisting of images that reflect the day-to-day nature of a teenage girl, the selfie style portraits of Abergil stood alongside blindfolded Palestinians are nestled alongside similarly composed images of her with friends in her military uniform, hanging out and having fun.

More recently *The New York Times* (01/09/2015) highlighted the polarised debate that comes as a result of the mediated interaction indicative of the 'new visibility' (Thompson, 2005). Focusing on a routine Friday demonstration near the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, a media discussion arose after a result of a series of images and videos appeared on social media depicting an Israeli soldier's efforts to arrest a 12-year-old Palestinian boy, Mohammed Tamimi. Detaining the boy, who had one arm in a sling, the soldier was quickly set upon by five female members of his family and, as *The New York Times* reports, 'at least eight journalists or activists photographed the confrontation... with footage of the incident, recorded by Palestinian and Israeli activists and reporters from 'at least five angles' (Mackey, 2015). Supporting this statement, *The New York Times* provided links to each video uploaded to YouTube, showing the various angles and perspectives of the incident which were also repeatedly broadcast on Israeli and Arab television, and viewed more than eight million times on Facebook and YouTube. A subsequent one minute minicast by Al Jazeera's AJ+ mobile app, combining footage shot by, a prevalent video-activist, recording every weekly demonstration, was supported by news photographs and dramatic music, has been shared on Facebook and Twitter over 100,000 times, generating over 3 million views. From whichever angle or political perspective you examine the images, the rawness and immediacy, because of the multiple witnesses, contributed to the appealing power of the images. However, little attention was paid to the IDF soldier's conscious decision to wear a mask except for one report by Ha'aretz columnist, Anshel Pfeffer in which she argued that the mask was a telling sign that the extensive documentation of protests online weighs heavy on the minds of the young men in uniform, that shame was indeed being mobilized,

through acts of disclosure and exposure. Pfeffer writes that the occupation is taking its toll on Israel and 'the mask is proof' (Pfeffer, 2015).



Figure 109: An Israeli soldier briefly detained a 12-year-old Palestinian boy at a protest near the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh.

While Eden Abergil's exposure came as a result of negligent image management related to issues of privacy on social media, or an indifference to her action and content of her images, such events are routinely dismissed by the IDF as regrettable and isolated incidents. In an effort to diminish future events of exposure, both the state and individuals at a personal level have made efforts to manage their image, specifically in terms of public relations and a knowing response to the damaging effect of the 'new visibility'. Gil Hochberg notes that for those who come to see the conflict, primarily through the circulation of images in the public sphere both on and offline, 'the most important factor for the Israeli government is the management and distribution of violent images' (Hochberg, 2015: 13). In 2009, Israel launched its 'digital military unit', comprising of 30 IDF soldiers working in tandem with Israel's online public diplomacy department. Under the supervision of Lt. Col. Avital Leibovich, the digital media unit's (also known as the internet warfare team) purpose was to 'reach those who do not turn to print media or TV for their news' in addition, seeking to bypass

traditional media outlets and convey their message 'without the touch of an editor'.¹⁸



Figure 110: Video still of the 'IDF Digital War Room' <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheVJMovement>

Israel's efforts to police the Internet and identify potential threats to its image are incongruously linked to a range of communities and sectors. Recruiting civilians to alter or challenge defamatory posts made on public websites such as YouTube with pre-scripted responses, the State sponsored hasbara (collective effort)¹⁹ even works with private advocacy groups with one technology company creating a downloadable app called Megaphone that sends an alert to their computers when an article critical of Israel is published. The digitalisation of the battlefield has also spread into the habitual processes of everyday life whereby Internet policing, informed by a sense of nationalism, is conducted on a voluntarily basis, outside the formal channels of the hasbara movement.

¹⁸ For an extended discussion see Derek Gregory's open editorial in relation to the 'digital war room' and the digital militarisation of Israel <http://geographicalimagination.com/2012/11/21/gaza-stripped-the-deconstruction-of-the-battlefield/>

¹⁹ Hasbara is a form of propaganda aimed at an international audience, primarily, but not exclusively, in western countries. It is meant to influence the conversation in a way that positively portrays Israeli political moves and policies, including actions undertaken by Israel in the past. The Hebrew translation is 'explaining' and is employed as a strategy for international public relations. This movement, which has existed since the 1960s is particularly prevalent online, with the creation of the JIDF as well as government recruits, often university students, employed to edit Wiki pages and challenge comments on YouTube.

Mobilised as an action group, the Jewish Internet Defence Force (JIDF) is a, 'private, independent, non-violent protest organization representing a collective of activists... on the cutting edge of pro-Israel digital online advocacy, presenting news, viewpoints, and information throughout a large network reaching hundreds of thousands via email, Facebook, YouTube, RSS feeds, Twitter, and other digital hubs to those who share our concerns for Israel'.²⁰ Informed by the militarisation of Israeli culture the rhetoric and identity of the JIDF (see Figure 111) perhaps reflects a transnational and combative effort to ensure Israel continues to appear both 'normal and proper', mopping up what John Thompson refers to as 'leakages in systems of communication and information flow' (2005: 30-31).



Figure 111: Web banner of the JIDF.

With all this in mind, authorities, military, police or even public figures, have found themselves more and more visible, caught up in performances, of which they no longer control the spectatorship.²¹ All over the world citizens are recording police and military action; bringing to light improper performances that make us question how we and others are governed by those in charge of us. An extension of this threat comes when footage of secondary visibilities are moved into a further remit that includes the editing, repackaging and exhibiting of raw footage in the form of compilations. These mash-up videos appear as part of an emerging visual vocabulary that feeds into the collective and collaborative archiving, networking and mapping of violence, spectacular or banal, that is being recorded across the West Bank and Gaza, all in the service of a vision of making change and raising state accountability. These videos often combine

²⁰ For more on the JIDF see: <http://www.thejidf.org/2008/10/about-jidf.html>

²¹ Reported on 6 October 2015 by the Times of Israel, Ha'aretz and a number of International publications, Moti Yogev, an Israeli Knesset member, is video recorded telling a Palestinian woman in Jerusalem to 'go to the grave' <http://www.timesofisrael.com/knesset-member-tell-arab-woman-to-go-to-the-grave/>

universal symbols of injustice, situating their protest in an ideological narrative of struggle; this can be seen in Bil'in with the splicing of footage from the Hollywood film *Avatar* and videos produced on behalf of the Palestinian Freedom Riders by sympathetic supporters of their cause. One such example is a 6 minute video posted by Sana Kassem on the 19 November 2011, 4 days after the Palestinian Freedom Rides. Using found footage of the Freedom Rides and juxtaposing it with archive footage from the original US civil rights movement, Kassem's video is accompanied by black, US gospel songs of freedom and equality and to date (July 2015) has been viewed over 5000 times²² Each small contribution, feeds into an eco-system of visual culture related to the disproportionate status of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, only intensifies questions concerning the fitness of the Israeli state, and specifically the IDF to represent and uphold a just and fair form of governance.

Referring to the proliferation of mediated forms and networks of communication, Thompson, writes, 'the making visible of actions and events is not just the outcome of leakages in systems of communication and information flow... [rather] it is the explicit strategy of individuals who know very well that mediated visibility can be a weapon in the struggle they wage in their day-to-day-lives' (Thompson, 2005: 31). As one of the key characterisations of late modern warfare is mediatisation, Israel's forerunning investment into a number of social media platforms, as a way to shape both the public consumption of war and the perception of the battlefield, is in line with efforts to manage their untethered and 'spectacular' violence. In contrast, little can be done to address what Anshel Pfeffer (2015) has referred to as 'the Palestinian stage-managing' [of weekly demonstrations]. With dozens of cameras placing IDF patrols in impossible situations and the results immediately uploaded to YouTube and eventually appearing in broadcast media, Pfeffer touches on what could perhaps be the undoing of this or the next generation of IDF soldiers,

Whatever these men and their immediate commanders are telling themselves, the true underlying reason more soldiers are covering their

²² Kassem's video can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSWF68Yx6tI>

faces is shame...Today's young soldiers are by now a third generation enforcing an occupation that is eating away at our army and our society. Perhaps their shame will one day motivate them to demand real solutions from the politicians.²³

5.11 Breaking the Silence – Disrupting the Status Quo From Within



Figure 112: BTS volunteer handing leaflets out to IDF soldiers in Tel-Aviv.

An extension to these online actions is the on-going efforts by an Israeli organisation of ex-Israeli military combatants called Breaking the Silence or Shovrim Shtika in Hebrew. The majority of this chapter has been focused on Palestinian and Israeli efforts to produce disruptive disclosures that reframe 'normal and proper appearances' for an international audience, as well as immediately to Israeli settlers by Palestinians. In this closing section, I will conclude with a focus on the work of the Israeli NGO, Breaking the Silence (BTS). As a very specific case, BTS have the capacity to divulge 'insider information'. The divulgence of insider information, in a general sense can often be regarded

²³ For more on this the full article can be found here: <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.673673>

as an attempt to use their power and knowledge to inform or shape a moral position in a hope that their actions serve to protect human rights while promoting a democratic ideal.²⁴ Taking BTS as an example, his or her position as an ex-combatant affords each member a special position within Israeli society. By serving in the IDF each member of the military has the capacity to go, see, experience and implement the occupation over Palestinians unlike any other citizen. While Israel is a military state, whereby 3 years military service is mandatory for 'most Israelis'²⁵, the rate of change concerning the development of the occupation, specifically since 2000 onwards, ensures that vision and experience is always altering. In this regard, the BTS archives also offer a subjective, but chronological timeline of interpretation whereby no story or context is ever the same.

Using this position of privilege, and supported by an increased access to camera phones and small video recording devices, members of BTS are in a position to produce politically orientated forms of visual disruption, that impact upon the ability for authorities to 'appear' both proper and 'normal' to a range of audiences, depending on who and how they might be addressed. Taking Israel, specifically as a militarized society (Kimmerling, 2003) there are, following Goffman's (1990) approach, 'a set of convectional social practices' that exist on top of the complex regimes of visibility that already shape how different Jews see the land of Israel and their relationship to it. These conventional practices inform and feed into what is considered 'normal', in the broadest sense. The military is perhaps the most 'normal' visibility within Israeli and within the Israeli field of vision, due in part by the expectancy for most Israelis to serve in the army, in addition to the security discourse that shapes everyday practices and politics. To think about Israel as a performative stage, the role of the military is clearly defined. In Goffman's reading of a society, the habits, behaviors and visibility performances are developed as a result of the consequence of having to behave

²⁴ Notably recent examples outside of Israel/Palestine include the former employee with the US National Security Agency (NSA), Edward Snowden, who found notoriety for having leaked information about the actions of the United States and British military. For an extended discussion on exposure as a tool of political power see, Gellman and Markon (2013), and Ginsburg (2015).

²⁵ Exceptions are made for ultra orthodox Jews due to religious sensibilities.

in a specific way; this includes the IDF, both in how they behave to Palestinians but equally their role in Israeli society. By criticizing the military occupation, BTS deviate from the norm of the social expectation of behavior. The 'performance' of the IDF, in front of their audience should not include a critique of the state. As a meaning-making event, BTS give meaning to themselves but also their society and those around them.

Founded in March 2004 by a group of ex Israeli combatants who served in Hebron, BTS gather testimonies from former soldiers who have served in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.²⁶ This development has grown from what is known as "perpetrator trauma" (Hochberg, 2015). Intrinsically linked to the increased direct military action in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as tedium of low intensity tasks such as the manning checkpoints, a surge in ex-combatant testimonies has emerged specifically in relation to other forms of human rights exposure related to the occupation. These testimonies focused on their involvement in violent acts or witnessing of atrocities that they feel to have been unjust.²⁷ While other Israeli based human rights groups produce similar documentation from the field (Check Point Watch, B'Tselem or Ta'ayush), the institutional weight of the IDF, a rite-of-passage for most Israel citizens and a homogenising component of the state, often carries greater public outcry.

For most Israelis over the age of 18, military service is a legal requirement. Those who refuse the compulsory military service face a cycle of jail sentences until they reach 21 years old as well as a number of state imposed limitations on their capacity to fully integrate into Israeli society as adults, including financial

²⁶ For more information on BTS see their 'About us' section:
<http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/about/organization>

²⁷ I was at a checkpoint, pissed off, I think it was while I was still in regular service, cut off from my company, standing in the rain with no basic conditions, no nothing, pulling 8/8 (8 hours on duty and 8 hours off), something horrible. You're fed up, after a month you're climbing the walls, you're going nuts. You're hungry and it's everything together. All of a sudden, a car drove up, a Palestinian family trying to cross the checkpoint. He tried to be funny or nice or be a smart ass, and I took it as being a smart ass. He opened the window and says to me, "It's wet, huh?" And I took it as an insult. I went nuts and I don't remember how it continued, but we started talking to each other in tones that were getting worse and worse, it got hostile, one thing led to another and finally I found myself saying to him, "take all the wheels off the car," there in the rain, just because he laughed at me. <http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/testimonies/database/131683>

implications such as an inability to get a mortgage. Seen to be 'aiding and abetting the enemy', the image of peace activists and whistleblowing soldiers is often distorted by the media, 'creating artificial symmetries: the violent settlers on the extreme right, are deliberately paired, especially on television channels, with the so-called extremists on the left (Shulman, 2007: 2). Such practices can be understood as an effort to create a balance that purports to represent a consensus related to Israeli politics; those in the middle are thus represented as indifferent, unsure and largely not complicit.

Aiming to 'open-the eyes' of the Israeli public, BTS, much like the street exhibitions produced by the 'Israeli based' photography collective, Activestills, use their capacity as citizens of the State of Israel to foreground the effects of the occupation through image, testimony and public address. In this regard, the function of bearing witness is both cathartic, but also an attempt to puncture the 'blind spot' at the centre of Israel 'sovereign vision'. In addition, such actions, I suggest, reframe Merleau Ponty's (1969) notion of the 'invisible' which is here 'without being present'. To achieve this, BTS, like other human rights organisations, employ the visual as a tool to extend the vision of those who may choose to be 'wishfully blind' (Hochberg, 2015: 31). Coordinating testimonial projects about army violence in the Palestinian territories that include, video diaries and interviews uploaded to their online archive, BTS also take public guided tours of former military postings. Through these tours they expose locations and stories to tour groups, articulating and contextualising the conditions of the occupation, exposing the power dynamics between occupier and occupied, citizen and non-citizen. In addition, they also stage photography exhibitions, using photos taken by soldiers while undertaking military service.

The BTS disclosures have the potential to disrupt and skew the otherwise acceptable behaviour of the Israeli State, displacing the shared public sense of a predictable social order (Innes, 2004). Such revelations of improper actions can weaken the creditability of the IDF and work as a form of reverse interpellation²⁸

²⁸ Interpellation is a concept developed by Louis Althusser as part of his theory of ideological state apparatuses. Althusser exemplifies his concept by responding to the police hail "hey, you there!" an individual is turned into a subject of the state. Jacques Rancière's "move along, there's nothing to see here!" responds to Althusser's well-known illustration and offers an alternative

by addressing, visually and performatively, through talks and tours, the 'generally known' yet seldom articulated awareness amongst the Israeli population of how the occupation functions.

This is most notably achieved by BTS when they interrupt Israeli public space in the same way the Freedom Riders did, placing the practice of looking under duress and challenging the selective or failed vision of the Israeli community, often in Tel-Aviv. The communities that BTS engage with vary as do the strategies, using the Internet, specifically their website which is accessible in Hebrew and English, and social media platforms to publish recorded witness testimonies by ex-combatants or confessional style disclosures of their own unjust action. Aiming to address a range of constituencies the group also publish reports and exhibit visual material related to IDF wrong doing taken by combatants in the field, in addition to hosting public seminars and rallies. It is the latter two that I shall highlight.

5.12 Bringing Hebron to Tel Aviv

A 2004 exhibition entitled '*Bringing Hebron to Tel Aviv*' first opened in June that year at a small venue at the Academy for Geographic Photography in Tel Aviv College; before going on to tour Europe over a number of years. Focusing explicitly on the Palestinian city of Hebron, those 'breaking their silence' reflected that Hebron 'represented the essence of the occupation' (Struk, 2011: 132-133). To explain Hebron in this way reflects a situation that is anomalous to any other aspect of the occupation. Stationed in Hebron, IDF soldiers were able to enact certain effects through access to specific space.

Detailing the relationship between the 'home' and the military space of Hebron, the images and texts exhibited synthesized how detached Hebron was from 'normal' or conventional Israeli life. The images and accounts published by BTS frequently refer to Hebron as 'lawless', where forms of Palestinian

version of the function of the police in the state apparatus as a way to remove or deny the potential for subject-status.

‘subjectivation’, to borrow from Foucault, rendered Palestinians utterly powerless. Representing the ‘essence of the occupation’, the exhibition attempted to reduce the Tel-Avivian field of vision concerning the occupation, asking those witnessed the images and testimonies to consider if what they saw was ‘normal behavior’.

Based on a varying register of visibility, what becomes normal and routine in Hebron is reflected in how one soldier spoke about his time in Hebron in the accompanying document, retrievable from the BTS website,

I’d come home, then go back to Hebron and it feels as though I had gone abroad, really...Whatever I used to call democracy here [Israel] would simply vanish in Hebron. Jews did as they pleased there - there were no laws. No traffic laws, nothing. Whatever they do is done in the name of religion, and anything goes...breaking into a shop, that’s allowed....²⁹

In an effort to challenge this, the exhibition sought to bring the reality of ‘the daily routine of occupation’ into view and to show how such behavior is normalized. Chronicling the banality of the occupation, *Bringing Hebron to Tel Aviv* exhibited images supported by a short text, which set the context of the image from the position of the photographer vis-a-vis their position of power over the subject or space. In one seemingly benign image (Figure 113) Avichay Sharon, a BTS spokesperson claimed that it was ‘horrifying’ stating that the ‘calm nature of the picture is an illusion because it is just another scene, like photographing dead bodies’ (Struk, 2011: 140).

²⁹ This quote is retrievable with other testimonies via the BTS website: http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Soldiers_Testimonies_from_Hebron_2005_2007_Eng.pdf



Figure 113: BTS personal photo taken from their archive of images and testimonies.

The objectification of Palestinians, dead or alive, is entrenched in the systematic and unspectacular processes that define those cast to the margins of Israeli society. Including, but not limited to Palestinians, those who fall into a pre-established ‘field of perceptible reality’ (Butler, 2009: 64) that has already been established on their behalf, rather than with their consent or input – they become props. Such images question Israel’s own identity as the ‘eternal victim’, deferring suffering from Israel as a nation built on the survival of the Holocaust to one which adopts this status to mask their own perpetrator violence. It is here, that Palestinians, and those alike, are incapacitated by the uneven conditions of life under occupation and also by the visual configurations that begin with the distribution of power that effect who or what can be seen and what or who remains invisible. In an effort to visually disrupt this, BTS have also moved beyond the limitations of the gallery space, taking their disclosures to the streets.

5.13 Habima Square Operation Protective Edge – Gaza 2014

In the wake of the 2014 Israeli bombardment of Gaza, known as Operation Protective Edge, BTS organised a public rally. Held in Habima Square, Tel Aviv on

Thursday, 17 July 2014, the event details were widely distributed on various social media platforms, reinforcing Patrick Meier’s observation that protesters use Facebook to schedule protests, Twitter to coordinate and YouTube to tell the world. BTS organized the rally via Facebook, live tweeted throughout and distributed video material of the readings via YouTube. Reportedly attended by 1,600 over the duration of the event (See Figure 114) with various media sources reporting similar numbers in attendance, members of BTS read testimonies, live, one after the other in order to enable the entire country to understand ‘what things really look like from within the war’.³⁰

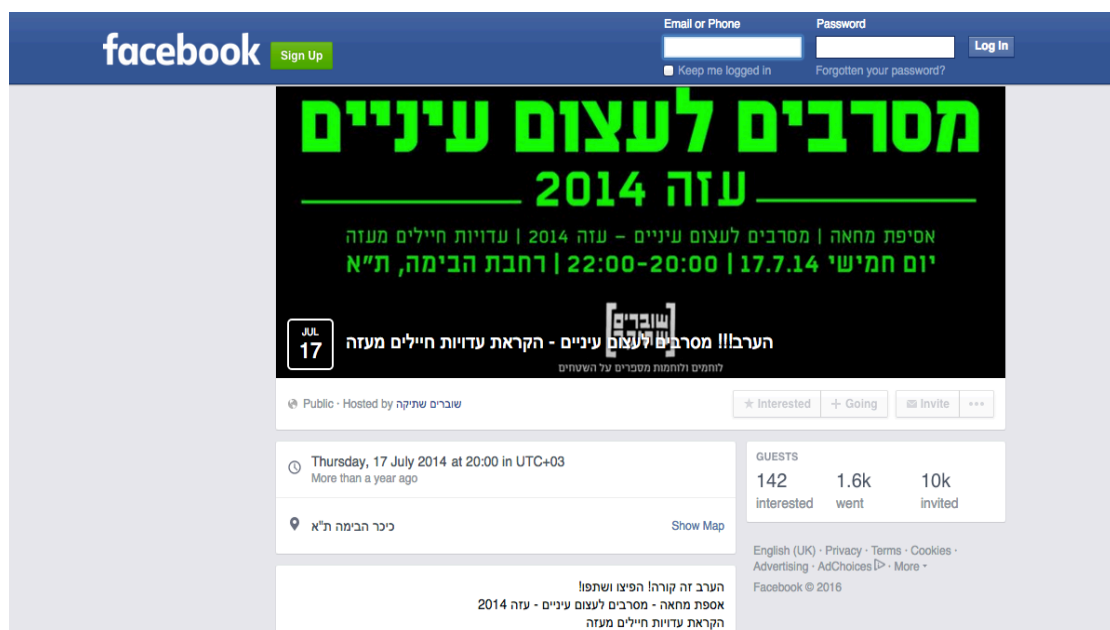


Figure 114: Screen grab of the BTS Facebook event invite to a public performance in Tel-Aviv’s public Habima Square showing attendance of 1.6k people. Whilst this figure is not a reliable source it gives an indication of their possible ‘support’ as ‘attending something’ even when you cannot, is an active of support and activism.

³⁰ “Thousands attend anti-war rally” ...
<http://www.timesofisrael.com/protesters-call-for-end-to-war-in-tel-aviv/>



Figure 115: BTS performance at Habima Square, Tel Aviv on Thursday, 17 July 2014.

The Freedom Riders and BTS enable us to see how images and interventions can be brought into a space that would otherwise remain unaware (wilfully or otherwise) of the nature and impact of the occupation, to those who are screened off. These actions bring into question the accountability and action of the state to perform 'properly'. For each BTS event, the exposure of 'back stage' activities are driven by the assumption that lack of knowledge and the concealment of information are obstacles to criticism and action against the state. Motivated by the belief of exposing hidden truths, BTS, like the Freedom Riders, sought to make it impossible for anyone to exempt themselves from the evidence by claiming ignorance,

In a way, I guess we're holding a mirror to apartheid system – it's as simple as that. The goal is to primarily show the Israelis are racist...we want to force them to look in that mirror. Mazin Qumsiyeh (2013)

In each case, the social function of the space and the politics that shape it enabled a temporary transgressive visibility. The opportunities afforded through the

'new visibility' supported this in two ways. Firstly, by creating an image of an action carried out by an organisation, group or collective of people, and secondly, the recording devices also produced a 'deviation from the norm itself' (Ginsburg, 2014: 61) by being present in spaces where they were not expected. For the Freedom Riders, the use of cameras to record the events helped to further expose the space of the bus as a 'deviation' from its normal state, thereby producing an additional deviation, namely exposing the hidden narrative of the occupation through mundane political practices of separation. For BTS, the use of visibility, through their photographic exhibitions such as 'Bringing Hebron to Tel Aviv', in addition to their interventions into public spaces raises the question of visibility as a countervisual 'right to look'. Such a 'look' as Nicholas Mirzeoff notes, is in opposition to the visibility regimes of political power that deny a claim 'to a right to the real' (2011).

In a more general context, each action also held a 'mirror' to those who are complicit in maintaining the occupation, either through the use of segregated buses, by enforcing the law of the occupation or by ignoring its effects. It is not uncommon for activists to approach photography and film as transparent mirrors of reality and to conflate them with proof. Even despite the fact that images always demand interpretation, as countless writers on documentary photography and film have pointed out, the analogy and/or implementation of the mirrors in protest scenarios is a commonly applied trope, specifically in the age of networked mediated. As a political practice the use of mirrors could arguably be employed as a form of mutual visibility management whereby I can ensure that you can see what I see and I am asking you to 'reflect upon your vision'. Seeking to manage the neglected foci of an opposing actor in a socio-political situation, 'mirrors' metaphorically or physically engage with vision as a constitution of the subject. For Mazin Qumsiyeh and the other Freedom Riders, the notion of a mirror was metaphorically represented through their appearance before the IDF and the settlers within the space of the bus. If only for a brief time, their political performance successfully re-ordered the visual field as to what could and should be seen within that specific context. Adopting the techniques representative of the 'new visibility' the potential for 'mirroring' or reflecting the

situation back onto the gaze of those outside the context of the bus also helped to enhance the riders political 'space of appearance' (Arendt, 1958) thus was actualised through their performance. What was specifically significant in terms of the new visibility was the capacity to act in concert.

5.14 Final Thoughts

As noted in the introduction to the thesis, the rise of social networks, serving as they now do as an arena for rights organizations, reinforces the notion that exposure can have an impact, specifically within the era of instantaneous communication of the new visibility. Yet, 'new visibility' also has the ability to exhaust the viewer, failing in its attention seeking endeavours or for the message to be weakened by its lack of centrality concerning the multiple producers repeatedly producing similar material for an often specific and narrow constituency. The sheer ubiquity of distribution platforms and imaging devices does not in itself automatically equate to the enhanced accountability of the powerful, nor does it inevitably lead to increased public condemnation of improper state action. As Jodi Dean noted in reference to the volume of anti-war messages circulating widely before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the messages morphed into a mass 'of circulating content, just like all the other cultural effluvia wafting through cyberia' (2008: 102). Instead of the 'synopticon', advanced by Mathiesen (1997), in which the many watch the few, surveillance and counter-surveillance indicate a proliferation of watching in which the many watch the many, or perhaps, more accurately, in which the few watch the few (Wilson & Serisier, 2010). This sentiment points to a lack of attention specifically to events discussed within the thesis, such as Susiya.

Prior to the Freedom Rides, in an interview in *The Washington Post* (4 November 2011), Hurriyah Ziada, prominent youth activist, outlined the relationship between resistance and cultural production in a context of the ongoing Israeli occupation and simultaneously, in relation to the increasing criticism towards the issues of normalization by Palestinian authorities and political elites. Ziada criticised Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' hero's welcome in the wake of the Palestinian application for United Nations Membership, skeptical that the

statehood bid would bring any tangible change. Disillusioned with her leaders after years of fruitless talks with Israel and uninspired by international movements to recognise the self-determinable actions of the Palestinian people; more broadly, Ziada and other youth activists saw President Abbas' vision of negotiating the creation of a Palestinian state in areas occupied by Israel in 1967 as inadequate. "We have to start a revolution," she said, "so people can take their freedom in their hands". For Ziada and the Freedom Riders' their principle concern is creating a sense of political and civil mobility. One of the most useful lessons learned, Ziada noted, was that participation can be enlisted by focusing on pressing social and economic problems that affect people's daily lives... "to encourage a sense of civic involvement and break patterns of passivity and resignation" (Greenburg, 2011).

What is striking is the affinity between Ziada's commitment for change and the resonance of Lori Allen's cautionary text of Palestinian 'political immediation'. Allen's text, although based on ethnographic research taken from the first two years of the Second Intifada, outline a pertinent crux to the development of mobilising a strong Palestinian voice, and in turn, visibility. In Allen's article *Martyr Bodies in the Media (2009)*, Allen underscores Ziada's comments vis-à-vis the Washington Post, both recognize a need for change concerning the Palestinian engagement with the public sphere. Strikingly, Allen writes, most Palestinians were reliant on third party organizations such HROs and NGOs as mediators to the world, unable to break the process of immediation. Furthermore, Allen notes that the demise of the Palestinian Authority left a political vacuum. Failed talks, mistrust and unanswered calls for Palestinian recognition and support mean 'the immediacy of [physical] pain and the sympathy for it-has become a weak core of politics' (Allen, 2009: 162). The self-representation of the Palestinian, Allen writes, is lost in a self-mediated saturation of symbolic, visual and discursive representations that focus on suffering, rather than them as politically active. The suggestion being that, that since the Second Intifada and the increased presence of NGOs and the advocacy roles of internationals have by and large rendered Palestinian visibility down to 'affect laden concepts of humanity' (Allen, 2009: 163).

For Ziada and the youth of Palestine, successful protest models and mediation are conducted by 'focusing on pressing social and economic problems that affect people's daily lives...to encourage a sense of civic involvement and break patterns of passivity and resignation', to assertively visualize political agency under oppression, linked to resistance and steadfastness, rather than victimization and helplessness. As such, the theme of the *Washington Post* article was optimistically echoed across a number of international publications that focused on correlations between the restored faith in the possibility of critical change, and a belief that youth in society are able to play a key role in such change with *Time Magazine* (16 May 2011) calling on Freedom Rider, 23 year old Fadi Quran, pictured on the right of Figure 116 aboard the settler bus during the Freedom Rides, as the face of the new Middle East for his work in the recent nonviolent movement led by Palestinian youth. *The Economist* (17 May 2011), along with articles in the Lebanese national paper, *The Daily Star* (11 November 2011), echo political scientist, Julie Norman's research outlining that younger Palestinians initially met the Second Intifada with cynicism and trepidation. Local reframing, Norman writes, of the nonviolence as peace building rather than resistance, and as a moral rather than a strategic choice, 'ultimately hindered mobilisation, especially for youth' (Norman, 2011: 6). Norman suggests that this mood was symptomatic of the nature and construct of most First Intifada activists who saw non-violent activism as an integral part of the wider sphere of resistance. Yet for many youths of the Second Intifada, this approach was a euphemism for normalisation or reconciliation directed by the international community during the Oslo era. This is a perception that Amaney Jamal reaffirms, stating that, 'after Oslo, donors almost exclusively funded associations and projects that were linked to or supportive of the goals of the Accords' (Jamal, 2009: 69).



Figure 116: Fadi Quarn aboard the settler bus holding a sign that reads, 'We shall overcome'.

The suggestion here is that the focus of nonviolence shifted attention away from civic-based resistance and activism to pacification and acceptance for co-existence and ultimately a two-state solution; a perception that the Freedom Riders, in a post-Intifada era, have challenged as outwardly orientated acts of citizenship, supported by new media and global networks to an international audience. Thus, the sensibility of the protest is, characteristic of a number of post-Intifada (2005-onwards) activist performances and protests.

These efforts by groups like the Freedom Riders, the Popular Committee of Bil'in and Israeli groups like BTS not only expose Israeli wrong doing but also reposition the Palestinian as an active political agent, responding however best they can to oppression rather than drawing on a status of victimhood. The Freedom Rides are instead, characterized by a performance of resistance and resilience in the face of on-going injustice. In doing so, Palestinians with the support of international solidarity activists, can actively shift the paradigm of spectatorship related to the occupation, challenging the dominant discourses and visual rhetoric's discussed by Said (1978) and Allen (2009) and to a degree, Gil Hochberg's assertion that Palestinians highlight armed resistance as a tool of visibility, or that more generally, concerning their status as an archetypal agent

of aid, a victim or rebel.

By focusing on visually engaged non-violent protest, the Freedom Riders shifted their representational stock from a 'sphere of deviance', whereby it is rejected by the political mainstream as unworthy of respectful attention, into the 'sphere of legitimate controversy' that becomes an acceptable subject of partisan debate (Hallin, 1986: 116).

In my penultimate chapter I will shift my attention to Gaza and the 2014 military operation 'Protective Edge'. Over the previous 3 chapters I have looked at how collective Palestinian, Israeli and International activists have sought to challenge the regimes of visibility concerning the Israeli occupation of Palestine through various technologically driven means. In what follows, I will explore how Gaza, as a specific entity, and the modes of control that define it, is visualised through photographic practice. Thereafter, I will shift my attention to another problematic context, that of Hebron. Again like Gaza, I will focus on photography as a means of address. In both cases I ask, what is the visual presence of violence and how do activists, photographers and visually engaged political collectives invite us to see, through, visual activism, violence in banality.

Chapter 6: Case Study 4: A Tale of Two Cities: Blackout Gaza and Divided Hebron.

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind cannot bear very much reality. Time past and time future, what might have been and what has been point to one end, which is always present. (Eliot, 1936)

These, the last lines of the opening paragraph of T. S. Eliot's 'Burnt Norton', were prescient as I sat thinking about the final chapter of this thesis. For the Palestinian in the Occupied Territories, time past and time future do indeed point to an end that is always present: the occupation. Since the establishment of the Green Line in 1967, Palestinians within the Occupied Territories have been subject to a temporality that is open-ended. The bird of Eliot's poem acts as the narrator of truth within the imaginative space of Eliot's *rose garden*. The tweet of Eliot's bird, much like the tweets that flooded the social media platform Twitter, drew our attention to a reality that often became hard to bear. The tweet became constitutive of how the visibilities of war in recent years are mediated, attesting to how technology and the journalistic environment undergo change in form and function. Here one can look at David Campbell's (2009) analysis of the Israeli incursion into Gaza during 2009 where it can be suggested that social media and citizen journalism helped to construct a public visibility of a social reality (Couldry, 2000) that would otherwise remain largely unseen were it not for those on the ground.

In what follows, this final chapter will outline some of the issues related to the production of visibilities in Gaza and the West Bank in response to the 2014 bombardment of Gaza and later the effects and challenges of visualizing the of the occupation as a photo-activist practice in Hebron. In doing so, I will explore the rhetorical approach taken by Israel in the build-up to the bombardment of Gaza. Thereafter I will shift my attention to the analysis of the documentary photography of Gianluca Panella and the photography collective, ActiveStills,

each of whom look to photography as a tool to challenge the ongoing but rarely visible management of a specific urban population. In an effort to continue my discussion on visual activism I will employ Jacques Rancière's notion that 'politics is first of all a battle about perceptible and sensible material' (Guénoun and Kavanagh, 2000: 11), to explore how both Panella and Activestills seek to reconfigure the distribution of the sensible in relation to what is visible and invisible, sayable and unsayable. As power is closely aligned with visibility, I will argue that both Panella and Activestills reconfigure the distribution of the sensible. In both cases, I argue, we are invited to see the effects of the occupation through a new set of configurations, in doing so, thereby altering the spectatorial expectation of the viewer and our understanding of the occupation in a day-to-day context.

6.1 The in/visibility of the occupation

On the 8 July 2014, Israel launched *Operation Protective-Edge*, a 50-day fully fledged military attack upon the Gaza Strip with a bombardment launched from sky, sea and land, combined with a short ground incursion. *Operation Protective Edge*, or *Strong Cliff* in Hebrew, concluded on 26 August 2014 after an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire. The subsequent 50-day barrage resulted in the death of 2100 Palestinians and one 'other'.¹ As of 5 August a report from Amnesty International stated that 86 per cent of the Palestinian losses within the Gaza Strip were civilians.² The report, which drew data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), also noted that more than 9400 people had been injured, many of them seriously, while an estimated 485,000 people across the Gaza Strip had been displaced. Such figures attest to the military wrath that besieged the Palestinian enclave, while the Israeli loss of life came in at 66, all of whom were Israeli Defense Force (IDF) combatants. The 'displacement of the

¹ A Bedouin Palestinian died during rocket fire from Gaza; however, Bedouin communities within Israel are denied basic services or recognized as citizens of Israel, yet it was reported that Israel attempted to claim the loss for their own statistics. For more information, <http://972mag.com/israels-bedouin-civilians-in-death-alone/93965/>.

² Figures accessible from: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/023/2014/en/c931e37b-a3c2-414f-b3a6-a00986896a09/mde150232014en.pdf>.

displaced' points to a tragedy that is almost beyond visibility; however, interesting and informative infographics, maps and videos helped to visualize the scale of the destruction.³

The use of info graphics help to better represent or visualize the ever increasingly complicated matter of the seeing the effect occupation in its multiple forms. Infographics produced by the Beirut-based collective Visualizing Palestine express the tensions between space, populations and amenities. Producing visually striking and informative graphical designs and interactive downloads, offered online for free in over 14 languages including most European languages including Polish and Dutch as well as Mandarin, Japanese and Korean, Visualizing Palestine were quick to respond to the bombardment of Gaza by producing 'Gaza's Untold Story'. A visual map displaying the Gaza Strip (Figure 117), the infographic re-images and re-contextualises space and information into a consumable, sharable and embeddable form. Focusing on the 'untold' the infographic focuses on the history of those killed. While highlighting that 2,219 Palestinians were killed during Israel's 2014 offensive against the Gaza Strip, the infographic outlines that half of those killed were refugees who were displaced from their homes, indicated by the red dots on the map that include Yafa, Salama, Isdud as well as many other villages and towns, as a result of and following the 'Nakba in 1948'. Visualized by size relative to the number of original inhabitants in the space identified, the red dots and the statistic of 56% attest to the ongoing and sustained violence as a result of the first Israeli/Arab war.

In addition to infographics, one such video, produced by the independent Palestinian production company MediaTown depicts the devastated urban topology of Al-Shejaiya, a suburb of Gaza City, which between 19 and 20 July 2014 underwent one of the heaviest bombardments of the operation.⁴ The haunting footage shot from a drone and uploaded to YouTube invites the spectator to *see* the scale of the damage. The 50-second clip surveys the wounded landscape, adding to the multiple optics of war visibilities and mediations, which contribute to the burgeoning archive of visual material

³ Examples of which can be found here: <http://visualizingpalestine.org>.

⁴ The video is accessible here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBEFBix01ck>.

related to Gaza.

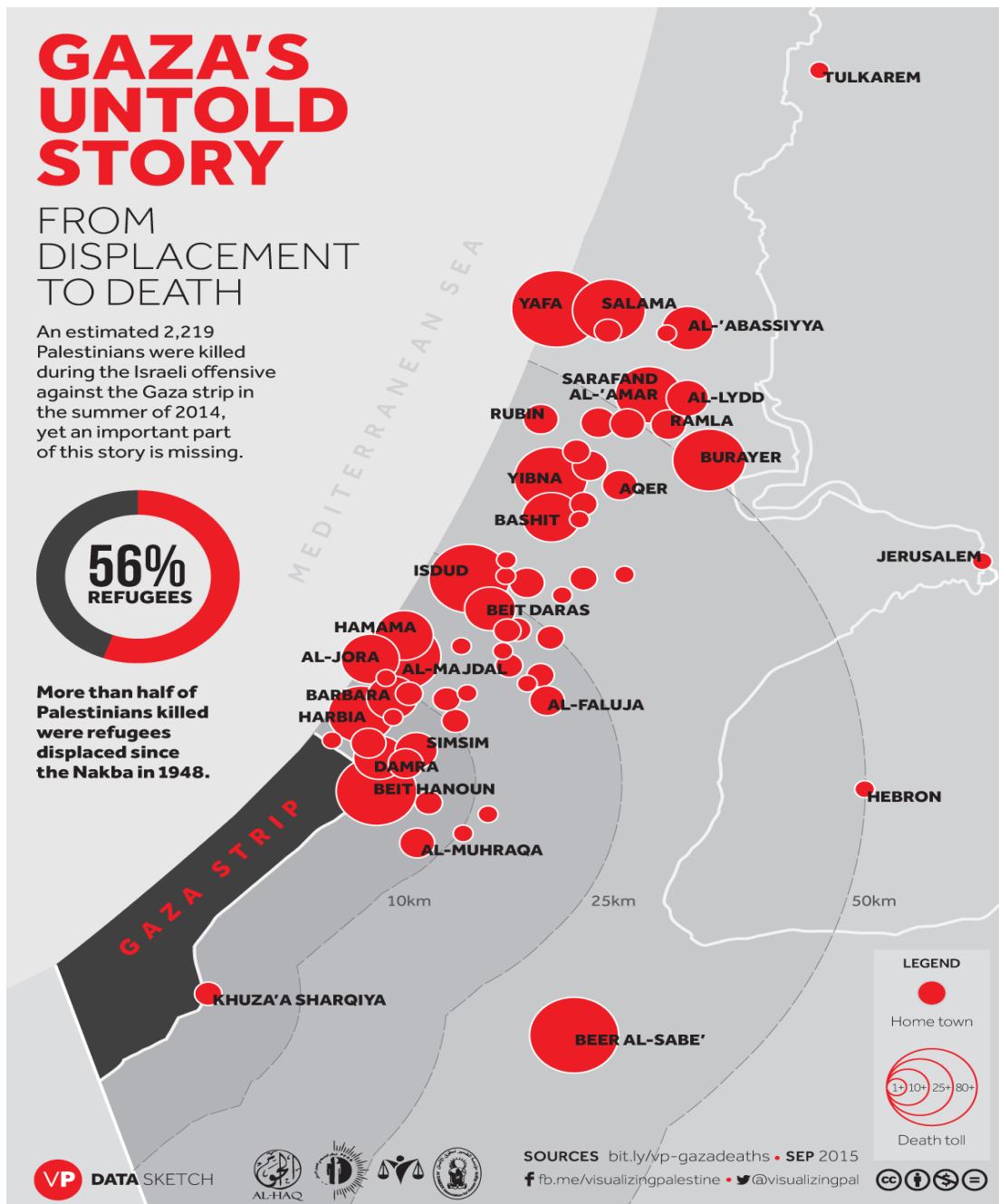


Figure 117: Visualizing Palestine Map: "Gaza's Untold Story". An Infographic created by the Visualizing Palestine Collective in response to the 2014 bombardment of Gaza.

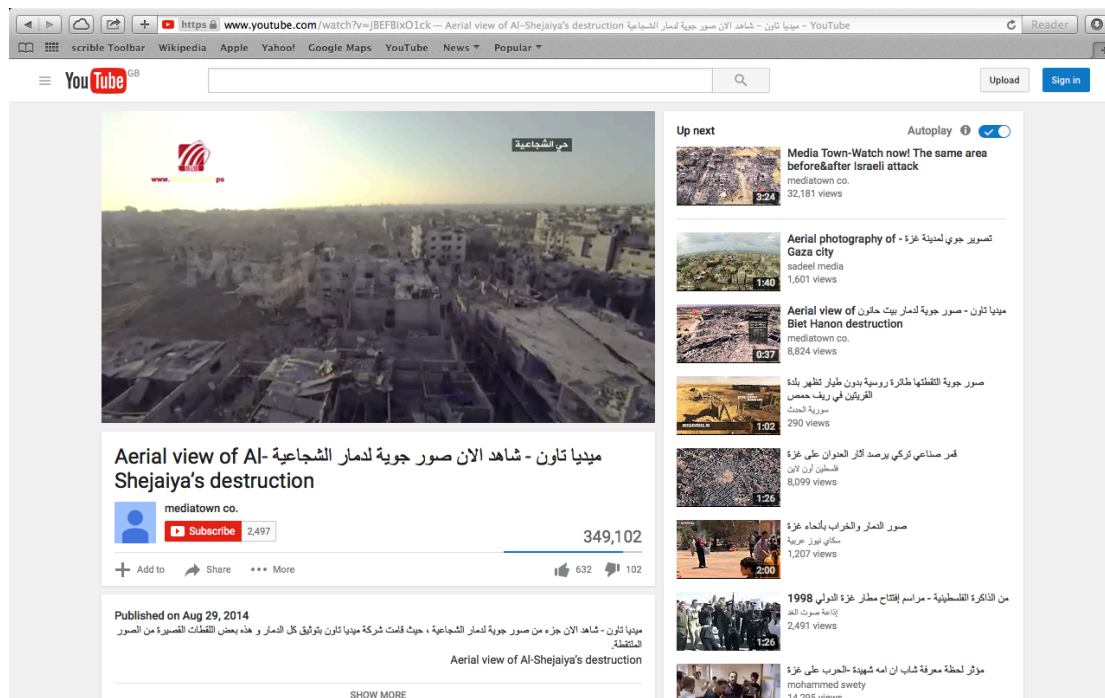


Figure 118: Screen grab of the MediaTown YouTube video clip surveying the destruction of the Gazan district of Shejaiya (2014).

Techniques like these help to shift how the visual is used, marking what Meg Mclagan noted as a move from documentation through photojournalism to a means of strategic communication (2006). This means of producing counter visibilities, does as I suggest, promote a widening of the space in which politics can be conceived, performed and seen: visibilities that challenge the attempts by the Israeli state to control the visual field as was the case in 2009.

According to Rancière, 'politics is a question of aesthetics, a matter of appearances' (1999: 74). As has been outlined, regimes of visibility and the relationship between politics and aesthetics concerning what is possible to see and how that visibility is constructed are closely aligned with the distribution of power. In a context, such as the occupation of Palestinian Territories by the Israeli State, order is imposed upon the inhabitants by means of military force. As such, the construct and mediation of visibilities within Gaza and the West Bank are always contingent on how political action is framed and made visible. While the conditions of both geographies differ in how they are controlled, the former is remotely or 'digitally occupied' by Israel (Tawil-Souri, 2014) and is without any permanent Israeli presence, the latter is managed through a combination of administrative and military rule. Yet, dominating the field of

visibility, specifically within a security discourse, is the notion that Israelis are neighbouring a society that is immersed in a pathological culture of violence, an impression that as noted, has been mythologized as early as the late 1800's (Finkelstein, 1995: 111). This neighbouring 'culture of violence' goes some way to explaining the Israeli hostility towards the immediate and long-term effect of their most recent military operation, and is very specific to the relationship with Gaza as territorial space.

Close to Hebron on the 15 June 2014, the kidnapping of three Jewish Israeli teenagers sparked a multi-narrative justification for what became *Operation Protective Edge*. Responding to the kidnapping and discovery of the three dead Israelis, the IDF prepared for a manhunt of the Palestinian city, blocking the main access routes to the city with concrete blocks and setting up a large number of checkpoints (Levy, 2014). In the wake of the kidnappings, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quick to suggest that Hamas was responsible, with the IDF official blog claiming 'Hamas terrorists kidnapped three Israeli teenagers in Judea and Samaria... meanwhile *Palestinians* have been calling for further abduction' (emphasis added).⁵ The use of the term 'Palestinians' generalizes the population, marking one of the first of many instances where the Israeli government utilized language to make a collective distinction between 'us and them' in the run up to their military operation, mobilizing the imaginative political binaries of 'good and evil', 'democratic and terror-state'. Thereafter, the focus-shifted west to the Gaza strip where the IDF responded to Hamas rocket attacks fired into Israel. Drawing comparisons with the Blitz, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that 'Israel is undergoing a similar bombardment', claiming that 'there's only been one other instance where a democracy has been rocketed and pelleted with these projectiles of death, and that's Britain during World War Two' (Spencer, 2014). Finally, on 17 July, Israel invaded Gaza with a ground incursion aimed at destroying the 'terror tunnels' that linked Gaza with Israel. However, the original Israeli statement that Hamas was responsible for the kidnapping was subsequently proven unfounded; Israel had already shifted attention to a victim and security discourse that justified

⁵ An area more commonly known as the West Bank, Judea and Samaria are biblical references to the land.

their ensuing actions. The latter typifies what Simon Faulkner (2009) refers to as the 'political imaginary' of the occupation that affects both the political and social aspect of Israeli culture. Over the three narratives that underpinned each Israeli military action, culminating in *Operation Protective Edge*, the use of emotive language that drew on a discourse of terror, defense and democracy in opposition to a neighbouring terror state helped to anchor the rhetoric and action of the IDF and Israeli state. As Dr. Mads Gilbert noted, when interviewed on the BBC's political show *HARtalk* (2014) Israel takes language hostage.⁶

The apathetic nature of the Palestinian is born from a long-established perceptible reality organized around a fundamental opposition between Israelis and Palestinians living in the occupied territories that obfuscates the nature of the occupation as an occupation. As such, Israel is often seen to be at war with Gaza; the connotations and popular mediations of which asserts that such a position is purely defensive. The political imaginary functions on a number of levels, first the designation of Gaza as a 'hostile entity' prefigures Gaza and Hamas as the perpetrator, ensuring that Israel is often a victim.

The tunnels are one such instance where the long tentacle of terror reaches deep beneath the civil society of Israel. Second, in response to the kidnapping, the rocket attacks and the 'terror tunnels' help Israel frame their conduct in 'response to' Palestinian action, helping to disassociate itself from the wider geopolitical frame of the long-standing occupation of Palestinian territory. This point has been noted by Craig Jones who asserts that Israel's visual representation of the assault on Gaza during 2008 can be summarized by a simple typology: 'it's their fault, not ours' and its corollary: 'they started it', thus recycling old tropes of victimhood (2011: 7). The Israeli Defense cabinet officially declared the creation of Gaza as a 'hostile enemy' in 2007, thus feeding into the political imagination of cultural 'othering', through various practices, including designating Gaza and all those which inhabit the political space as 'hostile'. Such a representation helps create a conceptual framework that Lisa Bhungalia (2010) argues is based upon 'an ontological distinction of "us" and

⁶ The full interview can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H903EcuuJuk>.

“them””, a distinction clearly articulated by the IDF tweet on the 15 July, in response to the kidnapping.

The threat of Gaza is also affirmed through the rhetorical discourse used by popular Israeli figures such as the historian, Benny Morris, who claimed in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, during an interview in 2004, a need for the Separation Wall in the West Bank, because it ‘quells the revenge culture central in the Arab tribal customs with no moral inhibitions’ (Shavit, 2004). This sentiment is not a marginal reaction within the Israeli public sphere, more recently, on the 28 July 2014, Moshe Feiglin, Deputy Speaker for the Israeli Knesset and member of the Prime Minister’s Likud party, remarked that ‘the only innocents in Gaza are the IDF Soldiers’ while Gazans were ‘savages in the desert’. Furthermore, on the 4 August he posted to his verified Facebook account a desire for electricity and water supply to Gaza to be disconnected before being ‘shelled with maximum fire power’ (Reilly, 2014). The calls for the elimination of Gaza, while extreme, are consistent with a narrative that Gaza is first and foremost a hostile space. Crucially, as Jones notes, Israel is always already the victim, and Gaza and Hamas are always already the perpetrators (2011: 8). If Gaza is the aggressor then accordingly *they started it*; Israeli action is prefigured as a *response* to (rather than an instigation of) violence.

The language of war is just as significant as controlling the image that is incumbent with it. While political rhetoric and press conferences reiterate a symmetric engagement, a conflict that responds to a ‘hostile enemy’, the media management of the operation begins with the name, specifically the ‘English translation’ in this instance, *Protective Edge* (Arnaout, 2014). The connotative rhetoric of defense is assimilated into the topology of the space in question. However, the figures tell a different story; in 2008 through to early 2009 *Operation Cast Lead* resulted in 1391 Palestinian deaths, while in 2012 operation *Pillar of Defence* 167 Palestinian lives were lost.⁷ Yet the representational framing of such loss is lessened due to the visual economy⁸ of the Palestinian

⁷ Information related to deaths and casualties related to the above mentioned operations can be found at www.BTselem.org.

⁸ In this article, the focus is on ‘eligible’ life in direct relation to Israeli life and, by proxy, cultured and democratic Western life which Israel stands in for, within the middle-east. Within an HRO

image because what constitutes an 'eligible' human life reflects, at base, configurations of sovereignty, which Ophir and Hanafi (in Hanafi 2009) refer to as 'inclusive exclusion'.

Delineating who or what is included in (or excluded from) the juridical-political realm – as a terror state, the Gazan, and more broadly the Palestinian, becomes an apathetic entity through Israeli political discourse. In doing so, an interdependency and understanding of Israel's existence is built on wars that justify their actions based on democracy and defense, and shape how we read and accept the images and rhetoric they produce. As Slavoj Žižek has pointed out, actions taken on the part of Palestinians are prefigured as 'acts of terror', and cited as 'proof' that Israel is, in fact, dealing with terrorists, and thus their image is affected as such and any such loss of life, including civilian loss, is masked to fit the narrative of defense and the battle against terror.

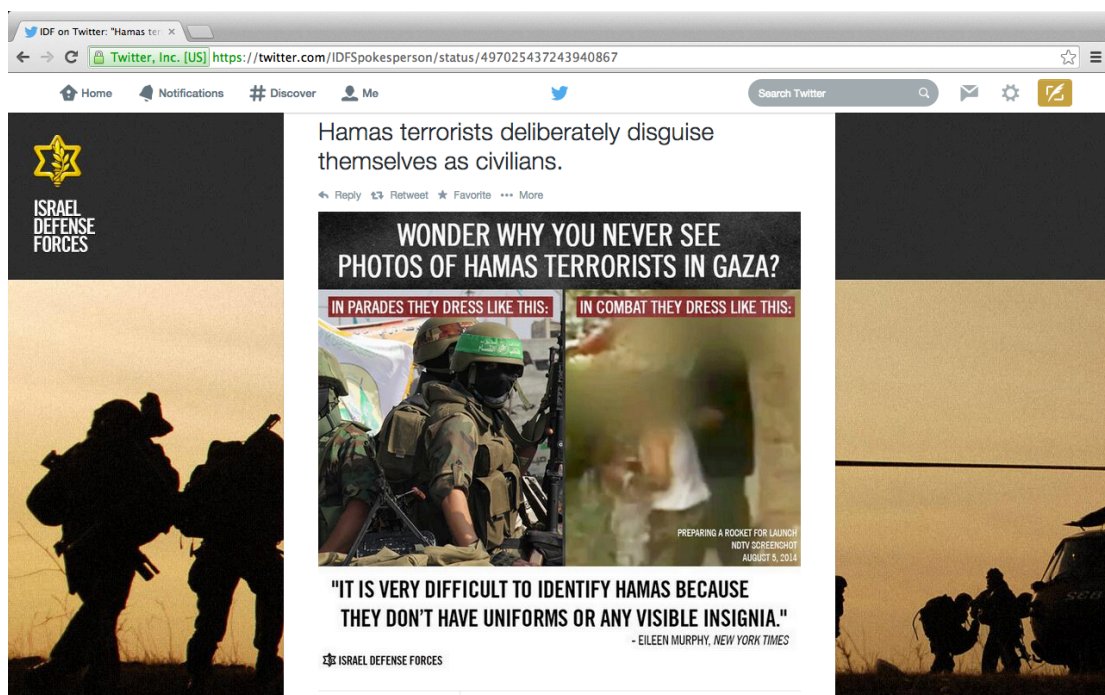


Figure 119: IDF Twitter account '@IDFSpokesperson' image from *Operation Protective Edge*: the invisible enemy of Hamas – the tweet was retweeted 784 times with 354 'favourites'.

This paradox, Žižek argues, 'is inscribed into the very notion of a "War on Terror", a strange war in which the enemy is criminalized if he defends himself and

framework, Lori Allen's suggests that the Palestinian body has been used as a vehicle to support HRO funding, often reproduced in a limited cache of representations, either as a victim or as helpless (see Allen's *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights* [2012]).

returns fire' (cited in Jones 2011: 9). And thus, it is no surprise that while the United States is fortifying their borders (Brown, 2010), so too is Israel because the War on Terror is a universal war that besieges 'every democracy'. Such a sentiment was echoed by Chicago Rabbi Gary Gerson, who, in the immediate aftermath of the Al-Qaida 9/11 terror attacks in New York 2001, attempted to console a nation coming to terms with an act of terror upon the United States by committing that...

Humanity came apart in Lower Manhattan today, and each of us is wounded. We mourn the loss of our innocence... now we are all Israelis (Lubin, 2008).

In an effort to align the historical persecution of the Jewish community both biblically and specifically since the birth of Israel in 1949, 'we are all Israelis now' sought to share the burden of the contemporary 'western assertion of threat' against Islamic terror and bio-political self-importance. Here, Benedict Anderson's notion of the 'spectre of comparison' is apt because the comparison becomes an inverted telescoping of the idea of self and image through the gaze of a dominant culture (1998). For the Rabbi, this spectacle of terror represents a conjoining of identities, first as a Jew and second as an American citizen. Such an inversion is glaringly obvious when one examines the political rhetoric of America who fails to lament Israeli behaviour with any vigour. When the BBC reported the news that Israel had shelled a UN-run school in Rafah on 4 August, the US response was that it was 'appalled by the disgraceful shelling'.⁹ Thus, the conceptualization of a democracy or 'island of freedom' helps to further contextualize Israel's War on Terror within the wider frame of global terror. 'Located in a region controlled by military dictators, feudal kings and religious leaders, Israel should receive unreserved support from western liberal states interested in strengthening democratic values around the globe' (Gordon, 2004)

⁹ More information can be found here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-28635031>.

and as such, collateral damage is permissible when the life of the Palestinian is already lost before it even begins.

With all this in mind, a third justification for the attack on Gaza, within the context of terror, democracy and victimhood linked to the political imagery, is the necessity to actively maintain a terror threat. In doing so, such a threat becomes a distraction from the basic fact that Israel is occupying Gaza and the West Bank. Traumatism, Jacques Derrida wrote in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks, is produced by the future, by the threat of the worst to come, rather than by an aggression that is 'over and done with' (Borradoria, 2003: 97). Returning back to Eliot's 'Burnt Norton', 'time past and time future and the always present' also reflects the omnipresent threat of Palestinian terror, the worst to come. This threat is validated by the political rhetoric of the Israeli security discourse that is underpinned by a reassuring need to produce the iconography of a definable and defensible border.

6.2 Visualizing 'Catastrophe'

While the security wall makes the occupation ostensibly visible, specifically across western media and print journalism, other aspects of the occupation, namely, the systemic violence incumbent with the daily nature of life under occupation, are often less visible. Whereas images of the aftermath of *Operation Protective Edge* were made widely available across mainstream media and narrowcast through independent news agencies and social media platforms, each conflict only has a limited shelf-life in terms of media interest, the occupation of Gaza and the effect it has upon Palestinian life is largely unseen outside the frame of war. While these claims have been made throughout this these, specifically in relation to Bil'in and Susiya as well as being touched up in the historical and conceptual framework concerning potential re-reading of historical documents and image, in Gaza, the pace of violence is, like the space itself, dislocated from the West Bank.

Like the previous Israeli military operations into Gaza, *Operation Protective Edge* was abound by the typical visual tropes associated with that specific political space; footage of Israeli aerial strikes from mid-range vantage points, Hamas rockets into Israel, the destruction of Gazan infrastructure and the gory politics of immediation¹⁰ related to Palestinian human life. While mainstream British media featured Palestinian ambulances shuttling across scarred landscapes and faces wrought with emotion, demonstrating how British broadcasting, on the whole, operate within an economy of 'taste and decency', Al Jazeera, as well as blogs, Twitter and Facebook across the Internet demonstrated with unrelenting pace, the horror of the Israeli strikes. The display of Palestinian bodies in all their visceral reality became the visual vehicle through which Palestinians have reliably, time and time again, sought to communicate their suffering at the hands of the Israeli State in an effort to engage a humanitarian discourse. As Lori Allen notes (2009: 161), the display of Palestinian death during clashes from the outbreak of the Second Palestinian intifada not only became a form of testimony but also constituted irrefutable proof of injustice.

In the opening page of Lori Allen's text, 'Martyr bodies in the media: human rights, aesthetics and the politics of immediation in the Palestinian intifada' (2009: 161), Allen describes how she is confronted by a series of graphic images by a Red Crescent Doctor 'where are the human rights... the person who cares about humanity, it would affect them, and they could judge... let the world see and it will do something'. This sentiment asserts in the midst of this montage of traumatic words and images that when presented with death and destruction, the world will act in defense of those who are subject to such disproportionate violence. The self-representation of the Palestinian, Allen writes, is lost in a self-mediated saturation of symbolic representations that focus on suffering, rather

¹⁰ Lori Allen writes that immediation is a particular approach to making political claims that foregrounds natural life as the ground of a particular set of rights. Specifically, Allen and I, in the context of this paper adopt this notion in relation to the power dynamic of visibility relation to the occupation and the representation of the 'Palestinian'. Thus, the linking of human rights, visibility and affect are common to Palestinian political and social life, structured around an ideal of 'immediation'. Although human rights (an ideology, language and system of institutions), visibility (a sensory perception, aesthetic system, and range of image objects produced and circulated in large part by broadcast media) and affect (a way of feeling, experiencing and reacting to experiences) are distinct dimensions, together they make up a 'politics of immediation'. Adapted from Mazzarella (2006).

than them as politically active (2009), though of course the actions of the 2012 Freedom Rides, as well as the ongoing non-violent resistance during the Friday protests in the village of Bil'in, do seek to alter this perception. Yet for Gaza, the visibilities and circulation routes of knowledge related to Gaza are often limited in their contextual value. Critical of news authorship in the United States where the occupation is made visible through the repetition of readily understandable scenes and scenarios, Amahl Bishara (2012: 252) suggests that such mediations belong to the 'fantasy of immediation'. While the general American audience is led to imagine that they have the full story at their fingertips, meanings are not so transportable (Bishara, 2012: 252). Writing in relation to anti-occupation demonstrations, Bishara notes that the significance of 'graffiti, quotes, and even oppositional postures' assumed during demonstrations [and recorded as images] shift when they are removed from the flow of events and recontextualized into news texts.¹¹ Similarly, David Campbell has observed that during the bombardment of Gaza in 2008/2009 the coverage of the 'conflict' and its mediation by western press exacerbated the normal conditions of the occupation as temporal and exceptional. By outlining the tension between the international media's demand for access to a particular 'time and space', limited by the Israeli military censorship, a demand driven by immediacy, problems arise in how the media communicate the unseen and ever-present challenges faced by Palestinians.

As such, much of the journalistic approaches to the 2009 *Operation Cast Lead* were premised on the idea that the truth of the conflict could be found on the streets of Gaza, when access was eventually granted. With this in mind, Gianluca Panella's 2013 World Press award-winning series *Black Out* sought to challenge the immediacy and stock reportage of press-photography associated with conflicts, helping to reframe a space that is 'always on the brink'. Unable to have the images published by the press Panella's images were later presented as a twelve-photo collection that addresses the reality of life under occupation. The

¹¹ For a discussion of this, see Amahl A. Bishara (2012: 250–55).

topic of the series focus on fuel shortages, due to the Israeli imposed siege on the Gazan borders and harsh weather conditions that forced the closure of Gaza's only power station, in November 2013.

Taken without a flash, each image faithfully records the reality of a 21-hour Gazan blackout. Across the twelve images very little is visible, yet we know we are looking at an urban environment. The occasional light from a window, be that a torch or a candle, the red brake light of a car or just the natural light from the night sky breaks up the darkness and gives the images a sense of depth, slowly revealing the space within the frame. The homogeneity of the images reinforces the effect of abject darkness in a cityscape that should otherwise be bright and vibrant. Like a series of stills from Ridley Scott's neo-noir dystopian epic, *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), the series communicates a sense of discomfort produced by the limiting darkness. As such, each building is black, each street devoid of any light except the odd flicker, informing the viewer that not only is there no electricity for the street lights, but no fuel for the cars; time and space has again stood still; the ongoing 'catastrophization' to borrow from Azoulay (2012) of Gaza.

The assault on Palestinian infrastructure is nothing new, nor is the calculated management of Gazan life through systemic violence and 'deliberative targeting' of specific sites that 'places a logistical value on targets through their carefully calibrated, strategic position within the infrastructural networks that are the very fibre of modern society' (Gregory 2014). Thus, the 'symbolic' attack on the Gazan power station during *Operation Protective Edge* brought Gaza into darkness once more, while more long-term concerns arise as sewage plants and water pumps fail, refrigeration systems stop, and essential surgeries and life-support systems are interrupted.¹² While the bombed out streets of permissible societies and 'non-democratic' spaces are repeatedly mediated to the point of visual exhaustion and juxtaposed with 'tribalistic displays' of public mourning and calls for revenge, Panella's images make apparent, through a visual strategy

¹² For more on this, see Human Rights Watch and their report on the wide-spread impact of the Gaza power plant attack: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/10/gaza-widespread-impact-power-plant-attack>.

that effectively denies vision, how for Gazans the basic necessities of daily life are endlessly tied to the politics of life under occupation; fuel represents one of the most fundamental examples of this entanglement.



Figure 120: Photo by Gianluca Panella (2013) of a Gazan street, the only light is from the inside of a car.

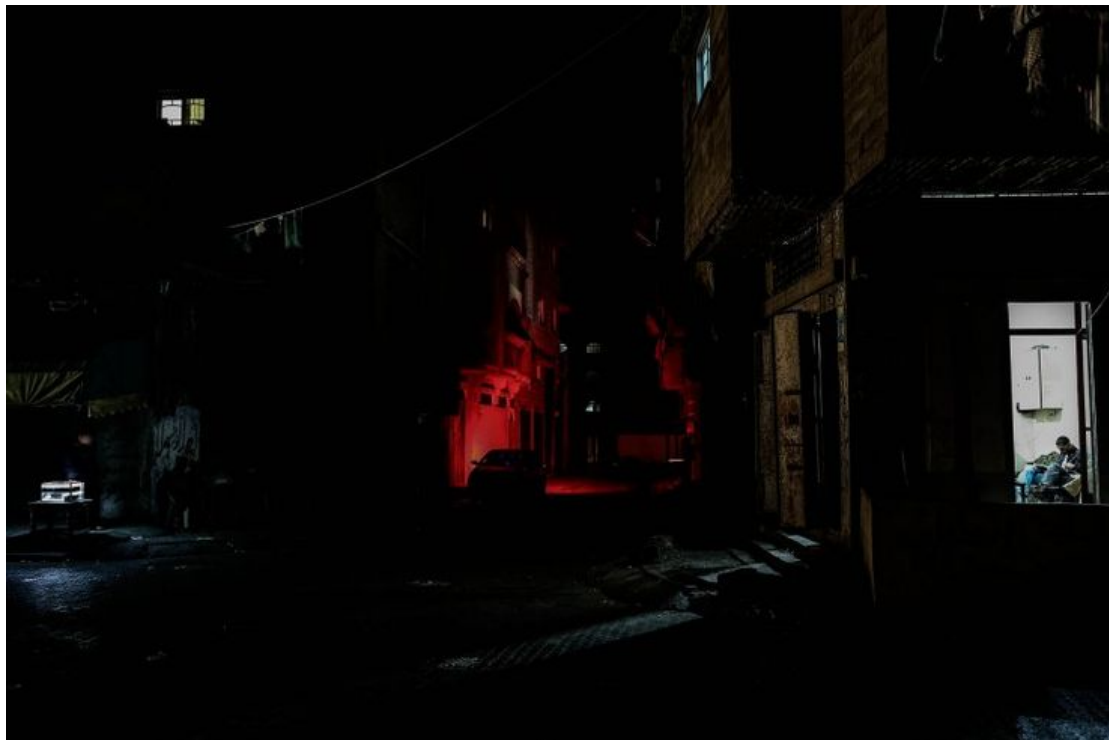


Figure: 121: Phot by Gianluca Panella (2013) of a Gazan street lit up by a rear car light (centre) and the internal light of a Gazan resident's house.

Panella's images help us to think about life in a markedly different way to the typical images produced within or related to the highly politicized arena that is Gaza. Taken with a long exposure, Panella's draws in what little light there is. Looking at the images the viewer enters into a space devoid of atrocity, where the photographer oscillates between the investment in the capacity of documentary photography as a truth-telling medium and as an expressive medium for interpretation. By not showing the act of violence itself, but rather alluding to it by depicting its consequence, the photographer engages our imagination. By addressing the problem of illumination and the difference between looking and seeing, Panella's images help communicate telling aspects of the occupation that are otherwise less visible. As such, his images function as a practical challenge for the viewer as much as they do a metaphor for Gazan life.

Similarly, albeit in the West Bank, the documentary photography practices of the Palestinian, Rula Halawani, also sought to challenge the paradigm of immediacy, commonly associated with press photography, creatively engaging with seemingly banal space, darkness and conflict. Photographing her hometown of Ramallah in 2002 during *Operation Defensive Shield*, Halawani spoke of her shock as the entire city had been transformed into a 'dark and scary place'. In an effort to communicate the darkness, Halawani took photos of the invasion and chose to exhibit the images as negatives in order to 'express the negation of our reality and of her people' (2012).



Figure 122: Negative exposure of Palestinian detainees during military raids in Ramallah in 2002 during *Operation Defensive Shield*.

Like the work of Panella, Halawani invites the spectator to enter the imaginative space of war and conflict by shifting the paradigm of spectatorship related to the Israel Palestinian conflict. Only by producing the images as she did, did Halawani feel it was possible to tell the larger story of just one 'specific period of the

Palestinian experience of Israeli repression and destruction our lived reality' (2012). Halawani's images, like Panella's, are produced with a different representational intent and with a different spectatorial expectation. As documentary photographs, their images differ in what they are expected to communicate within the frame. As such, both photographers adopt a more nuanced and denotative approach to the visualizing occupation than conventional reportage.

While Panella's images communicate the effect of the asymmetric nature of military and economic power besieged upon Gaza by Israel, the multifaceted effort to cripple the Palestinian economy with 'symbolic strikes' against the power station sits in tandem with the slow violence of military architectural planning and civilian/settler barricades that make up regime-made violence that operates below the typical visual sphere of perceptible violence. While *Operation Protective Edge* can be recognized as violence par excellence, a spectacular violence witnessed by the world, the population of Gaza has also endured the curtailment of access to food managed in such a way that it did not make its impact upon the Palestinian population overtly obvious. Rooted in the idea that the Palestinian should, in the words of Dov Weisglass, an adviser to then Israeli Prime Minister in 2008 Ehud Olmert, be put on a 'diet, but not to make them die of hunger' (Urquhart, 2006). Such a tactic, the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* stated, was an effort by Israeli officials to ensure Gaza's economy was 'functioning at the lowest level possible consistent with avoiding a humanitarian crisis' (Reuters 2011). However, the visualization of such is a question of politics, and politics, according to Jacques Rancière, is a question of aesthetics, a matter of appearances (1999: 74). Thus, the very struggle over political perceptibility in Gaza as important as the struggle over the land and in many cases intrinsically linked. This was most clearly enacted in Gaza during the 2005 'disengagement'. Examining the ways in which architecture is mobilized as a tactical tool within the unfolding struggle for Palestine, Hilal et al. noted that a varied mix of cultural and political perspectives informed the Israeli enforced evacuation of settlers from the strip.

The evacuation and destruction of settler buildings was tied to the potential symbolic effect of *images* of Israeli architecture under Palestinian control. Prior to the evacuation of Gaza in 2005, Hilal et al. wrote that,

The Israeli government decided that all settlement homes would be destroyed. One of the reasons stated in support of this decision was the government's wish to avoid the broadcast of what it felt were politically destructive images: Arabs living in the homes of Jews and synagogues turning into mosques. (2009)

The destruction of the buildings and settlements during the 2005 'disengagement' of Gaza was meant, amongst other reasons, to deny the function of this architecture as a political image; yet with all this in mind, in my final section turn my attention to the Palestinian city of Hebron and the photography collective, Activestills.

6.3 Boundaries in Hebron

Established in 2005, Activestills operate outside the representational frame that largely shapes the political visibility of the occupation, working to challenge the prevailing representation that defines the Palestinian, as well as other peripheral communities within popular Israeli visual culture, such as print media and television. Whilst each photographer is a professional in his or her own right, or has the ability to demonstrate that they can operate at a professional standard, each member must also demonstrate a political commitment to challenge the inequality brought about by the occupation. Operating with a strong conviction that photography is a vehicle for social change and that the power of the image has the capacity to both shape public attitudes and raise awareness on issues that are generally absent from public discourse, the eleven members operate both in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as internationally.

Often excluded from the critical visibilities related to the occupation, Hebron exemplifies how the occupied Palestinian is ruled by the Israeli state but excluded from any of the citizenry rights granted to Israeli Jews, and to a lesser extent, Palestinians living within the Green Line. Due to the kidnapping of the three Israeli teenagers on the 13 June 2014, Hebron became visible, if only for a short time, through the discourse of terror and savagery that was articulated into the Israeli narrative according to what needed to be seen, felt and thought. Examining some of the major British newspapers during the raids and media outlets such as the BBC provide an identifiable set of images that reassuringly denote all the readable traits of western democracy in close proximity to violent and lawless population. Representative of the image chosen by the Guardian online [published 13 June 2014] (Figure 123), IDF combatants were regularly photographed groups within an arid landscape wearing the recognizable uniform of a 'liberating force' that underscore the relatable motifs of jingoism associated with the British and US-led War on Terror.

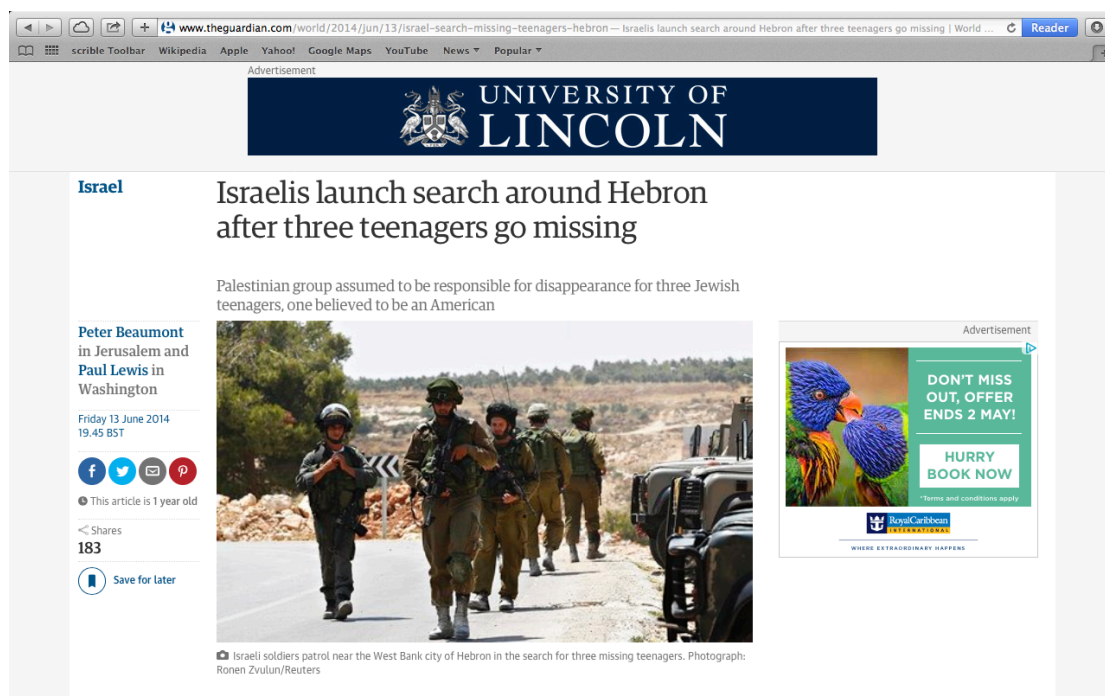


Figure 123: Example of how the IDF/Israelis were constructed throughout the British Press re their presence in Hebron. Commonly seen as 'entering Hebron vis-à-vis the unknown' to fight terror, although they have had a military presence there since 1967.

Such images reinforce Edward Said's (1994) analysis of Orientalist discourse that creates binaries between eastern and western cultures. The civilized and equipped 'Us' and inferior 'Other' is connotative of the image economy largely used within the press in response to the initial events in June. Like Rabbi Gerson in 2001, and that of the Israeli state throughout *Operation Protective Edge*, the language of victimhood and the images that support it are consistent with the 'information wars' that Said outlined as being waged by Israel in order to portray itself 'to Americans and Europeans as a victim of Islamic violence' (1994: xxi). Yet in what has already been discussed, and in what will follow, in the context of Israel-Palestine, visibility is subject to power; those without power are caught in a struggle of perceptibility that is uneven and hard fought. Jacques Rancière's assertion that 'politics is first of all a battle over sensible material' (2000) is thus very apt. The sensible order, in this specific case, the occupation, renders certain things visible, while others are removed or hidden. Specifically, since the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada (2000), coupled with the increased presence of NGOs and advocacy roles of internationals, the processes of Palestinian mediation are, by and large, dependable on 'affect laden concepts of humanity' (Allen, 2009: 163). As a result, the Palestinian is often subject to a pre-established 'field of perceptible reality' (Butler, 2009: 64) that has already been established on their behalf, rather than with their consent or input. However, Activestills seek to make visible specific appearances, introducing a specific visibility into a field of experience, which in turn modifies the regime of the visible (Rancière, 1999: 29). This photographic practice, like the work of Panella, does not involve overt displays of conflict; instead it shows the subtlety of the occupation; the day-to-day reality, denying the scene and the objects within any sense of spectacle, both photographic practices invert the existing order of the seeable and the sayable. However, for those who live in Gaza, Ramallah and the Hebron and those who document the effect of the Israeli occupation in each space, all representation and experience will vary. While Gaza is under siege, the fragmentation of the West Bank through the settlement enterprise and related infrastructure to accommodate the Israeli settlers produced a different form of control over the space as much as it effects the visual representation of the occupation. As Eric Hazan writes, the case of Hebron is absurd and must be seen

to be fully understood (2007). Activestills, either as a group or as individual members, have through their practice sought to make this absurdity visible. The collective negotiate a role whereby they work as news photographers selling their images to agencies that represent particular events, but more often each member operates as a documentary photographer and also an activist. Seeing a tangible relationship between the two roles each member returns again, and again to a particular place, operating above all with the aim of contributing to their own archive of photographs that builds a nuanced picture of the occupation.



Figure 124: Palestinian boy looks through a barrier dividing one of Hebron's segregated roads where Israelis may drive, but Palestinians must walk on the other side, November 2013.

A small Palestinian boy looks through a barrier dividing one of Hebron's segregated roads (Figure 124). For the Palestinian, the fence restricts and corrals their movement, limiting their passage to a narrow channel filled with rubble, dirt and a sequence of steps that make movement for the elderly and infirm difficult. The division of the street reflects the inequality of the occupation; the Israeli-only side is wide enough for traffic to flow both ways. The photo is one of fourteen images taken in a series by the American born, Israeli-based photographer, and member of Actvestills, Ryan Rodrick Beiler during one of his

regular trips to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Taken from the Israeli-only side of the division, the boy is framed from behind the green metal fence that limits his movement. The green metal fence orders the image and our visibility; from the position of the photographer, the viewer is ostensibly looking in on the boy, looking in as a citizen, upon a subject of the occupation. Conversely, the boy is looking back, his gaze directly meets the lens and thus he addresses the spectator in a candid fashion. The young boy addresses the camera with a look of recognition, a possible recognition for the potential of the camera to make visible his plight. Such an exchange has been noted by Arella Azoulay as the 'civil contract of photography', a contract that is bound by the 'partnership of solidarity' (2008). Azoulay suggests that this 'contract' anchors the spectator in a civic duty towards the photographed person. Whilst the young boy is most acutely in focus, the fence is given the greatest economy. Cutting across the centre of the photograph, and blurring out of focus, the sense of depth afforded to the image by the fence takes our gaze to the rear of the image where men, presumably IDF soldiers continue to mark out the improvised boundary.

Hebron is the second largest city in the West Bank and the only Palestinian city with a settlement in the middle of it.¹³ The Israeli settlement of Hebron is concentrated in and around the Old City, which traditionally served as the commercial centre for the entire West Bank. A report commissioned by the Minister of Development Cooperation in the Netherlands, B'Tselem and the Israeli Association of Civil Rights notes that the 'authorities [Israel] have created a long strip of land that partitions the city into southern and northern sections and is forbidden to Palestinian vehicles with some parts of the strip completely closed to Palestinian pedestrians'. The Israeli settlers, on the other hand, are allowed to move about freely in these areas. Restriction on movement escalated in the city after the 1994 massacre of Muslim worshipers in the Tomb of the Patriarchs, carried out by the Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein.

After the Oslo Accord in 1995, agreements were made between Israel and

¹³ Other than East Jerusalem, which Israel annexed immediately following the occupation, in 1967.

Palestine to divide the city in two: H-1 and H-2. The former comprised an 18 square kilometres zone where most of the city's Arab residents live (about 115,000) and was given over to the control of the Palestinian Authority. The latter, H-2, fell under direct control of the Israeli army; a space no bigger than 4.3 kilometres, the Israelis became responsible for some 35,000 Palestinians. The rationale was for both parties to work in cohesion and ensuring that 'security responsibility will not divide the city... with both sides sharing the mutual goal that movement of people, goods and vehicles within, and in and out of the city will be smooth and normal, without obstacles or barriers' (Feuerstein, 2007: 11).

In 2000 the Second Palestinian intifada broke out, resulting in intensified fighting, and the impact upon Hebron and the Palestinian residents resulted in widespread curfews and the implementation of flying checkpoints. Since the outbreak of the Second intifada, the Old City, the commercial centre and the service routes via the north-south traffic artery are still today out of bounds for Palestinian residents. Restrictions on Palestinian movement are mapped by a constellation of staffed checkpoints and physical roadblocks. In August 2005, the OCHA counted 101 physical obstructions of different kinds in H-2 (Feuerstein, 2007: 20). The most notable and documented act of boundary manipulation was the forced closure of Hebron's main commercial centre, Shuhada Street, reducing the city centre into a ghost town.



Figure 125: An old Palestinian man watches on as IDF personnel cut off what was previously Palestinian road with an 8ft high metal and concrete boundary. Activestills, November 2013.

Yet Beiler's images are atypical of much of the representational practices related to Israel–Palestine. Whilst a great deal of attention is paid to the stark materiality and scale of the 8m high concrete slabs of the Israeli enforced separation barrier, Beiler, as well as those who make up the Activestills collective, use documentary photography to 'claim the frame' (Apel, 2012: 6) for those that lack visibility and voice. Noting Susan Sontag's assertion that the rise of photojournalism has contributed to the cultural ubiquity of images of atrocity, Sontag suggests that the 'shock image' is part of the normality of a culture in which shock has become a leading stimulus of consumption and sources of value (2003: 23), one that helps to sell news stories or to generally draw in attention. Focusing on border and boundary fortification within an Israeli Palestinian context, the 'shock' in relation to visual reportage is most commonly attributed to the enormity of the Israeli separation barrier that lines the West Bank perimeter. The barrier, which once functioned as an effective and powerful image within the media-economy of the conflict, 'one resonating within a western historical imagination still engaged with the unresolved memories of its colonial and Cold War legacies' (Weizman, 2007: 171) has been lessened as time has passed. Meanwhile on a domestic level,

Eyal Weizman notes that the barrier represents an effort by the Israeli State to produce a reassuring iconography of a border within a liquid geography (2007: 228), a liquescence that is made visible through Beiler's photography.

Against the dominant motifs and representations of the occupation one can use Rancière's examination of the role of politics and aesthetics as a framework in which to think through Beiler's practice and to enable the drawing out of some general points applicable to the issue of political visibility and the redistribution of visibility. Returning to Rancière's notion that 'politics is a question of aesthetics, a matter of appearances' (1999: 74), and the notion that regimes of visibility between politics and aesthetics concerning what is possible to see and how that visibility is constructed are closely aligned with the distribution of power, Beiler's effort to rearrange the existing 'distribution of the sensible', the laws that prescribe what can be heard and seen in a specific political and social constellation, necessitates a different set of artistic strategies than those typical of photojournalism and documentary practices common within the region. As such, the photographer denies the spectacle of disaster par excellence or typical visual tropes that have been consistent within the region.¹⁴

In the Palestinian city of Hebron, as is the case across the Occupied Territories, the relationship between politics and the distribution of sovereign power are negotiated on a daily basis. With this comes the question of visibility, representation and frame, because as Mieke Bal notes, seeing is innately political (2003). Thus, the visibility of the occupation is contingent on how political action is framed and translated into images. Anti-occupation practices are thus dependent on making visible what is not commonly seen.

¹⁴ For an extended discussion of this, see Amahl A. Bishara (2012: 167-96).



Figure 126: Three Palestinian men unload food from a donkey drawn cart. Activestills: November 2013.

In the final photos in this essay, three Palestinian young men are seen unloading a donkey cart carrying sacks of ingredients for use in a local shop, located in the H2 section of Hebron. As the last image in the series, the photo is anomalous to the other thirteen images. Scribbled on the wall, right of the door in yellow paint reads 'the neighborhood of Hebron's heroes' in Hebrew. A reference to the nearby Qiryat Arba settlement, established in 1970, a crudely drawn Star of David supplements the graffiti. This photo, like the work of Panella and Halwani draws us in, it requires contemplation, helping us to think about the effect and processes of the occupation in different ways, opening up new conversations about the implications of living under occupation, as well as its precarious nature. The image is embedded within a system of visibility that governs the status of the bodies represented and supports the kind of attention they merit (Rancière 2009: 99). Each object in the frame represents some aspect of asymmetrical nature of the occupation. First, due to flying checkpoints, which the half yellow and graffiti sprayed concrete blocks represent, the Palestinian is subject to ad hoc boundary movements, and as such, variable restrictions between differing administrative zones. Second, the restrictions on automotive vehicles limit Palestinian mobility to either foot or cart in the Israeli administrated zones,

while Israeli settlers are allowed the freedom to drive. As such the young men are subjects of the occupation; they are both inside and outside the law and represent the relationship between Israel as an occupying society and the occupied Palestinian population that has been described as a condition of 'inclusive exclusion' (Ophir and Hanafi in Hanafi 2009) through which Palestinians are ruled by the Israeli state but excluded from its protection. Moreover, the donkey and cart, the stark materiality of the wall and the Hebrew writing all attest to the Palestinian's spatial indistinction – everything that is visible in the frame has been imposed upon them.

6.4 Conclusion

The argument that visibility is subject to power, those who are without visibility are the least likely to be heard or seen was clearly demonstrated during *Operation Protective Edge*. The Israeli media machine quickly galvanized the rhetoric of a democratic nation responding to Islamic terror, a rhetoric that had been employed historical from the earliest Zionist settlers. As such, the Palestinian was framed through a nationalized way of seeing, grounded in the dominant Israeli discourse of national security and victimhood. Yet for events outside of *Operation Protective Edge* the everyday realities of the occupation are often still often unseen. While the representational cache of the occupation is drawn from a stock of easily identifiable images bound by a specific event such as military operations, that produce images of Palestinian destruction and death, the slow pace of the occupation and its effects within Gaza is much less visible, especially outside the frame of a newsworthy event. However, Panella and Activestills alongside in addition to the visual activists noted in previous chapters contribute to a growing archive that details the varying pace of systemic violence inflicted upon the Gaza and the West Bank. As such, it might be suggested that each form of image production, photojournalism, infographics and more nuanced documentary photography compete for a meta-physical representation of the greater whole. Each form of visibility making addresses a different type of experience for those living with the Israeli occupation, making

visible varying types of violence that are produced at different speeds yet share the same ultimate goal – to make life under occupation unbearable.

Visibility is based on a relationship through the means of production and the reception of what is being mediated. Images like those discussed above, and throughout the thesis are also subject to a debate over how what is being visualized is also being seen. It is with this in mind Vanessa Joan Muller's belief that some images, specifically photographs can communicate an atmosphere, a sensory experience that is not visible, but redolent in the production, one that channels the focus away from what is being represented, towards the 'how' of its perception is pertinent (2011: 4). In documentary photography examples presented above, we are asked to think about how this has come to be as much as to what it is we are being presented with. In this regard, visual activism both responds to events but also invites the spectator to recognize these events as part of a system of violence that maintains a society on the brink.

The next chapter will conclude the thesis, drawing together the findings of the research and outlines the contributions it has made to analyzing the struggle over Palestinian visibility, specifically online. I will also consider how this struggle has been made visible to an internationally sympathetic audience rather than exclusively Palestinian or Israeli web-users. I will also raises questions and possibilities for future research based on the research undertaken thus far.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

This thesis has explored how visual activism helps to visualise the effect of the occupation upon Palestinian life through critical, analytical and sensory research. In doing so, I outlined how a range of anti-occupation artists, activists and organizations challenged the regimes of visibility by deploying modes of visual activism in an effort to reconfigure the visual field for Israeli and international spectators. To do this, I have considered and identified how the Israeli field of vision is conceptualized by regimes of visibility determined by ideological and militaristic factors. These regimes, as I have recognized, are historically rooted in the privileges and powers that are written into 'imaginative geographies' of the land through the mythologizing of the 'Eretz Israel' prior to 1948. Militaristically, I have outlined how, through the distribution of space and the management of the Israeli gaze, successive governments from 1967 specifically, have obfuscated Palestinian visibility through the use of architecture, the fragmentation of land and a process of individual and collective modes of governance. Visibility in this regard was exercised as a tool to categorize and oversee subject positions on the basis of the places they occupy within a specific relationship to the political conditions that oversee them. It is this 'overseeing', specifically as a form of management by the state, through watchtowers, surveillance cameras, checkpoints and the use of settlements as an extension of the state apparatus, that visual activism seeks to contest.

Throughout this thesis I have recognised that the relationships between vision and visibility are not homogenous, as identified by the range of examples used and the intended, often multiple gazes that each activist, collective or artist has sought to engage. The ability to engage multiple gazes at multiple times or in multiple spaces is due to the significant role of new media. New media offered the visual activists the means of further enhancing and sharing their protest, as a live event, and as a means of compiling an accessible archive of material.

This was first explored in Chapter Three, concerning the web presence of the Bedouin village of Susiya, in the wake of a demolition order issued against their community buildings. Turning to the Internet, as the community activists first

did, was unexpectedly problematic. Struggling to produce engaging content as a consequence of the village's remote location, yet wanting to keep up momentum after the demolition order was issued, the village activists found the demands of continually generating web material required of a social networking site difficult. Premised on the assumption that one should connect with others, not through writing but by posting images, reflects Van House's (2012) suggestion that many users give up blogging because it was 'too much work' when compared to other social media platforms.

Perhaps trying to emulate the successes of Bil'in, which was the subject of Chapter Four, the activists working with Susiya realized that visibility making strategies are not transferable from location to location, but require different approaches and ultimately engage with different constituencies. Seeking to engage web-users through 'post-humanitarian appeals' (Chouliaraki, 2010) as an alternative to conventional protest imagery, the Susiya activists focused their attention on the power of social networking and visibility making campaigns. This approach employed social media with visibility making tactics by asking Facebook users to adopt a 'Susiya profile pic-badge' to their web-profile image. In an effort to engage likeminded campaigners, through the infiltration of personal social networks that are premised on shared values and interests, the pic-badge as well as the selfie-sign writing appeal enabled campaigners to promote Susiya's struggle whilst maintaining the villager's character and dignity. A process which also denied any issue of 'who and how to produce' the 'right image' of the village.

For the Popular Committee of Bil'in, the use of the Internet and the potential for new media technologies to produce an enhancing critically engaged perspective on the occupation was embedded within a multi-model visibility making practice that was interdependent on three specific factors. The first of these mutual interdependencies was the village's commitment to joint-struggle as a marketable image to Israelis and internationals. Secondly, the adoption and creative repurposing of culturally resonant themes helped attract media attention and additional spectatorship. Thirdly, the potential for their actions and props to have a migratory appeal and to be re-read by varying publics in a

number of supplementary contexts such as gallery spaces, helped to extend the visibility and discussion of their struggle. The mobility of this latter aspect was crucial as a way of breaking through some of the visibility regimes related to the spatial division in Israel/Palestine. Much like BTS and the Freedom Riders in Chapter Five, the ability and power to disrupt, subvert or potentially politicize a space that is otherwise removed from the conflict and to confront a selective blind spot in a society is, I suggest, a significant aspect of visual activism. In addition, each action, from Susiya to Bil'in, the Freedom Riders and BTS, all sought to capitalize on the potential gains of a secondary visibility (Goldsmith, 2010). With the ubiquity of camera and video-activists in addition to managing their own image dissemination, each visual event often operated between one or two varied spectatorial constituencies. Firstly, the examples of visual activism within the thesis addressed the willful or unexpected gaze of those who populated the immediate protest space, event or intervention. This address was also often extended to a networked visibility that included members of the public who watched the events live, online via a number of platforms as a form of 'media witnessing'. Secondly, due to file sharing platforms as well as the ability to easily develop a web-presence via Wordpress, Facebook and similar platforms, every activist action also benefited from some degree of extended visibility either hours, days, weeks or even years later online. One example is Hatiham Al Katib's Bil'in video upload, entitled *Bilin Reenacts Avatar Film 12-02-2010*. Originally posted to YouTube in 2010 and registering 271,125 views at the time of writing Chapter Four in October 2015, it now has 271, 327. While no comment can be made as to who is watching and for what purpose, an increase of over 200 views in a five month period attests to the potential contribution of an ongoing secondary visibility.

In addition, I have outlined how visual activism can be considered as a process that is both a relational and strategic activity that operates between seeing and being seen, noticing and being noticed as well as challenging denial, blindness and dismissal. With an emphasis placed upon the ubiquity of technology and its capacity to connect people, visualize ideas and produce meaning, recent attention concerning visual activism has been almost exclusively placed on the

potential outcome (Mirzoeff, 2015). Rather, I suggest that visual activism be considered in a wider framework that includes an enquiry into 'how' as well as 'why' and 'where'. Thus the emphasis on the process is reflected most identifiably by the fact that all but one example throughout this thesis (Panella) has been collaborative, mixing internationals, Israelis and Palestinians in collective struggle. Here, the notion of 'how' should not be limited to the technological capacity to reclaim or reorganize visibility, but also as an extension of an already well-established history of nonviolent joint struggle within Palestinian culture. Moreover, these processes and outcomes have been largely organized by Palestinians *with* Israeli and international support. Thus, the idea of a process extends beyond communicating a particular message to achieve a specific objective but is enabling a self-expression that is locally determined but potentially globally observed. This expression of local needs by local actors overcomes, at least partially, some of the concerns within human rights discourse of a western portrayal of 'distant others suffering' (Scott, 2014). This sense of ownership over their struggle whilst also giving visibility to it is something that has been lacking since the industrialization of Palestinian human rights since the shift towards 'peace building' in a post-Oslo era (Allan, 2015).

Thought about in this way, the potential for visibility to be altered, manipulated and mobilized by those without power in the service of their political aims as a way to influence and promote real social effect is vastly significant to the Israeli/Palestinian context. However, it is important to note that the 'effect' does not have to equate with the overarching aim of the visibility making action. For example, the Freedom Rides, as discussed in Chapter Five sought to register multiple effects that were linked to a number of goals. The principle goal was linked to the symbolic desire to freely ride to Jerusalem. However, for Mazin Qumsiyeh it was ultimately about disrupting the visual field between Israeli settlers and Palestinians. Knowing that the 'ride' to Jerusalem was an attention grabbing media stunt Qumsiyeh (2013) notes,

In a way, I guess we're [the Freedom Riders] holding a mirror to apartheid system – it's as simple as that. The goal is to primarily show the Israelis are racist...we want to force them to look in that mirror.

The analogy of the mirror holding in protest scenarios has itself become a commonly applied trope, employed as a form of mutual visibility management. An example of this comes from Bil'in, during one of their routine Friday protests in July 2009, where members of the Popular Committee taped a number of mirrors together in a performance that asked the IDF to look and examine their action; much the same way the also Popular Committee in the iconic striped pyjamas worn by Jews in Nazi concentration Camps. The mirror has more recently been deployed in a similar vein by Ukrainian protesters, in January 2014, when the Police turned on anti-government protesters who questioned the validity of the recent elections.



Figure 127: A Ukrainian protester holds a mirror to the face of the National Police Force during a peaceful protest in Kiev, after the 2014 national elections.

Seeking to manage the neglected foci of an opposing actor in a socio-political situation, 'mirrors' metaphorically or physically engage with vision as a constitution of the subject. For Qumsiyeh and the other Freedom Riders, the notion of a mirror was metaphorically represented through their appearance before the IDF and the settlers within the space of the bus. By appearing before them, the Freedom Riders demanded their gaze and also their recognition. If only

for a brief time, their political performance successfully re-ordered the visual field as to what could and should be seen within that specific context. Adopting the techniques representative of the 'new visibility', the potential for 'mirroring' or reflecting the situation back onto the gaze of those in and outside the context of the bus also helped to enhance the riders political 'space of appearance' (Arendt, 1958) thus was actualised through their performance.

As Andrea Brighenti (2010: 188) suggests, we are now in a place where the battle for democracy 'can no longer be imagined without taking into account visibility and its outcomes.' Thus, as I have outlined, both in a general sense and specifically in terms of Israel/Palestine, how visibility is highly dependent upon the interplay between the sites, subjects and events in which it manifests. Taking direction from visual culture, sociology, human rights discourse, photography theory, new media and reviewing historical relevant accounts of civil disobedience, I have drawn on a number of research fields related to the enquiry of the visible as social and political subject matters.

Taking direction from Brighenti's overarching discussion of visibility as a multifaceted field of social and cultural enquiry (2007; 2010), I considered how visibility has become an everyday process (Mirzeoff, 1999) within popular culture and as a force that is intrinsically linked to the receptive and perceptive management over subjects. This has included the exploration of political philosophy including the work of Jacques Rancière (2001, 2006) and Hannah Arendt (1958) to reflect upon how the constitution of the social is politically informed and based on visibility. Arguing that politics are not pre-constituted entities, rather its emerges from the setting of roles and powers within a system where visibility is employed as a means of sorting, classifying and ranking people or communities to a specific position within society. Looked at in this way, visibility can be considered a bio-political tool as it concerns the management of people. To understand the function of visibility in this way, the possibility for activists to subvert or redistribute these given roles through activism is an attempt to 'distribute the sensible' (Rancière, 2006). By creating demands and tensions between what can and cannot be said or seen is to make a claim for equality through perceptibility. Examining political action in this way enables us

to think about the varied levels and scale that visual activism can manifest. While similar critical frameworks have been considered in relation to Israel/Palestine by Noa Roei (2007) and Simon Faulkner (2014) in terms of enticing spectatorship through creative nonviolent protest, little consideration has been given to the expression of nonviolent creative resistance circulated online as an explicit tactic within the broader definitions of visibility making.

By focusing on the relationship between nonviolent resistance and the value placed upon new and online media as a visibility making tool since the end of the Second Palestinian Intifada (2006 – present), my research builds upon limited existing work concerning some of the general ideas about the Palestinian struggle over visibility in the context of the occupation (Hochberg, 2015; Faulkner 2014a, 2014b, 2013, 2009; Roei, 2007). In addition, research by Ruthie Ginsburg (2009, 2011), taking inspiration from Ariella Azoulay's (2008) work on spectatorship and the 'civil contract of photography', focuses on Palestinian visibility through a human rights framework presented in the Israeli press or by Israeli human rights organisations. Equally, very little has been written on the relationship between Palestinian resistance and online mediation. Those few that have, most notably Miriyam Aouragh's *Palestine Online: Transnationalism, the Internet and the Construction of Identity* (2011) have focused almost exclusively on Palestinian relations with Web 2.0 as a space to develop a national identity, minimizing the space between local, regional, national and international diaspora (Aouragh, 2011). While Aouragh addresses activism, the focus of her work is on the Internet as a space and mechanism for linking the Palestinian diaspora through the construction of an 'online homeland', developing her thesis from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1982). While a useful theoretical base from which to develop an approach to web-analysis, much of Aouragh's content analysis is from the West Bank (2001-2002), Jordan (2003) and Lebanon (2003-2004) with a focus on the user (gender, age, socio-informed background e.g. religion or class as well as urban or rural) as well as focusing on service providers like Internet café owners, ICT specialists and technological infrastructures. Exploring the construct of identity, either political or otherwise, Aouragh's extensive ethnographic work outlined how the Internet helped to

connect users to their national identity in a variety of ways. Specifically for her investigation into political web-usage, the notion of activism (pro-Palestinian websites for example) are examined as communicative spaces rather than as strategic tools through which the visual can challenge dominant regimes of visibility. Thus, as Aouragh notes, the Internet is a space where 'online chat facilities, email and websites provide accessible instruments [that] to some extent overcome the fragmented nature of the Palestinian diaspora' (2011: 147); reconnecting people and place, emotionally, ideologically and virtually. Other relevant but distinct works that also address the Palestinian web sphere include research by Helga Tawil-Souri, especially her exploration of the 'digital occupations' of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza (2012). Outlining the inequality to ICT soft and hardware within the territories, as well as the limitations imposed on Internet access and telephony communications, Tawil-Souri asserts that Palestinians are bound by physical as well as digital enclosures (2012: 27-42). While these Israeli practices of technological control manage communications, so to do they impact upon visibility. This is perhaps best identified in Chapter Four where I build upon these ideas, and Tawil-Souri's research, to suggest why the Bil'in website was initially a French language website. In a post-2005 context in addition to research suggesting French peace-missions were visiting the OPT in 2005, the effects of the digital occupation fed into my initial research and helped to construct my argument based on the Popular Committee's efforts to distribute a political visibility online.

Lastly, important work by Adi Kuntsman and Rebecca Stein (2015) has also broadly contributed to my extended field of enquiry with their publication, *Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation of the Social Media Space*. Exclusively exploring how Israelis employed social media tools, technologies and practices in the service of military projects by both the state, as addressed in Chapter Six, as well as everyday civilian users. Identified as a phenomenon that has emerged in the context of the Israeli occupation with the rise of social media platforms, 'digital militarism' advances the discussions used throughout my historical and conceptual framework related to the identity and mythologizing of Jewish and Israeli culture vis-à-vis Israelis/Palestinians and the militarization of a society.

Developing a transferable vocabulary for the analysis of politicized selfie-communication such as sign-holding and a conceptual framework to explore the visual syntax of social media images more broadly as a type of 'performance' that bespeaks specific meaning, is expressly focused on the Israeli bloggersphere and their specific relationship to the conflict.

Building upon these varied and timely discussions allied to extending Palestinian visibility and related discussions concerning web use including social media as a politicized communicative tool, my contribution to knowledge is,

- To help to further define the term visual activism and contribute to an emergent field of visual enquiry
- To contribute to the existing literature concerning the struggle over Palestinian visibility
- To examine how Palestinian/Israeli and international artists, collectives and activists have adopted the Internet and visual activism as a political tool post Second Intifada
- To outline how the web has been used to visualize the Palestinian struggle online for an internationally sympathetic audience rather than exclusively Palestinian or Israeli web-users.

7.1 Future research

This conclusion has highlighted some of the key areas of existing research that have helped to shape and define my research thus far. Having positioned visual activism as being a process that has a digitally orientated media output, as well as largely being a collective and multinational endeavor, there is scope within this research to further refine how we think about visual activism as a term. As a term that is still to be fully critiqued, it would be remiss to narrowly define visual activism simply in terms of digital technologies and protest or how critical visibility is ultimately conceived and presented. With this in mind, consideration for the multisensorial forms of appearance and social practice, through which collective struggle is formed, would be the next logical step. This would enable an enquiry into visual activism to extend into the area of filmmaking or works

produced specifically as installation pieces for galleries, thus expanding the possibility of its function and address.

More specific to Israel/Palestine, I would like to extend the web-archiving aspect of the research to examine the web usage, and constructed visibility, of the villages neighboring Bil'in, who operated under the umbrella designation of the *Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements*, as noted in Chapter Four. Current online and regularly updated village websites include Nabi Saleh,¹ whilst a number of websites have gone stale including Iraq Burin, Budrus and Nil'in. In terms of extending my current research, I could look to examine why specific villages adopted the Internet and at what point e.g. in relation to the proximity of the separation barrier to their village land. This could examine the collective and regional online response to the separation barrier's construction in addition to determining what expectations and outcomes the web presence have/had in terms of generating attention. As discussed in Chapter Three, the political and geographical context of each village under occupation, specifically in the West Bank, is unique to its location but at the same time each ultimately share the same threat.

To extend this discussion would firstly offer a broader field of comparison against which to measure Bil'in's seemingly unique success; enabling a cross examination of protest techniques and determining factors including international presence within the villages, access to image-making facilities as well as exploring the organisational structures within the villages. Secondly, it would offer the opportunity to develop a more robust methodological toolkit for web archiving, whilst the preservation of web material for future research could be made more widely accessible. The value of this would not only be to me, as researcher interested in the recent past, but also as part of an archive that accounts for much more. For many web historians (Brügger, 2010) much of the research activity within the emergent field is focused upon the use and development of technological communication. However, with specific attention on the OPT, the potential to analyze an assemblage of media that represents

¹ Link to Nabi Saleh's website can be found here: <https://nabisalehsolidarity.wordpress.com>

nonviolent direct action and joint-struggle 'now' as well as in the 'recent past' may come to represent a stage in the history of Israel/Palestine where the seeds of success were sown (Simons, 2016). Perhaps less optimistically such an archive may present the occupation as it is now and the recent past as a potential future disaster that is a possible outcome of the present.

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Appendix 1 – Participant Interview

Notes

Interview with David Lister conducted via Skype

Date: 31.03.2014

G: Gary (Interviewer)

D: David (Interviewee)

G: Thanks for the reply by the way and thanks for sending me that link it did cover a lot of the things I provisionally asked in that first email with regards to questions and things.

D: Yeah, so I'm wondering if you need ... yes if I can help with any other things then go for it.

G: Oh great well I shouldn't keep you too long I have got maybe 6/7 rough questions just jotted down and you can adlib there's nothing too structured about it but basically I'm just curious find out a bit more information to supplement my research for this particular chapter I'm doing. So the Susiya project, I'm particularly interested in terms of how the networks and communities, internationals or Israelis or various other collaborations come about to produce a visibility for someone who would otherwise not have one.

D: Again?

G: Sorry?

D: The question you are interested in is how Israelis and internationals ... can you just rephrase that?

G: Yeah, no it wasn't really a question I was just saying that the purpose of me wanting to speak to you and being very appreciative of the fact that you're corresponding with me is just the overall purpose of my research is to get an understanding of how internationals collaborate with communities that might not otherwise have a visibility, so those who are on the periphery.

D: Yeah yeah yeah, it's a good question, good research ... in our day it changes so much.

G: Yeah exactly but particularly the visibilities that are produced that aren't consistent with the regular norms of how let's say Palestinian visibility is produced, so very much they're either victimised or they seem .. there's a particular trend for NGO material but the stuff produced at the Susiya village is really interesting. So that's the ark for where I'm coming from.

D: I think that's what we were trying to do a bit different this time from the normal interventions that many organisations do there like Breaking the Silence or ... I mean our understanding of art is a bit different from .. it's not an activist approach I would say.

G: No, and you can tell through how the pictures are taken as well. The first question I wanted to run by you is who is in the collective and how did you meet? How do you operate? Even what does the name mean? I didn't actually get round to googling it.

D: Wasitit means friend (G: Ok) I work with the villagers group but I'm also an activist??? (bad crackling) some moments I'm a member of ActiveStills some moment I'm not, it just depends on whether I do something with them or not. So Wasitit was because we needed a name we, me and some friends, did a film called Eid (which is in the article that I sent you. The village is not far away from Susiya, it's like a five minute drive, and when we did it we looked for a name that we could send; the movie wasn't intended to be a film that was going to be sent to festivals it was supposed to help ... he wanted to get out of Hebron hills or he wanted to get out ... so we thought maybe go to art school. So the DVD or movie that we did was supposed to be part of his portfolio but then when we were done with it people really liked it and they told us to send it to festivals and we needed a name and when we were sending things to festivals they asked you which is the production company, we didn't have one so we decided to call ourselves the Wasitit (collective because it basically means that we did what we did because we're friends. Wasitit means friend, simple as that and that's what basically always brings us together, we have very deep friendship with some of the people there, not with all of them but with some of the people.

G: Ok and who's in the collective?

D: It comes and goes, again it was an adhoc thing but Fiona Wright, Kate Wilson, Eid Ibrahim. It's not really a name of a group it's depending on the project, we did a few other things and the people changed name because a lot of the things we do don't always ... what's important is not so much the name of the organisation but the content itself. Sometimes it's not a collective in that sense, it's not really a group. We played it because that's what people wanted to hear but we're not as organised as Activestills who are really well defined with a political agenda collective.

G: No, that's fine. I didn't know if it was ... is it predominantly international? or is it fairly 50/50? Or are you all artists in some regard? Or are some of you ...

D: Well let's take the Susiya centre, let's take where we took Eid from, which we did the movie, its part of the Susiya (sahib?? can't hear if there's something else) collective.

G: Ok, I see.

D: So it's part of on that level. But normally a lot of the activities that were involved during those two years were with the villagers group.

G: Right, ok.

D: I would say that they were the ones we were mainly working with. The village group is the group that has probably deepest relationships with the people in south Hebron hills. I met them and then I started doing things with them. So I am part of the villagers group on that level but when we did our project the groups intertwined between themselves. So the article that you received for example, it was because Eid was screened at the festival and the magazine really liked it and they interviewed us. We didn't have the energy to explain to them the political ... how we work so we just came up with a name and told them. I mean the other part is ??? which is put the name Wasitit so they can understand what we're trying to do more than who we are.

G: No, it makes sense I suppose just to give yourself, well not so much brand but at least you've got one thing to go to rather than trying to articulate we do a bit here, we do a bit there.

D: Yeah, the Susiya centre is, I wouldn't say developed but it was the village group that helped me with the key to access (G: ok) and then I would say from that moment on it

was a very intensive collaboration between the villagers group and the residents of Susiya.

G: Ok, since you've mentioned Activestills, is your work with the village group and Susiya continuous as Activestills continuously produce work or do you have little hiatuses and then come back together when there's a project that you think is viable or do you constantly produce material that's not necessarily online? Or continue the relationships although you don't have a consistent online visibility like Activestills have?

D: No the online part is really really relevant. We're online, and I think we wrote in the article, because when we look at a situation we try to understand what are the tools that we needed. With Activestills because I'm part of it, I'm a friend, when we were doing the Susiya centre I asked, it was already during many activities and I had a bigger agenda than just the photography project (G: ok) it was something that played a role for what it was attempting to do on a much bigger scale. So Activestills played the role, they came, they took the photographs. The use of art, how Activestills use the art and how I would use art is very different.

G: Right ok.

D: For me it's an organisational tool and for them for that specific project it was a photography, it was a participatory photography project where Keren and her partner got to know the families and worked with them and it was very intimate relationships between them and the families. The overall picture they did not need to be concerned with. They were doing it because it coincided with two good projects working together (G: right). But the reason for me asking them was beyond just the photography project.

G: Yeah because it seemed ... Keren does is it Visible Voice or Active Voice as well? (D: uh huh) Which seemed more of an Active Voice project than and an Activestills project but I don't know whether that was just me making tenuous links.

D: We all play with names and again when I asked Keren to do this project how she wants to define herself or what group she wants to associate that's what I leave up to her (G: yeah). My needs were or the organisers needs which was Abraham and Ahbed and Fatima were a bit different than what Keren and her partner wanted.

G: Ok and what were those needs particularly since you've alluded to them?

D: So basically they came to us for x amount of time to take photos (G: hmm) or to teach and to create a relationship once that was done they went (G: ok). Ok and our project was to use after they leave so we had to have ... our agenda was trying to create ... its much bigger but let's say it has two objectives. One to try and create norms (??? sound goes off a bit here) which are based on the classic confrontation model where neither I would say fall under the classic condition (?? Can't hear what it said here) of protest or any of that. Each region has its own strength and needs and possibilities. South Hebron hills because it's so disperse and because it's such a rural community doing protests once a week doesn't work. On the contrary, the main form of resistance there is occupying the land, living there. So the question for us was can we create something that shows the people are able to defy the occupation not by reacting to it but by basically saying the occupation will not stop us from living and enjoying and being able to appreciate life and being able to organise around it. So it came from a very different avenue so when the army comes if the army wants to see or settlers when they want to see people suffering, people being kicked out things like that, they won't see that. They will see people who are proud, people who are creative, people who are using art, people who are solving their own problems no matter how hard it is. So it was trying to work from that because that was one thing and the centre was playing that role. Another role was we were experimenting with more what is my interest can be used as ... my main interest is trying to take art away from the lets say the visual aspect of it and there's certain forms of aesthetic art (?? Can't hear what is said here) which I think have organisational merits and by that I mean ways of interacting and doing things based on art practices. So I was using something which I, when I was doing my masters and things like that, was developing and still am developing, the idea that the aesthetics and process of art intervention can be used as an organisational tool to organise around. So if art intervention is a temporary form of expression where like Banksy or graffiti or public art where you just go in, you do something and after a while it just appears, it has a temporality to it, then can you basically where art is always built over layers and layers so there is no real possession because things constantly, in art intervention disappear after a while, could you create a social centre that is based on these concepts? So there is no democracy but there is no tyranny either it's like a space where people, no matter who it is for whatever reason, can do their project inside. And in that form so we

had dance class, we had Hebrew classes, we had Arabic classes. All sorts of things which were happening constantly and they did not always have to continue they could come when they wanted and the part was to try to find a structure which would, because of people in Susiya or many of the other villages too have a very difficult life, how do you create a centre that is part of their lives (G: hmm) but doesn't take more time? And the only one that I could ... and the idea(??) that I had, in some parts succeeded and in some parts didn't, because its temporal and things constantly change so people didn't have to always take care of the centre, they took care of it when they had time to do it. I didn't want to add more work and more stress. So when I approached Activestills it was part because we were trying to add another art project, second it was to try to do things with the women who had a harder time going into the centre (G: hmm) because they were always working and busy (G: ok). Thirdly, after about a year of running around the centre, where everything was focused around the centre, the concept of the central place people are coming to, then we understood the centre is not really a centre but it is a village which is a centre (G: ok), so how do we transform? So again the art intervention idea in every art intervention the public space is public (G: hmm) it means there is no one more important place than another, so how about we turn each of the families into a centre (G: Yeah). Turn the tent into a centre and the photography workshop was really useful so what happens in the end is each family goes through a photography class but when we celebrated after the one year of celebration each family made an exhibition in their tent and then people came and turned their homes into the centre, it wasn't important. So we were playing around with ideas how to create some sort of ... I mean we were very focused on the functioning of the centre, getting the people to use what we called local knowledge. They have so much knowledge which is disappearing, it is disappearing for many reasons none of them necessarily because of Israel but it's more like a knowledge that is getting lost because of a generational gap.

G: Right ok.

D: One family builds their own flutes from little metal things, another one does crochets and like really ... and the children are not always interested in that anymore like they have their phones and they have their things. So we were ... and at the same time I'm getting to this, but people who deal with education for example deal with what critical

pedagogues basically define is when the oppressor has so much oppressed ... when the oppressor has been so oppressed that they've copied certain traits of their oppressors.

G: Right, ok.

D: Now that, on a (??) scale, you can see that through the educational system (G: hmm). We brought, this was one example which was very obvious, we brought some very good educators ... they wanted to learn Hebrew (G: right), and they wanted to learn Hebrew because they understood it is ... I wasn't wanting to teach them Hebrew at all, I thought they should teach Arabic. But they were saying that Hebrew is the language of power, they were saying that Hebrew language gives them work, Hebrew is a language that makes them being able to argue with the police and with the army; it is a language of power. So they want to learn Hebrew so we brought teachers, some very good teachers, but their way of teaching is very ... it's not necessarily in a school fashion, the critical pedagogue. So they were teaching it without books but with very creative means but some of the Palestinians felt insulted.

G: Right.

D: They felt insulted because they thought we were not being serious, they wanted the tables, they wanted the books, they wanted the suits. Now this is nothing to do with the occupation but this idea that you're so indoctrinated that this is how you learn (G: yeah). I mean if you don't go to ... when people go to a class and if there is no teacher telling them how to do it or there is no table and books then they feel like they're not really learning. So this is something which is true in many many countries. So in such conditions, but this is just an example on an educational level, but if you look at it there are traits of ... I mean it's quite simple think about it this way Palestinians understand they're constantly oppressed and violence is used against them. So the language that they learn is the language of violence (G: yeah) and it's very hard to break away from that language and it's true because its only then that Israel listens to them. If they would be pacified and they would not use violence Israel would not listen to them. Now obviously promoting a certain nonviolent resistance is more complex because you're breaking away from that (G: yeah). Learning a language without books and without having tables, but learning it through everyday discourse and listening is very different, it's difficult because we're taught something in a certain way. So the idea of the Susiya

centre was to try and break away from this form of always being, one, victims but always reacting against instead of taking it away from that and creating something. So we were doing the arts centre because we wanted to do it (G: yeah) not because someone was telling us to do it (G: right ok) and that's a very, and for the situation of Susiya, that's a revolutionary thing.

G: Ok, that's really interesting. Yeah that's great, because when I spoke to Keren, which was in October I went to Israel and Palestine, I kind of moved between them both, she was very conscious of saying that the images ... it wasn't about giving voice or empowering it was just about participating and just being active in something that would be an everyday activity otherwise (D: uh uh). Which I thought was quite interesting.

D: I mean Keren knew what I was doing with the Susiya centre (G: yeah) and things like that and ... but yeah it has the concern ... the interaction we have we've managed to somehow to a certain degree, obviously with the limitation that it has (G: hmm), solved I would believe this colonial problem of foreigners coming in to Susiya. It's never completely solved and there's always issues (G: hmm), one example is, and this is very classical, Palestinians when it comes to, and it's true many other places where there has been some sort of colonialism, it's very hard to say no to a foreigner.

G: Yeah.

D: So if I come with an idea, people will listen to my idea and will accept it and will feel ...

G: Obligated maybe?

D: Obligated but they will feel bad for saying no (G: yeah) to anything that I say. So if Keren and her partner went and did photography workshops it's very very difficult to always understand what the family would say. So (mekala???) would be approached because they would say David we don't know what exactly are we allowed are we not allowed to ... they're telling us yes yes yes or no no no and I would, and because I already live there (G: yeah), I mean I was living basically there.

G: Ah right ok.

D: Yeah, yeah that's how ... I mean I'm one of the only ... I think I'm the only person who's ever lived there like Israeli who basically lived there.

G: Right, for what period of time were you there?

D: Well I came there once and I stayed for like ten weeks.

G: Right, ok.

D: And then, I would just every Thursday, Friday, Saturday I would sleep there and work with them on the centre and things like that.

G: Right, ok.

D: But I can't speak Arabic (G: right) and for me my form of communication is art (G: Right). But for me art the form of communication is not ... so if you're talking like in a visual aspect is I can't speak Arabic so I cannot get my ideas across. But then also many times words go out from somebody's mouth so fast that you never really understand. It's only through the visual practice and it's only through example that people are able to understand (G: right) what you're trying to do. And from the moment we built the centre it was a participatory ... like I would go there ... I mean the way it's done when I started I would sit down and do my thing (G: hmm) and then people would come and say what are you doing (G: ah ok), what's that. And then I would show them, I won't go to them and I won't tell them not to do this (G: ah ok right). When I met there they told me you can stay here and I would wake up every morning and I started doing stop motion animation and they would look at my camera and they would look at my things and I would let them come. And then when they started building the tent with them so I started collecting rocks and doing things and then people would come and participate and then they kind of understood the concept of it (G: hmm). But the concept is ... I mean then you have to ask yourself for example what is participation? what does participation mean? (G: yeah) in the beginning we went to every family to tell them hey we're creating a community centre come and join us. That didn't work out.

G: I was going to ask that, you know did they see the value in it or did you just ... or value from my perspective

D: It's only through trial and error do you understand your interaction and then your form of communication. Keren and her partner did not stay long enough (G: hmm), I

mean they already have lots of experience that's why they did it, they succeeded, but they always had Ibrahim or myself many times as being middle people to be able to talk and discuss because they can't speak even Arabic (G: right). But those who are not involved in our project have a hard time understanding how we communicate (G: yeah), but those who are involved in our project, photography, video, painting or whatever, know that there are many ways to communicate an idea and a feeling, and a sentiment and you don't need necessarily to speak to do that. So art on that level is a very powerful tool (G: hmm) and that's why ... so the entire centre is, it's organisational and function, was art was the best, I mean this is how I see it and also I think Ibrahim and Nabid was the best way to try and create this kind of art community centre because it afforded us the ability to always try, experiment, see what works/doesn't work. And yeah, as long as you keep an artist's mind frame, so you're constantly creating, you're not problem solving anymore (G: yeah), you're constantly creating. So the first part is how to get the people involved, it didn't work. So then we started doing things in the centre itself and let people come and they did, but some families would not come, for all sorts of family political issues will not come to this specific place (G: ok), for instance this specific person's land and this family is fighting with that family so they won't ...

G: Really?

D: Yeah, it's like neighbourhood things.

G: Yeah, I suppose, yeah.

D: So then we had to think ok do we reconceptualise it and then came the idea with Activestills, then I said hey if we did a photography workshop where suddenly its home becomes the centre which changed the concept; and that's how we tried to develop it constantly. So Activestills were part of a much larger scale attempt to do something else. They were focused on one thing (G: yeah) but overall it had bigger implications. And obviously you can go to the other things which is to empower women (G: yeah) for example women photography workshops, to strengthen the relationships between Keren and Activestills and Susiya, the many little things that have come out as a result of this. But again, the idea was to use visualisation art as a means for social creation, social participatory, something political, something yeah.

G: Yeah, that's really interesting because I wouldn't have got that from the images, you know analysing the images, or from the information on the website or from speaking to Keren so these subtle nuances shape and inform.

D: There is no need for you to understand it, it's something which is about Susiya itself (G: yeah), it's not something for the outside world.

G: No ok, but then its put online so as an outsider...

D: It was online, the Susiya forever site, I guess you got into that one right?

G: Yeah.

D: That came up because a specific moment, Susiya was going to be demolished and, I think we write it in the article too, there is no site today anywhere that talks about Susiya, yet there are many places which are talking about Susiya, but it's not from a Susiyan perspective. And what I mean about that, all the organisations that come, and on Facebook, the chat, the demos and all of that (G: yeah) are constantly fighting their cause, the texts are in Hebrew, the texts are in English but not in Arabic. The site ... so when we came up with the site it was just for this moment to tell the world that Susiya was to be demolished, but I was working with Ibrahim on it, normally people don't ask. There is this relationship, that again, to be able to understand what a no means (G: hmm) when someone tells you a no or yes you need to really really listen to how they're saying it. So there is an organisation that comes once a week with people who are interested about Breaking the Silence – I don't know if you know them?

G: Yeah

D: They bring people there, but it is kind of like a zoo.

G: Like war tourism or catastrophe tourism almost.

D: Well it's important to bring people to see there's no doubt and Nasir when he goes and then he sits down and he talks to them and it's really important what he does there. It's really really important the way he talks, he's a very good public talker and he does it with a lot of humility. And it's really important but they come and they go (G: hmmm) and Nasir will never be able to tell them no, even when he feels sometimes that they're just coming to ... on the one hand he feels that I need to do this because to make my

village known to the world (G: yeah). But I remember once we had an argument with Breaking the Silence, because you always have these things, and he told me I can't tell them no. and the ability to understand and being able define no, it's just by getting to know the people really really well (G: yeah). So the website, no one ever asks Palestinians how they want to be presented basically it will be something like this: Nasir there is a new law coming out we have to resist it, I'm going to open a Facebook page and is that ok with you? And Nasir will say ... you can't tell them no, you can't (G: yeah), it's important but he will have no control over it. And at the same time they don't live in a web world even though they have their phones and things like that they live really in concrete. So we made this site, which one page of it need to stop it's like the update page because I can't stand it because I'm too busy and they can't do it, so they only way to do it to make a site that represents them is to do a static site. It's not a site that changes, we just made a collection of movies we like, of photography of the Susiya centre (G: yeah) and saying ok that's Susiya.

G: It's like a small archive representing what they've done basically.

D: I mean Susiya is not a name it's a place where people live (G: yeah). Who are those people? (G: yeah) None of the sites do that, a lot of the sites look at the images, there are protest images, there are army images. There are no images which are decontextualised from a straight political perspective, just people living, just regular people – you're destroying a home, you're destroying people's lives and that simple pretext and the fact that we're supposed to just do that, nothing else. And in that way, not only did we do it with them, I sat with Ibrahim and Karen, and obviously when it was done I showed it to the other members of the villages to see what their reaction, I knew which photos they would not appreciate and I knew which movies they did not want (G: hmm) and then we leave it, I barely touch it (G: right). And that's how, again I'm not going to speak for them, everything that they've done there is theirs; so the photographs are theirs, the movies (maybe other people made them but they participate in them). The movie Ibrahim for example the one that I think, the main movie that is shown about Susiya (G: yeah) Nahim Nowajay who did that film, I went with him he went to each family and asked them what does home mean to you, just before the demolition (well they didn't demolish it). This site was supposed to kind of tell the world ok look who's living here but that's it.

G: Right ok, because I was going to ask from your point of view or whoever runs the website what were the complexities of representing the group? What images were chosen but I suppose you've just addressed it because I suppose you're advocating on behalf of them in terms of ...

D: I mean listen for a start they're my friends (G: yeah), I trust them they trust me. The text I kind of showed it to them, I mean its open like (G: yeah) to read this is not always the best but I kind of went through them to make sure that some of the fact. But I think that ... I took some of the texts from Rabbis for human rights things like that. It was just to give a little ... the facts there I wasn't too concerned about ...

G: Oh right, ok.

D: I think that the images and the movies speak so much stronger by the people there. So it did in that year, I mean people have been writing about it and the other members of the village group have been going there for like ten fifteen years (G: hmm) know so much of the facts and the people of Susiya trust them with a blind eye, like they really really trust them. So I took the texts and showed it to Eyre who showed it Erayla who said yeah that's fine the facts are fine. I went to Nasif and said ok Nasif listen this is more can you see what you can hear and I just put it. And again I think has the project, it has the Susiya centre, it has movies. It's not about ... I mean they all have Facebooks (G: yeah), they're in constant communication, maybe they do it bad maybe they don't do it bad. I am sure a lot of the letters that they write which are published in the press other people wrote it and they sign it.

G: Right, ok.

D: Because there's no way that they could write like ... People are motivated by a desire to help (G: hmmm). They become very pragmatic they're destroying your house you can't really write English (G: yeah), so I come to you and ask you ok we have to do this letter, we have to publish it there, just tell me one, two things about it, I'll write it down and make it sound good and send it (G: yeah). And this suddenly some passive guy becomes a really really articulated writer. I try to keep away from that.

G: Yeah.

D: I mean for pragmatic solution they have no problem because this can save their village, it's not how I exactly do things. The photography workshop, Keren might have taught them how to frame the picture but they had to press the button. And that moment of taking the frame, as small as it is, it's still comes with a place where you say I made a decision, no one forced me to press that button (G: yeah). It's me writing that letter, it's me deciding. And then when Keren sits down with the families to go through all the pictures that they've taken, it's again they're deciding (G: ok). It's not like Keren is coming to them and telling here what picture do you want. They sit down together over tea and then there's a dialogue that happens between Keren who says who likes this and then yes yes yes what about this one? And they go oh yes too like and then everybody chooses the pictures together, but it's still their choice.

G: Yeah.

D: And it's the same thing with every form of the work that the Susiya centre was trying to do. So again static pages can present much better than constantly updating and things like Rabbis for human rights, and this is one example, in Susiya everyone stays in contact with one person whose name is Naso G: ok), he's the main contact person. Why? Because he can speak Hebrew. You're going to have to change the names ok if you going to use that.

G: No, I will do that's fine, these are just for my notes. All I've written is one person main communicator can speak Hebrew so I've not written a name.

D: And they treat him as he's a representative of the village (G: right, ok), he's not. I mean people respect him a lot and he has a very big voice but that's the only person they communicate with him so when they want to do something they only do it with him (G: right, ok). We were trying to do something with the entire village with parts and it's a very different ... so for a lot of the ... so for Breaking the Silence they don't know anybody in the village apart from Naso

G: Right ok, that's interesting. Right, I see, ok.

D: Keren, myself and the villagers group, obviously, we know every family (G: right), I slept in their houses.

G: So the dynamic in the relationships is totally different and that will affect like you say elements of trust and participation and in terms of affording you the opportunity to essentially make a representation. Whether the website is static and whether anyone visits it they're all conscious factors that need to be taken ...

D: I mean there was a moment when they wanted access, Naso wanted access, to the website and I told him no.

G: Ok.

D: And I told him if I give him access he knows very well what's going to happen: it's not going to be maintained, put something things, they will be calling me constantly to help them technically and I have no desire to do that. I told them you take it and you don't call me or do anything or we live it static and if you want something then you just tell me and I'll put it there. But I can come from a place telling him no, in a way that we look into each other's eyes and you can laugh about it. So there was an organisation that wanted to take the site over, so they could update it constantly (G: ok, right). And I went to Naso and told them listen that would be great help for me because I don't have the time. And he said we will update it and I said yeah in what language – in English you'll update it. And I told them listen I'll give it to them and I tell them they can only update the first page, all the other pages they cannot. We kind of agreed, I told them what they should do is do an Arabic one but and again it was a very simple example so he told me they will do it for us. I said I'm not going to do it for you because I'm too busy. You're going to have to maintain it, write in it, translate it – it's all there just start and I will do it. They never started it. So ...

G: Did that third party come in and take over the front page or is still just left?

D: It's still left.

G: So do you think it actually has a function or do you think it serves a purpose beyond being a static archive? I mean does it make a great difference it being there or not then? Are they reliant on it or have they just accepted it's there and then they move on? Because the thing that kind of got me particularly interested in it, and it's what essentially underpins my research because I'm looking at online activity, is the fact that it's there and it's available for spectatorship around the world. So it is in English it's not,

if you look at the Bil'in website, there's a Spanish page and a French page, you know it's just English it's there. Would it matter if you took it offline? Would they be bothered?

D: No, they wouldn't.

G: No, right ok that's interesting so it's another strand of ...

D: No, it's not that simple, it's not that they would be bothered or not bothered, it's trying to understand exactly what does it mean for them (G: yeah). It's a website, their house is going to be demolished (G: yeah), they have settlers coming into their village do you think they are going to concern themselves if a website exists or doesn't exist? (G: exactly) It's not like something that ... they've seen things ... I mean when I tried to apply art intervention into the community there because, maybe naively I don't know that, I believed I saw a connection between this idea of temporality. Art intervention is never permanent, it changes. Their lives are in constant threat, they never know if their house is going to be demolished or not demolished, they never know who is going to go to prison and who is not. So this idea of temporality I said wow art intervention can work here as a concept. So they're used to things coming and going, disappearing, one group come another one leaves, this project is done then it stops. So many people have done projects in South Hebron hills, and specifically in Susiya, that a lot of them started really well off but to maintain something is much more difficult (G: yeah). And the only thing that they're able to maintain, like incredible, is their family structure, is their homes; that's what counts. Everything else is like games (G: yeah), it's irrelevant. The site, yes of course, I and other people would have taken the site and made it constantly turn it into *the* Susiya site with Facebook pages and start interacting and get people involved and show them pictures but ... So I need them to look at more images of how life is in the other side. I think it's more important for people to come there and be with them and socialise with them and with or without the cameras and then if there's this on the site then sites come, sites go (G: yeah) people come and that's their lives... so if the site ... they would continue but because their lives are uncertain (G: yeah). Now what does it mean for us? I would probably be more sad because I think it's a really really beautiful site as far as ... because it's simple and the pictures are really beautiful and have memories. And when Abid looks at it it's like a personal thing. But ...

G: That's why I kept saying archive it's almost like an online snapshot...

D: It's an online archive to try and put a face to the place (G: yeah), that was the only objective. When you make that analogy that a face and a place are connected then you're leaving a decision to the third party, the person who is watching to decide what that means for him or her. Do they see that way or do they think that Susiya the people living there are all terrorists, Jew haters or whatever? Or do they see/hear people who are just like you and me, trying to live and ... or do you see/hear sexism? Do you see your patriarchy? Or do you see your people forming other forms of communication which we might not understand but also have certain qualities. We could have done more, we could have put a map ... we did put an address but if you start putting phone numbers then do we get constant phone numbers and things like that so we did put an email and we put there's a list of organisations you can email if you wanted to get involved or if you wanted to get there you can get there (G: yeah).

G: That's really interesting actually because Sarah Pink has this idea of photos or documents, so you could use the website as an example, as modes of knowledge and that's there pure function which I think is quite apt in this case.

D: We had this project, which I wanted to do with a lot more time, is do the same thing – the photography workshop in every village in the 9,7, 8 I think firing zone (G: right). Same thing, go do this and basically what it would do if you have all these unrecognised villages; people don't know their names, people don't know who lives there. So we can map some of that region out by using participatory photography where the people there do the workshops for ten days, with families, and then we can have a site like Susiya for every village in that place.

G: That'd be a good idea.

D: Yeah, I'm just lazy and I need funding for that and I ... but my partner and me are thinking of going back to Palestine and that is the main project we're thinking about.

G: Ok, that leads me up to ... I mean I've only got a couple more questions, I really appreciate your time ... was there any funding or did you get any grants or was it privately funded or was it just you and your friends?

D: Well, money is an issue (G: yeah), it can help but it tends to get in the way of things. The villagers group were kind enough to give us something like £200/300 (G: ok) and I used that to build the centre (G: right), to get some paint, to redo the ... the tent already

existed (G: right, ok) to try to make it nice and to try to make it different from the other places. I think in the Susiya forever site I think you can download a PDF about the Susiya centre (G: yeah you can, yeah), so you can see pictures of how it was built and things like that. We tried to develop ... this is a problem if you get grants from a certain amount of money ... money was a really complex issue, we had to deal with it in so many ways. So the first thing if you've got a lot of money what happens automatically if you don't have the mechanism to work with it properly it becomes a corrupting force (G: right). Because then you starting to pay salaries and need to create more money so you need to keep a way. On the other hand if the people there have no money then, or have very little money, and asking them to invest in their centre then they want to know one – what are they getting back, will they get their money back (G: yeah) and we tried to work more on that level because then we said ok fine. I wanted each family to donate a very symbolic, in the beginning, very symbolic sum so they have a stake in the centre. If you don't invest something normally you take it for granted (G: yeah), it's an idea how do you create ownership. So what we tried to develop in the centre was some projects that were economically sustainable when we're using the resources that already existed. What were the resources? Resource one, people like Breaking the Silence, Activestills, artists, activists come to Susiya, so that's a resource (G: yeah). It's a resource of knowledge, those people have money, it's a resource so good, the question is how do you use it properly? And the second resource, for me it's a fact of life but, people are creative and people have knowledge, everybody has that (G: yeah), so that's a resource. They have land, they have space, that's a resource. So how can you take that into a resource and turn that into some sort of economic plan? So one thing we did which worked really really well with a lot of work we started teaching Arabic. We got internationals and activists to come, and the same process and same mechanism, they came for a weekend and they stayed with one family (G: ok). And they paid 300 Sheckels, 200 went to the family, 100 went to the centre (G: right, ok). And the resource was wow they speak Arabic, they have that; it's the most simple thing. So we tried to develop an Arabic programme because what this programme was doing same thing with Activestills one – you're living inside the family so there's a relationship between you and the specific family, same thing with Activestills it was a relationship between the work in the centre telling everyone to please come for a class we are going to work with that family. There is a very intimate moment specifically when the Arabic lessons

are happening, you're living you're staying for a Friday, Saturday or Thursday, Friday, Saturday. And think about this you can't speak the language, you know that you're a foreigner, you know that your safety depends on them (G: yeah entirely) and that meant that the learning experience was very powerful because one people felt wow look how they're living no electricity, barely have enough water but it also gave the opportunity for us, because one of the things we were concerned about is how we solve not only the money problem but the security problem, how can we have people there? We needed Israelis and foreigners to be monitors and the best way to monitor ... and we didn't want this charity of or like some organisations we come and we're going to monitor and then we're going to write a report (G: yeah). We wanted to create a place where people want to be there and the Arabic structure let us. So suddenly the problem if we could get this one activist, one somebody to come there for a week that meant there was a foreigner there for that weekend to monitor the settlers in case there was a problem to take pictures. So it was this understanding that everything we do has to have a multifunction, even with Activestills it wasn't just taking the pictures. So the Arabic lesson, the family got money, the women who were teaching (because it was mostly the women who were teaching it), but when they were teaching it suddenly they had something to offer, they knew something that the other one didn't know. It's a very powerful point of empowerment (G: yeah). So they were getting money, the centre was getting money and that worked for a while. So we had that programme, and then when we had the Susiya one year festival and we didn't have money, so basically I started doing political negotiations. I was talking with Breaking the Silence to donate a bus, people/activists from Tel Aviv can come, and they did. But the villagers group gave a little too, no they didn't give money they gave a promise. To have celebration we needed money and all the residents had to put their own money and they all put their own money into the ... and the villagers group gave a guarantee that whatever they get back if it's not the full sum (G: yeah) they will cover it (G: alright ok). So it was like this thing but they put the money, we all did, and we did the festival. We got less donations than we wanted (G: right) and the villagers group basically covered it (G: ok), but we got some, and each family in the end got their investment back. So we were already trying to do these very small economic models saying we are able to control this amount of money, we don't want foundations, we don't want grants, we don't want anybody, it's

our money and it's our skills and that's how like part ... and the same thing with photography, no, the photography ... they brought the cameras, Activestills, and then ...

G: I think Keren said she had some money to print the images off, maybe like \$50 or something all in, paper and everything.

D: Yeah, yeah I think there was. I think they did a bit and I did a bit, it was all very precarious like we get from there and from there (G: yeah). I mean we're talking such a small scale sum (G: yeah) it's not even ... but the money issue is a very delicate one which causes so much problems.

G: Yeah, I was just curious and I suppose the way the money operates in this particular instance is representative of the precarious nature of the village I suppose. It's easier to do it small grass roots rather than making attempts to bid for something than might not be there when you get the money or ...

D: I would say that on a visual aspect what's interesting is if this centre could work in Susiya, and like I said people don't always learn you can tell them by words many good ideas but to implement them if you don't see them it's very hard to be able to interpret or translate them into something material. The Susiya project, if we can do it in one place and to show people how easy it is to do it (G: yeah), all you need it a tent and that's all, then maybe it can be duplicated in other places. Because they see oh wow they're doing it there and wow people are coming there and there's internationals, there's Israelis, there's the press coming there, they have teachers coming there they're learning Hebrew so we can do the same thing. And I would say that it partially worked (G: yeah) on that level because Susiya centre closed down but the village where Eid comes from when they saw the Susiya centre they wanted to do the same thing and their centre exists until today.

G: Ah right, cool, that's interesting. The very last question is, well I suppose there's two, how did you establish a network to get the internationals in, like through what? So you were saying Breaking the Silence, the village group ...

D: Again, people come there. I hate networking, I do my stuff ... it's the same thing with art intervention, it's the same philosophy when you do an art intervention you're coming ... take Activestills when they do their public exhibitions (G: yeah, people come and go) then when they do their gallery exhibitions on the streets they're not waiting

for people to come and see, they go to they find a wall (G: yeah), they take a picture then they walk away.

G: I suppose the context is different though with Susiya because you can't really walk in ...

D: No, it is the same context. We were doing things ... we had ... we were doing activities which were community based and then if somebody showed up (G: ah ok) so for example do you any art? Photography or something?

G: Photography, yeah.

D: Ok, imagine we're doing our stuff right, we're doing a workshop with children, with the grownups, the women whatever. You're coming because you heard that there's something in Susiya and you bring your camera. And then you're taking pictures, you come there and were introduced to Ibrahim or Abed or Fatima or whoever. Then because it's your first time, like any other first time photographer who comes to a place the first time, you start taking more pictures than you would need. I mean, I never take, when I go to a place which I know for a while I never take my camera the first time (G: no) but you come for the first time so you're taking pictures. And you start taking pictures and you get excited and then Ibrahim comes to you and says would you want to come here next week and maybe give a small workshop? And then you would say yes or no or you would take pictures and send them to Ibrahim (and the next time you come there you would do something with it or suddenly you would have seen Activestills doing their workshop and you said hey wonderful, can I help you out? That's how it worked.

G: Ok.

D: It worked and it grew very fast. I mean we had Hebrew, obviously I have contacts, Edward has, but we always found where there's a will then it's very easy to find the people who want to contribute. The Hebrew teachers I was working with in the democratic school they said Hebrew and I knew the person I and I told them hey why don't you come with me over the weekend see the place, if it captures you go for it; and it captured them. The dance classes were done from somebody from Yacktar (??), from the village nearby. The music, we had one music class from a teacher, Felicity Lawrence

from Manchester University, she does a lot of this music thing. She came to visit Susiya to do one workshop there (G: right). You don't have to make phone calls.

G: Right, so it's very fluid, very organic then I suppose.

D: It's the same concept of art intervention. You do your stuff, when you're doing a work of art you're doing it because ... there are people doing it because they want public recognition, we also wanted public recognition (G: yeah) because the point is the public knows what's going on. When you're doing a work of art that's also a very intimate moment where you're say I have something to say or I need to say it. And it doesn't matter if someone is going to see it or not see it. Well it's the same thing with here, what's important was the Susiya centre as an art project where we are doing something here for us. It's important for us to interact, to evolve, to grow, not to feel oppressed and demoralised. Now if people, if that inspires them that's great, if it doesn't that's fine, we're going to continue because we're enjoying it. And it doesn't always work like that but it's ... I was releasing this art intervention and centres like ... when you're doing art intervention you have the police, you need to worry about the police, they have ... and you have to do it fast and its things like that. Same things here, you have problems with the authorities, you're not ... you always have to be constantly on the move, you have to constantly change, so it's just a form of if you look at the Susiya centre as an art project itself you will find that is has every other definition of what is concerned work based art (G: yeah). It was in the same fashion.

G: Oh ok, right. That's incredibly useful because you've kind of recontextualised how I thought it was happening, which is incredibly handy for me. I spoke to a guy called Mazim who did the Freedom Rides, he's a lecturer at Bethlehem University (D: ok) and similar type of thing, Activestills were there and there was a live streaming of him and a couple of other activists getting on a bus that was for settlers only to Bethlehem. And they were live streaming it so it was consciously of being produced for a global audience and I said were you interested or particularly keen on producing an image in a particular way and its public facing attributes? And he said he didn't really care about whether people filmed it or not because it's for every ... it's an everyday reality for him, he can't get on this bus. So for whether people saw it or not (D: yeah) or how it was seen he said was secondary (D: yeah) it was about making an action. Similar in the way that

you talk about an intervention and whether people come, you know, it's that fact that you're doing it.

D: It's definitely that, if they come or doesn't come, the work of art it's in its own right, has its validity (G: yeah). And you don't need an outsider to give it legitimacy (G: exactly), and you don't need the army to tell you're allowed or not allowed to. When Nasir ... when we built the centre, I mean I don't know, the history of it is an interesting one. When I came there for the first time the tent, I still have pictures of it, the tent was filled with computers.

G: Right ok.

D: They wanted to make it a computer centre (G: right). Now that's interesting, a place which barely has electricity (G: yeah). And the other centre ... and there was a big EU flag and it was dirty, it was empty and nobody was there. There would be like card games at night, with cigarettes and things like that. When I saw the centre I took Nasir and said ok why? And he gave a very nice answer, he said we don't want to feel left behind. And I told him you know, I feel like a have a lot of respect but what you're doing here is really stupid. And he kind of looked at me because I just came and he goes why and I told him ok, we were outside, and I told him see this tree, this olive tree feeds you. And tomorrow the army can come, or a settler can come and destroy this tree, that would be very painful but what will you do then? He goes plant another one. So I tell him ok let's take that story. So basically what you're saying is nothing lasts and you have to be able to create something new. So tomorrow if the settlers come and they burn down the tent or the army come and confiscate it (G: yeah) what are you going to do now? He says there will be no more tent or centre, so you see there's a problem here you can't be created, it's exactly, against the environment that you're living in (G: yeah). You're trying to create something that is funded but you don't have the infrastructure and you don't have the ... we have to create something that if the army comes and destroys it the idea still, it's easy to replant it (G: yeah). So after that discussion, it took him a few weeks, but basically we took all the computers away and got rid of them.

G: Started again. So where did the computers come from, was that from a funded...

D: It was funded, I don't know, it was just (G: a bad idea, I think) ... the most beautiful thing I've seen but it was completely out of context (G: yeah, completely), out of the

environment. And then what we did the space was empty, we coloured it, we made beautiful walls around the centre but it was empty. And the idea was if the army came, and we called it the Creative and Learning centre, then the army would destroy the Creative and Learning centre, and then we would just open another tent. And because basically the civil administration gives you orders, what is permitted and what is not permitted, then if they close that one down we just go 3 metres away and open another one (G: yeah). But because the concept of the centre wasn't based on computers or things you needed to move, it was based on an idea ... so again, it's trying to find the right art form that works in that specific context. And then, the art intervention, for me at least, seemed to be working I think, but it doesn't always work. Because while I value art intervention the people there want a home (G: yeah) and they want steadiness and they don't want always to be moving, they don't like ... having computers be there is more of a symbol (G: yeah, that's what I was thinking) rather than my own little philosophical interpretation of what is the best thing. So there are obviously between my ... and this was a dialogue constantly going and we never spoke about art intervention. I mean I do from a community organising and arts background so I kind of know these things. But they want steadiness.

G: Yeah, and I suppose they could look at that computer room and think well you know (D: yeah) it's fairly concrete, you know it's something to build upon.

D: But that's how the centre changed (G: yeah) because sooner or later we realised that the centre wasn't any more about the tent, the centre was Susiya itself. And every tent needed to become a centre in itself, and that's where the Arabic courses came where each person stayed in the town that were Activestills. The exhibition in the end, of the one year celebration, the pictures were not in the centre. Each family exhibited in their tent what they took and then they sat down and they explained, so when people visited each tent they talked to the people, so that changed a lot.

G: And did that give them. like you were saying the computer station, did that give them kind of self-affirming almost, you know for other people coming in and seeing them that ... what function did it have for internationals to come to their homes and to see their images?

D: I mean it's very difficult to understand, on the one hand it's always an honour and there's so many little things. On the one hand where the centre was located was with a specific family and they were getting all the attention (G: yeah), and that was a cause of tension. So suddenly that, the focus wasn't on that specific area but all around the village was one way of challenging it. The second way was they're always happy to have guests and they always like talking about their lives. And I like talking about my life, I mean everyone likes talking about their life and things like that so that's always an additive. Some people say oh shit, more internationals coming in, why do I have to do this? It's more teaching, its more expenses. You know I have to feed them, people are constantly coming, I have to socialise and I need to take care of the children. Between the ideal version of how do you create a centre that is part of the life and doesn't add more work (G: yeah) and what happened was we created more work for everybody because it grew, it grew.

G: Yeah, it's a funny dichotomy I suppose isn't it? You've got that kind of stress from both ends almost.

D: It is but it's this constant negotiation and yeah so ...

G: But necessary as well I think.

D: Well maybe but after the Susiya centre experience, which closed for numerous reasons, we tried to analyse how exactly we could do it different, and what would we do different. We came up with the idea of creating what's called a mobile social centre. A mobile creative and learning centre which instead of being localised in one area could be a van that goes, like kind of an ice cream van (G: right), that goes through the villages and does specific workshops.

G: Like the travelling dance bus?

D: Well we thought do movie screenings, teaching first aid, things like that. And that's one of the ideas we played around with because creating centres in each village creates so much interior politics, it's just very difficult to work with. And it's got nothing to do with the occupation, it's just human nature.

G: Yeah, yeah it becomes something else I suppose. The very last one, before I let you go is, because I read on the website, or at least I think in the document you sent to me, that

the images were free to use and could be distributed however (D: yeah), do you know which platforms they went on formally? Because I know they were on 972 and ...

D: They were on 972, we used them, Ibraz used them I think, people put them on Facebook. I don't really ... it's an issue ... it's a really good question because who do these photos belong to?

G: Well that's kind of where I was going and in terms of having a visibility or to be a political actor you need some sort of visibility because if you're not seen you're not heard, that type of argument. But I was wondering how do the images traverse the internet? Where do you go?

D: Well, here you have to speak to Activestills, I mean I'm not <inaudible – there seems to be a problem with David's sound – Skype call is restarted>

G: Hello?

D: Yes.

G: Sorry, I could hear nothing but static (D: yeah), the screen was going absolutely wild, sorry about that.

D: As far as I'm concerned those pictures belong to the families. Keren, because who she is, she's really an amazing person, she's very loyal to how it's used. When we did exhibitions, in Bristol and things like that, of those images you know she would ask me David can you ask the women if it's ok if I use their images? So I went and I did these kind of things, I mean I was kind of a middle person. So I think somehow it's definitely an issue, like again, the families of the South Hebron hills trust us and they chose and we spoke to them about it being diffused and distributed and the entire women issue of women being exposed, all of this was discussed with each family. Telling them that's where it is and they understand that they on the web things are being shown everywhere (G: yeah). And when we show the photos we sat down with them and we explained to them and if they want us to take something off we take it off and things like that. But everything was ... I did discuss it when we put it on the website, I did discuss it with a few like with some of the villagers and they tell me this photo can be used, this photo cannot be used, this photo works (G: ok) and things like that. And that's about it, but as far as I'm concerned I'm very anti-copyright so I don't give a fuck (G: ok). Like

people should use it, as long as you respect the people who've taken it. I don't know how Activestills people treat it but I know ...

G: They're happy to have them used as well just ... he said they're on the website, if it's non-commercial use you can just take them so ...

D: Well again, I don't think Keren had ever spoke to them about commercial use or not commercial use either, and that's something which maybe Keren should have done. But like I said life continues (G: yeah) and the photos are not, you know, I think the people when we told them there is flexibility here and there and I think they were happy about that. Who the photos belong to, they have print ...

G: That's good aswell, because I always wondered what happened to them afterwards, are they still hung up in the houses?

D: Some of them are (G: that's cool), I have the originals also so if a family ever (because I go there more often than Keren) wants then I make them copies (G: cool), things like that.

G: It's tangible isn't it? It's something nice, because there's so many memories imbued in the process, in having them exhibited.

D: Oh yeah, I have an archive of photos from those two years from that project and its really really beautiful. I mean the photography work shop was a really powerful ... it worked really really well, it was one of the highlights (G: cool). And working with Keren, is always like, I'm always happy to do that because when she does it I don't have to worry because I know it's going to be done good.

G: Yeah, I suppose it's a reliable source I suppose. Right, I think that's me done, I mean I've had you for an hour and a half so I really appreciate it. I didn't expect (D: yeah) ... it became more of a conversation than a series of questions but the information you gave me was, well not what I expected and incredibly interesting.

D: What did you expect?

G: Well I didn't really have any expectations but I was just ... I didn't realise that's how the village operated and I didn't realise that's how the intentions of the project weren't necessarily about making a visibility and how I thought the project was grounded and

how it was started. You know it's just very different, the whole process is very interesting, different to how Bil'in works maybe or anywhere like that. But I know the context is obviously different and obviously the political context in terms of time and the precariousness of the village obviously shapes and dictates how they use images perhaps. But yeah it was just very interesting, different to how I thought as well actually, which was good. Yeah it was really ... kind of filled some gaps between ... and the not really a reliance on the web as I thought there was. I thought the internet was a massive driver and you know it's that kind of ubiquity of the internet and to get an image out there.

D: I mean, I run a political art website which it's all about the web. So I know the world of the web and we're a pretty big site in Israel and it's a very different form of (G: yeah) ... we have like, I don't know like, 700/800 people a day coming into our website (G: right) and I don't anybody there (G: right). We have people coming in and we have Google Analytics telling me who's coming in and who's coming out of the site and how there's ... I don't know anything about my viewers (G: yeah) and working in South Hebron is the exact opposite, I know more about who I'm working with and what they are about. So I live in those two worlds, but the last year and a half I've just been in the virtual world (G: yeah) having done media organising for all sorts of reasons. There was one moment when Wikipedia asked Edward to write something about Susiya, because you have Susiya the settlement and Susiya the village (G: yeah). And one of the most beautiful correspondence that I've ever read was in that moment, Edward wrote in two lines something like he said ... so the guy from Susiya ... he was basically saying ... from Wikipedia why aren't you asking us to write a blurb telling us saying what is the Susiya passing village and what does it mean to be unrecognised and things like that. And Edward wrote him a sentence – "I don't live in the virtual world. Every week I go there and I speak to the people that are there. I don't need Wikipedia to say that it's there or not there. I'm there, I see them, they're very much alive". But he wrote it in such a beautiful sentences, so you can do and write whatever you want, I just know that in that place, which is not on the map, which is not officially recognised, there is a village and in that village there are people and that people I know their names, and I eat with them and I drink with them. And it was this beautiful contrast between the virtual world, the unrecognised village – they decide if you're not on Wikipedia you don't really exist (G:

yeah) – and between the villagers group that goes there once and week and knows everybody I think that these two worlds are really interesting.

G: Yeah, no you're quite right and there's that notion if you can't Google it it doesn't exist but incidentally you can Google Susiya now because of the Forever blog so it's kind of ... it almost works two ways because I wouldn't have heard about it until I'd seen the blog.

D: How did you get to ... like the Susiya forever blog?

G: Yeah

D: That's how you got into it?

G: Yeah.

D: But how did you get to that?

G: I think it was through 972, it was either 972 or the other online magazine called Jadilliya or something (D: ok). They'd done a little piece on it and because I'm quite interested in ... well I started off looking at Miki Kratsman photographs and (D: yeah) Alham Shibli and her photos of unrecognised villages. So just through that and then looking at Activestills, and then the project that was done with Keren and you via Activestills was completely different to however to the rest of the images they put on their website really. So just my interest sparked in that because I'm quite interested in ...

D: How was it different?

G: Well if you look at the Activestills stuff a lot of it is images, well the vast majority of it is images of protest, then there's some kind of documentary images, then there's a few kind of photo stories, photo essays but the fact that it was done by the women rather than Activestills. And the representations that were made, because obviously they were done by the women, if you look at them there's a great emphasis on water and water transfer. But speaking to Keren she said she probably wouldn't have picked up on those things as much as the women had done because obviously water is incredibly important to the women in Susiya but if Keren was taking the images it would have been more about the settlers, it would have been more about the soldiers and the watch towers

kind of in the distance and things like that. So when you read the images against the other images that Activestills have as a body of work they stand out, I think.

D: Yeah, yeah I think, I mean you have a lot of these kind of photography participation all over the world ...

G: And it's different from BT'selem project as well...

D: Yeah, it is different. When Ibrahim did his movie we went to each family and asked them what is home, when they're stood in front of ... did you see that movie on the Susiya Forever site?

G: Yeah.

D: No one really put it, the only film made by a resident of Susiya ... not many people, everybody else choose other films (G: yeah) they made and things like that but no one used his film. Only later on somehow Rabbis finally ... the one movie that is done by the resident no one really used.

G: It's funny isn't it?

D: And it's probably the best one.

G: Yeah, I mean that's the point I suppose there's always people advocating on behalf of them, especially visually, so it's interesting for them to get the cameras because it gives them a visible voice in a sense doesn't it? Because they might not necessarily have a web presence but if they start producing their own images and people support those images to be moved around and be made visible, people like me find them and I find them interesting then I ...

D: I find that you stumble on them pretty ... I mean normally the people who go there are activists or things like that but I never expected just somebody who's not involved in it to stumble upon it, so maybe the 972 article had a lot of influence. I mean that a good example because we didn't, we sent it to our little network of people but the site never captured too much or it never got out too much it was only when Activestills did <inaudible> 972 I'm not. So it was more Keren pushing it on that level, I think that the 972 page didn't work to the site into Susiya than the site itself.

G: Ok right, well I'm glad I found it.

D: Yeah, I'm pretty impressed that you found it.

G: Maybe there's only me and a few others, but no I'm quite glad I came across it (D: ok). Thanks again for your time.

D: No problem

G: I massively appreciate it.

D: I'm just going to the site right now just to look at it, I haven't looked at it in such a long time.

G: Right.

D: But yeah the movie *My Home is Everything* nobody's really picked up that the only film that was done by a Palestinian from the residence, no one really took that as their call.

G: So other people came in and made films and then distributed them ...

D: I mean, if you go to the site itself, Susiya Forever (I haven't seen that site in such a long time), so there's a list of all the films that were done in that site like movies.

G: Yeah, and the first one *My Home is Everything*.

D: Yeah, that was done by Ibrahim the one who helped me with the Susiya centre, or I helped him. The only film done by a Palestinian for and about the family. The next one is a movie that I did with Keren and then the other ones are all about ... it's all other people have done.

G: Yeah, what other people have done as in outsiders have come in and made them?

D: Outsiders.

G: Right, I'm with you.

D: So this was the only one where the villagers themselves are speaking and maybe because it's so honest and direct and has no special effects ... I don't know. I'm just curious, how much ... like only 1,000 people have seen it if I look at the YouTube, and it's a pity because that's probably the only film and the best film about Susiya. It's like the most direct, it doesn't get any ... and it's using the photos from the project of Activestills with the women.

G: Right, I'll have to go back and watch it.

D: It's the only one that does that and it never got there, and it uses the voices and everything and ...

G: So who made the ones where there's a little boy talking about ... the series of video blogs there's like Susiya 1, Susiya 2 – Disconnected, video blog from Palestinian village and there's a boy talking...

D: That's Rabbis for human rights and again, its arrogance, they come and they're going to make a movie. They come, they film the Palestinians and then they put it up and they talk about the issue – not the people - instead of just giving the camera to the Palestinian and telling them I'll come back tomorrow can you film some about the water issue or something like that or...

G: Yeah or settler attacks?

D: Yeah, I don't know. For me, My home is everything it doesn't get ... when we did it Ibrahim and me and Kate and Fiona, we all were sitting together and trying to think of what is the right movie to do and we came up with the idea that it has to be the simplest, the most direct – to, again, give a face to the place. And if you read through it it's like ... I mean you see the photos of each family and then you see the tent where they're talking from and it doesn't ... I mean maybe I'm old fashioned but it's as simplest as it gets. It doesn't say anything more, you know, it's the most classic form of documentary. I don't know ... but it's just....

G: I'll watch it in comparison to the others then and see if I can pick up on any kind of differences now that you've drawn my attention to it. Because I've sat and watched them through and I've made notes on a few but it's the photos that I was more interested in (D: yeah) but I'll go back to the videos.

D: Yeah and that's the only one that uses all the material, all the material that is used in that movie is material that they made (G: ah ok), they chose it, they made. There's nothing there, I mean if I remember, there's nothing that is from the outside.

G: And in terms of production then I suppose, the Rabbi videos and the other ones do the people from the village have any control over the editing process?

D: No nothing, nothing (G: right ok, that's interesting), nothing at all. Ibrahim filmed it, we talked about it, he went, he had the camera, he filmed, he directed - it was amazing. And then I went and started putting the things together. Then I went back to Susiya and I showed it to him and he was like David this is not good we have to cut this. I was like do you know how much work I had to put? He goes David you need to change it, so we changed it, it was this collaboration. And it's with using the photos of Activestills with it and its interesting the people at the Bristol festival really liked that film and they showed that one more than ... No one really asks, the entire process again it's the same process as with Activestills very collaborative - it had to be from them, they had to decide which pictures they want inside, which pictures they want in their house. And all the other ones, the Rabbis, people send ... no it's just two very different ways of working, it's just worlds apart.

G: Well I'll have a look then because, as I said before, that's why I picked up on the photography project because it's different to what Activestills normally do. So it's a different production value, kind of procedure which it's been worked through and articulated so ... But I'll go back and look at the videos because if that's the same process as the photos then I'm going to pick up points of interest that I can talk about.

D: Could be, but just know with Home is everything all the photos are from the same project (G: right, great), and I don't even know if Keren knows about that.

G: Maybe not, I'll have a look through.

D: I don't know. I think maybe she does. I think one of the photos which the family didn't want and then I had to ask permission. Not all the photos are from Activestills, some of them are mine too, there's one or two that are mine too (G: ok).

G: The image selection, for both the film and the photography project where people came to the houses to look at the images that were produced, were they purely based on aesthetics? Like oh I like this image, I like that, I don't like this.

D: I think ...

G: Or was it content or ...

D: I think each image, each family sees things differently; some look at aesthetics, some maybe if it makes them laugh (G: yeah), some if it empowers them or makes them look

like ... I mean there are some really interesting ... because it's a woman taking the pictures but what are they taking pictures of? They're taking pictures of their family (G: yeah), so who do you see most of the times? The father figure (G: yeah) a lot of them and suddenly the father, I mean the male figure has this aura around them and it's like an ego boosting thing, which is also really interesting as far as that. For the movie, I think we chose the ones that kind of expressed what life was there, so I'm looking at Ibrahim's mother right now, she's peeling something. And then I'm looking ... yeah its more images of what ordinary daily life is there, it's very ordinary pictures. I mean they're not composited like a professional photographer will be (G: yeah) and yet both the movie and the photographs ... I mean I think when you see an honest picture ... you know one of my favourite pictures is that kid who is lying on a metal bar.

G: Oh yeah and he's just looking down?

D: Yeah, and I asked her how did they get this really good touch and she said it was made by mistake because it's a home where there's only women living there and two boys (G: right), long story, and by mistake they put Vaseline on the camera, because their hands were with Vaseline and things like that, and that gave it a soft look.

G: Ah right, ok. Because...

D: And when I look at that picture there's nothing planned in it and yet that little smile that he has just looking down with the Vaseline it's so spontaneous and like little moment of when you think of a Palestinian that's not the image you think of. And I love that image, it's like such a good image, it has so much optimism and also so much simplicity. But when you see an image you know it's authentic, it's not being imposed on, it's not trying to ...

G: It's not contrived in anyway, that's the thing, it's ...

D: Very little, you know, they're not really sitting down, they're not trying to frame it perfectly, they never ... he was just there and they were playing around. And you sense it, and you sense it with the video My home is my everything, it's not professional, the lens suck, the audio wasn't recorded properly because, we had an inter microphone, and it was windy. But you learn more about that, about those images and about that movie than I would say all the other movies and photos that have been taken from there. Those ones you learn more about because you're not trying to sell anything (G: yeah), none of

them, even that one wasn't really trying to sell anything. The questions were like five questions – what is home mean for you, what would you do to destroy your home, what is your name, where do you live and when were you born.

G: Perfect, yeah ...

D: It's like those were the five questions and then each person spoke and then the images speak and the quality doesn't matter anymore (G: no), it's the story that gets across. And I think that's something that many organisations forget sometimes and many people forget like they're on a mission, a crusade, they have to sell Susiya (G: yeah). And that's why I think Keren is amazing, the way she did it, the way she integrated with the community. The people who worked are very subtle and they're not looking to sell Susiya, its more we have access, we have some keys we can use them but you have to tell your story and we can use the access that we have. And that's what's being done but have a look, mean if you see a difference in the videos from the other ones. I mean yeah, the other ones are ... the Displacement is also there's parts of Susiya in it – that was something that Keren and me did, a project that we did together (G: ok). And again, its two views in photography but obviously much more special effects and things like that and this is like a politcal tool, very different from the other one. So yeah I would say look at My home is everything because it's the same concept – participation, getting permission, its various things – they have to film it, they have to edit it, they have to tell their story (G: ok), yeah.

G: Thanks again David, that's ace. You've more than covered everything that I wanted to address.

D: I am happy, I always like talking about Susiya. You are making me look back through the site and, you just know for accuracy not all the pictures are from the people there, in the Susiya forever.

G: Right, ok.

D: I cheated a bit

G: Right, ok. Well I'm only examining the ones, just out of ease really, that Activestills used and that were on the 972 blog (D: ok). Because I realise there's a big disparity between if I looked across the four platforms in which I seen it (D: yeah), I think there's

going to be a hundred images, hardly any of them I've saved. So I've just picked a sample.

D: Yeah, so basically what I see on Susiya forever, all the photos inside the centre are mine (G: ok right) and a few others, but the rest is from Activestills. That image is such a killer, I mean it was the clouds, but it's such a good image.

G: Yeah, it's good isn't it? There's also a really nice one, I don't think it's on this ... I'm just doing exactly what you're doing ... oh it's there actually, the dove and the water tank ...

D: That one is ...

G: I mean look at that, symbolism is rife, so many analytical readings.

D: Yeah, yeah that could be so many analytical ... but because I know the people there I know ... if you go down there's an image of a guy, here I'll do this it might be even easier for you, hold on. Can you see my screen? (G: I can) I mean that one you were talking about (G: yeah, it's just amazing, talk about the ...), the moment ...

G: The opportune moment ...

D: The water appears and everything. But this image is like his eyes, like that's life in Susiya (G: yeah), there are moments of ... and yeah they're really really good.

G: I mean, they're very intimate that's the thing, you know ...

D: They're very intimate but for example ...

G: Which you couldn't get if you were an outsider taking images like that, and that's where ...

D: Well, look at me, the pictures that I've taken are different (G: yeah). So this is one of the Susiya centre, this is another one that I have taken (G: right), this one Hamudi and this one. So they're ... but the rest is ... and this one.

G: Oh that's a good one as well, I like that one.

D: But the rest are ... and this one too, wow I love my pictures, wow. But the rest I think ... I wonder if you can see a difference...

G: You can almost tell when the women have taken pictures of their family and their own community, there's almost an atmospheric quality that's captured with the fact that they're taking pictures of their own community. It's hard to articulate really off the top of my head but ...

D: No, it's definitely ... wow I haven't seen them in such a long time.

G: But they're amazing, and I mean the guy sat on the ground tending to his land while the soldiers walk past in the distance I asked Keren about that. It looks like a resistance image – is he defending his land? I asked Keren and she said no no he's just tending to his land because it's everyday life. The soldiers walk past every day so it's nothing significant.

D: I think, oh yeah and this one is my picture, oh wow.

G: But for me those images are quite striking because usually its images of confrontation but it looks like ...

D: But that's the thing, that's my main criticism of Activestills I have. Activestills just take more photos than any other organisation that deal with them but the photos ... it's basically photographic journalism (G: yeah) and I think it's a waste of energy for Activestills. More projects like this can be ... I mean they've done a few exhibitions which I think are not bad at all, but even their other ones it always had a very definite political agenda. Here the agenda is much more subtle (G: exactly) and I think it works. I wish Activestills would have taken more this direction and leave the confrontation because there's enough people selling the confrontations.

G: And that's my point, that's why I picked on these rather than anything else because it's a different type of resistance. There's a resistance being articulated through the images (D: oh yeah) because the people are on the land, they're producing visibility that wouldn't normally be seen but it differs from ...

D: Would you say that there's a resistance that is not looking either to convince or it's not even trying to be professional, this is in that moment where ... I mean, I'm a video maker and Keren is, I seen how when we work on details when it comes to colour correction and things like that and the amount of time we spent to make it perfect. While when they take the picture and they continue with their life, the entire way of

looking at it which is completely ... I would say there's more truth ... the truth that I'm more sympathetic to is that idea that you just take that picture and then that's all, it's only a picture. Don't try to make it more aesthetic than ... I mean there's something in how I view it but ... because there's very little colour correction if I'm right, very little work on that.

G: They're essentially family snaps, you know if this was a photo book I wouldn't be surprised looking through someone's photo album and seeing these images. They're a different type of visibility particularly in relation to the Palestinian context online, the images are completely different to anything else you normally see.

D: Yeah, yeah, Yeah, I think that's what we were trying to do. I mean, I'm trying very hard to break away from this reacting to resistance and trying to go from ... but I don't like being shot so if you don't like being shot then you have to find other ways of resistance which inspire you and that was one of the big challenges of the Susiya centre, to do creative forms of resistance which are not about reacting to the forces that force you to react but to have your own determination. I know we said Bil'in is one of the few villages that has succeeded in doing that, in at least they have control over the demonstrations (G: yeah). But even then they have this weekly habit of going to the fence, or had the weekly habit, and once they have no need to go to the fence the creativity stops.

G: Yeah, it's almost like it's a staged performance and its articulated by both sides, the Israelis go, the people from Bil'in go, they act out this (D: yeah) and its recorded, and its disseminated and it looks very much the same every day. But this ...

D: It stops there (G: yeah), once at the fence the creativity stops there. Well what we tried to do with the Susiya centre was, occupation can exist like occupation can disappear, but the everyday life of community doesn't disappear that fast. And it continues, and as long as you keep creativity and open-mindedness and invite people then that's what the resistance is all about. It's not about anymore if the wall is this or not it's about what kind of life can you envision for yourself. It's a very liberating tool when you know that you're creativity and when you wake up you have some sort of control over your life and not one that is always deterministic and decided by somebody

else. In Bil'in the creativity and everything was decided by the Israeli forces not by the villagers. And in Susiya, I would say, it's less of that.

G: Yeah, you're absolutely right.

D: You do photography because they wanted to learn photography, you're doing a dance class because they wanted to learn a dance class. It didn't matter if sometimes there was nothing in the centre, sometimes we sat down and we just played cards or something like that it didn't matter, life continued. And it's a very big difference because you're asking, you're going back to the question of what exactly are you fighting for, what exactly are you trying to say. And I think those photos say, like you know, we have a life and we're living it. And it's nothing, and those days when the army wasn't always there and people ... and it's just a regular thing and I think that's a very big thing that activists and people who deal with social engagement forget. And it's kind of sad that they're motivated by injustice instead of being motivated by what they really want to do. And it's important to have creativity when you're fighting injustice, which is just as important, I'm also realising, that your creativity and your empowerment and knowledge are yours. And I think that the Susiya centre was Susiya's centre not somebody else's centre. So I think that's why the photos worked in a certain way.

Time 02:24:00

End

Appendix 2 – Participant Interview

Notes

Interview with Keren Manor conducted in Tel-Aviv

Date: 11.11.2013

G: Gary (Interviewer)

Keren: (Interviewee)

G: I've got questions but if you think they don't make sense or ...

K: No its ok just go ahead

G: or I was going to say if you think you've answered it we'll move on (K: Yeah), they're just points for me to reference (K: Yeah). So I put as a practitioner in the field ...

K: As a?

G: As a photographer (K: Yeah) what do you think the politics of visibility are in Israel at the current moment?

K: Yeah, erm ...

G: So what are you dealing with as an activist photographer?

K: But what do you mean the politics of visibility? You mean like the ... like in the mainstream media like what is visible here? (G: Yeah, generally) Like to the Israeli public (G: yeah) what is visible what is not visible? (G: yeah)

G: So essentially what are you operating against?

K: Yeah, yeah yeah, I understand. Yeah, its' a bit funny because I just talk about it all the time and it's (G: I know, I can imagine). I'm thinking of how to say things in order not to bore myself.

G: Yeah. No it's alright, I repeat myself a lot of the time.

K: Yeah, so first of course the mainstream media in Israel, like in all the other places, is motivated by political interest and not political sorry by economic interest (G hmm)

yeah. Like economic interest are actually defined by popularity (G hmm) means that basically newspapers want to sell, yeah, so they will give the public what they want. To give the public and I think in Israel it's kind of a circle what's going on between the public and the mainstream media. It's kind of a circle, the newspaper or the mainstream media show the public what they want to see but also like the ... ok sorry, maybe I need a coffee I'm a bit confused for a minute.

G: No no, actually ...

K: No, no it's ok, I have something to say about it I'm just thinking. Maybe we should start from the beginning ok

G: well you can keep it short if you want.

K: No, basically the mainstream media is talking about the conflict from basically and mainly one narrative, which is the Israeli narrative (G: hmm). This means that in most of the mainstream media channels you will hear stories about Palestinians when it will be mostly related to issues of violence or issues of .. mostly violence and mostly like confrontations and almost not like human stories. As well like for example I don't know like during the last attack on Gaza or during .. you know its sometime the story is told from the Israeli point of view (G: yeah), from the army point of view. Most of the media correspondents are ex-military or expert in military, also the way that they analyse things is from a military point of view, from a security point of view (G yeah). like there is the rule or the weight that the Israeli army spokesmen has actually in the news is very big because lots of times reporters like something happened and the reporters ask for a response from the army and lots of times I saw it and that what they publish is just quoting the army spokesmen.

G: Ok right, that's interesting. So ...

K: Yeah, lots of times they take the statements of the army spokesmen as is.

G: Ok. So, if the main discourse is the popular press, how much influence do you think Active Stills have? Or is that a silly question?

K: No, it's not a silly because you know I (G: it must be important) don't know if we have an influence or if we don't have an influence you know. We try to ...

G: Or is it more international?

K: I think during the ??? we walk together since 2005 ??? Yes you know more like more people, also inside Israel, get to know us (G: ok). Like for example now in a report of ??? I don't know if you know it, it's a right wing organisation (G: hmm), in their report we were mentioned (G: oh really), you know. Oh yeah ...

G: so you're on the radar?

K: Yeah we are, I think that also on the right wing, especially in this movement of ??? this right wing movement or like the settlers, they also already know us.

G: Ok right, that's interesting (K: yeah). Which leads me into my other point I've just written that your work is very powerful, which it is, it has a very powerful statement. Do you think you're producing a visibility that other people are unwilling to? Are you feeding into a gap that other people aren't willing to participate in?

K: Again? Sorry.

G: Because your images are so strong, are you operating in a space that other people are not really willing to?

K: As a photographer you mean?

G: Yeah, politically? (K: mm) I mean Miki Kratsman does it, I don't really know anyone else.

K: I will tell you what I think, like more and more you know you see more photojournalists also in places that we are going to. Like I will give you an example, like for example in 2007 I was documenting lots of house demolitions in Jerusalem and this was an issue that you know I didn't see any other press there (G: ok). Also it was if I wanted to publish it in the mainstream media like it was no ... nobody wanted to publish it. It was things that happened like for example in Mazim (?) it is also related to your first question, like things that are happening all the time, you know, they don't have any representation in the Israeli media. I think with the time, I mean the last year I see more and more photographers are going towards this issue of documenting, but I think what is maybe still a bit unique in how we present our work is that we don't try to hide our political agenda (G: hmm) or we don't try to present it as an objective work, which is I

think most of the photojournalists are afraid of putting themselves in this place (G: yeah). I think with the time there is more subjects that are being documented by mainstream media (G: hmm) photographers but the question is I think also like what do they do with these photos (G: yeah).

G: That's interesting, because it's hard for me to follow the visual narrative of what's going on (K: yeah). Because I read the papers online (K: yeah) but I don't really see aside from what you guys do, for me there seems to be a big disparity in (K: yeah) how things are represented (K: no, for sure). Are you seem to be up here and everyone else is (8.41)

K: Yeah, for sure because as well I think in the mainstream media the top priority is not showing the daily life of the occupation, you know it is not an interest of the mainstream media. Sometimes there are some reporters that are very dedicated to this issue (G: hmm) but they are few, like really few, I can count them on one hand you know. Like also in the television, also in the newspapers there are really really few reporters or journalists that are want to take these stories out but are (G: ??) not sure what is said here?? As I said in the beginning like the most of the times except of from exception?? you will hear a very specific story about Palestinians (G: hmm) or about occupation. And what I said in the beginning from one point of view mainly from the Israeli security military point of view, there is for example I think what we are really dedicated in documenting is also the struggle against the occupation. I think it doesn't ... it's not represented enough in the mainstream media (G: yeah). I think that like most of the people in Israel you know when they say Bi'lin they already know its famous no? (G: yeah) but so they say ah yeah, they have this image of violent demonstrations, the image the people have of this demonstration is violence. They don't even know what the reason of the people that go to demonstrate, they don't know like the stories of the people that go to demonstrate. Almost that they know about all the night arrests, the dead people, the injured people you know it's usually if it's the only demonstration in the news it's because of some clashes or some extreme event was happening like someone was dying or something you know. And I think like that ..

G: Like Baton? Was it Baton (?) that got shot?

K: Mustafa (G: yeah) Mustafa .. Mustafi Tamimi (?)

G: Oh no, I was thinking of was it ...

K: Baton (?) can't understand?? He was arrested for can't understand??

G: Oh yeah that's right

K: So I think in this way we actually portray it as a movement (G: yeah) you know. Also something alternative that people have like you know to show that something is happening, to show people what they are doing every week, you know. I think that you know when you show something that is happening that people are not aware of it or not aware how wide, how big it is when you show that it is happening you also give people an alternative. Because if they don't know it's happening it's also not an option for them you know (G: yeah).

G: That's really interesting because I know pretty much .. it seems like I have a better idea of what's going on (K: hmm) than most Israelis ..

K: Than Israelis, yeah for sure, for sure (G: How strange) for sure because most of the Israelis they are .. you know they read the specific newspaper, they see the specific TV channel (G: yeah) they are .. like and its true, it's definitely true what they say I think you know much more than any common Israeli you know. But it's difficult to think you know .. the one narrative .. it's like this narrow minded (G: hmm) of same things from the same perspective (G: like blinkered) exactly. You know and that's why they tried to say in the beginning there is a kind of circle of what the media is showing, shown or not showing (G: yeah) and what the people want to see you know.

G: Yeah, so there's a correlation?

K: Yeah, there is a correlation I think. You know people hear them, you know its habit of the years, something that was developed that you know like keeping the people in Israel very far from a situation that actually happened very close to them (G: yeah) 20 minutes you know (G: yeah, like ...). Like people here are sitting 20 minutes its totally different reality. And this is a system that you know it's like was developed by the state I think, you know different people busy with their lives I don't know not asking themselves so many questions. It arrived (or derived??) from many many things it arrived from since the education or like you know or the ...

G: There is a distancing, because I'm staying with a friend in the German colony (??) in Jerusalem (K: uh huh), you'd have no idea (K: yeah) sitting in the apartment you'd have

absolutely no idea what's going on, which is peculiar for me, I find it really strange. Right I'll talk about Susiya.

K: Yeah, firstly, I just want to say it's like I think the easier way for people here not to think about these things because if they will think about these things then they will be in dilemma. They will be in dilemma of ok you know .. I think people don't want like to take them like to take on them self this responsibility of what's going on because if people will start to think yeah then it will raise lots of other questions like you know most of the population are going to the army (G: yeah). Now and then like and I think people are actually like maybe you know afraid with confrontation with themselves of what we are doing (G: hmm). Second, I think there is a big brainwash here (G: hmm) that you know like security security security and you know fear is the most efficient way in controlling public. Also most of the people here will not read foreign newspaper because for example if there is some article in foreign newspaper that is written from other perspective almost the first instinct/reaction of Israeli people will be they are anti-Semitic. It's really easy (G: yeah) to put every criticism on anti-Semitism you know (G: hmm) and this is what's going on here there is no .. people are not open to hear something else. People are not open to be criticised you know (G: hmm) they are really like (G: like in a bubble) like it's not just in a bubble it's like a really protective way of you know like yeah we are the victims here (G: yeah), we like if we would not defend our self we will not be exist (G: hmm), they don't want peace they want to kill us (G: yeah), they want this, they want that you know. We live in this defensive way and really like sure on the way (G: hmm) you know and any criticism again like there is no any willing to see the other side (G: ah) and there is no willing to show the other side (G: hmm) if we are talking about the media again by really specific journalists yes but as a media no.

G: So for Susiya (?)

K: Sorry will it bother you if I smoke?

G: No.

K: Ok

G: Just kind of generally (K: yeah) what's the difference between taking images and giving the subject the camera? Because it (K: yeah) was a workshop wasn't it? (K: yeah yeah yeah) Which is very different from Activestills portfolio.

K: Yeah it is different but it's derived from the same the same belief, like I think I will just explain you some background (G: yeah) ok because doing this participatory photography course I'm doing also since 2006 or something (G: really). It was (??not sure what is said here??). In 2005 we started Activestills, the main idea was to use our photography as a politic tool, as a tool to create awareness, as a tool to talk about the things we want to talk and we don't feel it's well represented (G: hmm) in the mainstream media, as a tool to bring our story that we think the public should know yeah (G: yeah). This was our .. like what motivate us to start this collective and in the same year more or less me and another one that was also start with me Activestills and like other people we started to think yeah ok we believe so much in the power of the image to create awareness you know so why not like .. let's try to pass it on to the community itself (G: ok, right). Since 2006 we actually like doing these courses, also in Tel Aviv with refugees, but its derived from the same idea that like the images are the power, that using images as a way to create awareness. So I think in this, its similar and what is actually different here it's the ... like if in Activestills for example no we are a group of documentary photographers (G: yeah) that are going and documenting a situation. No matter how close to the community we are, how empathised with a community, how you know .. how we respect them, everything (G: yeah) we still a documentary photography that are coming from outside to (G: yeah) document the situation ok and in active vision (??) the idea was to kind of challenge this traditional point of view of documentary photography (G: right, ok) that the view will be of what was until now the subject in the documentary photographer (G: hmm) will actually you know will turn the camera (G: right) to themselves. And we believe that by that like, first its many reasons, first we believe that you know that it's the place of the community to influence, to take actions (G: hmm) to influence the life. And as well I think the community itself they know the best what they want to show (G: yeah) and they know the best like what is the main issue they want to raise awareness, what are their demands, how they want to show it (G: hmm) you know because still like a photographer, me I can see a situation I can maybe be sensitive maybe less you know but again it's from my values or perspective of what I see, wow this is the worst thing I

see you but you know people that actually live in this situation I think it's the first hand it's their place (G: hmm) to create this view on themselves or whatever.

G: So there was no kind of objective or mandate you just gave them the camera and they photographed whatever (K: no) they thought was important to them?

K: Hmm, no it's not just giving the camera out like we do .. in fact ok about Susiya project (G: yeah) ok so in Susiya project what we did is we were walking first with the women of the community (G: hmm) because we wanted to walk with the women and that the project was monitor .. like it's me and (somebody's name I can't make out - Marika??), she's also another photographer, so we kind of initiated .. go with this project but we wanted to walk with the women of the community. And what we did is that every week we came to the village (G: hmm) and every week we walk, we train a woman or two women from one family (G: oh ok) ok. There are twelve families there so it was the whole day or really like personal workshop. It started with a conversation like what do you think people .. like what would you like to tell to the people about Susiya? like how do you want .. what do you think people know or doesn't know or thinks about Susiya and how you want to portray it your life like. Why do you think it's important? and all this and it continued with some technical explanation about the camera and how to use the camera and then we escorted her and then together we went around and we were thinking, we were looking and thinking, thinking for the graphic way ok how we can show, how we can make the photo you know (G: hmm). And then during the day the woman continued to do photos, in the middle we stop, we put the photos on the computer, we looked at the photo, we gave some feedback (G: ah ok), yeah and then she had another session of continuing taking photo. But like it was like in the beginning except of talking about the concept, talking about ok you know this is like tool now to show people outside like what you want that they will see. It was also like some technical part (G: yeah) I don't know talking about lights (G: hmm), talking about cameras, showing like a kind of really .. but it was personal this specific project (G: yeah) like a personal cause.

G: They look like snapshots, like family albums.

K: Yeah, because this is the way they wanted to take it and but they did like before you know like talking about photography, talking about the light but again small scale, it

wasn't like a workshop of .. it wasn't a study of one year, you know (G: yeah). It was basics, basics about photography and then going with her and thinking together about photography and then just leave her the camera ok. And also in the middle you know like seeing the photos and everything and then like the week after we came to work with another woman (G: hmm) so we printed some photos from the previous week and gave it to her so it was also kind of like giving them something back (G: hmm) or whatever you want to call it.

G: Yeah, so you're answering these questions all in one gone so we'll get this done quick I think. Why was it women? (K: why?) Yeah, exclusively women, was there (K: yeah) are they particularly underrepresented in Bedouin community? (K: I don't know I think that usually) Or was the option to work with men as well?

K: No, we wanted to do it with women. Because ...

G: Because it's a particularly .. from looking at the website (K: yeah) it's a particularly female gaze isn't it? It's very domestic (K: yeah) it's the house (K: yeah), its they're all around water (K: yeah, yeah) it's the woman picturing the family (K: yeah) rather than the other way (K: yeah, yeah). Yeah, it's a very feminine perspective (K: yeah), I think (K: yeah). And then but there's two images which really stand out if you remember, I didn't have them on my thing either.

K: No but you can tell me I remember, I have a photographic memory (G: like a camera).

G: There's one where there's settlers (K: yeah) and there's one where there's the IDF walking and there's a man sat in a field (K: yeah, yeah, yeah), is he protesting? Is his protecting his territory or

K: No, no he's (G: working the land?) working the land.

G: and they just happen to ..

K: It's not happened because like Susiya, the village

G: Because those two images stand out (K: yeah) they're real, those two images draw in a little bit of what Activestills document (K: yeah). The rest of it you wouldn't know .. they give the whole series context (K: yeah), you know it's an occupation (K: yeah), you know it's a village under threat (K: yeah). Otherwise it could be Armenians (K: yeah),

they could be Romany gypsies (K: yeah), it could be anywhere (K: yeah). But just these two images really (K: yeah) stand out (K: yeah) they're really (K: yeah). But did the women choose to take those pictures or did you say (can't hear??) and that will give it context and narrative.

K: Yeah, I think it was the process together (G: or ..) but I think also you know like when we talked to them in the beginning what do you want to show they were talking about the real settlement that is just above them (G: yeah) and there is a permanent thing of a soldier (G: oh right) that all the time there to protect the settlement. So the soldiers are all the time there you know (G: right) so they were talking about ...

G: That's (with??) Susiya as well isn't it?

K: Susiya, yeah. They were talking about they want to show like how the settlers are living close to them, they want to show the presence of the army (G: hmm), they wanted to show it, you know. And then we went together and this happened but I think it was like something you know that maybe we were discussing it so maybe it's brought up ideas of what and how (G: hmm) we can document it. But I don't think .. like it wasn't like ok take a picture of this its important. I think, you know it's what they wanted to show (G: ok).

G: Right ok that's interesting, (K: yeah) because as a series I think it's amazing (K: hmm). I think I've answered that.

K: Why women again, I think it's kind of clear I think like in general we are living in a very masculine society men are the dominant like the other one mostly to speak, to define the agenda you know (G: hmm). For us it was clear, yeah we want to work with the women because usually like also you know if you will go and visit there one will come and talk with you is the men (G: right ok) ok. The women never really leave their place in the shadow (G: hmm). It was a way of I don't know (G: giving them a voice? It's a visible voice isn't it?). I don't like the word giving them voice because they have a voice (G: that's true), I don't give them nothing, but like the idea of I don't know work with them, like taking initiative in like saying what's in the mind. And I think it was amazing in a sense, it was .. I don't know if you saw it but the photos in the end was presented in a .. like it was a .. like the end of the project (G: hmm) so in this time was also a celebration for the Susiya centre (G: oh yeah, I saw) so it was a whole festival. And then

in this festival we did .. like they did an exhibition of the photos and actually each woman was using her family tent as a gallery. So people in the festival went around the families, visiting the families to see the photos and I think really to see also they were super happy, they were like really you know .. it's like I don't like this word as well but I think it is kind of empowerment tool (G: hmm), I don't like this word, I'm sorry but (G: I know, I'm with you (K: yeah) but it's hard to find another word sometimes), yeah.

G: Was the project funded? Was it part of something else or (K: it was) did you just decide to work with them or did they contact you?

K: It was our initiative but we worked together with Susiya community centre that was there, that is there, so it was a kind of collaboration with the Susiya community centre. The community centre was offering courses for the community so this was .. in this way we put ourself as one activity of the Susiya community service not service centre (G: hmm). It was barely founded, we got some support from ...

G: Because were they your cameras that you gave out?

K: Yep our cameras, yeah. And because it was a kind of personal work (G: yeah), every week with another woman of another family so it was like (G: right). Yeah, so we got the help from the villagers group, a group of Israeli activists that also partly supported the Susiya centre (G: ah ok). So we got a bit of support from them but like basically and yeah it was again for the printing to give the woman or you know (G: yeah) or travel expenses sometimes (G: hmm) and sometimes we took from Activestills so it was kind of yeah.

G: Yeah, I was just wondering how it came about (K: yeah), you know, how did it start. Who do you think the audience is?

K: The audience is?

G: Yeah, was there an audience for it? Or was it just for the dialogue with the community? (K: No) Was there an aim to realise it?

K: No of course, this is like we publish it and this is why like as I said in the ... in this festival like they present the photo and most of the people that were coming are either international or the Palestinians (G: right) that were going and seeing the photos and

then we put it online to spread it (G: yeah) also to the Israeli public and also to the international community so like the ...

G: What platforms did it go online? It went on your website, is it 927 the magazine?

K: 927 (G: 972 right), yeah and then it was also published in Jallidiya it's also some ..

G: Yeah, yeah the kind of news website (K: yeah) the Palestinian news (K: yeah exactly) .. because I was wondering how far, what was its reach? Where did it go? Because from a small little Bedouin village (K: yeah) it's quite impressive how (K: yeah) what websites picked it up (K: yeah) for me to see it in Manchester (K: yeah) it's quite a success I think.

K: In Manchester?

G: Yeah, well that's where I am (K: yeah) and I saw it all the way from Manchester.

K: But where did you see it?

G: I saw it on your website.

K: Ah yeah, yeah

G: So I was just wondering how many other places ... no actually no, the first time I saw it was on the Jallidiya (K: ah yeah, ok) I was reading it and it says (K: yeah) Susiya festival and then they've got the Susiya forever blog (K: yeah, yeah exactly) so by the time I got to Activestills you were like the third (K: yeah, ok) (??can't hear what you say here) but usually it's the other way

K: It's good to know

G: Yeah, but did it go on anything else?

K: So mostly this 972, Gidalia, our website, I try to remember...

G: Local press? Like is it working at a really local level or is it just) the website and international? Because then that's the disconnect isn't it? It's making these people aware that that project exists.

K: Yeah but it's really hard (G: yeah) to publish this project in local press, again because of all that I said before (G: yeah, I had to ask) it's like not attractive for them, it's not news it's like you know like

G: How weird, shame. Yeah I was just curious.

K: Maybe also we were not so good in promoting (G: yeah) like you know maybe it's also our mistake that we don't know how to promote it to the local press maybe like for sure a part of it is because of this (G: hmm) but yep.

G: Which again there's another question that I've got down here, it kind of saves me reading them (K: yeah). Was it about the process or the product?

K: I think it .. like its almost always about the process I think also really this process was amazing and I go back to the issue of the women it was amazing to work with the women yeah (G: hmm) it was like really I think the process was really powerful for all also for us (G: yeah) and also for the women themselves because it was really powerful.

G: It was powerful for me as an observer it's something I wouldn't ordinarily see.

K: Yeah, so yeah and of course the outcome is really important because we want to take it out you know (G: hmm). So I think both, I think, may be equally important like (G: right). Yeah and especially this project you know because I don't know it was working with women and of course this was super strong for all of us and it was not something taken for granted or is something that is happening every day or you know (G: yeah, definitely). And of course the outcome is really important because that's what we try to do and that's what they try to do to take these things out (G: hmm) to tell them to other people because ok you are taking photos but if nobody's seen it (G: yeah) so of course you learn a lot about it but like why you are taking photos. You are taking photos because you want to show something (G: hmm) so of course the outcome is a bit part of the thing, yeah.

G: Which I also wanted to ask, is in the selection process for the final images (K: hmm) and for when people went round to the tents, did the men have any decision in what was presented?

K: The men no, but the women did.

G: Alright ok, so there was no male participation at all?

K: No, in choosing no.

G: Really, ok so purely 100% women?

K: Yeah yeah.

G: That's really good (K: yeah). Did that have an impact on the community? Did the dynamic of the community change because there was a prominent female voice (I can't think of another word but)?

K: Yeah, I don't know if within the community if it changed, I cannot say.

G: Yeah, ok that's fair enough. I think I'm getting through these quick. Were any other models considered? So obviously you're a photographer but did you think about film or poetry or a combination like multimedia?

K: In general about our work you mean or (G: well in particular to Susiya) to Susiya? (G: Susiya)

G: In general there's never much text is there with your work?

K: Ah no, not necessarily it is like text with our work like caption (G: yeah) or if its project like the production text (G: hmm) or ...

G: I mean the Susiya project on your website (K: yeah) is just the images isn't it? There's no explanation .. there's nothing to conceptualise it. Like working with the women did you consider any other medium? (K: I think ..) Or was photography easiest and most expressive?

K: I think with this project with working with the women it was like basic level of photography (G: hmm). We didn't work with them about writing context to the photos maybe because of lack of time or you know because it was not part of this process, maybe it's a mistake maybe not but if it was like this I think .. usually I think that photos should come with a context (G: hmm). And for example in the Gidalia magazine they ask us yes so then I was describing what you see in the photo (G: hmm) but I felt a bit uncomfortable with it but although like the photo is you know I know what .. it's just describing not giving any context. I think the context was given in the general text about this project and I think again using it when you see these photos you mainly get the impression of their daily life (G: hmm) you know, of their family like. Maybe, hopefully it brings you a bit more closer to the people you know, to seeing them (G: yeah) you know, its people you know so I think this was the main thing. Again it's not that I say it was deliberately without text for any photo (G: hmm). Like also, I'm not sure if this was the

right decision or maybe we should have captions. I cannot say like (G: ok) but I think that in general from these photos the idea was to again to let people come a bit closer to like what it's been to live in Susiya to get a bit more related to the people, more feeling or seeing the people themselves as people you know (G: yeah).

G: You do get a better feeling I think and it's evident through the fact that you do a workshop. Mickey Kratzman did All About Us (K: yeah) and Shiboli did the Bedouin series and one called Goater but they're going in a photographers. The work you do is far closer, it's more intimate (G: yeah) because it's their images isn't it so (K: yeah) it's more real I suppose (K: hmm). And you can tell that by the fact that you've given them the camera (K: yeah) rather than just taking the photos.

K: Yeah it's exactly what I said before about you know it's again the question of who tells the story, the one from outside or the one from within you know (G: yeah). And you can see it and like maybe the photos are less professional you know but maybe it's more intimate.

G: The less professionalness is what draws my eye to it (K: yeah) because they look like family snaps, they look I don't know there's more of a connection and an intimate collection (K: yeah). And you can tell they're not professional and that makes them ... because if you look at the Activestills catalogue is interesting in terms of context but if you look through it like I do for days and days (K: yeah) when you see the Susiya project there's a change (K: hmm). And then that visual change is its invigorating sometimes because you can tell there's a different perspective being taken (K: hmm). And I think that's good because you could Mickey's pictures in with most of the Activestills ones because they look so professional (K: yeah) but that Susiya projects stands out (K: hmm, yeah) as its own.

For the women who took part was there an autobiographical approach and is it a memory making exercise for them? Or for them is it also political? Are they aware that they're making a political statement or are they just ...

K: No of course because that's what I said in the beginning we were talking with them about what photos can ... like how you can again say ... like I think that the yeah for them it was clear that they want that people will know about Susiya, will know about like mostly what was urgent was that this village was in threat, all of the villages in

threat of demolition (G: yeah) you know. So they wanted people will know about this village, that will know it exists, that will know that there are people actually that live there and like this is their life and want to continue to live like this you know G: hmm). So for them it was also the political act of yeah let's take photo and put them outside to the world but I think also it was mainly fun (G: yeah), fun activity and you know like ...

G: So kind of a break from the regular day (G: exactly) being under occupation because the reason I picked up on it for my research is it's a different type of political appearance, if that makes sense?

K: A different type of political appearance like because it's ... why?

G: Because it's shifting the visibility of the occupation, you get (K: yeah) very set (K: yeah) frames (K: yeah) there's house demolitions (K: yeah, exactly), there's protests ... (K: exactly, it's like direct) there's Susiya. It's just, the fact that there's Israelis working with Palestinians, it's collaborative (K: yeah), but it's their ...

K: Yeah, I understand what you mean, yeah it gave a different vision from a different perspective and maybe less direct like here you know checkpoint arrests, soldier shooting it's like again and this was the aim of it also again give a feeling of people (G: yeah) you know and I think this is not less important than showing the ... than showing like direct thing that you can ... you know because you can I don't know sometimes I don't know a soldier in front of a Palestinian so like it's really direct and then you can take a stand. Ok but I think the soldier is like actually protecting this and this or I think that this Palestinian is poor and blah blah blah you know (G: yeah). You can really easily put yourself in one of the sides (G: yeah). And here it's just like human, like what can you say about picture of women masking cheese? You know, like what can you say, like yeah but they are danger like you know. Again it's like a basic level of I don't know like just showing people as people and then you know it's you don't have lots of space to, I don't know, to see it different because you know you just see people and the lives and you know that yeah that this village is like in threat of demolition so maybe you know this life will not continue being the same like that there was like more again like just ... Yeah it is a different perspective (G: yeah) it's more like try to emphasise people with the lives of others (yeah) you know.

G: I think there's a difference between looking and seeing you know you can sometimes you can see things (K: yeah) but those pictures they invite you to look, you have to take a (K: yeah) ... you have to give it a bit more time (K: yeah) and the time you give it relates to the production, it's a slow narrative isn't it? (K: yeah) You know the checkpoint images or the images of confrontation they're fast and hard (K: exactly) and you can look and you go I get it, I get it, I get it.

K Yeah, exactly.

G: But these you kind of you have to look (K: yeah) to really kind of take it in and there's those two stand out images with the settlers and Israelis (K: yeah) and then you go ah the occupation's still there (K: yeah). But it's just not as (K: yeah), not like the soldier and Palestinian (K: yeah) its distanced and that's, it's that ... I mean I might be wrong but that's rare (K: yeah) for the research I do I don't see that distance (K: no). I think it's really interesting. Right I've got about three left and then you're ...

K: Yeah no problem, it's ok.

G: There's a group I like in Brazil and they're called No Olo Rou, I don't know if you know ...

K: No?

G: No Olo Rou, well there they are, I wrote it down. But they're (K: ok) essentially a Brazilian Activestills (K: yeah), I'll send you (K: yeah, send me) ... the works really good. They do a project with street kids (K: yeah) in Rio de Janeiro but because ... the street kids in Brazil their life is so ... its rapid and precariousness and it's hard, what they do is give them disposable cameras (K: yeah) or sometimes very cheap cameras (K: yeah, yeah, yeah) based on trust and they just let them go (K: yep) and they meet them a week later and the kids come back (K: yeah). And I just wanted to know if you think there was .. would you .. would the images be different if you left the cameras with the women for a week?

K: If it will be different? I think also in this ... like the way we work they basically went and choose instinctively what they wanted to shoot you know.

G: Ok, right (K: and like ...) so it was already kind of they already knew?

K: Yeah I think we gave them a really basic tips (G: yeah) about photography, about how to use the camera you know because it was our camera. So first they need to understand like how to use it technically you know. So basically what was going on where the light was coming from there or what but basic things you know and then they went and you can see it also in the photo what was interesting for them also (G: hmm) ... it was also a kind of a fun game (G: ok) you know. In the family and going with the kids, the kids were really excited (G: yeah) and posing to the camera, and that's what's interesting to them to shoot it and they shoot it you know (G: yeah) but then it is more like they wanted I don't know like to have photos of themselves with the olive trees (G: yeah) or it was really I think like instincts of ok I have a camera what do I want to do with it? Which photo I want and like (G: yeah) instead it looked more like a family album (G: yeah) which is like you know.

G: Which is dead good (K: yeah), yeah it's really cool. Yeah because that Brazilian project they give them little cameras and the kids come back in a week (K: yeah) and they said the response and the rate the kids come back is pretty high, especially for Brazil because kids get stolen (K: yeah), they get killed or all sorts of terrible things. And then what they do is they print the images, they let the kids decide which ones they want (K: yeah) first (K: yeah, yeah) so the kids still choose (K: yeah) the narrative (K: yeah) and then they paste them up in the districts (K: they? Ah yeah yeah). So there's like big pictures all around that these kids produced because, and like you said I don't like saying give them a voice but, it does it gives them a presence in the areas because people walk past the kids and pay no attention (K: yeah). But when they walk past and they see a really nice image (K: yeah) or they see a picture of a couple of kids (K: yeah) people look (K: yeah of course). So then by ... through the medium of photography (K: yeah) they're seeing the unseen (K: yeah exactly, yeah, yeah). Which is kind of the same with Susiya.

K: Yeah, I agree.

G: But I'll email it you, it's really interesting (K: yeah, cool, yeah). How many images were taken and what made that selection of 40? That's it 40 images and then ...

K: How many images? like quite a lot, I cannot tell you numbers but as you said we also watch we give every woman the photos she took and she said ... they like choose images (G: right) you know. And of course we also put our input (G: yeah) in terms of like

photographic (G: hmm) and but like basically the narrative that is shown is what they choose you know (G: yeah) from all the images (G: right). So they were like really a big part of the decision of the selection (G: right), they had a big part of it.

G: So there was an option to be more than 40 images, it just so happened that they were happy with 40?

K: No, it's not that they decided on 40, in a way you have a project you need to work it in some way and like give some product, I think more than 40 photos maybe it's a lot for people to see. This was more like editor decisions you know (G: yeah) like you know so we are doing some projects or after when we want to create a reportage a photo story from it we limit ourselves in order for it to be effective (G: yeah) you know then people can see. We could put all the photos they took but the question if somebody will keep the attention all the time if you have so many and you need a bit to concentrate it a little bit (G: yeah) to ...

G: Kind of keep it compact?

K: Yeah, exactly.

G: Ok. There's a real emphasis on water, I don't know whether that's intentional in the images that were chosen (K: yeah, yeah) but I think I counted 17 images out of the 40 they're either carrying water, working with water (K: you see the water tanks) and its ... Ok the occupation is ever present and its really on top of them and they're always aware of it (K: yeah) but is the implication of the occupation is that focused on water? Like it's so hard to get water there (K: yeah, yeah) and there's as much pictures of water as there is of their kids (K: yeah, because it's a big issue for them), but is that just by chance?

K: No it's a big issue for them.

G: I didn't know if it was just me (K: no, no, no) because as an outsider looking ...

K: And also like what I said before in the beginning when we talk with them we said ok what are the main things or the main problems you want to raise, is there anything you want to show about your life and it was like water. Water, anyway is a big issue in Palestine (G: yeah) you know, and it's a big issue of the occupation, when you talk about occupation water is a big part of it. It's not just soldier in front of people it's also the measure that is taken in order to limit the possibilities of life for the Palestinians and

water is a very basic thing and it is a very urgent issue I think from Palestinians to talk about (G: hmm, ok). And you can see it in the photo you know, we ask them ok what they want to talk about and they said they want to talk that we don't have water here, we want to talk that we have settlers next to us, we want to talk about you know ... they chose it because, I think, it's really urgent matter and it's a really ...

G: It's an issue that ordinarily is hard to document, you know you take a picture of a water tank it carries no ... for me it's interesting (K: yeah) because they're the pictures (K: yeah) again it brings the little things that are hard to see it makes it more present (K: hmm). Because otherwise how would you go about documenting water, it's a tough thing to document isn't it? (K: hmm) But that can only really be done because it's their perspective as you said, its them taking the images and that gives it real weight (??in the corpse??).

K: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but I think there are many ways to show lack of water.

G: Oh yeah, yeah in terms of vegetation (K: yeah) I suppose and arid landscape and I might be wrong but it seems a hard thing to document in an interesting way but I could be wrong

Time: 00:53:28.

End

Appendix 3 – Participant Interview

Notes

Interview with Mazin Qumsiyeh conducted in Bethlehem (West Bank)

Date: 08.11.2013

G: Gary (Interviewer)

M: Mazin (Interviewee)

Gary (G): So, I was wondering, how did the action break from the normal representation of the Palestinian body?

Mazin (M): Break from what?

G: The normal representation of the Palestinian in the media

M: you mean, why was it why.. I don't understand .. how did it break from the normal .. it didn't break its normal action Palestinians under occupation to do this kinds of actions

G: Ok

M: you mean it's different than what we were doing before? Or...

G: Different in the sense that how people in the UK typically see the Palestinian as either a victim or as a ...

M: Oh, it's different from the Zionist propaganda in other words (G: Yeah), is that what you're saying?

G: Yeah, but I didn't want to mention that ...

M: well, clearly it's understandable that any coloniser wants to give the impression that they are defending themselves. I mean the white colonisers in North America when they were speaking to themselves and to other people in Europe they said we're circling the waggons and these Native Americans are attacking us for no apparent reason. They're violent, vicious, untamed barbarians and we are the beautiful white settlers that are bringing civilisation and culture here. They are trying to sell you a product, it's like trying to sell you coke you know. Coke is refreshing so they make a very simple

sloganism and they try to sell. That's propaganda and it works fairly effectively and simple minds who don't want to find out the real value of Coca Cola is and how it's made and where it's made and they don't want to get into the details so they capture the idea that Coke is refreshing. And in this case, you know, the idea is Palestinians are bad Israelis are good. White hats and black hats, this is the propaganda that's used. If what you are asking me is .. is this action challenge this? Yes, as is every action the Palestinians do in our daily lives, everything we do, when we eat, when we drink, when I teach my students, everything I do is of course the complete antithesis of this image (G: Yeah). If you want to Coke is refreshing.

G: (Laughter) I like the analogy, Coke .. I'll keep that. How do you think the Freedom Riders or the action created a different type of spectatorship around Palestinian activities? In terms of how you use the technology, how did it afford people a new political visibility, if at all.

M: Well, I mean Palestinians tried different ways to show the reality of their lives and their circumstances and the reality of the apartheid racist genocide, the regime that rules us basically. And so, to show this of course you can use different techniques, different procedures. As the technology evolves you use the different technologies for example the 1987 uprising, which was a nonviolent uprising, that was happening here Palestinians used the fax machines to relay their messages abroad and they fax informations and declarations and ideas. So technology is a tool that you use to achieve what to want to achieve to show the world what your life is like under occupation, under colonisation.

G: And did it act as a form of pedagogy as well, a form of means of informing and producing new knowledge beyond the event itself? Did it have any implications?

M: If you mean like today we have the internet and we have Facebook and we have Myspace and we have Twitters and we have instant video uploads to YouTube and other places where you can directly upload your information. This is all tools, technologies that have been used by social activists around the world (G: hmm), not just in Palestine of course occupy movements, movements for labour rights for woman's rights, for everything. So for Palestinian rights it certainly (not sure about this word) is also being used, and I would say fairly effectively because you know in this arena that designers

are trying to control but they haven't figured out quite how to control (G: hmm) so they ... what the best they could do for now is employ large numbers of people and spend a lot of money to edit pages like Wikipedia (G:hmm) and things like that to make sure that when you Google something that the Zionist versions high up on the search (G:yeah) lists and things like that. That's what they do. (G: Yeah). Other than that it's very hard for them to censor information on the internet like they censor information on the mainstream media where it's not allowed to (G:hmm) cover their (unsure if this is the right word) stories.

G: How important was it to take control of your own image? Because you effectively controlled the event, you controlled the camera, compared to other activities where it's often a photojournalist or it's the news or the representations ...

M: Yeah, I think this is fairly significant and it's important. It's not just us who speak it's also the so called alternative (not sure about this word), non-corporate media. The corporate media of course is bought and paid for by (G: yeah) the people that control their image and their stories and everything else. But the alternative media and our own activists who acted as their own media reporters with cameras and Facebook and things like that, the idea is to present the real story and presenting the real story is fairly important of course. (G: Yeah) After all, what is it that we want? We want the world to stop supporting apartheid and the more people understand the reality the more people will stop supporting this apartheid system.

G: How did the event ... Did the event have an immediate impact locally or nationally or was the idea to disseminate the systemic violence more internationally? Did it have any effect locally?

M: Well I mean (G: or was it hard to tell?) of course everything that the Palestinians do to .. that visibly involve resistance must (not sure about this word) be challenged, use civil disobedience in this case stuff like that. All these events are important because they lift the spirits of people, they lift the morale of people. They show them that a few individuals, in this case there was just six of us on the bus, that a few individuals can make a difference, can do something, can act. You don't have to have an army, you don't have to have military, you don't have to have power other than the power of your conviction, and the power of the individual and a moral decision to act on your

convictions. This is ... so so it's really a moral and psychological impact that is significant, I think, in the local people watching this.

G: Kind of linked in with civil disobedience and talking about impact, could you tell me why there was or there is a cynicism amongst the younger generation regarding civil disobedience?

M: Well, I mean, it's not (G: compared to the first intifada) no it's not the cynicism among the younger generation, I think that's an incorrect characterisation. We are actually in between uprisings (G: Hmm) so the total level, whether young people or old people, optimism for the future or activism is low. Now, because we are between uprisings, we have had fourteen or fifteen uprisings they come and go in waves, that's not normal for social movements to do that. So so in this ebb and flow of movements you get this weak points where there is a lot of people who are not overtly excited about anything, they just want to go on with their lives. But this is a temporary phenomenon and it's an unsure timing, come in two years again and ask the same question, to the same people even (G: yeah), you'll get a totally different answer (G: Ah, ok), and that happened, for example, before every uprising. If you looked at public sentiment in 1928 or 1935 or in 1986 or in 1999 (can't make out the word after this), the year before every uprising happened you will find that the public sentiment is at basically low low stage (G: hmm), and that's actually more so for the older generation than for the younger generation (G: ah ok, right). This would be surprising to most people but I don't know why because it's natural for young people to be more optimistic (G: hmm), more energetic. I mean, I was the only one who was old in that (G: laughter) bus, the rest were young kids (G: yeah, Fadi and ..) the age of my son, you know (G: yeah). So so the people who are doing the activism, the people who are acting are going to be the young people.

G: Yeah, that's very true. Very fair. Yeah it was just something I read, there was a few texts, which are obviously more authoritative than me (M: yeah) in terms of knowing what's going on. How important was it that it became a visual event versus maybe had you reached Jerusalem what would have been .. the idea was to be taken off the bus I guess because it produced a particular visual event ...

M: not sure what you mean by visual event.

G: well it was a visual event in the sense that you got on the bus knowing that the Israelis would take you off and that produced something of visual interest.

M: Erm, not necessarily. I mean (G: did you know you'd be taken off the bus?) if the Israelis had let us get to Jerusalem it would have been equally effective.

G: Yeah, (M: laughter) yeah well .. but would that have been a surprise?

M: But, yeah but I mean it's not ...

G: because...

M: yeah, I mean it's .. the idea .. I mean what's the reason we do it? The reason we do it is to shine .. to light this candle in this darkness and shine the light at this injustice, this apartheid system and show the world and show the Israelis themselves .. when we were riding the bus we were talking to the Israelis including the Israeli soldier in the bus .. that there is something wrong here, it is not normal. This is not natural, this is something that's extra, you know, unusual and you cannot ignore it, you cannot assume or wish it to go just away you just have to face it. In a way I guess we're holding a mirror to apartheid, we're really just holding a mirror to them and say look you have an apartheid system (G: hmm). It's as simple as that. This this this shedding the light or holding the mirror for them is, if you want to call it, being visual, yes it is being visual in that sense but it's being also tactile (G: hmm) whatever, I mean and others way, hearing, everything else. I mean you don't have .. you don't see with your eyes if you can feel the conversation (G: yeah) and you're a blind person you can still also understand what's going on (G: hmm) ah so so it is it involves all five senses if you want in terms of the effect of it at the person that we hope it will effect which are primarily the Israelis.

G: Ok right.

M: That's how our goal is to primarily show the Israelis that they are racist, that there is an apartheid system; that's the main goal. And whether they see it or not, whether they choose to make ... you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink (G: laughter, no.). So whether they choose to see what we want them to see or just simply totally ignore it, turn their heads away that's up to them. We cannot force them but we want to force them to look in that mirror and then they can decide whether to ignore the image or not ignore the image, that's up to them,

G: Ok, that's int ... that's really ... kind of leads me into another question I've not really got written down but a there was a commentator .. there's very little written on the Freedom Rides, academically, but there's one commentator who said that the Freedom Rides were seeking to get equality under Israeli law rather than seek to end the occupation and that's how it looked. (M: hmm) do you think there was .. did people have a kind of disjuncture with what was going on and what your aim was? Was the aim clear?

M: No, because we had, I mean we discussed this ahead of the action and we discussed what is our messaging. Our messaging is not that we want to be able to use Israeli buses to go to Jerusalem, that's not our message. If you look at our press release it was clear (G:hmm) and unambiguous, it was why should, you know, somebody who is not from this country be able to come here and get automatic citizenship essentially. Why should somebody who comes from another country, you know, who has no connection to this land other than religious connection be allowed to get automatic citizenship, to live on stolen Palestinian land and to travel freely to go to Jerusalem on this green buses. When the native Palestinian, born and raised in Jerusalem or Bethlehem, cannot move freely between one place or another. This is the same as the apartheid system in South Africa (G: hmm) you know permit systems all the stuff that was considered by the international community racist. So we are challenging this system. We're shedding a light on this system, we're not asking for, you know, some sort of, you know, ability to use a bus you know (G: laughter). It's not what we are asking for.

G: I've only really got two more questions so I won't keep you much longer. Thanks for your time Mazin, it's really good. How did you try to, if at all I mean I don't want to put words in your mouth, to internationalise the discourse? So how important was it to adopt the term "freedom ride" to make symbolic gestures around Rosa Parks? Was that well thought out throughout?

M: Oh we had to realise that this project Zionism is a project that has always been internationalised. There would not have been an Israel or colonialism here if it were not for the West .. for Western countries like France and England (G:hmm) and lately the United States and other countries that support Israel .. that support colonisation .. it

would not have happened without that. It has always been internationalised conflict, it is not a local conflict, it's not a tribal conflict ... it's not ... it's not at all you know this course of conflict that's local it's always been a conflict that's internationally sponsored and supported. The destruction of Palestine, the ethnic cleansing was and continues to be supported by the West. So obviously, if this is the case when you analyse it rationally as somebody fighting it of course somebody who wants to have their freedom and their human rights, their dignity whatever, you have to address the sponsors of it (G:hmm). You know, it's like these are the collaborators anyway you know so it's not just the Israelis we address, we address international community because it is them who make it possible. (G: yeah) So that's part of the reason why we use these tactics, if it was local we would just use local psychology (G: yeah) but since it's international you have to use international psychology to wake up the international media and the international world about it.

G: So was it a very kind of early established idea to adopt the kind of the link with freedom rides and Rosa Parks as part of .. to make it tangible for people who might not fully understand?

M: I mean the biggest sponsor of this violence today is America and so American public need to understand what is it that we are fighting for and they need to understand that they are complicit in it like they were complicit when there was no civil rights for the people black people in America (2:58 interruption until 4:01). Alright, go ahead.

G: Last one and then I'll let you get on with your day. Obviously I'm concerned with the development and structure of visibilities, that's my shtick as they say. So was it ... how important was it or was it predetermined that the idea was to shape a visibility, either consciously or unconsciously, away from traditional images of Palestinian suffering to one of active resistance?

M: Well, as I said, the main goal was to shed the light on this apartheid system, shed a light on our reality, show our reality. Show our reality to the Israelis and international community who are complicit in creating this unjust and really ... genocide reality that we face (G: because it was not ..) that's the only thing we wanted to do. You know even if people did not act based on finding this truth we believe at least we can show them that there is this reality and they cannot claim they didn't know it. I mean a lot of Germans in

the Second World War claimed that they didn't know (G: yeah) what was happening in the concentration camps or whatever, we want people to be aware so that they cannot later say I didn't know what was going on you know, you know what's going on (G: yeah) so here is it, see we show you, we show you (G: yeah) and you understand it and you cannot say well it's not there, it is here, it is here there's racism, there's apartheid. What you choose to do with it is up to you and our goal again is not to force the horse to drink (G: yeah) it's to show the horse there is water if you want to drink and what they do with this information is up to them, what they do with this knowledge is up to them. And I think for .. we .. our .. if I may so say, our optimism is that human nature is such that .. is generally good. Human nature is not generally bad and evil and that people do have a conscience and eventually eventually somehow they will act on their conscience on aggregate or on average (G:hmm). That's the reason for our optimism and that's the reason for doing these kinds of actions, is that we hope, we pray, we think, we believe that people will do the right thing. Many times we are disappointed they don't do the right things (G: yeah) of course but it doesn't matter at least we are doing the right thing, at least we are acting on our convictions and that's all that matters.

G: You've got to keep trying.

M: and we keep trying.

G: That's brilliant, the point I was going to make before I go is .. because I .. the main focus of my .. well I'm interested in Israeli art photography Miki Kratsman, David Reeb (that's kind of .. so I teach fine art but I also look at the kind of strategic use of NGO images so B'Tselem and very often the Palestinian's always made to look slightly like a victim (7.31) in some respect, they've very rarely empowered. And that's why I was particularly drawn to the Freedom Rides because you looked like you were embodying active resistance rather than being a victim .. even though you were taken off the bus you looked very powerful, you looked (M: er I mean yes) .. and I think that's a positive (M: ok) image compared to what you normally see but I don't know whether that's ...

M: It's another thing, I don't think of Palestinians as victims ok it's another ...

G: No, I don't just .. but see the general (M: yeah yeah) where they internationalise the image and ...

M: Obviously the Zionists try to victimise us (G: yeah) whatever but I tell fellow Palestinians that victimisation is in your head. If you choose to be victimised in your head you're a victim, if you choose to liberate your mind your body will follow (G: yeah) you know. In the civil rights movement in the US there was a thing that says you know free your mind and your ass will follow. So if you free your mind, if you believe you are free and if you believe that there's no mental occupation (G:hmm), which is the most dangerous kind of occupation, much more dangerous than restriction of movements, much more dangerous than ethnic cleansing, anything else – if they colonise your mind it's finished. So if you free your mind, if you believe your mind is free you are able to take control of your destiny then you certainly have power (G: yeah). That's an important point I think and I try to teach my students here that the power is in you, you can despite all the obstacles and all the challenges in life (G:hmm) everything else power is right and so act on it do something about it, and I think every one of us can do something. I tell you just a simple story that happened to me when a time I was when I was arrested for nonviolent resistance (inaudible) I was taken to this place with some young people, Palestinians who were also arrested, we were put in this basically a ditch underground (Inaudible) a room about .. bigger than this one but it's underground and there's stairs that go up and then there's a fence also around on the outside and there's no bathrooms and the soldier is there with his gun and he is telling us, when we asked him about bathroom, he said in the corner. And the place stinks and we are sitting there for hours and then when I start to talk to these young people he started to say no talking, you know, don't talk. And eventually raised his voice and started threatening and the young people stopped talking to me so I started singing and dancing, singing and dancing you know. He said what are you doing I told you to shut up, I said no you didn't tell me to shut up you told me to stop talking to them and I'm not talking to them I'm singing and dancing and I'm happy (laughter from both G and M) and I'm smiling. And he says now I'm telling you don't talk, don't smile, don't do anything just sit on that bench there on the corner and don't do anything. I said can I, you know, you're sitting there standing there with your gun and I'm here and we are bored, can I just talk to you then if you don't want me to talk to them, you don't want me to sing, can I just talk to you, you know, you're bored and I'm bored. He said, well what do you want to say to me and I said well I just want to tell you that I'm more free than you are and I want to explain this to you. He said what, I said well I came here I'm wearing this t-shirt called,

you know, it says got human rights Palestinians don't . I went in the demonstration knowing I'd be arrested, knowing I'd end up here it's not the first time I come to this ditch, you know, and but I came by my choice I have more choices than you are. I can wear whatever I want to, I can go, do whatever I want to do, whereas you are much more occupied in your mind than I (G:hmm) because you have to wear this uniform, you have to carry this gun. Tell me that you can take off this uniform right now and go change to something else, you can't do it. And so that's how I started getting to him and again I point out this because ideas appear, you know, (G:hmm) ok he has a gun, he has a physical power to hold me in this ditch and not allow me to go to the bathroom but he doesn't have the capacity to control my mind, I have control of my own mind and I have better control of my own mind than he does (G: yeah). So I think that's what freedom is, it's the ability to free your mind and so something like the freedom rider action is precisely that. Ok so these soldiers can drag us out of the bus, they can beat us, they can arrest us, they can charge us, they can whatever, but ultimately we choose. We choose to do this, we're able to do this and we act on our conscience and we keep feel better by acting on our conscience and ultimately that's the most important thing. What the image produces outside, how people react to it all of this stuff is, really to me, secondary (G: yeah). It's secondary to my own feeling that I can look in the mirror in the morning and I say I have done something positive and I live comfortably with my conscience, it's much more important than what other people think. I mean I don't give a shit (G: yeah) to be honest about what other people think about me, what the Israelis think about me, you know, I really want to just feel comfortable that I'm doing the right thing.

G: That's amazing, yeah perfect. Because you're never really free of representation, that's the thing, there's always something with a frame taking pictures and usually dominant discourse is the Israeli news who always look like terrorists (M: right), humanitarian organisations because they're funded and they want money are all about making people look weak but the freedom riders did exactly what you said and that's brilliant. You looked like you were in control of your ...

M: Well I may appear like that (laughter)

G: Well it did, it was a very positive ...

M: I'm in control of my mind but not of..

G: No but you acted (M: laughter) based on your mind and you controlled your own representation and that's very rare and that's what brought me (M: right) all this way. That was perfect (M: OK), thanks. Thanks for your time,

M: Yeah, can you leave me your email address?

G: Course I can.

Time 00:31:50

End