

**Remembering Palestine: A multi-media ethnography  
of generational memories among diaspora Palestinians**

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**I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Wherever contributions of others are involved, these are clearly acknowledged.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek'.

Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek

## **Abstract**

This thesis is a qualitative investigation of memories of Palestine among exiled Palestinians and their descendants in Poland and in the UK. Taking the continuous character of Palestinian dispossession as a point of departure, it examines their modes of remembering, imagining and relating to Palestine. The thesis seeks to contribute to the sociology of diaspora by shedding light on the multiplicity of situated trajectories that shape diasporic Palestinians' relationships with their 'ancestral' homeland. It delineates three generations of Palestinians in diaspora: those exiled in the 1948 and their descendants born in refugee camps; those who left as a direct or indirect result of the occupation; and those born as 'second generation migrants' in their parent's countries of exile. It argues that while the continuing erasure of Palestine informs all of their experiences, each generation produces memories of ancestral homeland in relation to different geographies, temporalities and set of imaginings. Tracing these differences, I am concerned with how the plurality of diasporic memories allows generations of Palestinians to endure and constantly re-create their relationships with the Palestine despite more than six decades of continuous uprooting.

The research is based on oral history interviews with 33 Palestinians in Poland and the UK, followed by an ethnographic audio-visual exploration of some of the research participants' sites of memory. The audio-visual engagements have moved back and forth between stories narrated in Poland and in the UK and site-specific field visits within today's Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The five ethnographic études that accompany the written part of this thesis strive to restore, at least partially, access to context that was lost with the participants' uprooting and to explore the texture and materiality of their dispossession. This approach contributes to the development of a multi-sensory methodology that seeks to understand diasporic and exilic experiences by placing the relationship between memory, time and place at the heart of sociological enquiry.

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## Introduction

This thesis examines ways in which continuing dispossession from Palestine informs the modes of remembering the ‘ancestral’ homeland amongst three generations of diasporic Palestinians living in Poland and in the UK.<sup>1</sup> The unremitting ongoingness of Palestinian uprootedness is a crucial point of departure for my enquiry, underpinning both the methodological approach and the questions asked about the status of collective memory amongst a nation living in dispersion for more than six decades.

This ongoingness of Palestinian dispossession takes place across several dimensions. The mass displacement began in 1947 and 1948 with the events of the Nakba - meaning ‘catastrophe’ in Arabic, which led to the exodus of the Palestinian population from Palestine.<sup>2</sup> During these years, over 750,000 Palestinian Arabs were forced to flee from their homes in the wake of the Arab–Israeli conflict that followed the proposed UN Partition Plan of the former British Mandate in Palestine (c.f. Morris, 1987; Pappé, 1992, 2004, 2006, 2007; Sanbar, 2001; Masahla, 2003, 2006; 2012, Badil 2012). Following the flight of the population, over 531 Palestinian villages were destroyed by Jewish paramilitary organizations and, later, by Israeli authorities (*ibid.*). As the result of the war, the nascent State of Israel established itself on 77% of the territory of Mandatory Palestine, allowing Jews from around the world to immigrate to the newly founded Jewish homeland. A Palestinian state has not since been established (*ibid.*).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the term ‘ancestral’ here in inverted commas to signify that the notion of ‘ancestry’ needs particular attention as it can essentialise belonging through biologist and territorialised notions of bloodlines and kinship. I discuss the problem of this terminology in detail in Chapter Two, where I argue for problematizing the idea of

<sup>2</sup> There had been earlier instances of dispossession and migration of Palestinians during the period of the British Mandate. Under the 1925 Citizenship Order and the 1928 Land Orders, those Palestinians who remained abroad at that time were unable to acquire Mandate citizenship (c.f. Badil, 2012: xxii).

<sup>3</sup> The years 1947 and 1948 remain one of the most contested and mythologized periods in Palestinian and Israeli history and historiography (c.f. Pappé 1992, 1999, 2014; Morris 1994; Masalha, 1996, 2012; Rotberg 2006; Sa’adi and Abu- Lughod, 2007). Palestinian and Israeli official historiography differ on many aspects of the events, including the response to the UN Partition Plan, the character of the Arab – Israeli war, the role of Arab and Zionist leadership and the character of the flight of the Palestinian population. The emergence of the group of Israeli historians later referred to as the ‘New Historians’ in the 80s saw the development of revisionist accounts of the events of 1947 – 49 within Israeli historiography and brought Israeli and Palestinian narratives closer together. Based on the archival documents and brought these accounts shed new light to the events of 1947 – 1949 and largely confirmed the planned character of the expulsions and confounded the myth of the military advantage of the Arab powers (Flapan 1988, Morris 1987, 1994; Pappé 1992, 1999, 2004, 2006, 2014; Shlaim, 1999; Jawad 2006; Rotberg 2006).

The Nakba led to the fragmentation and dispersal of Palestinian society, which has had dramatic and destructive consequences for Palestinians. The expulsion affected over 50% of the population of Mandate Palestine. In the territories over which Israel gained control, 85% of the population was affected. Palestinians lost their most important cultural and intellectual centres. They had to leave Jaffa and Haifa, prosperous coastal towns on the Mediterranean Sea, as well as a large part of Jerusalem, previously home to affluent Palestinian neighbourhoods such as Talbiyeh and Katamon (Khalidi, 1997). Palestinians who managed to stay in the territory became aliens in their own country (Pappé, 2001; Said, 2003). They remained under emergency rule until 1965 (Pappé, 2011:93). Some of them received the status of 'present absentees' - present on the land, but not allowed to return to their houses and resettled in remaining Palestinian villages and towns (Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003; Pappé, 2011; Masalha, 2012; Badil 2012).<sup>4</sup>

Following territorial dispossession, Palestinians were confronted with discursive and symbolic dispossession, executed through the denial of Palestinian history, which has been systematically erased by the Zionist narrative and by spatial, architectural and archaeological practices on the ground (Weizman, 2005; Pappé, 2006; Masalha, 2012). Former Palestinian villages have vanished not only from the Israeli maps, but also from the Israeli cultural landscape. The old Palestinian cities and Palestinian neighbourhoods have been given Hebrew names and Jewish identities (Masalha, 2012: 88 -120, Pappé, 2006: 225-234). For instance, Old Jaffa has seen a major revitalization process, which has led to an erasure of an Arab heritage from the city. In Jerusalem, different practices of erasure of the Palestinian presence have been implemented since 1967 (Zureik et al., 2001, Hanafi, 2009; Weizman, 2007; Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2011). Recent examples include the archaeological reconstruction of the Jewish Biblical Park 'City of David' built over and under the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan (Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2011; Emek Shaveh 2014), as well as the planned location of the Jerusalem Museum of Tolerance over one of the oldest and largest Muslim cemeteries in the city (Makdisi, 2010). The same practices are replicated in Haifa and many other cities of today's Israel. Similar practices were undertaken in relation to the rural landscape, in which the visible sites of Palestinian heritage have been destroyed using an assemblage of different practices involving the establishment of national parks and the forestation of the sites of the eradicated Palestinian villages (Pappé, 2006: 225-234).

Palestinian 'sites of memory', to borrow the expression of the French historian Pierre Nora (1989: 9), have become the sites of forgetfulness – places where the Arab heritage has been purposefully denied, appropriated or silenced. Illan Pappé calls these practices of dispossession as 'memoricide' and describes them as the 'erasure of the history of one people in order to write that of another people's over it' (2006: 231).

'What happened in 1948 is not over,' argue Ahmad H. Saa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (2007: 18). Indeed, the Nakba has remained a lasting and unresolved experience for displaced Palestinians and their descendants, who have never been allowed to return to their houses and villages in their ancestral homeland.<sup>5</sup> Israeli authorities have never taken a moral or legal responsibility for the massacres and expulsions of 1947 – 1948. The refugees have not received any form of restitution of their rights nor financial compensation for the properties and land that they were forced to leave (Rotberg, 2006; Pappé, 2014). The status of Palestinian refugees and their descendants has remained precarious in many of the 'host' Arab countries in which they sought sanctuary after the expulsion. Today, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians still live in the refugee camps spread across the Middle East and the initial 'temporariness' of the refugee experience has now continued for four generations. Millions of others who no longer live in refugee camps are still prevented from returning or visiting their ancestral homeland (Sayigh, 1979; Salih, 2011). In 2014, seven out of 11.4 million Palestinians lived outside the borders of historic Palestine (Badil, 2012). Sixty-seven years after leaving their houses and their lands, the refugees still demand the 'right of return' and are not allowed to visit and see their homes unless they hold citizenship in another country and are not considered a 'security threat' by the Israeli administration.

Palestinian dispossession is an ongoing experience not only in terms of the lasting consequences of the 1947-48 events, but also in terms of the continuous displacement of the Palestinian population from the remaining parts of historic Palestine. During the so-called Six Day War of 1967, Israel conquered the remaining territory of historic Palestine – Gaza, the West Bank and the rest of Jerusalem, which led to the flight of another wave of the Palestinian population. In the events called 'Al Naksa' ('the setback' in Arabic),

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<sup>5</sup> The state of Israel has never agreed to a return of Palestinian refugees despite Article 11 of UN Resolution 194 calling for facilitation of the return of the population that was forced to flee (Akram, 2002: 40 -41, UNRWA <http://www.unrwa.org/content/resolution-194> - 8.1.2015). The right of return of Palestinian refugees has been reaffirmed by other pieces of international law, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (c.f. Akram, 2002).

approximately 450,000–480,000 Palestinians were forced to leave their homes, nearly half of them becoming refugees for the second time (Masalha, 2003; Badil, 2012). The occupation of the rest of the Mandate Palestine, which began in 1967 and involved the unilateral annexation of Jerusalem and adjacent Arab villages, initiated another phase of destruction of Palestinian life. Since the beginning of the occupation, Israel had begun a continuous project of settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, appropriating, in different forms, land from the Palestinian population. These practices have led to the splintering of the remaining areas of Palestinian territories, which are cut off from each other by the expanding settlements, road closures, Israeli-only roads and, since 2002, the construction of the separation barrier (Weizman, 2007; BT'selem, 2015; UN OCHA, 2015).<sup>6</sup> These discriminatory policies of territorial control have exerted an unrelenting pressure on Palestinian communities, making their lives insecure and unpredictable and forcing some of them to leave. As I write these words, Palestinians are being evicted from their homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

Taking these conditions into consideration, this work theorises the Nakba as an 'unfinished past', which constantly flows into the present of Palestinians and blurs temporal boundaries (Das, 2007: 108). I see the Nakba not only as a historical event, but also as a metaphor for an ongoing and lasting experience of social exclusion and symbolic violence (c.f. Said, 1984; Khalidi, 1997: 13-19; Pappé, 2006; Williams, 2009; Sa'adi and Abu- Lughhod, 2007). This multidimensional dispossession has produced an existential uncertainty and insecurity for generations of Palestinians. Edward Said captures this fear of erasure, asking in *After the Last Sky*:

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<sup>6</sup> The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) and the Israeli human rights NGO BT'Selem provide regular updates on the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including forcible transfer, destruction of properties, land confiscated by the separation wall and settler violence. See: <http://www.ochaopt.org/reports.aspx?id=103&page=1> and <http://www.btselem.org/publications>.

<sup>7</sup> The policy of expansion and the ghettoisation of Palestinian communities follows instances of their forcible transfer from Area C of the West Bank, such as the Jahalin Bedouins from E1. The application of discriminatory policies regarding the access to water and legal system creates additional factors pressurizing Palestinian communities into leaving. See: [http://ops.unocha.org/Reports/daily/CAPProjectSheet\\_947\\_51232\\_20151118.pdf](http://ops.unocha.org/Reports/daily/CAPProjectSheet_947_51232_20151118.pdf).

Do we exist? What proof do we have? The further we get from the Palestine of our past, the more precarious our status, the more disrupted our being, the more intermittent our presence. When did we become 'a people'? When did we stop being one? (1984: 34)

*Oral stories and visual ethnography of memories*

In the context of the ongoing territorial, discursive and political dispossession of Palestinians, the particular site of investigation of this thesis is memory – and more specifically the narrated memories of different generations of diasporic Palestinians. Building on the body of literature that theorizes memory as an individual and collective site of meaning-making and identity creation (Chapter Two), this work examines how Palestinians living in diasporic settings remember their ancestral homeland and how their memories are passed from one generation to another. A key hypothesis upon which the argument of this thesis is constructed is that, in the absence of national institutions that could have served as custodians of Palestinian national identity, memory plays a vital role in ensuring the existence of the nation in dispersion. Ali Abunimah, a Palestinian journalist, has written that 'Palestine exists, because Palestinians have chosen to remember it' (in Hammer, 2005: 40). Concurring with these observations, this work sees memory as a key site of the production and reproduction of national identity and as a particular site of resistance. Paul Connerton writes of extreme cases in which state apparatuses are used in 'systematic ways to deprive...citizens of their memory' (1989: 14). In these circumstances, he argues, writing 'oppositional histories is not only a practice of documented historical reconstruction...but [a preservation of] the memory of social groups whose voice would otherwise have been silenced' (*ibid.*: 15). Mina Karavanta strives to 'counter-write' the histories of slave plantations in the Caribbean to engage 'counter-memory' - a memory that seeks to deconstruct the colonial history of domination and exclusion in 'the New World' (2013: 44). Given the appropriation of Palestinian territory and the ongoing Zionist 'memoricide' (Pappé, 2006), I treat *memory* as a particular type of collective and individualised labour against dispossession and the symbolic violence of forgetting.

In the context of this thesis, it is not just the 'writing of oppositional histories', as Connerton suggests, but also 'the telling' of them that I see as the site of the articulation and

preservation of memories. Given the long-standing tradition of *oral history* among Palestinian communities – before and after the Nakba (Davis, 2001; Sayigh, 2007: 137) – this work treats the *narratives* of its participants as particularly important sites of memory making. In adopting the narrative approach, I build on the literature (Chapter Two) that theorises narrative as the central location for constituting meaning in the process of making sense (or failing to make sense) of personal and collective memories, as well as of wider social and generational experiences and discourses (c.f. Plummer, 2001; Denzin, 1997; Portelli, 1997; Gunaratnam, 2009; Frank, 2010). In this thesis, oral history accounts are seen as particular situations in which assemblages of personal, collective and inherited memories are put in relation with each other in the process of constituting a narrative.

In order to understand the relationship between narrative, memory and experience, it is useful to turn to Mariam Motamedi Fraser and the attention she places on words, or rather, on ‘words-as-things’ that constitute the assemblages from which telling is constructed (2012: 99). Often, she claims, when we think of words, we tend to attribute them power because of the referent they signal (*ibid.*: 94). But, she asks, what happens if ‘there is no “of” through which to lure a tale? No “of” through which to be lured?’ (*ibid.*). She argues that sometimes there is no ‘of’, but there are words - rumours, hearsays, and stories - which are powerful, exactly because they do not have a referent (*ibid.*). She writes: ‘Words-as-things do not always *follow from* experience, or *come after* experience, or *describe* experience, but can be understood as experience participants, parts of experience assemblages, or themselves assemblages’ (*ibid.*: 98). In thinking about the Palestinian past as ‘unfinished’, Motamedi Fraser’s insights emphasize the importance of paying attention to the elements (words-as-things) that are inherited, rather than stemming from direct personal experience, yet which are important ‘participants’ in constituting memories and meaning.

While the departing interest of this thesis is diasporic memories as articulated in research participants’ oral histories, I also realize that sometimes there are limits to what can be articulated with words. Sometimes there are experiences and situations when words ‘fail us’ or become inadequate to express or to recount. How is it possible to articulate experiences of loss, especially when the telling happens outside of the context to which it refers, often at vast geographical and temporal distances from the narrated events? In other words, I accept the possibility that certain feelings and memories, especially those

related to war and trauma, might be impossible to sufficiently articulate in words. Veena Das suggests that 'a possible vicissitude of such fatal moments is that one could become voiceless—not in the sense that one does not have words—but that these words become frozen, numb, without life' (2007: 8). In relation to her participants' narratives of their experiences of Indian partition and the assassination of Indira Gandhi, she observes that the words were *shown* rather than told (*ibid.*). She further argues that sometimes the failure of words to express their experiences was about the participants' inability to 'access' *the context* to which the words referred (*ibid.*: 9). Michael Jackson (2012) observes that a recurring element in refugee stories is that the experiences of the dramatic past cease to be narratable. He writes: 'Not only is there a loss of the social context in which stories are told: the very unities of space, time, and character on which narrative coherence depends are broken' (*ibid.*: 102).

With the audio-visual material that complements this thesis, I aim to restore, at least partially, access to what has been lost through dispossession. In developing my methodological approach, I look to Caroline Knowles (2004), who treats visual material as a non-verbal register. I also follow Markus Banks (2001), who sees the role of visual methodology as engaging with the social and physical surroundings of people's lives beyond the situation of the interview. In the case of my thesis, I envisioned the fieldwork as a 'travel practice' (Clifford, 1994), in which the social surroundings of the subject's narrative are filmed – including both the immediate context of its telling and the distant geographies of which it tells.. The 'words' are followed by actual journeys undertaken by me with a camera – to places in pre-48 Palestine, today's Israel, to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), as well as to other sites narrated by the research participants. These audio-visual ethnographic journeys, which are further theorized in Chapter Two, are brought to life in the form of five short ethnographic films in which the camera becomes a 'peripatetic time machine' (Lebow: 2003:37) travelling across different layers of memory, space, time and participants' telling. Their purpose is to enter into a dialogue with 'the words' written in this thesis by providing the access to the texture, landscape, and light of the world that disappeared with dispossession. Thus, they become the co-participants of the written 'words'.

*Towards a multi – sensorial sociology of the dispossessed*

In researching the questions of diasporic memory in the context of the ongoing Palestinian dispossession, this thesis seeks to contribute to the multidisciplinary body of literature on Palestinian exile in several ways. Building on the body of scholarship that views the 1947-1948 expulsions as the founding experience of Palestinian nationhood, this thesis complements its theorisations of the Nakba as the ‘unfinished past’ by illuminating the diversity of exilic experiences and the subsequent waves of departure from Palestine. Departing from the assumption that the Nakba began but did not finish in 1948, the role of this sociological exploration is to highlight the experiences of people who left Palestine in different biographical and historical trajectories, or who were born as the children of exiled Palestinians. The question that emerges, therefore, is about the ways in which Palestine is remembered and imagined by different groups of people – both with and, increasingly, without direct experience of it. Taking into account a plurality of Palestinian exilic trajectories, the particular interest of this work is to give a nuanced account of different generations with different diasporic experiences– the 1948 exiles and children and grandchildren they raised in born refugee camps, Palestinians who left the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a direct or indirect result of the occupation, and, finally, the children of Palestinian exiles born as ‘second generation migrants’ in their parent’s destination countries.

This work provides an analysis of the experience of Palestinians living in Europe, specifically in Poland and the UK. A number of research projects have focused on the experience of refugees in locations with large congregations of Palestinians– in the West Bank (and to lesser extent in Gaza) and in other Arab countries, including Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. By concentrating on two European locations, this work strives to address the paucity of research in this area by asking questions about the modes of remembering Palestine among those who live in geographical separation from it and temporal separation from the events of the Nakba. Sari Hanafi describes the Palestinian diaspora as one with a weak centre of gravity (2005: 112-117). He maintains that the lack of a national state and the ongoing occupation create a situation in which there are not enough ‘pulling’ factors towards the ancestral homeland and a vast number of pushing factors (see Chapter Two). The task of this work is therefore to investigate memory and memory transmission in the

places where this gravity is potentially at its weakest and where other factors related to adaptation or integration within the respective host societies emerge. The research for this thesis specifically in two of the European countries: in Poland and the UK not with an intention of comparison, but rather to engage with a diversity of Palestinian exilic experiences in my sample.

The trajectories of Palestinian exiles to Poland and to the UK have been very different. Migration to Poland (and other countries of the former Eastern Block) consisted primarily of impoverished refugees from the camps of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. They found themselves in Poland and in other countries of the former Eastern Block in the late 70s and early 80s. Most of them arrived through the framework of the bilateral agreements between the PLO and the respective communist governments and in most cases on student visas.<sup>8</sup> Before coming to Poland, many of them had been actively engaged in the resistance activities in Jordan, Syria and later Lebanon. These trajectories and experiences of having being brought up in the refugee camps in the aftermath of the Nakba, and the subsequent political or humanitarian involvement with the PLO, made their diasporic trajectories very different from the trajectories of British Palestinians. Moreover, another reason for having decided to work with Palestinians in Poland was that it presented an opportunity to fill the gaps in our knowledge related to the Palestinian migration to Eastern Europe. My initial search has revealed a scarcity of academic or popular works that document and analyze the experiences of the Palestinian presence in Poland and the context of the intense and rich political, social and cultural exchanges between the PLO and communist parties and governments.

In case of the UK, the migration had very different character. Many of the Palestinians came directly after 1947- 48 and were middle class families who had earlier contacts with the British Mandate institutions or were students who found themselves stranded in the UK and unable to return to Palestine.<sup>9</sup> The UK saw another wave of Palestinians arrivals after the first Lebanese war in 1975-1979, made up mainly of Palestinian business people from Lebanon. I decided to carry out the research specifically in these two countries as they

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<sup>8</sup> In 1974, a delegation of the PLO visited Poland. Alongside opening the representation of the PLO, one of the subjects they discussed with Polish officials was , next to the was offering a scholarship for Palestinian students (c.f. Kocharński & Morzycki-Markowski, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> c.f. Matar, 2005; Shibliak, 2000

offered the possibility to trace the most diverse experiences in terms of the routes of departure and socio- economic conditions of exile.

The notion of the 'journey' remains an important concept in diaspora and migration studies. A number of researchers maintain that the exilic or migration experience is defined not only by the attachment to the (lost) roots, but it is also shaped by the experiences forged along the routes of diasporic journeys (Hall, 1996; Brah, 1996; Gilroy, 1997). In this work, I am treating *the routes* not only as a metaphor that helps to describe the conditions of life away from one's homeland, but also as a methodological practice in which I place the diasporic dislocations of the research participants at the heart of the research process (see Chapter Two). One of the participants, Hannen, a journalist originally from Nablus, said in her interview, 'I have lived here for 20 years, but something is still *lost* in me'. If the experience of dispossession is about the separation of a subject from place, this work strives to engage both *the subject* and *the place* in order to better grasp the loss of a place 'in' a person, as well as the loss or absence of a person from that very place.

This thesis also seeks to contribute to the sociological understanding of the *meaning* of on-going dispossession to the everyday experience of Palestinian exiles and their ancestors. Here, I partake in the discussion about the potential of sociology as a discipline to develop attentiveness to the lasting pain that society and its structures inflict upon individuals and to advance methods that can facilitate the analysis of social suffering (Das, 1997a, 1997b, 2007; Bourdieu, 1999; Wilkinson, 2005; Frost and Hoggett, 2008; Gunaratnam, 2012). Iain Wilkinson writes:

While a great many publications are devoted to detailing the dramatic and tragic events of modern history, and although commentaries on risk, crisis and insecurity feature heavily within the literature of social science, and despite the fact that news media present us with a daily catalogue of disasters from around the globe, it is argued that something most vital is always being left 'outside' of our accounts of the human significance of these events and experiences. (2005: 3)

Building on his call for sociological accounts that would be able to account for the *human significance* of social pain, this work seeks to contribute to the body of work attempting to

envisage a sociology that is more methodologically capable of engaging peoples' experiences and feelings related to dispossession and exclusion – those which are sometimes difficult for research participants to articulate and for sociologists to 'write about'. In this regard, the employment of the multi – sensory methods has been a particularly important element of this project. The audio-visual material that accompanies the thesis aims to bring to life the context of the words written here, to engage in dialogue with them, and, hopefully, to restore some of their meaning. (Das, 1997; Motamedi-Fraser, 2012) By engaging places, spaces and landscapes from which the subjects have been dispossessed and to which they have no access, the audio-visual elements of the work also strive to engage with the materiality of the dispossession. Catherine Kohler Riessman writes that 'visual representations of experiences - in photographs, performance art, and other media - can enable others to see as a participant sees, and to feel' (2008: 142). At the same time, Luc Boltanski (1999) warns against the indifference of the 'spectator' that looks at other people's misery as a 'spectacle' without experiencing or trying to understand the pain of the other. The audio-visual material provided here attempts to engage the texture of people's experiences related to loss and displacement – beyond or, perhaps, in spite of – the gaze of the spectator, in the hope of opening up space for interpretation, rather than seeking authority over the personal experiences of exiles. The five ethnographic études are offered in the modest hope of moving toward a sociology that can 'feel' and be 'engaged', a sociology that speaks against silence and that stands against ongoing attempts to erase Palestinian histories, memories and people.

### *Overview of the thesis*

The thesis is organized in three parts, of which I will now give a brief overview. In the first part, Chapter Two situates questions of remembering and relating to homeland amongst diasporic Palestinians in the context of key concepts and theoretical debates in the study of diaspora and memory. By bringing together these two bodies of social science literature, I lay the theoretical foundations for my conceptualization of diasporic memory. Developing the understanding of diasporic memory as heterogeneous historically situated, and consisting of multiple personal and collective histories, the chapter highlights the significance of diasporic *routes* in shaping the process of remembering the ancestral

homeland. It examines participants' diasporic memories as always partial, fragmented and entailing laborious processes of giving meaning to personal and ancestral pasts.

Chapter Three discusses the thesis's methodological framework. Building on the conceptualizations, discussed in the second chapter, of diaspora and memory as constructed in the process of movement, it begins by considering the possibilities of developing fieldwork as a 'travel practice' (Clifford, 1992: 101), an effort that has helped me to place the diasporic journeys of the research participants at the centre of the methodological approach. The chapter describes practices involved in undertaking a multi-media, multi-sited ethnography of diasporic memories, which included 33 oral history interviews conducted in Poland and in the UK, and the production of the audio-visual material undertaken in Poland, the UK, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

I begin the second part of the thesis by introducing the approach I have used to organize the analysis of the research material. Here, I approach the diasporic experiences of Palestinians in Poland and in the UK through a generational lens. Building on a Mannheimian (1952) understanding of generation defined through shared experiences and 'similarity of location', I discuss how I have grouped the experiences of the research participants into three diasporic generations. I argue that within each of the generations, memories of Palestine are embedded in distinct sets of relations with Palestinian spatio-temporalities and histories.

In Chapter Four, the first of the empirical chapter of the thesis, I discuss the modes of memory production amongst the generation of Palestinians who were born in the aftermath of the events of the Nakba or were children during the expulsion. Employing the concept of 'postmemory', I interrogate how the largely un-lived past and the experience of growing up in the shadow of its trauma informs their modes of remembering and relating to Palestine. Reflecting on these stories of engagement in the early Palestinian Liberation Organization, the chapter concludes by discussing the possibilities (and limits) of interacting with postmemories, as well as the other kinds of relations with Palestine.

Chapter Five is based on the narratives of the generation of Palestinians who were born in the Palestinian Territories and subsequently left. This chapter explores how the memories of Palestine among the participants of this generation are activated through direct sensual

and bodily experience. I discuss how the spatially- situated memories of this group reveal a particular cartography of occupied Palestine, in which space is produced through the occupation's practices of constraint and control – of bodies, of movement and of intentions. The chapter concludes by discussing how the same bodies can simultaneously be seen as sites of resistance through steadfastness, survival, and the active reclaiming of colonial space.

The final empirical chapter reflects on the ways in which the generation of Palestinians born and brought up in Poland and the UK give meaning to their heritage and 'inherited' memories of Palestine. Arguing that the process of intergenerational transmission has been limited and fragmented for these participants, the chapter reflects on the ways in which they produce their own modes of remembering and connecting to Palestine. Always in flux and constantly reconfigured, I argue that this generation's bonds with the ancestral homeland are continually activated through ongoing dispossession and violence.

Finally, the third part of the thesis consists of a collection of five short ethnographic études titled *The Chronotopes of Palestine*, which explore the relationship between participants' memories and the ancestral homeland by engaging with the materiality and texture of the experiences of dispossession. The five films are:

***'Travelling with a map of 1948 Palestine in today's Israel'***



The camera accompanies my journey attempting to locate the now nonexistent village of Al Zanghariyya in North Israel. The film is guided by the voice and memories of Omar, who tells the story of his parents' departure from the village. While Omar waits in Krakow for

the soil to be brought to him from his ancestral village, the camera follows the traces of the ruins and locates the eucalyptus trees that might have been planted by Omar's parents.

### ***Return to Haifa Al - Ateeqa***



Two brothers, Joseph and Antoine, whom we meet in London, share their childhood memories of growing up in the neighbourhood Haifa Al-Ateeqa. As we listen to the story of their idyllic childhood and then their rapid departure from Haifa, the camera looks for the traces of the past they narrate and tries to locate the house they had to leave. The house is not there and the neighbourhood is now completely transformed, but we suddenly find many traces that reveal Al-Ateeqa's obscured past.

### ***The Run***



This film tells the story of Alina, a Polish Palestinian, as she goes for training in the Tatry Mountains of Poland to prepare for her first ever marathon, which will take place in and around Bethlehem. As she runs through the snowy hills, we learn that taking part in the marathon and going to Palestine with her 2 year-old daughter has a particularly important meaning.

### ***Tell him we miss him***



This film tells the story of Jakub, who lives in Warsaw, and his sister In'am, who lives in Beita, and waits for Jakub to return home. As we accompany Jakub in his daily activities, we get to know the realities of life away from home, and the story of his departure. As we accompany In'am on a tour of Beita, Jakub and In'am's home village, we realize the personal costs of their nine years of separation.

### ***A Jerusalem boy***



Born and brought up in Jerusalem, Wael has lived in Scotland for 30 years. We meet him on his annual trip to Jerusalem and follow the paths of his childhood. Jerusalem Old City consists of dozen of layers, each imbued with meaning – different religions and groups of people read the palimpsestic geography of the city in their own ways. The film unfolds as we learn the city through Wael's story and get to know his personal geography of it. While it might look like nothing has changed for centuries in Jerusalem, we soon realize there is no return to the time he narrates. We learn that Wael's Jerusalem ID had been revoked by the Israeli authorities, and he – 'a Jerusalem boy' - is only a tourist in his own homeland.

The thesis concludes by providing a summary of the different modes of remembering the (ancestral) homeland that arise among the different generations. Particular attention is given to understanding what these memories, constructed in relation to different Palestinian temporalities, histories and geographies, mean for the collective memory of a nation living in dispersion and under occupation. I argue that these diverse modes of relating to and remembering Palestine allow Palestinians to endure, enabling them to draw on different experiences to constantly reformulate their memories of homeland as 'living memories'.

## **Part I. Researching Palestinian Diaspora**

### **Chapter 2. Diaspora and Memory**

#### **2.1. Overview**

This chapter introduces some of the theoretical debates and concepts that have influenced this thesis and informed my research questions. The first part is based upon a thematic review of the social sciences literature on diaspora. This literature has helped me to better understand the experiences of displaced Palestinians and their children in the UK and Poland in the context of their diverse trajectories. Since the application of the term 'diaspora' has been debated in the scholarship on Palestinian dispersal, the chapter begins by discussing the relevance of the concept to the Palestinian context. Subsequently, I discuss some of the conceptual concerns raised in relation to theorisation of diaspora in general and reflect on the relationship between diasporic formations and ancestral homelands. The second part of this chapter reflects on the processes of formation of individual and collective memory, and the possibilities of trans-generational remembering. This discussion forms the basis of the analysis of diasporic Palestinian memory in the following part of the thesis.

#### **2.2. Literature and context**

Literature on displacement and migratory experiences spans several social science disciplines and could be analysed employing a number of theoretical perspectives. The plurality of theoretical possibilities necessitates a difficult and complex process of identifying certain literatures and excluding others. This process has often been iterative: my reading influenced my research interests, which in turn, together with later fieldwork experiences, further influenced the selection of literature. Two main bodies of literature – the first on diaspora and the second on memory – have informed the conceptualization of this thesis and form the basis of the discussion in this chapter. Both of these literatures have

generated multidisciplinary interest, resulting in a broad spectrum of both theoretical and empirical studies. My particular focus is on the intersection of these two streams of knowledge. The discussion undertaken in this chapter is narrowed down to the review of works that have particular relevance for the theorization of diasporic memory.

Given my particular interest in how diverse displacement and migration trajectories inform modes of remembering and relating to Palestinian ancestral homeland, the discussion on diaspora here examines literatures and propositions that specifically relate to the theorizing of the relationship between diasporic locations and diasporic origins. The second body of academic literature discussed in this chapter concerns the broad field of memory studies. My literary review is narrowed down to the debates that have particular relevance in the context of emergence, maintenance and transmission of memories in diasporic circumstances. Particular attention is given to the de-naturalizing of the concept of memory and understanding it as a dynamic, selective and situated process of remembering and forgetting. I also reflect on the important debates in the field of memory studies on the relationship between individual and collective memory, processes of memory transmission, as well as the relationship between memory, place and displacement.

This thesis has been considerably influenced and informed by Palestinian fiction, non-fiction, poetry, film and arts. The works of such distinguished authors as Edward Said (1999), Mahmoud Darwish (1966, 1982, 2003), Fawaz Turki (1972, 1979), Raja Shehadeh (2010), Ghassan Kanafani (1999), Suheir Hammad (2010), Suad Amiry (2004), film-makers and visual artists such as Elia Suleiman (2001, 2009) and Kamal Aljafari (2006, 2009) and artists such as Emily Jacir (2003) and Mona Hatoum (1988), Larissa Sansour (2012) helped me to better understand not just the political and social circumstances related to displacement but also to develop attentiveness to the enduring emotional dimensions of loss involved in dispossession and the ongoing condition of 'out-of-placeness'. While a review of these important works does not form part of the body of this chapter, I will be drawing from these accounts in subsequent parts of the thesis.

### 2.3. Palestinians and diaspora

#### *Problems with taxonomy – an uneasy diaspora*

In the context of the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian population, the problem of relating to Palestinians outside Palestine has taken on great theoretical and political importance. One of the continuing debates within the field of Palestinian studies concerns finding the relevant categories and language to encompass the diverse experiences of Palestinians who find themselves outside Palestine (Said, 1984, 1986, 1990, 1999; Lindholm Schulz 2003; Williams 2009; Hanafi 2005).

Arabic-language sources offer several ways of referring to Palestinians outside Palestine. One common term is *Al-Ghurba*, which means 'absence from homeland', 'separation from one's native country', 'exile', and 'life or place away from home'. As Julie Peteet reminds us, the word *Al-Ghurba* is built on the root *g r b*, which means 'the West' in Arabic and is associated with taking exile in the West (2007: 638). The other term is *Al-Shatat*, which means 'dispersal' (Khalidi, 1997; Williams, 2009). According to Helena Linholm Schulz, this term is closer to the English word 'diaspora' and is not as emotionally charged as *Al-Ghurba* (2003: 20). The third term used is *Al Manfa*, which is the closest to the English word 'exile'. Mahmoud Darwish uses the term *Al-Manfa* in his writing, for instance in the poem '*Risala min al-Manfa*' (*A letter from the exile*) (Peteet, 2007: 638).

The body of academic literature produced in English has employed various ways of referring to Palestinian dispersion. There are a number of important ethnographic studies concerning the situation of Palestinians scattered in the refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, or in the West Bank and Gaza (Sayigh, 1979; Holt, 2010, 2011; Salih, 2013, 2014). These works employ the term 'refugee' in relation to Palestinians, drawing both on the legal dimension of the term as well as on research into aspects of life in refugee camps. Other authors, most notably Edward Said, have employed 'exile' in their writings to describe a more general condition of dispossession and uprooting. The term exile is a broader term than refugee and does not have legal connotations, which enables it to encompass the experiences of those Palestinians who, like Said, were exiled from Palestine, yet managed to escape the specific fate of the refugee experience. The term exile has been defined by Said as an 'unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted' (1999: 138).

In the case of my research subjects – generations of Palestinians in Poland and in the UK – none of the above terms seemed to be fully accurate. I could not refer to my research participants as refugees, as only some of them had ever been registered as refugees. While some of them were born and brought up in refugee camps, none of them were living there at the time of our interviews. In some cases, the more relevant term would be exiles. I could not really refer to them as exiles however, as not all of them were exiled from Palestine. Many were descendants of exiles or refugees from the wars of 1948 and 1967, but certainly not all of them. Some of my interviewees left Palestine, or rather the Occupied Palestinian Territories, a long time after these wars and were not expelled or forced to flee. In some cases, the more accurate term would be ‘immigrant’, as many came to Europe recently to study or work, in search of better lives due to a lack of opportunities in the West Bank and Gaza. Then there was a generation of children of Palestinians, born in Europe – some of them in mixed-ethnicity families.

Given the complexity of the trajectories of my research participants, the term ‘diaspora’ seemed the most inclusive of the terms. Simultaneously, the concept of diaspora has offered the broadest analytical possibilities of engaging with the historical, political and geographical complexities involved in their displacement trajectories. While a number of researchers of Palestinian exile and migration have used the term (i.e. Lindholm Schultz, 2003; Hammer 2005; Hanafi, 2005, 2011), its applicability to Palestinians has also been questioned (Said, 1999; Kodmani-Dawish 1997). One of the most serious concerns regarding categorizing Palestinian presence outside Palestine as ‘diasporic’ relates to the political implications of using the term diaspora.

This critique has primarily been based on concern that its usage would normalize the existence of a Palestinian population outside Palestine. The most vocal critique of this term comes from Edward Said. In his view, the term diaspora, first coined to refer to the Jewish experience of exile, does not represent the peculiar situation of Palestinians and the ambitions of Palestinian society in terms of national struggle. Williams, when analysing Said’s reluctance to use this term, notes that for Said, diaspora implies a passive acceptance of the status quo and a reduced urgency of the situation of Palestinian refugees, thus legitimizing the permanent status of Palestinian exiles outside historic Palestine (2009: 83).

For Said, the term suggests 'coming to terms' with the situation of being away from Palestine and relinquishing of the idea of return. Another reason for Said's reluctance to use this term, Williams further notes, is the fact that it cannot represent the entire Palestinian experience, since many Palestinians are not 'scattered', but living in Israel or under Israeli occupation (*ibid.*: 84). Bassma Kodmani-Darwish raises similar concerns. Despite employing the term in the title of her book, *La Diaspora Palestinienne* (1997), she sees its use as potentially falsely suggesting the resolution of the problem of Palestinian exiles. In her view, maintaining the term refugees enables one to emphasize the urgency of the situation.

However, many other scholars researching Palestinian issues have embraced the concept of diaspora, arguing that the advantages of its analytical possibilities overcome the potential risks. Julianne Hammer argues that the term is composite enough to encompass the specificity of Palestinian experiences. In response to its critiques, she argues that the term can be used in different ways and to convey different intentions:

[If] one chooses to stress those aspects of diaspora identity that focus on the connections between diaspora communities not primarily through their attachment to a symbolic and mythical homeland, but through their kinship ties among communities outside the homeland, then calling the Palestinians a diaspora could well help deny their claim to a homeland. (2005: 57)

At the same time, she argues against thinking of Palestinian dispersal through the prism of the refugee experience alone. She writes that 'to portray Palestinian emigration solely in terms of refugee waves during and after the wars with Israel would do an injustice to the complexity of Palestinian migratory patterns and would prevent a deeper understanding of the Palestinian migration experience' (2005: 13). Hammer further asserts that it is important to recognize and analytically account for the subsequent movement of Palestinians from their first countries of exile (*ibid.*).

For Helena Lindholm Schulz, the term diaspora articulates the alienation and estrangement of shattered lives and homes that characterize the Palestinian condition (2003: 21). She uses the term, not only to refer for the experience of the different waves of Palestinian refugees and exiles, but also to the experience of those in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and

Israel, to signify the 'predicament of alienation from land, territory and place', thus emphasizing the plurality of ways in which Palestinians lives are 'defined by a diasporic condition' (*ibid.*).

Sari Hanafi (2005) reviews various ways of qualifying different types of Palestinian experiences. In contrast to other paradigms that he considers, such as assimilation, multiculturalism, and transnationalism, he argues that the concept of diaspora seems to offer the most analytical advantages. Diaspora 'emphasizes the importance of the multi-polar connectivity between the different peripheral communities and between them and the Palestinian territories' (2005: 100). Hanafi disagrees that the term 'diaspora' diminishes the political urgency of the Palestinian situation. In a conversation with Kodmani-Darwish, he points out that the term refugee is first of all a legal term. The term diaspora intersects, but does not exclude, the term refugee. In his view, 'a refugee remains a refugee even if she/ he adopts the nationality of the host country, and even if she/he has acquired some resources of wealth' (*ibid.*: 106). In his view, "[d]iaspora" does not mean abrogating the necessity of changing the Palestinians' situation outside their home country, but rather emphasizes the importance of analyzing the relationship between this population, their host-lands and homeland' (*ibid.*). He asserts that Palestinians constitute a 'partial' diaspora and that the level of 'diasporization' varies from country to country and across time. In his view, the processes of creating a diaspora look different in Arab countries where large Palestinian populations still live in refugee camps, compared to countries that granted citizenship to Palestinian refugees, such as Jordan, and different again in Europe and North America. Hanafi adds that the transformation of the historic homeland, which is now largely Israel, had severe consequences for the diasporization processes and complicated the relationship between Palestinians outside Palestine and the 'homeland'. He points towards the weakness of the networks between Palestinian diaspora and the centre. These networks, he argues, have been Marwan or weakened due to the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian Territories in which Israeli authorities control the flow of people and goods between Gaza, the West Bank and the outside world (*ibid.*: 104). Based on these observations, he coins the phrase 'diaspora with a weak centre of gravity' to characterize the experience of Palestinians outside Palestine (*ibid.*: 112-117). While recognizing Palestinian specificities, he insists on using the term and argues against the 'methodology of uniqueness' that, in his view, has characterized some of the earlier studies (*ibid.*).

In this work, I concur with those that argue that, though potentially problematic, diaspora offers a helpful means of analysing the diverse experiences of Palestinians outside Palestine. The discussion that follows situates the experiences of diasporic Palestinians in the context of literature on diaspora and considers ways in which theorizing of the diaspora can be useful for analysing diasporic memories. Aware of the reservations discussed above, I have given particular attention to understanding the relationships between diasporas and homelands and exploring the possibility of theorizing diaspora without naturalizing it or romanticizing the condition of uprootedness, as have some of the approaches to diaspora studies.

#### **2.4. Diaspora as problematic**

The concept of diaspora has been employed and theorized across a number of social science disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, postcolonial studies, geography, and politics, and has evolved in parallel to other concepts such as migration, border studies and transnationalism. Historically, the term diaspora was used in relation to a limited number of 'transnational communities,' most notably Jews and later Armenians and Greeks, who lost their ancestral homelands and lived in different countries for generations as a dispersed people, often engaged in various transnational practices, which enhanced their diasporic status (Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1996; Weingrod and Levy, 2005; Braziel, 2003). As the result of this limited application, the concept of diaspora has remained under-theorized. The accelerated research focus on processes of globalization in late 20<sup>th</sup> century significantly increased interest in diasporic forms of existence and also led to increased application of the term.

Early conceptualizations of diaspora focused on the need to establish criteria that would define diasporic groups (i.e. Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1996; Cohen, 1997). For instance, in the first issue of the journal *Diaspora*, William Safran proposed one of the most widely debated definitions, in which he introduced a set of criteria that, for him, were necessary for delineating a diaspora. In his view, diaspora was founded upon a shared 'ethnocommunal consciousness', uneasy relationships with a host society and strong memories of the 'homeland', supported by an active desire to restore it (1991: 83-84). Safran went as far as

listing the cases in which he determined 'we may legitimately speak of diasporas' (*ibid.*). Nonetheless, as he noted, none of the diasporas that he listed fully conformed to the 'ideal type', which was the Jewish diaspora upon which he based his typology (*ibid.*).

While agreeing on the need to specify the definition of diaspora, James Clifford (1994) has warned against using the specific experiences of one single group to construct an 'ideal type', as in Safran's taxonomy. Reflecting on the criteria offered by Safran, Clifford pointed out that even 'large segments of Jewish historical experience do not meet Safran's last three criteria: a strong attachment to and desire for literal return to a well-persevered homeland' (1994: 305). He warned that employing a definition of diaspora based on an 'ideal type' might lead to identifying groups as less or more diasporic depending on the number of features they possess. Clifford argued that even 'pure forms' of diaspora, as Safran conceptualized the Jewish diaspora, were 'ambivalent, even embattled over basic features' (*ibid.*: 306), adding that 'it is not possible to define diaspora sharply, either by recourse to essential features or to privative oppositions' (*ibid.*: 310).

Clifford's work thus destabilizes the 'fixed' character of diasporas offered by Safran and other theorists and opens it up to more nuanced experiences. Clifford proposes the diacritical use of diaspora, in opposition to the existing set of collective formations, such as nation. He writes that 'diasporas are caught up with and defined against (1) the norms of nation states and (2) indigenous, and especially autochthonous, claims by "tribal" people' (*ibid.*: 307). He asserts that diaspora formations 'traverse' or 'subvert' the nation-state authority in which they reside due to their attachment to ancestral homelands or to other diasporic locations. He writes: 'Peoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be cured by merging into a new national community' (*ibid.*). In his view, diasporas also challenge 'indigenous' and 'autochthonous' movements. By encompassing the notion of movement as a central element of their formation, they undermine any articulations that claim a 'natural' connection with the land (*ibid.*: 308).

The preoccupation of early diaspora theorists with mapping the borders of the term has been further criticized for assuming a problematic uniformity within diasporic formations. A body of literature, influenced by the field of cultural studies, argues that the early

definitions, which focused on setting the criteria, often obscured the fact that diasporas are not necessarily homogeneous entities. Moreover, they argue that people of the diaspora might be engaged in outside relationships that are more meaningful than diasporic relationships and that diasporas are often characterized by internal antagonism and conflict (Brah, 1996; Hall, 1996; Werbner, 2005; Weingrod and Levy, 2005). For instance, Avtar Brah stresses that it is the internal composition of diasporic formations that should be examined and she argues for theorising diasporic relations in terms of pools of different configurations of power (1996: 180-187). She looks through the traditional boundaries of diaspora and 'location' to scrutinize the question of who is empowered and disempowered within the diasporic formation, and who constructs the diasporic 'us' and 'other'. Brah encourages a conceptualization of diasporas not in terms of 'binaries' that create essentialized notions of 'us' and 'them', but rather in terms of 'relationality' within and between the diasporic formations (*ibid.*). She argues for acknowledging the historic and current plurality of diasporic formation. She writes:

Diasporas, in the sense of distinctive historical experiences, are often composite formations made up of many journeys to different parts of the globe, each with its own history, its own particularities. Each such diaspora is an interweaving of multiple travelling; a text of many distinctive and, perhaps, even disparate narratives. (*ibid.*: 180)

The heterogeneous view of theorizing diaspora provides an important perspective in the context of this thesis, offering ways to engage with the complexity of diasporic experiences. It allows for the recognition of the diversity of situated experiences of Palestinian diasporic subjects, including the different moments and circumstances of their departures and arrivals as the central point of enquiry.

#### *Diasporas and homelands*

The dialogue between the need to establish criteria of what constitutes a diaspora and the desire to recognize the heterogeneity of diasporic formations intersects with another debate concerning the relationship between diasporas and ancestral homelands. Here, diaspora theorists consider issues that are crucial from the perspective of analysing the situation of Palestinians outside Palestine. Is the relationship with the ancestral homeland a constitutive force driving the existence of diasporas or, rather, should more attention be placed on the everyday experience of diasporic settings and the relationship with the 'host' countries?

Should diasporas be theorized as examples of post-national cosmopolitan formations that undermine the dominance of the nation-state? Or, should they be viewed as nationalistic entities, often engaged in the politics of their ancestral homelands?

These questions are especially complex given the recent proliferation of the usage of the term diaspora. Many theorists acknowledge that over the years, fuelled by the acceleration of globalization, the concept has become so widely applied to a variety of different ethnic and migrant groups that some theorists of diaspora, including Safran, have argued that the concept has been so 'overextended' that it has lost its explanatory power (Safran, 2002; Cohen, 1997; Tölölyan, 1996; Braziel and Mannur, 2003).

Several diaspora theorists insist that the orientation towards an ancestral homeland is something that differentiates diaspora from other conceptualizations of global movement. However, the character of this relationship often remains the subject of debate (Werbner, 2005; Malkki, 1992; Levy and Weingrod, 2005; Clifford, 1994, 1997). Discussing the 'cosmopolitan' and 'nation-oriented' views on diaspora, Pnina Werbner argues that diasporas 'can be both ethnic-parochial and cosmopolitan' at the same time (2005: 30). On one hand, she recognizes their cosmopolitan character, arguing that 'the powerful attraction of diaspora for postcolonial theorists has been that, as transnational social formations, diasporas challenge the hegemony and boundedness of the nation-state and, indeed, of any pure imaginaries of nationhood' (*ibid.*: 29). On the other hand, she insists that diasporas are still very much embedded in nationalist rhetoric. The imagined attachments to a place of origin or a collective historical trauma are, in her view, still powerfully implicated in the late modern organization of diasporas (*ibid.*: 30). Moreover, she adds that the relationship with the ancestral homeland does not need to be based exclusively on visions of a common past, but on the diasporic subject's current bonds of attachment. She recognizes that 'many diasporas are deeply implicated both ideologically and materially in the nationalist project of their homeland' (*ibid.*: 9).

This engagement of diasporic political movements with national projects has been theorized as 'long distance nationalism'. Benedict Anderson, who first coined the term, views this process as individuals taking part in projects related to their homelands from abroad, without the responsibility or accountability that comes with formal citizenship (Anderson, 1991; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001; Skrbiš, 2001; Conversi, 2012). Building on

Anderson's observations, Daniele Conversi argues that 'diaspora politics have often entailed an above-average amount of radicalism' (2012: 1372). He asserts that 'having secured a living in the host society, socially mobile elites no longer face direct risks and can thus delegate the "dirty jobs" either to their homeland's policing institutions or, in the case of stateless nations, to local radicals who then have to bear the brunt of the state repression' (*ibid.*).

Other accounts reflect on how long distance nationalism can help to preserve the diasporic identity, even among subjects who might have lost connections with an ancestral homeland. Zlatko Skrbiš (2001) scrutinizes the relationship between long distance nationalism in community and diaspora-affirmation. He writes: 'While the process of maintenance of ethnic identity *is not* a form of long-distance nationalism, we cannot understand the latter without appreciating the underlying significance of the former' [emphasis in original] (*ibid.*: 135-136). Chetan Bhatt (2010) demonstrates how diasporic long distance nationalist movements can exploit the cultivation of an 'affective remembrance' among diasporic members to mobilize them around particular ideologies or political and religious projects. In his view, the Hindutva movements represent a 'conscious ideological strategy that has sought to cultivate diaspora Hindus who have left their "sacred homeland" and had been formally abandoned by the higher echelons of ecclesiastical Hinduism' (2010: 565). This case of radical religious long distance nationalism allows the cultivation of a type of national identity among diaspora Hindus 'whose connection with India may not even be a memory, certainly not anything that might be called a practical engagement with contemporary Indian social realities' (*ibid.*).

While James Clifford agrees that 'some of the most violent articulations of purity and racial exclusivism come from diaspora populations,' he argues that 'diasporic cultural forms can never, in practice, be exclusively nationalist' (1994: 307-308). The fact that they are entangled in multiple attachments goes against any forms of 'ideological purity'. In his view, it is important to distinguish between the 'nationalist critical longing and nostalgic or eschatological visions, from actual nation building with the help of armies, schools, police and mass media' (*ibid.*). He recognizes that links with ancestral homelands change over time. The desire to reclaim or restore an original homeland might not be as strong among all diasporic formations. Similarly, Andreas Huyssen (2003) asserts that links with the ancestral homeland depend on the length of the diasporic settlement. He claims that the

'traditional understandings of diaspora as a lament to ancestral homeland might be largely irrelevant for the second and third generation, who, might be no longer conversant in the language and culture of the country of their ancestors' (2003: 162). He emphasises that for many diasporic subjects, the relationship that defines their orientation is to 'the national culture they live in rather than to the imaginary of roots in the culture of ancestors' (*ibid.*). Tölölyan argues that diaspora should be seen as 'place-conscious' not 'place-bound' (2010: 37). Researching 'new' Armenian and Jewish diasporas, he explains how maintaining links with the ancestral homeland among the subsequent generation can be seen as a burden, especially when it comes to complying with the expectations of other diaspora members (*ibid.*: 39). He observes that different diasporic generations find new ways of maintaining connections with the ancestral homeland, 'without acknowledgement of the affective and ethical imperatives the older discourse dictated' (*ibid.*: 40). Importantly, he states, 'the homeland is a place to care about and to do good works in, but not the authoritative centre that can dictate either political or affective behaviour for long' (*ibid.*). Tölölyan's ideas will be particularly helpful in understanding the relationship to homeland among Palestinians born in Europe, which will be further discussed in Chapter Six.

#### *Diasporic roots and routes*

A number of theorists call for paying particular attention to the relationship between the 'roots' and 'routes' that shape diaspora experience. From this perspective, attention is given not just to the narrative of common origin, but also to the experience of dispersal. This homonym of 'routes – routes', theorized by Clifford, Gilroy, Hall and Brah enables one to move diaspora theorizing away from viewing it exclusively in terms of binary oppositions of origins and location. Clifford argues that diasporas are the product of both roots, embodied by the myths of common origin, and also routes, in the sense that the experience of migration, displacement and loss becomes an important element of diasporic consciousness and identity (1997: 255). Reflecting on the character of connections between the diasporic locations and the ancestral homeland, he argues that 'decentred, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin' (*ibid.*: 306). Clifford writes that diasporas 'mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place' (*ibid.*: 255).

By attending to diasporic trajectories, these approaches place particular attention on the emergence of hybrid forms of belonging and identity shifts that are enabled by diasporic movements. Paul Gilroy argues in *The Black Atlantic* that 'dealing equally with the significance of roots and routes...should undermine the purified appeal of either Afrocentrism or the Eurocentrism it struggles to answer' (1993: 190). Based on this recognition, and inspired by the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, he develops the concept of 'double consciousness', which problematizes any form of ethnic and national essence. He claims that 'diaspora consciousness highlights the tensions between common bonds created by shared origins and other ties arising from the process of dispersal and the obligation to remember' (Gilroy, 1993: 328). Gilroy's observations are echoed in Said's reflection on the plurality of identities informed by his exilic journey. He writes in *Out of Place: A Memoir* that

I have retained this unsettled sense of many identities –mostly in conflict with each other – all my life, together with an acute memory of the despairing feeling that I wish we could have been all-Arab, or all-European and American, or all-Orthodox Christian, or all-Muslim, or all-Egyptian, and so on. (1999: 5)

As if in response to Said's longing for the certainty of the all-ethnic or all-religious categories he had never experienced, Stuart Hall writes:

[W]hat is distinctive about the culture of contact zones or diasporas is that they never remain 'pure to their origins'...The culture which evolves in diasporas is therefore usually the result of some never-contemplated, complex process of combining elements from different cultural repertoires to form 'new' cultures which are related to, but which are not exactly like any of the originals. (1995: 193)

This perspective opens the theorizing of diaspora to the hybrid and mixed form of identity that diasporic formations enable (Hall, 1990; Bhabha, 1994; Gilroy, 1994). While a detailed discussion of hybridity itself extends beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to emphasize Hall's argument that the processes of diasporic identities 'becoming' and 'evolving' are informed by roots and also by *routes* – a combination of the trajectories and the destinations. As he writes: 'It is not so much who we are or where we came from, but also what we might become, how we have been represented and how much that bears on

how we might represent ourselves' (Hall, 1990: 4).

In the context of the discussion on diasporic routes, the work of Avtar Brah emerges as particularly useful in theorizing the everydayness of diasporic subjects. She argues that while the ancestral homeland might remain important for diasporic movement, the actual homeland is lived 'through the lived experience of locality' (1996: 188-189). She asserts that while the 'the image' of a journey is at the heart of thinking about diaspora, 'these journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots elsewhere' (*ibid.*: 180). Therefore, 'home' cannot be constructed only as an idealized place of origin, but also as a process of 'home-making-away-from-home'. This process entails moving away from defining 'home' exclusively in terms of 'roots', and also, as Hall points out, 'coming-to-terms with our routes' (1990: 4). Brah asserts that while an ancestral homeland remains a 'mythic place' in the diasporic imagination, in reality it might be a place of no real return even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory (1996: 190). Instead of talking about return to a homeland, Brah coins the term 'homing desire', which is not the same as 'desire for a homeland' (*ibid.*: 197). She recognizes that diaspora subjects do not necessarily maintain an actual desire to return home, but also that the return 'home' to the place that was imagined might not be possible. 'Homing desire' implies, therefore, the impossibility of 'declaring a place a home', because there might no place of origin to which subjects of diaspora can literally return or destination where they would 'feel at home' (*ibid.*: 190-193).

Finally, in the discussion about roots and routes, Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge argue that diasporas can no longer be defined by a stable place of origin, clear and final destination points or coherent group identities and call for a 'revitalised sociology of diaspora' (1990: ii). They assert that people are increasingly 'moving targets' of anthropological enquiry and they call for placing 'boundaries' and 'borderlands' at the centre of diaspora research. Furthermore, they propose seeing diasporas in the context of 'lags' and 'disjunctures' (*ibid.*). In their view, the most important 'lags' are those of memory. They write that, 'more and more diasporic groups have memories, whose archaeology is fractured...These collective recollections, often built on the harsh play of memory and desire over time, have many trajectories and fissures' (*ibid.*).

Following these suggestions, several diaspora theorists call for the 'de-naturalization' of diasporic origins. For instance, Lisa Malkki (1992) undermines the perceived role of

diasporic 'roots' as an unequivocal source of stability and belonging. In dialogue with Simone Weil's famous quote about the need for roots as one of the 'most important and least recognized', she argues that the relationship of diasporic subject with a place is not necessarily always 'natural'. She asserts that if we place the problem of borders at the centre of research, notions of nativeness cease to be 'natural' and become increasingly complicated. She proposes that it is not the stability of place that drives the diasporic relation with homeland, but rather the memory of the place. She writes:

[T]here has emerged a new awareness of the global social fact that, now more than perhaps ever before, people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, can invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial national bases – not in situ, but through memories of, and claims on, places that they can't or will no longer corporeally inhabit. (Malkki, 1992: 24)

This bears particular relevance in the Palestinian context, as diasporic Palestinians have been prevented from returning to their ancestral homeland, which has undergone vast political and physical transformations since the 1948 establishment of Israel.

Anne-Marie Fortier argues against reducing diaspora to a 'single origin' and a single event of the moment of dispersal (2005: 183). She asserts that 'by establishing the defining moment of diaspora solely in its inception – the traumatic uprooting from geographically located origins – it can be too easily reduced to its connection with a clearly bounded time-space: the nation-space of the "homeland"' (*ibid.*: 193). Agreeing with Gilroy, she argues:

Against the assumed isomorphism of space, place and culture, on the one hand, and the reification of uprootedness as the paradigmatic figure of postmodern experience of identity on the other, the heuristic potential of diaspora raises the ways in which belonging may involve both attachment and movement. (2005: 184)

As a means of overcoming the attachment of diaspora theory to the metaphor of roots, she proposes we think diaspora in terms of a rhizome, which opens up the possibility of conceptualising the intricacies of its roots and routes. For Fortier as for Malkki, it is the social memory that links different rhizomorphous elements of diaspora together (*ibid.*:

183). In her view, 'memory, rather than territory is the principal ground of identity formation in diaspora cultures, where "territory" is de-centred and explored into multiple settings' (*ibid.*: 184). She argues that diasporas are constructed around the 'practice of remembering', which she sees as an active process that 'thickens' our memory and gives it 'substance' (*ibid.*). Such practices involve 'the active process of re-working different elements of diasporic histories, locations and practices together' (*ibid.*).

The above reflections on the relationship between diaspora and memory are especially relevant to the rest of the discussion in this chapter. If memory is a key site of diasporic meaning-making, then special attention needs to be given to the processes of constructing, maintaining and transmitting diasporic memory. To fully appreciate the value of this perspective, it is important to recognize that memory itself is not necessarily 'natural' and cannot be seen as a source of stability, something for which Fortier has been criticized. As Andreas Huyssen observes, '[n]ational memory presents itself as natural, authentic, coherent and homogeneous. Diasporic memory in its traditional sense is by definition cut off, hybrid, displaced, split' (2003: 152). Just as the concept of place should not be 'taken for granted', the notion of memory equally needs to be problematized. In conversation with Fortier, Baronian et al. assert that:

It seems important to acknowledge that the 'ground' of memory can be rather unstable and shaky itself, in particular if one conceives of memory not as a stable place of identity but as a process of displacement itself...Significantly, movement and mobility are not just characteristics of diaspora, they are also constitutive of memory as something that is always in flux and notoriously unreliable. (2007: 12)

The next section of this chapter continues this discussion on the formation and role of diasporic memory, drawing on different theorizations of memory, and situates the discussion in relation to the Palestinian diaspora.

## **2.5. Remembering the ancestral homeland**

In the context of the continuing dispersion and dispossession of the Palestinian population, as well as the lack of a nation-state, memory emerges as a pivotal site for the maintenance of

the Palestinian national identity in diaspora. Simultaneously, as already outlined in the previous section, diasporic memory cannot be seen as 'natural', stable or solid. Percy C. Hintzen observes that 'the unifying theme of any particular diasporic imagination is the collective memory of homeland. However, there is no single corpus of memory, no single imaginary homeland...and an individual can have many claims to homeland and many diasporic imageries to call upon' (2004: 296-97). Given these complexities, the role of this chapter is to situate the question of Palestinian diasporic memory in the context of some of the multidisciplinary debates on memory. It begins with unpacking and de-naturalizing the concept of memory. It further explores the processes and, importantly, practices, which guide individual and collective remembering and which make the intergenerational transmission of memory possible. What events, images and ideas of Palestine do diasporic subjects bring into their exile and how do they correspond to the collective modes of remembering? How are these memories, often of physical and symbolic violence, passed on and what do these memories 'do' to the diasporic subjects living in dispersion? How does the transmission work in a diasporic context and how do the individuals and collectives 'learn' to remember?

### *Against forgetting*

For Palestinians, the process of remembering the homeland has become instrumental in maintaining and creating a collective memory and passing it on to the next generations. A rich body of scholarship emphasises the importance of formal institutions in developing and maintaining the collective memory of nations, groups and collectives and the pivotal role of textbooks, legal systems, museums and monuments as particularly important sites for national memory and consciousness (Misztal, 2003; Assange, 1995; Hammer, 2005; Sa'di and Abu- Lughod, 2007; Davis, 2011). Hammer recognises that after the catastrophic events of the Nakba, 'Palestinians as a nation did not have tools to develop a national narrative' (2005: 40). Palestinians lacked national institutions that would allow for creating and maintaining common sites of memory and history. In the absence of official institutions of memory, Palestinian memory emerges and develops 'from the bottom' (Hammer, 2005; Davis, 2011; Masalha, 2012). The oral histories and bedtime stories that mothers tell their children, the songs sung in family gatherings, and poetry recited at social gatherings have gained a special status for Palestinians in passing and maintaining memories (Davis, 2011: 42). While the role of oral transmission of stories and memories will be further discussed in

Chapter Three, for now it is important to emphasize that these acts of memory allowed successive generations to imagine and relate to a homeland in the absence of a nation-state and became an important space for identity creation and preservation.

The task of remembering Palestine emerges as important not only in the context of physical absence from the land and lack of national institutions. Palestinians have been subjected to the processes of 'ontological dispossession', to use the phrase offered by Williams (2009: 85). These processes have involved denial that Palestinians exist, or ever existed, and attempts to silence or de-legitimize Palestinian history (Rodinson, 1973; Said, 1994; Williams, 2009). A number of scholars have discussed the ways in which memory of the events of the Nakba has been overshadowed by the more powerful Zionist mythology of the establishment of the State of Israel as a Jewish homeland built on the narrative of appropriating 'the land without people for the people without land' – a formulation which has rendered Palestinians are non – existent in their own homeland (c.f. Masalha, 2003, 2012; Pappé, 2006, 2014). The creation of Israel in 1948 has largely been seen in Western countries as a moral obligation after the Nazi genocide (Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 2007: 4; Pappé, 2014). Sa'di and Abu-Lughod note that 'Israel's creation was represented and sometimes conceived, as an act of restitution that resolved this dialectic, bringing good out of evil' (2007: 4). As Pappé observes, 'Generally speaking, the Zionists succeeded in persuading large segments of world opinion to accept the idea of Israel as the best response to the horrors of the Holocaust' (2014: 119). In this narrative, there was no place for the Palestinian catastrophe and Palestinian history. These accounts excluded Palestinians from the unfolding of history, as their narrative 'did not fit' the dominant narratives of the historical context. Writing about the Nakba and the silence that followed the Palestinian plight, Elias Sanbar states that, 'having disappeared in 1948, Palestine left the stage', adding that this occurred not only in the context of the 'departure from space', but also 'departure from time' (2001: 90). Sa'di and Abu-Lughod note that after their 1948 exclusion from both land and history, Palestinians were reduced to a humanitarian case (2007: 4). As Sanbar puts it:

That year, a country and its people disappeared from maps and dictionaries...'The Palestinian people does not exist' said the new masters and, henceforth the Palestinians would be referred to by general,

conveniently vague terms, as either 'refugees' or in the case of a small minority that had managed to escape the generalized expulsion, 'Israeli Arabs'. A long absence was beginning. (2001: 90)

In the context of dispossession, as well as attempts to erase Palestinian existence, the task of remembering has not only been an important means of maintaining national identity; it has also been imperative to surviving as a nation. Departing from the above observations, I argue for the need to theorize Palestinian memory as a site of production and reproduction of national identity, as well as a crucial site of resistance against ongoing dispossession. The counter-hegemonic role of Palestinian memories will be further discussed in the empirical chapters that follow. For now, it is useful to reflect further on what it might mean to treat memory as a site of resistance, drawing from a bodies of literature, developed on the foundation of postcolonial literature and in authoritarian contexts.

Paul Connerton (1989) discusses how memory emerges as a crucial means of maintaining a sense of individual agency in the face of authoritarian regimes. Using the example of the Czechoslovakian communist regime, he observes how the government strived to take control over its citizens by displacing their memories. He writes that 'the mental enslavement of subjects in totalitarian regimes begins when their memories are taken away from them' (Connerton, 1989: 15). He asserts that 'what is horrifying in totalitarian regimes is not only the violation of human dignity but the fear that there may remain nobody who could ever properly bear witness to the past' (*ibid.*). In a similar context, Lidia Burska (2012) reflects on the ways in which the communist government in Poland imposed an official version of memory of student protests against the regime in 1968. She uses the term 'confiscated memory' – the memory of people that resist an official power, which is completely erased from the public sphere that is dominated by state propaganda (2012: 93).

In understanding memory as a site of resistance, it is also useful to reflect on the approaches pioneered by Michel Foucault, further developed within postcolonial studies (Foucault, 1977: 18; Misztal, 2003: 62; Erll, 2011: 42). Foucault's conception of 'counter-memory' as a discursive practice undermines the totalizing character of memory discourses. In the words of Barbara Misztal, 'the idea of counter-memory illuminates the connection between the hegemonic order and historical representations because it allows us to...differentiate

between the “truth” and ideology and provides the possibility of accounting for subordinated voices from the past’ (2003: 64-65). The approaches developed within postcolonial critique pay attention to the voices that have been ‘forgotten’ by official colonial historiographies and deprived of access to power structures. Climo and Cattell note that, ‘during the long centuries of colonialism, history was written mainly by the conquerors, and histories of subordinate groups were hidden or silenced’ (2002: 28). They argue that the voices of ‘people without history’ may be ‘recovered through the writing of oppositional histories’ (*ibid.*: 28-29). In this tradition, the process of history-writing has been seen not only as a practice of ‘writing from below’ but also ‘from the margins’, which has strived to challenge the versions of history provided by the colonizing power and to reveal the perspectives of the colonized people. For instance, Ranajit Guha’s (1999) *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, developed through the work of the Subaltern Studies Group, uncovered the history of colonial India from the peasant’s perspective and challenged the ‘elitist’ historiography of the period (Biswas, 2009: 203; Bhay, 2002: 231). In another context, Mina Karavanta discusses the process of a ‘critical re-writing of the history’ of slavery in the Caribbean from the perspective of the oppressed. This process of ‘counter-writing’ draws on a ‘counter-memory’ that strives to resist the over-representation of the accounts of the colonisers by relying on the memories of those who were excluded in the process of history writing and deprived of their own voice and agency (Karavanta, 2013: 44). In the context of the discussion on ‘counter-memory’, it is useful to reflect on the words of Dina Matar (2011), who reminds us that while memory can be powerfully utilized by oppressed groups, it can also be mobilized in different ways. She writes:

Memory can be a tool in the hands of people in power, or an ally, for those who are dominated and whose voices are not heard. The work of memory, then, must address itself not only to questions of what happened, but also to how we know things, whose voices we hear and where silences persist. (2011:10)

Matar also encourages examining ‘how we know things’ (*ibid.*). This question opens, in my view, an important space for reflection on the fact that ‘what we know’ and ‘how we know’ are not given and should not be taken for granted. It also stays as a reminder that memory – be it the ‘official memory’ or the ‘counter-memory’ – is not a given and natural process, but rather a process of learning and appropriation and as such can be misused and manipulated

(cf. Fortier, 2005: 184; Connerton, 2011: 34)<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, Irwin-Zarecka observes that 'individuals are perfectly capable of ignoring even the best told stories, of injecting their new, subversive meaning into even the most rhetorically accomplished text' (1994: 4). Zygmunt Bauman makes further observations about the relationship between the memory and the past, writing:

Memory *selects* and *interprets* – and *what* is to be selected and *how* it needs to be interpreted is moot and a matter of continuous contention. The resurrection of the past, keeping the past alive, can be attained only through the active, choosing, reprocessing, and recycling work of memory. To remember is to interpret the past or more correctly, to tell a story meant to *stand for* the course of past events [emphasis in original]. (2003: 87)

If remembering is about 'standing for the course of past events', it means that remembering something involves choosing some things and forgetting other things. When analysing memory, what is important is not what the memory tells us about past, but how the past is selected and interpreted – what is remembered, and how, and what is forgotten. Thus if remembering is, as I have argued, an active process of learning, this process involves learning to associate meanings to a particular version of the past, as well as learning to forget others. 'No memory is pure, unmediated, spontaneous', write Sa'di and Abu-Lughold, acknowledging that the 'Palestinian memory is particularly poignant, because it struggles with and against a still much contested present' (2007: 3). What and how we remember is informed by current discourses, understanding and interpretations (Erll, 2011: 8; Misztal 2003: 11; Szacka, 1997). Matar adds: 'Memory as a discourse about the past and of the present suggests that its meanings are not fixed in stone, but are malleable, shifting and open to interpretations and judgements' (2011: 10). Echoing Sa'di and Abu-Lughold, she

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<sup>10</sup> In understanding what it might mean to 'learn' to remember, it may be useful to leave memory studies for a moment to draw from Howard Becker's study on marihuana users (1953). One of the initial observations that Becker makes in his research is about first-time users. It appears that in order for marihuana users to take pleasure from smoking, they need to associate sensations with pleasure. This process does not come naturally for new users. As Becker writes: 'Marijuana-produced sensations are not automatically or necessarily pleasurable. The taste for such experience is a socially acquired one, not different in kind from acquired tastes for oysters or dry martinis. The user feels dizzy, thirsty; his scalp tingles; he misjudges time and distances; and so on. Are these things pleasurable? He isn't sure. If he is to continue marijuana use, he must decide that they are' (1953: 239). Even the most bodily or sensuous experiences are not necessarily 'natural', especially when they are social experiences. They involve the process of learning. Employing Becker's observation to memory studies, it seems important to acknowledge that memory is an active process that requires a conscious process of associating meaning to past events.

further suggests that 'memory is almost always mediated' (*ibid.*). If memory is about learned meaning-making, it needs to be seen as selective, situated and partial.

#### *Between personal and collective memories*

This understanding of memory requires consideration of the relationship between individual and collective memory. The interdependence of collective and individual memory was first theorized in the classic work of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992 [1950], 1952). In his view, each act of individual remembering has a social character and is always constructed as part of a wider social context, within what he calls the 'social frameworks' (*cadres sociaux*) of memory. Remembering, he argues, happens in the presence of other people and in the context of the pre-existing knowledge, discourses and behaviours that individuals have at their disposal. These frameworks allow them to interpret, understand and place individual acts of remembering in a symbolic and cognitive order. In other words, what and how an individual remembers is related to the 'social frameworks' in which an individual's memory operates. As Misztal observes: 'Memory is social because every memory exists through its relation with what has been shared with others: language, symbols, events and social and cultural contexts' (2003: 11). It is the social and relational character of memory that provides its meaning and allows its pivotal role in the formation of collective identity. As Eyerman puts it: 'Memory provides individuals and collectives with a cognitive map, helping orient who they are, why they are here and where they are going. Memory in other words is central to individual and collective identity' (2004: 161). Halbwachs adds that collective memory is also dependent on individual memories, realising itself in and through them (1992 [52]: 40). He writes: 'One may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realises and manifests itself in individual memories' (*ibid.*).

Halbwachs' theory of social frameworks of memory has been criticized for failing to acknowledge the dynamic and changing character of collective memory, as well as failing to problematize the complex relationship between individual and collective memory. For instance, Olick (2003) argues against theorizing the social memory in Durkheimian terms – as 'a thing' or a *sui generis* reality – and calls for approaches that would examine social memory in terms of a process or processes of remembering and forgetting, rather than as a stable entity. He emphasizes the constant process of change and evolution of social memory.

Rather than treating social memory as given, Olick underlines struggles over memory and over the shape of the past that is 'remembered' (2003: 25). Halbwachs' theorizing is also criticized for failing to acknowledge the dialectical or dialogical relationship between individual and collective memory (Miztal 2010: 55). In other words, the relationship between individual memory and social frameworks of memory cannot be assumed as smooth and straightforward. Individuals remember differently and contest the frameworks of collective memory.

Following Halbwachs' understanding of the social character of memory, the individual memories of diasporic Palestinians do not emerge or exist in a vacuum, but must be understood in the context of wider social frameworks – the inherited modes of interpreting the past and past events, the telling and re-telling family stories, literary and political accounts, as well as their own experiences relating to living in/visiting Palestine. Simultaneously, it must be recognized that the collective Palestinian memory cannot itself be seen as stable and fixed. Nor can the relationship between the individual and collective memory be taken for granted. Individuals can draw from different, even contradictory experiences, imaginings and frameworks of collective memory.

#### *Modes of memory transmission and acquired memories*

The question of the unity and heterogeneity of Palestinian collective memories becomes even more important in relation to matters of memory transmission. Connerton observes that 'to study the social formation of memory is to study the acts of transfer that make the remembering in common possible' (1989: 38). One of the most important questions that this thesis raises is that of how traumatic memories of loss are carried into exile and how they are transmitted to subsequent generations of Palestinians, born already in exile, who did not experience the Nakba, and who often had no direct contact with the ancestral homeland.

A large body of scholarship on memory recognizes the importance of acquired memories passed from generation to generation in the formation and maintenance of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992 [52]; Assmann and Czaplicka, 1995; Connerton, 1989; Schwarz, 2000; Miztal, 2003; Assmann, 2006). In societies that do not have access to formal

institutions of memory, oral forms of transmission in family settings are of pivotal importance (Assmann, 1997; Halbwachs, 1992: [52]). Connerton observes that collective memory is enabled by 'common acts of transfer' (1989: 39). He emphasizes the crucial role of repetition and re-enactment in memory transmission, arguing that commemorative ceremonies and the bodily practices involved are critical in the shaping and conveyance of communal memory (*ibid.*: 67). These 'ritual re-enactments' help to create what he calls a 'performative memory' that takes its power from being ingrained in the body (*ibid.*: 71) (see Chapter Five).

Scholars have recognized that there are memories, especially those related to traumatic events, which can be difficult or impossible to articulate and transmit. In her work on the Indian partition of 1947, Veena Das, whose work will be further discussed in Chapter Four, observes the difficulty with which those who had experienced the violence of partition – and the later riots relating to the assassination of Indira Gandhi – spoke about the events. She felt that 'perhaps they had speech, but not voice' (1997: 8). In other instances, she observed how words became meaningless, failing to represent experiences, as they can no longer access the context in which they emerged (*ibid.*). In his book *The Whisperers*, Orlando Figes examines memories of the generation of prisoners of the Soviet Gulags and finds that their memories had become partial and non-linear (2007: 633). He writes that 'their memory becomes fragmentary, organized by a series of disjointed episodes (such as the arrest of a parent or the moment of eviction from their home) rather than by a linear chronology' (*ibid.*: 633). According to his research, the publishing of *The Gulag Archipelago* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, which revealed the horror of the Gulag, helped former prisoners 'to remember' and to articulate their experiences. Figes claims they 'identified so strongly with their ideological position...that they suspended their own dependent memories and allowed these books to speak for them' (*ibid.*). The book, it seems, revived their memories and gave them language to express their traumatic experiences. Both of these accounts encourage one to pay particular attention not only to the acts of transmission, but also to potential inabilities to transmit. They also direct our attention to situations in which individuals struggle to find forms of expression that allow the articulation of the experience of past violence.

Other authors reinforce the unconscious character of the transmission of traumatic memories (Hirsch, 1997, 2006; Cho, 2008). Marianne Hirsch observes that the children of Holocaust victims and survivors, who did not experience the war directly, were nevertheless 'dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by the traumatic events they can neither understand nor re-create' (1997: 8). Hirsch, whose theorizing will be employed to interpret the oral stories of research participants in Chapter Four, develops the term 'post-memory' to signify the strong and affective relationship between the generation that 'came after' and the traumatic experiences of the Holocaust survivors (1997, 2008). Grace M. Cho (2008) observes how even unacknowledged traumas of the past are carried into diaspora and may activate themselves in the haunting of the subsequent generations. The intergenerational passing of traumatic memories has also been investigated within neuroscience.<sup>11</sup> The findings on epigenetic inheritance memory have been taken up by social scientists. For instance, Mónica Teresa Ortiz (2014) uses the notion of epigenetic inheritance to reflect on the way in which traumatic memories of the un-lived past are carried into the present in transgenerational scarring. In her essay 'Blood Memories,' the narrator's encounter with the body of a lover brings back the 'ghosts' of past and the memory of the violent murder of her own grandfather, which took place before she was born.

Thinking about ways in which acknowledged or unacknowledged memories acquire meaning in the present, Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering (2012) draw our attention to the importance of imagination in the process of remembering. They write:

Imagination allows memory to move beyond a repetition of experience, either firsthand or secondhand. It realigns the temporal tenses and gives rise to qualitatively new meaning in the present. It also allows a second 'bringing into relation', horizontally in the present, as the pasts to which we have a 'living connection', either literally or via our inheritance, are informed and interrogated by the pasts of others. (*ibid.*: 123)

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<sup>11</sup> For instance, recent experiments undertaken by Rachel Yehuda et al. (2014) found that the children of Holocaust survivors, especially those with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), had different compositions of the hormones responsible for how the body responds to stress.

Thus imagination allows not only a 'connection' to past experience, but also creatively re-shapes the experience, or the transmission of the experience, so it 'can make something qualitatively new through recombining ideas, objects, practices and experiences' (*ibid.*). These observations are particularly important in recognizing that memories involve not only recall, but also an active creation.

### *Memory, place and (dis)placement*

Memories take us to places and spaces, landscapes and situations, just as certain places, landscapes and textures evoke memories. Misztal emphasizes the importance of place to the emergence and maintenance of collective memory, stating that 'a group's memory is linked to places, ruins, landscapes, monuments and urban architecture, which – as they are overlain with symbolic association to past events – play an important role in helping to preserve group memory' (2010: 16). In the case of diasporic subjects, the geographical and temporal complicates the relationship between place and memory. What happens to the memories of places that are impossible to reach physically, or which figure only in the imagination of the subjects, or are no longer there?

In theorizing the relationship between memory and place, many accounts refer to the classic work of French sociologist Pierre Nora (1989) and his conception of 'sites of memory' (*sites de mémoire*). Nora's work departed from the assertion that with the rise of 'modernity', societies lose access to natural 'landscapes of memory' (*milieux de mémoire*), which used to serve as the natural repositories of collective memory. These 'landscapes of memory', which he mainly associated with peasant culture, provided, in his view, a sense of continuity, stability and identity for communities. With the urbanization and rise of capitalism, communities have been losing access to this natural landscape of memory, which has been replaced by artificial 'sites of memory' – 'places' created in order maintain a sense of common self, such as museums, monuments, libraries and archives (Nora, 1989; Creet and Kitzmann, 2011). These artificial sites of memory were constructed, according to Nora, because communities could no longer access spontaneous memory.

Nora's theory, while influential and helpful in thinking about how 'social memory' is produced (and also manufactured), has been criticized for being exclusively nation-centric and failing to address the changing relationship that people may form with places, as well as

the changing meanings that people give to places. For Nora, access to 'natural memory' was only possible if people had unlimited access to a place (Crete and Kitzmann, 2011). Ann Rigney (2008) has criticized Nora's conception of sites of memory as creating an impression of memory as stable and fixed. In her view, memory is constantly 'in the works and, like a swimmer, needs to keep moving' (cited in Erl 2011: 26). She argues elsewhere that 'sites of memory are constantly being reinvested with a new meaning' (Rigney, 2005: 18). Crete and Kitzmann raise the critique from the angle that such theorisation can deprive those who have been displaced and dispossessed of memory (2011: 6). They observe that memory is not only a product of 'stability' – which is of paramount importance to Nora's approach – but also a product of mobility. They ask: 'Should we not, given our mobility, begin to ask different questions of memory, ones that do not attend only to the content of memory, but to the travels that have invoked it?' (*ibid.*). They add: 'Memory is where we have arrived rather than where we have left. What's forgotten is not an absence, but a movement of disintegration that produces an object of origin. In other words, memory is produced over time and under erasure' (*ibid.*). These remarks acknowledge that it is not only the site itself, but also the journey and timing that produce memories of place.

Scholars have also noted that place itself can be a site of assemblage of different memories, remembered differently by different groups of people. This has a special resonance in terms of remembering Palestine and Israel. For instance, in the *Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land*, Maurice Halbwachs recognizes that Jerusalem has become a source of contrasting memories and consists of several layers of mnemonic identities (1992 [1941]: 235). Similarly, Meron Benvenisti reflects on how the same physical landscape of historic Palestine was lived, imagined and produced as two separate mental maps: 'As long as I remember I have moved within two strata of consciousness, wandering in the landscape that instead of three spatial dimensions, had six: a three-dimensional Jewish space underlain by an equally three-dimensional Arab space' (2000: 1).

In order to represent how one place can be a site of several mnemonic interpretations, Huyssen (2003) uses the metaphor of palimpsest, a written text containing different layers of writing. Employing this device, he looks at urban space as a place where different sites of memory representing different memory discourses coexist, creating a layered urban landscape of 'present pasts'. He writes: 'Cities, after all, are palimpsests of history,

incarnations of time in stone, sites of memory extending both time and space' (Huysen 2003: 101). One of the questions that concerns him the most in terms of the urban landscape is about the kind of past that we remember and what kind of meanings and discourses we attach to sites of memory that proliferate within these landscapes. James Donald argues that a city is always partly imagined and that our understanding of urban landscape is mediated not only by what we physically see, but 'through a powerful set of political, sociological and cultural associations' (1997: 179). He demonstrates how the layers of urban palimpsests contain both physical, imagined and narrated strata that define the relationships and interpretations of place.

The above reflections on memory and place inform the theorizing of this thesis in two major ways. The recognition that memory of place is influenced not only by a place itself, but also by the journey from the place, encourages an examination of how the experiences of exile itself – the separation from Palestine – is part of the creation of the memory of Palestine. In the context of the ongoing dispossession that produces new generations of Palestinians who have never been to Palestine, such conceptualizations open up an important perspective on the creation of memories. Secondly, the literature that encourages attention to the 'place' as a repository of different, often contrasting layers of memory, has a specific resonance for Palestinian diasporic memory. It allows recognition that the memories of diasporic subjects might be related to both different Palestinian geographies and different Palestinian temporalities. Seeing diasporic memory of Palestine as palimpsestic encourages us to pay attention to the rooting or rather, relating, of Palestinian collective and individual memories in the complex and changing realities of physical, political and imagined Palestinian geographies. Helga Tawil-Souri (2013) argues that, in the face of continuous and ongoing dispossession, a shrinking territory, constant ambiguity of borders and the absence of a national state, a situation is created in which there is no single Palestinian geography or temporality. Following Tawil-Souri and thinking in terms of diasporic memories of Palestine, it is helpful to recognize that Palestine as a place cannot be theorized as a stable entity, but rather as an assemblage of different, shifting geographies and socio-temporalities remaining in relation to each other, which, in turn further complicates diasporic memories.

## 2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to situate questions about the formation, maintenance and transmission of memories of homeland among diasporic Palestinians in the context of the academic literature on diaspora and memory. By bringing together the two bodies of literature, this chapter lays the theoretical foundations for the conceptualization of diasporic memory, which will be further explored and developed in the subsequent chapters. Rather than providing a ready-to-use framework, I begin the discussion here by deconstructing the notions of diaspora and memory as bounded and fixed categories. The reviewed literature on diaspora encourages the conceptualisation of diasporic formations as heterogeneous, historically situated, and consisting of multiple personal and collective histories. It is the *memory* of un-fixed origins and the *journey* from those origins that is constitutive for diaspora formation. Similarly, I build on those approaches that argue for viewing individual and collective acts of remembering as partial, fragmented and 'learned' exercises of meaning-making.

These deconstructed and denaturalized understandings of memory and diaspora bring important observations to the research of Palestinian diasporic memories, which inform the methodological as well as the analytical approach of this thesis. I approach Palestinian diasporic memories as shaped by the processes and forces that simultaneously consolidate and fragment them. The traumatic experiences of the Nakba provide an important marker of Palestinian history and the memory of the 1948 catastrophe figures as one of the frameworks of Palestinian collective memory. Ongoing dispossession engenders processes of consolidation of Palestinian memory into what can be seen as 'counter-memory' and the collective effort of resisting denial, erasure and oblivion (see Chapter Four). On the other hand, the lasting experience of dispersal and separation continues to fragment diasporic memories and isolate them from each other. The final argument of this chapter is that Palestinian diasporic memories need to be seen as heterogeneous and subject to constant struggles. As Matar suggests, there is no single Palestinian memory, but a multiplicity of memories – social, historical, cultural, individual, collective and sensual. In her view, what joins this different assemblage of memories is that they are – 'at heart – political' (2011: 10). The following chapters explore further the relationship between continuity and disjunction within Palestinian diasporic memory and the situated modes of imagining and carrying the memory of Palestine outside of it.

## **Chapter 3. Researching diaspora memories of Palestine**

### **3.1. Overview**

This chapter discusses the methodological practices I developed in order to engage with the diasporic memories of Palestinians in Poland and in the UK. It considers the methodological possibilities of developing fieldwork as a 'travel practice' (Clifford, 1992: 101). It begins with an overview of the design of a methodological approach that enabled me to place the journeys of diasporic Palestinians at the heart of the study and engage with the temporal and spatial movement that defines diasporic trajectories. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the practicalities involved in carrying out the fieldwork, which involved a combination of methods and research locations. The third and final section of the chapter adopts a more reflexive perspective and considers the difficulties inherent in the continuously evolving relationship between researcher and research participants and reflects on the ethical dimensions of the fieldwork as a process of multimedia exchange.

### **3.2. Designing the fieldwork as a 'travel practice'**

This thesis is based on a multi-sited ethnography, which involved a combination of oral history interviews, extended observations and the production of the audio-visual material. Multi-sited ethnography has been theorized by George E. Marcus as a process that 'moves out from single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects and identities in diffuse time space' (1995: 96). For Marcus the advantage of multi-sited ethnography was that 'it could take unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity' (*ibid.*). Mark-Antony Falzon argues that multi-sited ethnography necessarily implies 'some form of (geographical) spatial de-centeredness' (2009: 2). In his view: 'The essence of multi-sited research is to follow people, connections, associations and relationships across space (because they are substantially continuous but spatially non-contiguous)' (Falzon, 2009: 2).

In the case of my research, the value of employing the multi-sited approach was that it

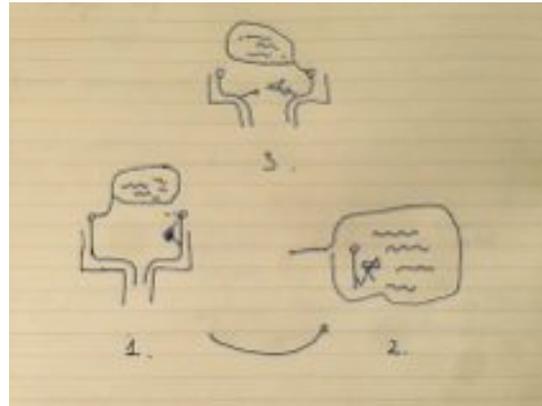
offered the possibility of a more active engagement with the diasporic journeys of Palestinians in Poland and in the UK. The main goal of the study was to understand how different trajectories of diasporic Palestinians had informed their relationships to and memories of the ancestral homeland. I was looking for an approach that would allow me to situate the journeys of the research participants at the centre of the methodological process. It was the *movement* across space and time and the *memories* activated by these movements that were of crucial importance from the perspective of my study. Employing a multi-sited methodology afforded me the possibility of physically tracing participants' trajectories and the ability to develop a particular attentiveness to the spatial and temporal shifts implied by these journeys.

Multi-sited ethnography enabled me not only to explore the complexities of the shifting socio-geographies of my research participants, but, crucially, it also allowed me to develop a perspective of travel as a methodological vantage point. Analysing the history of ethnographic research, James Clifford observes that while ethnographers have taken many journeys 'to the field', the notion of travelling itself has been a neglected part of the research analysis. He asserts that 'traditional ethnography' in the 20<sup>th</sup> century 'privileged relations of dwelling over relations of travel' (1992: 99). He calls for developing fieldwork as a 'travel practice' to offer a more complementary way of researching cultures that is 'less a tent in a village or a controlled laboratory or a site of initiation and inhabitation, and more like a hotel lobby, ship, or bus' (*ibid.*: 101). The perspective of travel, he argues, enables researchers to see culture from the perspective of margins and boundaries and to recognize that cultures are not bounded and rooted, but also displaced, hybrid and in a process of constant transformation (*ibid.*). For me as a researcher, the possibility of embarking on a journey (or rather, many journeys) allowed me to follow and film some of the research participants' diasporic routes. It helped me explore the relationship between place and diasporic memory and gave me reasons to return to the research participants (to some of them many times) to share my own experiences of these journeys, the footage I took and the 'material traces' that I collected of during the research.

I designed the fieldwork as a chain of methodological practices, which constituted circuits of 'back and forth' journeys that I carried out across different geographies, and, to some extent, different temporalities. While not always clear-cut, it involved the following stages,

which were both constitutive and transformative to the process of knowledge production.

1. Oral history interviews with the research participants conducted in Poland and in the UK
2. Multisensory ethnography exploring some of the research participants' sites of memory in today's Israel and the OPT<sup>12</sup>,
3. Return visits to the research participants in Poland and the UK, accompanied with the collected footage or artefacts from the ethnographic journeys



**Figure 3.1. Overview of the methods employed in the research**

I began the fieldwork with a set of oral history interviews with diasporic Palestinians in Poland and in the UK. These interviews served as an initial opportunity to get to know the research participants and, importantly, to discuss their memories of Palestine. They helped me to grasp the scope of personal histories as well as to map the temporal and spatial framework of their connections and relations with Palestine. Overall I spoke to 33 participants and to some of them several times. The chart below represents my contacts with each of the research participants. The colors of the chart map the different generations of participants, whose boundaries are defined by the type of diasporic journey experienced. The three generations - the Exiles (in blue), the Occupied from Within (in turquoise) and the Children of the Idea of Palestine (in purple) - will be discussed in detail in the empirical chapters that follow.

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<sup>12</sup> OPT – abbreviation for the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Summary of the sample & methods							
Demographic details					Method used		
No.	Nickname	Gender	Age bracket	Location of the interview	Single history interview	Two or more returning visits	Participant observation/ Audio-visual ethnography
<b>Poland</b>							
1	Mamdooh	M	45-60	Warsaw	X		
2	Omar	M	45-60	Kraków		X	X
3	Marwan	M	45-60	Warsaw/ Katowice		X	X
4	Emad	M	18-35	Warsaw	X		X
5	Mona	F	18-30	Warsaw	X		
6	Jakub	M	35-45	Warsaw		X	
7	Fawzi	M	35-45	Warsaw	X		
8	Aziz	M	35-45	Warsaw		X	X
9	Razi	M	35-45	Warsaw		X	X
10	Yousef	M	35-45	Warsaw	X		
11	Lena	F	18-35	Warsaw		X	
12	Ala	F	18-35	Kraków		X	X
13	Emil	M	18-35	Wrocław	X		
14	Konrad	M	18-35	Łódź	X		X
15	Dalia	F	18-35	Warsaw	X		
<b>UK</b>							
16	Antoine	M	60 +	London		X	X
17	Joseph	M	60 +	London	X		X
18	Jumana	F	45-60	London	X		X

Summary of the sample & methods							
Demographic details					Method used		
19	Tarek	M	35-45	London	X		
20	Firas	M	35-45	London	X		
21	Wael	M	45-60	Glasgow		X	X
22	Bassam	M	35-45	London	X		
24	Hannen	F	45-60	London	X		
25	Shadi	M	35-45	London	X		
26	Lahali	F	35-45	London		X	
27	Nada	F	35-45	London	X		
28	Hayat	F	35-45	London		X	
29	Reham	F	35-45	Sussex	X		
30	Fayez	M	18-35	London	X		
31	Amr	M	18-35	London		X	
32	Leen	F	18-35	London		X	X
33	Tala	F	18-35	London		X	

**Figure 3.2. Map of the fieldwork sample in Poland in the UK**

The oral histories served as a departure point for an audio-visual ethnography, which allowed me to follow some of the participants' narratives back to Palestine and today's Israel. The video camera I was carrying became a crucial device of travel and dialogue with the oral stories. These journeys also allowed me to relate to the diasporic experiences of the research participants in a more multi-sensorial way. As Howen and Classen write, 'What makes sensation so forceful is that they are lived experiences, not intellectual abstractions' (2014: 7). Following the memory path activated a multiplicity of senses and enabled me to engage with the texture and materiality of the narrated memories and experiences. Many of the narratives of the research participants reflected on the difficult experiences of

dispossession. They were stories of loss, pain, violence and longing for the homeland. Tracing the journeys involved smelling, touching, and experiencing physical barriers, as well as complex emotions such as fear, anger, hope and despair. Collecting the footage became a way of mapping, tracing, and documenting the memories, but also of 'leaving traces' (Ingold and Verngust, 2008). It was a means of regaining access to the lost landscapes of the narrated stories. Wandering across the sites of the often destroyed ancestral villages of my participants, whose stories led me to today's Israel, made think of Tim Ingold's work and his reflections on the relationship between walking and leaving 'footprints' (Ingold, 2004; Ingold and Verngust, 2008). Ingold and Vergust (2008) argue that walking creates a particular relationship between the surface and the person walking. Walking leaves footprints on the surface. These footprints leave marks on the surface, but these marks are not permanent. They observe: 'Footprints are, in short, impressions rather than inscriptions, and the movement they register is one of changing pressure distributions at the interface between the body and the ground' (2008: 8). I realized that perhaps a better way of describing what I did with the stories of the research participants in Israel and Palestine was 'walking' them, rather than merely following them, leaving footprints in the forms of collected footage and, in some cases, material objects I carried back.

These series of 'walks' with camera became essential in opening different ways of seeing (Berger, 1972) and ways of sensing (Howes and Classen, 2014) diasporic experiences, but also in opening different relations with the participants. The ethnographic journeys and the collected audio-visual material guided further dialogue. On my return to Poland and England, I went back to interviewees to share the experiences, stories and artefacts of my journeys, as well as the created footage. The objects I carried back to the research participants constituted another stage of the multimedia 'exchange' that became a constitutive element of the fieldwork. As I continued the research process, I realized it became a process of on-going 'gift exchange' (Mauss, 1923; Komter, 2007). I was generously granted the stories and instructions of where and how to get to places of interest. In return for their generosity I would bring something back from my journeys – stones, scarves, mandarins, books, photographs and more stories. These objects I carried made me consider the role of the materiality involved the research process (Benett, 2012). Not only did the objects carry a physical weight, but they also carried emotive weight, becoming symbolic participants in the research process (c.f. Bennet, 2012: 3).



**Figure 3.4. Stones from the no longer existing village of Al-Zaghariyya in Upper Galilee, which I carried back to Omar in Krakow, Poland**

This dynamic character of going ‘back and forth’ that constituted the research process was marked by my constantly evolving relationship with the participants, as well as with the fieldwork itself. Centred on the diasporic journeys of research participants, the fieldwork itself became a journey of shifting perspectives, navigating between the ‘here and there’ of different diasporic spaces and the ‘now and then’ of different diasporic temporalities.

### **3.3. The research journey: access, sample and methods**

The fieldwork consisted of a series of circular journeys, which were carried out over the course of three years, delineated in the chart below. For the sake of clarity, it can be divided into three stages. It began in Poland in early 2012 with a series of oral history interviews and extended participant observation conducted in Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław and Łódź. Subsequently, in the autumn of 2012, I went to Israel and Palestine to follow some of the stories of the research participants. In the second stage of the fieldwork, I repeated the process again in the summer of 2013 in the UK, where I interviewed participants in London, Sussex and Glasgow. Their oral stories paved the way for a continuation of the multisensory

ethnography in Israel and Palestine, which I conducted in the autumn of 2013. I then kept returning to the research participants in Poland and in the UK until early 2015, when I was putting together the films that accompany the thesis. The table below describes the sequence of the methods used at different stages of the fieldwork.

<b>Overview of the fieldwork and sequence of the methods used</b>			
	Date	Method	Location
Stage I	May - August 2012	Oral history interviews	Poland
	September - December 2012	Audio-visual ethnography of oral histories	Poland, Israel, West Bank, East Jerusalem
Stage II	June - August 2013	Oral history interviews	UK
	September - October 2013	Audio-visual ethnography of oral histories	UK, Israel, West Bank, East Jerusalem
Stage III	Jan 2014 - April 2015	Return visits and sharing the audio-visual material	Poland, UK

**Figure 3.3. Stages of the fieldwork**

My extended stay in Israel and the West Bank in late 2012 was only possible because I was volunteering as a human rights observer for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine (EAPPI), for which I was based in East Jerusalem alongside five other observers. Our daily tasks included monitoring human rights violations at three checkpoints: Qalandia, Zaytoun and Shu’fat. It also involved working with Palestinian communities especially affected by occupation policies, and responding to urgent human rights situations, most often related to house demolitions and instances of settler violence. In East Jerusalem, we worked in the Shu’fat refugee camp in Silwan and the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhoods, as well as in Nabi Samwil located in the ‘seam zone.’<sup>13</sup> In Area C of the West Bank, we worked with the Jahalin Bedouin and farmers in the Bidduku region. While

<sup>13</sup> ‘Seam zone’ is a term used by UN OCHA to describe those areas of the West Bank that were de facto annexed to Israel by the separation barrier. Inhabitants of ‘seam zones’ maintain West Bank IDs. Although they are living on territory that has been annexed to the State of Israel, they are not allowed to travel inside Israel without a valid permit.

not directly related to my fieldwork, my role as an observer allowed me to undertake extensive ethnographic observation and gave a direct and 'insider' access to people, problems and places that were important to my research perspective and that helped me to better understand the context of my research. It also made me acutely aware of the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian society in the Occupied Palestinian Territories – in East Jerusalem, in the West Bank and in Gaza – and the difficulties faced by Palestinian communities inside Israel.

### **3.3.1. Sample, access and recruitment criteria**

The main sampling and recruitment strategy was to access different segments of the Palestinian populations in Poland and the UK and collect oral histories, which, while not representative, would engage the diversity of experiences and diasporic journeys among these populations. In both countries, I came across different challenges related to securing access and the relevant composition of the sample. In Poland, where I conducted the pilot stage and the first part of the fieldwork, the key challenge was to gain trust and to convince potential participants to take part in the project. There has been no published study on Palestinian migration to Poland. The research participants had extremely varied perceptions of the size of the Palestinian population in Poland, with some estimating a few hundred and others a few thousand. The group has remained small, largely invisible to the mainstream society and highly suspicious of potential spying activities (cf. Lindholm Schultz, 2003). In the UK, the challenges were of a different nature and were related to the more complex profile of Palestinian population there (Lindholm Schultz, 2003; Matar, 2005; Mahmoud, 2005;).

I decided to include anyone who claimed a Palestinian background in the sample regardless of the type of Palestinian ancestry. This meant that I included people who arrived in Poland and the UK in different circumstances, as well as people born in the respective host countries, often in mixed ethnicity families. While this approach had major advantages in terms of an openness to various types of diasporic journeys, it had also one major limitation. Adopting an approach based on self-identification meant that the pool of potential participants consisted of people for whom Palestinian-ness mattered at least to

some degree. The sample would thus not include cases of people with Palestinian ancestry who did not identify with the identity categories used in the study.

The sample strategy involved a combination of snowball sampling with recruitment from different sources that could ensure a broad cross-section of respondents. Snowball sampling is a recruitment strategy employed in qualitative research in which a sample of research participants is generated through referrals made by people who share or who know of people who fulfil the study's inclusion criteria (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Snowball sampling is widely used in qualitative research situations where it is not possible to get a pool of respondents or when the research is sensitive (i.e. Bryman, 2001: 99; Becker, 1998). In the absence of a large reliable sampling frame, one of the greatest advantages of using snowball sampling was that gaining access to the participants was facilitated by the referral system. I was aware, however, of its limitations in relation to the lack of diversity in social networks. In order to minimize this risk, I followed the path of other social researches and started the chain of referrals from different people (Renzetti and Lee, 1993: 86).

I was lucky enough to have developed a network of contacts from participation in Palestinian cultural events in Poland. I already knew several Palestinians from different circles living in Warsaw and Krakow from whom I could start my search. At the pilot stage of my fieldwork, I started collaborating with Kamal, who I knew from cultural events and who has been an active member of the informal Polish-Palestinian Friendship Society. He did not want to take part in the formal interview, but agreed to help by putting me in touch with potential contacts and subsequently became my 'gatekeeper'. Gatekeepers are described in academic literature as individuals who 'have the power to withhold access to people or situations for the purposes of research' (Miniechiello et al., 1997 in De Laine, 2000: 123). I was grateful for Kamal's help, but I soon realized certain limitations of working through a gatekeeper. These problems are well described and generally relate to the gatekeeper's influence on the selection of participants (cf. Miller, 1999; Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert, 2007). While Kamal's ability to introduce me to research subjects as a 'trusted researcher' was indispensable, especially in the beginning of the process, his engagement in cultural and political affairs had a number of potential implications for my research. Kamal was trying to put me in touch with 'good contacts', as he referred to the

individuals that he suggested – meaning that he had this own strategy of selection over which I had no control. Secondly, since these contacts knew I received their details through Kamal, they might have thought I was expecting them to be similarly active in Palestinian issues. As the fieldwork progressed, I tried to avoid relying on gatekeepers and used snowball sampling. The snowball method was able to reach up to four ‘generations’.

My Polish sample over-represents men in their 40s and 50s due to the pattern of male immigration to Poland during the first wave of Palestinian immigration. From what I managed to establish during the course of the fieldwork, the majority of Palestinians who came Poland in the late 70s and early 80s were male students arriving with PLO scholarships to universities located in countries of the Eastern Block – Czechoslovakia, Poland and Russia. Many of those who arrived had been earlier engaged in the resistance activities in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria often with the PLFP.<sup>14</sup> While there were a limited number of women arriving with PLO scholarships, none of them, according to my informants, stayed in Poland after having completing their studies. The majority of men who stayed married locally. Given their background, they create a largely secular community. Thus, another group in my Polish sample consisted of Polish- Palestinians born in the mixed ethnicity families. As I moved forward with the fieldwork, I tried to make sure that my sample would include not only a diversity of diasporic journeys, but also a range of ages and genders. During recruitment, I gave specific attention to ensuring that women were represented. In the context of the male-dominated nature of the Palestinian presence in Poland, recognizing the marginal voices of women within the small Palestinian networks there became particularly important.

In the UK, it was easier to recruit participants. The Palestinian community, estimated to be 20,000, is larger than in Poland and has a more established presence as part of the wider Arab community (Shiblak, 2000; Lindholm Schultz; 2003; Matar, 2005).<sup>15</sup> By the time I began the UK fieldwork, I had already developed a vast network of relationships with several circles of Palestinians that I had met at various Palestinian cultural events organized by the Palestinian Return Centre and the Arab-British Centre, as well as at the Palestinian

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<sup>14</sup> The Popular Front of Liberation of Palestine, a left wing organization associated with the PLO.

<sup>15</sup> Given the character of British census, and similar to the situation in Poland, there are no official statistics giving the precise number of Palestinians in Britain and the second generation born in Britain would not be recognized as separate ethnic group (c.f. Matar, 2005).

Film Festival and at events I was organizing or participating in as a former human rights observer. Through these networks, I managed to contact some religious and political circles representing a different spectrum of opinions. The main challenge with the UK research was to ensure engagement with the full diversity of Palestinian migration to the UK beyond the sections of the community represented at cultural events. In contrast to Poland, Palestinian migration to the UK has had a more heterogeneous character in terms of socio-economic background, political and religious affiliation and period of arrival (Shibblak, 2000; Matar, 2005). Early migration to the UK had a more middle class character, followed by refugees from Lebanon and entrepreneurs who sought refuge in the UK after the Gulf War as well as the migrants from the Occupied Palestinian Territories.<sup>16</sup> My goal was to reach different classes and strands of Palestinian diasporic society, which is dispersed and dissolved in the wider Arab population. In order to diversify the sample, I recruited participants in Arab and Palestinian eateries and restaurants and through family and friends of the acquaintances I had made in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. My intention was to include in the sample a diversity of migration backgrounds in terms of time of arrival in the UK as well as in place of departure – both in Palestine and elsewhere in the region (see Chapter Four).

### **3.3.2. Oral history interviews**

In the social sciences, narrative methods ascribe an important role to the process of telling and putting together memories in stories (Plummer, 2001; Denzin, 1997; Portelli, 1991, 1997; Gunaratnam, 2009; Frank, 2010). For instance, Paul Ricoeur sees the narrative as constitutive in creating the sense of self in the world. He sees human beings as the narrators of their own lives who 'recognise themselves in the stories they tell about themselves' (1990: 247). According to Ricoeur people link various elements from their biographies in the act of telling to give meaning to their lives. These narratives are created in relation to other people and other social discourses and contain the elements of how people see themselves, how they would like to be seen, and also how they are situated in wider social contexts. Scholarship on narrative approaches recognizes that in life history interviews it is

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<sup>16</sup> The early Palestinian presence in Britain dates back to 1930s and the Mandate Period, when Palestinians were coming for educational purposes. Small numbers of them arrived in the 1940s as the result of Al - Nakba. Among the subsequent arrivals were refugees and entrepreneurs coming from Lebanon in the 80s after the PLOs expulsion from the country (who mainly went to Sweden and Germany), as well as groups of Palestinians arriving after the Gulf War and from the OPT as the result of the occupation. While bigger than Poland, the size of the Palestinian diaspora in the UK remains small in comparison to Germany or Sweden (c.f. Shiblak, 2000; Lindholm Schultz, 2003; Matar, 2005).

important to listen to what is being told, as well as how, why and in what way it is told (Portelli, 1997; Denzin, 1997; Plummer, 2001).

Oral historian Alessandro Portelli treats the narrative encounter as ‘an art dealing with the individual in social and historical context’ and argues for viewing the oral story not as a ‘story’ of its own, but as a ‘history’ that puts the narrative in a particular position in relation to the outside world (1997: viii). For Portelli, oral history is a tool that invites ‘looking for connections between the personal biography and between individual experience and wider historical transformations’ (*ibid.*). His interest in the oral history interview is to examine how people speak ‘to the history’ (28.04.2009, lecture at Goldsmiths). My engagement with oral history interviews, which will be further discussed in the following sections, was concerned with the meaning that diasporic subjects give to their personal, collective and national memories and the ways in which they story these memories.

Importantly in this context, Yasmin Gunaratnam calls a narrative the ‘event’ of meaning making and emphasizes the performative role of the language used in narrative (2009: 23-24). She emphasizes that narratives should not be treated as a direct representation of experience, what Shapiro calls ‘narrative fundamentalism’ (Shapiro 2011: 68). Arthur Frank asserts that stories also have a moral imperative, making demands on listeners, especially when it comes to interpretation (2010: 110). Barbara Laslett adds that ‘life stories are not just another research technique. They are also engaging in ways that many of us have been taught not to be engaged: emotionally’ (1999: 401). The narrative approach allowed me to look at Palestinians outside of Palestine through the lens of their personal experiences and the meanings ascribed to these experiences in the process of telling. My fieldwork then became a dialogic journey through the different temporalities and geographies that shaped the ideas, senses and imageries of Palestine they narrated in the stories.

#### *The grammar of the oral history interviews*

In practical terms, the oral interviews lasted from just over an hour to more than three hours, and in more than half of the cases, the stories were told in a series of encounters (as detailed in Chart 1 above). Each time we would meet again, I felt the relationship with a research participant had evolved – the conversation flowed more smoothly and I was treated with a greater openness. Rachel Thompson asserts that the ‘long view’ offered by

qualitative longitudinal research studies offers the possibility of developing more complex and realistic understandings of how and why communities live as they do and of getting 'beyond the surface' (2007: 572 - 580). In my research, staying in touch mattered and continued to be important throughout the process. In Poland, all of the interviews were conducted in Polish and later transcribed and translated by me in the process of writing the thesis. In the UK, all of the interviews were conducted in English.

The interviews took the form of an adapted Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method. According to Tom Wengraf (2001, 2004), the aim of the BNIM interview is to create a space that allows for story-telling, where the narrator leads the story, facilitated by the researcher. The first of the three narrative sub-sessions begins with the single most important question, called the SQUIN (Single Question Inducing Narrative), which is designed to 'to elicit the life-story of the informant as he or she chooses to tell' (Wengraf, 2004: 4). In this part of the interview, the researcher's role is restricted to listening, taking notes and encouraging recall and story-telling. No new questions are asked as the narrative unfolds. The second sub-session allows the researcher to ask questions, but only related to the topics raised and in the order they were raised. The third sub-session allows the researcher to tap into topics that might not have been raised by the interviewee. The most important rules of the BNIM interview are around the role of the researcher as an 'active' listener, where the researcher is a facilitator that does not rush or bombard their subject with questions, but rather allows a smooth and encouraging flow of discussion (*ibid.*: 5).

Although I wanted to follow the rules of the BNIM interview as described by Wengraf, I learnt quickly that 'active listening' and staying silent would sometimes prove difficult. In several cases respondents expected a conversation and demanded interaction despite my initial explanation that during their initial narration I would not disturb them with questions. In some cases the participants would stop and ask me questions related to my own experiences. I would always respond to these requests. I felt the conversation should be about the process of exchange. I sensed that developing a relationship with my interviewees was more important and felt more natural than my willingness to maintain the control over the interview. As Riessman puts it:

Although we have particular paths we want to cover related to the substantive and theoretical foci of our studies, narrative interviewing

necessitates following participants down *their* trails. Giving up control of a fixed interview format - 'methods' designed for 'efficiency' - encourages greater equality (and uncertainty) in the conversation. (2008: 24).

My SQUIN question was: 'Could you tell me the story of your life, describing in detail the events that have been of particular importance to you?' I did not touch upon Palestinian-ness immediately because I wanted to leave it to the subjects to determine how much it mattered in their own narrative. Nevertheless, from my introduction to the participants, they knew that I was interested in getting to know different Palestinian experiences of people who live in Poland and the UK, so they interpreted the initial question in this context.

In some cases interviews required only some introductory questions and occasional encouragement. I noticed that the open SQUIN question worked well with participants who had a clear diasporic trajectory marked by moving from one place to another. Most often these subjects would start from narrating where their families came from, where they were born and would then explain their entire journeys and the circumstances under which they moved to different places, eventually arriving in Poland or in the UK. They seemed to value the time to tell their sometimes very complex life stories in detail. I remember when I first introduced the subject to Mamdooh, who has lived in Poland for the past 30 years after leaving Damascus, he asked: 'Do you really have time to listen to the entire story?' When I nodded, he asked me to wait for him for 30 minutes and then invited me through the backdoor of his shop. He prepared a chair for me and for himself, made himself a coffee, gave me water and a falafel, tidied up the space, sat comfortably on the chair, lit a cigarette and said: 'Now we can start properly.' We spoke for several hours.

The SQUIN worked differently with those research participants born in Europe who had spent most of their life in one country. Often, they would ask for additional explanation or a re-phrasing of the question. After hearing my initial question, Hana commented: 'OK. I will tell you the story of me as a *half-er*,' meaning that she wanted to tell me the story of growing up in a mixed ethnicity family. Sam started by saying, 'My story really starts when I realized that my family looked a little bit different than other families in Poland, so this is the kind of story I will tell you, ok?' I was happy to work with their re-interpretations of the SQUIN and followed up on themes that appeared in their narratives. I felt it was difficult for these

participants to 'tell the whole story', since they would stop to wait for another question or to double check with if their response was what I 'expected'. After several such instances, I realized this uncertainty could be related their uncertainty regarding feelings of Palestinian-ness. In many cases, in different ways, participants expressed concerns about how other Palestinians perceived their Palestinian-ness. They might have felt pressured in the research situation to 'perform' as 'good Palestinians' and were worried about whether they fit with my expectations or projected the collective 'Palestinian' norm. Others felt no such limitations and were immediately at ease with having their 'own take' on the question.

### *Interview intimacies*

Nirmal Puwar and Mariam Fraser observe that the circumstances of undertaking research have often been a neglected part of the process and cut off from the research analysis (2008: 4-5). Against this limitation, they argue that these circumstances have an important influence on way we 'carry' the research and think about the research analysis. They write: 'The rhythm, smell, sense, tension and pleasure that go into producing what will become research and data remain largely outside of such discussions, even though these are the very ways in which we carry research into the library, the studio and the lecture hall' (*ibid.*: 2). Indeed, many of the conversations that form the basis of this study had a highly emotional character. They involved tears, trembling voices, nervously smoked cigarettes, whispers and long moments of silence – all different 'things' that make the interview, but which are difficult to account for in words. These assemblages of moments, emotions and feelings that I carried 'with words' accompanied me throughout the research process. Going back to the transcripts or reviewing the footage again, reminded me of those experiences and often sustained me in the processes of analysis and writing.

I remember listening to the life story of Palestinian journalist Marwan. He told me his personal account of fighting in the south of Lebanon, where he lost his fiancée and his best friends. I could see how difficult it was for him to talk about these events and I did not want him to feel vulnerable. I told him that I appreciated what he was saying and that it must be difficult for him. I stressed that we could stop the interview at any time. He smoked a cigarette in silence and we continued. Sometimes he would ask me to switch off the recorder. For Hayat, a teacher from London, telling the complex story of her parents was so

difficult that she could not stop weeping. We were sitting in a quiet café in North London and I felt guilty that she was re-living these traumatic experiences when telling the story. In these instances, I would try to reassure people that they did not need to tell me everything. I felt privileged to be able to listen to these experiences. I also became aware of my responsibility in 'carrying' these stories and the ethical dimensions of involved with the research. I remember interviewing Yousef, a doctor in Warsaw, who initially said that he considered himself a very quiet and not very outspoken person. When he started talking, however, it felt as if he had been waiting for the opportunity to tell his story and to reflect on his life journey. He spoke for nearly three hours without stopping. He ended saying that it was good to be able to tell this story and that he had never told it in this way before.

Yousef's story brings me to the ethical implications of the oral stories being 'a product' of the research situation. I realise that, as in his case, the oral histories narrated in my presence were often told for the first time. Before my interview with Omar, for example, I heard from his daughter that she was curious to hear what her father would say, as, 'He would never tell those things.' Mamdooh told me after our interview that it was good to finally put all the different pieces of his life together. Marwan said he had been waiting for a chance to tell his story and I promised to give him the recordings and a transcript of the interview. These experiences closely resemble Portelli's observation that

what is spoken in a typical oral history interview has usually never been told in *that form* before[original emphasis]. Most personal or family tales are told in pieces and episodes, when the occasion arises; we learn even the lives of our closest relatives by fragments, repetitions, hearsay. (1997: 4)

I agree with Portelli's observation that the narrative which comes to life in the research situation, in which the narrator is 'made to' make sense of their life to an 'external' listener, is a 'synthetic product'. The fact that it is 'a synthetic product' does not, however, make it less 'real' (*ibid.*). Once we reject the desire to see the narrative as a 'truth beyond telling' (Back, 2009: 4), it does not matter that the narrative is 'constructed' for the needs of the research situation. Thus, I propose that the narratives, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, offer, to return to Les Back, 'versions of truth' (2007); truths constructed by the research participants and tailored for the needs of the act of telling.

Arthur Frank notices that stories are 'not the best medium for telling what might be called definitive truth or singular truth', because memory is imperfect and influenced by the way we see events from the past in the present (2010: 90). In his view, the stories reflect more of 'a desire for what might have happened than commitment to an accurate description of what did happen' and they should be seen as performing truth rather than as telling of truth (*ibid.*).

#### **2.2.4. From the oral history interviews to the audio-visual ethnography**

My first interview took place at a large shopping mall in a Warsaw suburb, a location far from the 'classic' descriptions of an anthropologist going to a distant location' to do research (Clifford, 1992). Undertaking fieldwork 'at home' meant that I had to unlearn the city I had lived in for many years and learn it anew through the eyes of my research participants. This experience reminded me of Back's call for commitment to 'live sociology' by 'pluralizing the vantage points from which sociological attentiveness is trained' (Back and Puwar, 2012: 30). The same pathways and places of my own Warsaw were acquiring new meanings and I was challenged to look at them differently.

In effect, during the time of my Warsaw fieldwork, I lived simultaneously in two different 'archi-textural' layers of the city – the Warsaw related to my work and life and the Warsaw related to my fieldwork. The same places and same journeys had different meanings and I read them differently (de Certeau, 1984; Puwar, 2010: 299). While in Poland I was seen as a 'local'; in the UK, I was often treated as an outsider and my research participants would frequently act as 'hosts' towards me. In other instances, I was seen as a person holding a status similar to the participant – as a person living in London, but emotionally invested elsewhere.

Most of the interviews, both in Poland and in the UK, took place during the summer. Sometimes we would meet in the park or go for a walk. There were endless coffee shops. At other times, especially when meeting a second time, I was invited to the participants' houses for a tea or a meal. The distinction between interview and participant observation tends to blur and the two need not be seen as separate research techniques (O'Reilly, 2005; Pink, 2009). In Poland, one of the places where I would most frequently meet my respondents was in bistros serving Middle Eastern cuisine. I got to know Warsaw via

different 'kebab bars'. as they are called in Poland - from the Sahara Bar to the Liban [Lebanon] Bar and the Betlejem [Bethlehem] Bar, where I was fed copious amounts of falafel and mint tea. London had its equivalent of the Betlejem Bar, a Palestinian restaurant in West London, where I would sometimes go and 'hang around' chatting to people. These places were for my subjects what Nirmal Puwar calls 'social scenes' - public places where people feel at ease with themselves and able to find intimacy within a larger public sphere (2007: 253). These social scenes, I noticed, allowed for different types of conversations, as my research participants were more open within them about sharing stories without feeling pressure to '[explain] yourself and your difference' (Puwar, 2007: 260). In these places I was not only lucky to listen to the stories of my research participants and experience the scale of their hospitality, but I was also able to conduct extensive participant observation of daily interactions with customers and friends and activities involved in running a kebab restaurant.



**Figure 3.5. Still image from the 'Bar Betlejem' in Warsaw.**

### **3.2.5. Moving through space and time with a video camera**

The oral histories served as departure points for the exploration of research participants' narratives in the form of audio-visual ethnography. With the visual ethnography, I sought to engage with the diversity and materiality of the participants' diasporic journeys. My

intention was to provide a multi-sensory experience that would reflect the plurality of diasporic experiences, as well as the social and cultural landscapes that appeared in the oral stories. The video camera became a vital device for the exploration of the different temporal and spatial notions involved in these diasporic trajectories. It was achieved by a narrative and visual juxtaposition of different dimensions of participants' stories: the presence of their telling in Poland and in the UK and the exploration of their memories of their own past and the ancestral past through cinematic interpretations of imagined and contemporary geographies of Palestine and Israel.

It needs to be noted that the value of the multi-sited ethnography was not in the literal following of all the physical diasporic connections between the 'here and there' and 'now and then'. Neither should it be seen as trying to impose a straightforward connection between diasporic subjects and Palestine, a relation which was often complex, ambiguous and far from straightforward. Many of the research participants had only limited direct memories of Palestine or none at all. As Baronian et al. write: "[T]he thread of continuity" that diasporic memory spins should not be seen as an Ariadne's thread that provides a solid, retraceable connection with the past or a lost and retrievable origin' (2005: 15). As discussed in the previous chapter, diasporic roots cannot be seen as stable nor can memories of diaspora be understood as fixed. Thus, this 'following' needs to be seen as a more impressionistic exploration of some of the relationships between diasporic memories and the places and spaces participants referred to in their narratives.

The audio-visual ethnography required focusing on certain aspects of the narrated experiences and choosing some participants to agree for filming. These choices were informed by a combination of different criteria. The most important was consent from and collaboration with the research participants. Another criterion was ensuring a diversity of experiences. In the final selection of films I wanted to encompass the diversity of diasporic experiences and stories to reflect on the variety and richness of the ways in which Palestine is remembered and narrated. This involved engaging with stories of different generations of diasporic Palestinians, as well as selecting different locations. Eventually, my final selection was also limited by technical, organizational and financial constraints. Overall I pursued more threads than those that are included in the final selection. For instance, I started filming the story of one family in London who originated from Gaza, but was subsequently

unable to enter Gaza due to the heavy restrictions Israeli authorities imposed on access to the region. Irrespective of the final selection of the five films that accompany this thesis, I would make the 'return visits' to the research participants. The chart below summarizes the ethnographic journeys I took.

I travelled with my camera to many places, but I did not insist on specific locations. It was the participants' narratives and the subsequent collaboration with them that determined the locations of further ethnographic inquiry. These ethnographic journeys would often start in various locations in Poland and UK, where the research participants lived, and led me to number of diasporic locations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and today's Israel. In following the stories, the ethnographic 'site' of the research was situated, using Marcus's terms, within the scope of my research participants' narratives. Therefore it was not possible to pre-determine or delineate its borders.

<b>Following the oral stories with a camera – initial map of locations</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location of the first interview</b>	<b>Main filming locations</b>
2	Omar	Kraków, Poland	Al-Zanghariyya*, Upper Galilee, today in Israel
3	Marwan**	Warsaw, Poland	Balad-Al-Sheikh*, today Neshet in Haifa, Israel
5	Emad	Warsaw, Poland	Suhmata*, Upper Galilee, today in Israel
6	Jakub** In'am	Warsaw, Poland	Bar Betlejem, Warsaw West Bank, Bejta Bar Sahara, Warsaw
7	Alina **	Kraków, Poland	Kraków, Poland Podhale Mountain Region (Tatry)
8	Konrad	Łódź, Poland	Coffee Bar Kwadrat, Łódź
9	Mahmoud	East Jerusalem, OPT	Yaffa, Israel
10	Fawzi	Warsaw, Poland	Umm Al-Fahm, today's Israel
11	Antoine and Joseph **	London,	Haifa Al – Ateeqa, today's Israel

<b>Following the oral stories with a camera – initial map of locations</b>			
12	Wael **	Glasgow	Old Town Jerusalem
13	Leen	London	London
14	Jumana	London	London Planned filming site: Gaza – no access
** Those of the films, which are presented as a final collection * Villages that were destroyed and no longer exist			
<b>Figure 3.7. Map of filming locations</b>			

Some of the films were shot partly in the participant’s current location, where they lived, which was an extension of participant observation (c.f. Durington and Ruby, 2011). Sometimes participants would put me in touch with their families and friends, like Yakoub did with his family in Beita in the West Bank. In other instances, I would travel alone, as when I searched for Omar’s, Marwan’s or Emad’s villages in today’s Israel. Sometimes I would meet them in the location - like Wael on his annual trip to Jerusalem. Sometimes the camera would not travel further, as in the case of Alina’s film, which was shot in the Podhale Region of the Tatra Mountains in Poland, when she was preparing for the marathon in Palestine.

In most cases, the journey continued to today’s Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Some parts of the sequences consisted of footage filmed ‘in search’ of the locations that were identified in the oral histories. I would travel to the places in Palestine or Israel guided by their instructions, which were more or less specific. For instance, as I followed the oral histories, I was led to areas in today’s Israel that, before 1948, were the sites of Palestinian villages called Al-Zanghariyya, Suhmata, and Balad-Al-Sheikh, as well as to formerly Palestinian neighbourhoods in Haifa, Jaffa and West Jerusalem. Especially while in the areas that were once within historic Palestine and now in Israel, I found myself engaged in a strange ethnography of ‘absence’. Searching for the destroyed villages of research participants or their ancestors, I felt as if I was looking for ‘ghosts’, to use Avery Gordon’s (1997) language, something that is not there or cannot be seen. Gordon explains

the 'ghost' as 'a form by which something lost or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way' (1997: 8). Marcus argues that 'the follow the biography type of ethnographies' could become 'potential guides to the delineation of ethnographic spaces within systems shaped by categorical distinctions that may make these spaces otherwise invisible' (1998: 94). Learning to locate these sites and to search for their traces as I walked through them made me acutely aware of the scale of Palestinian dispossession and the ways in which Palestinians continue to be made absent. The villages I was trying to find were absent from the landscape and absent from the Israeli maps. I was trying to find their locations juxtaposing the Israeli road map and Google Earth Maps with locations marked by the Palestine Remembered website ([www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com)).



Figure 3.8. Map of Palestine 1946, source: <http://www.mideastweb.org>

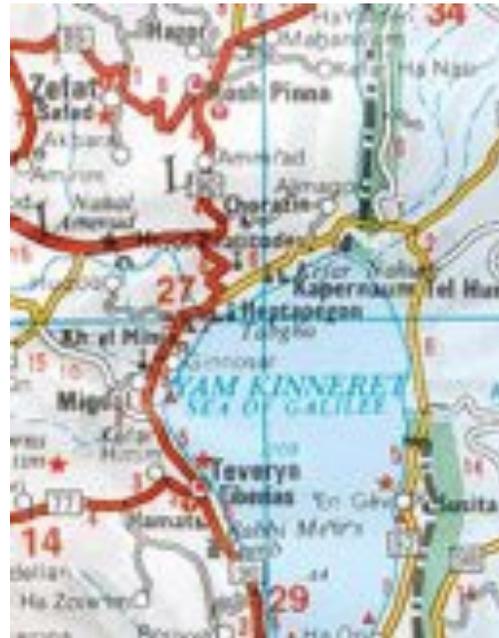


Figure 3.9. Avis Map of Israel 2012



**Figure 3.10 . Location of Al- Zanghariyya on Google Earth from the [www.PalestineRemembered.com](http://www.PalestineRemembered.com) website**

Other former Palestinian villages had become part of Jewish neighbourhoods, as in the case of Balad-Al-Sheikh, now Nesher, a neighbourhood of Haifa. Some of the villages I was looking for had become covered in forest, like Suhmata; in other cases, access was prohibited or partly prohibited. Sometimes, the participants' narratives would lead me to different places in today's Occupied Palestinian Territories. In the West Bank, the narratives of my research participants led me on less detective-like trajectories to Nablus, Beita and Ramallah, to particular places such as refugee camps or checkpoints that featured in the narratives, and to Jerusalem. These routes often meant navigating different kinds of maps and landscapes and experiencing the material traces of occupation - checkpoints, walls and roadblocks. In the case of Jerusalem, it meant navigating through the palimpsestic nature of the city.

In conceptualising the relationship between the oral histories and visual exploration, I draw upon Caroline Knowles' observation that 'it is precisely around the visual images (as well as voices heard in the direct quotes) that the text opens up and lets the reader in' (2000: 18, in Holliday, 2004: 61). The role of the audio-visual material that accompanies the written thesis is to add texture and allow a different type of engagement with the stories. It does not lay claims to any interpretative authority over text or image. Both the voice and the footage have been selected in the process of editing and building a film narrative. As such, the short films need to be seen as partial and subjective interpretations of the participant's narratives. I use them to offer what Arthur Frank defines as a hermeneutic interpretation,

where the researcher seeks ‘not to display mastery over the story, but rather to expand the listener’s openness to how much the story is saying’ (2010: 88). Following Pink (2006, 2009a, 2009b) and Banks (2011), the visual material that accompanies this thesis should not be seen as an illustration of the oral histories or an exhaustive account of the complex life journeys of participants. To build on Frank’s observation, I suggest that the video material should be seen as part of an ongoing dialogue with the narratives that invites further engagement and welcomes further reflection.



**Figure 3.11. The family house of one of the research participants in Balad-Al-Sheikh, now a Jewish prayer house in a suburban neighbourhood in Haifa, now called Nesher.**



**Figure 3.12. Collection of stills from one of the short films 'Return to Haifa-Al-Ateeqa'**

### **3.2.6. Devices as enemies: challenges in 'producing' the fieldwork**

Les Back has observed that 'the power the tape recorder as sociological devices has been both enabling and limiting' (2012: 257). Throughout the time of my fieldwork, I called my recording devices my 'enemies' as I often felt physically and emotionally restrained by the technology. In retrospect, the devices I carried also became good companions, on which I heavily relied for their recording abilities.

Arranging the interviews had little to do with the pre-planning I had imagined. Often when I called potential participants, I would get immediate positive responses and be asked to meet the same day. Many of my interlocutors were reluctant to make specific plans for future meetings: I kept hearing, 'Maybe tomorrow, maybe next week, maybe next month.' Whenever I could, I opted to have the interview the same day. I got used to carrying my 'sociological devices' - notebook, audio-recorder and later even my camera - wherever I went.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, I faced reservations about using my audio-recording devices and having to get written consent from participants. Both of these activities symbolically bolstered the border between interview and informal conversation. I saw the devices as a kind of armour I had to put on, a ritual I needed to perform in order to engage in the 'science of interview' (Hughes, 1971:504, cited in Back, 2012: 248). I kept worrying that the devices had a 'distancing' effect on my participants and took my focus away from the interlocutor to technical details. Each time, I placed the device in a discreet spot to make sure that the equipment did not overwhelm the participants or make them feel self-conscious.

Aware of these constraints, I tried not to limit my sociological imagination to the recording device (Silverman, 2007: 42) and to pay attention to details. Sometimes it was after I switched off the audio recorder that my research participants would really start talking and the conversation would take off. Never fully trusting my recording device, I always wrote descriptions of not only what was said, but also how it was said. Despite these limitations, I was able to audio-record the majority of my interviews. When I returned home, I would review the notes from the meeting and subsequently download the recordings and transcribe the interviews.

The video camera added another layer of technological complexity. In some cases I separately recorded audio and video with my DSLR camera and took notes at the same time. Except for one instance, I did not film during my first contact with a participant. I always wanted to make sure that they felt comfortable with the presence of the camera. The need to engage in conversation as well as control the light, sound and audio of the equipment required attention and was sometimes challenging, a reminder of Back's assertion that the 'interview is a place where social forms are staged' (2012: 251).

It was during the process of the fieldwork that the technology let me down the most. The memory card on which my first filmed interview was recorded failed and I had to resort to specialist services to restore the data. In other instances, the camera or audio recorder would switch off due to prolonged exposure to high temperatures. Over time I learned to work with these failures and to use them to the advantage of the research project. For instance, when my external drive collapsed, I had to return to Haifa-Al-Ateeqa again. This

'return visit' helped me to see this place in a different light, both literally and metaphorically. Some frames are over or underexposed due to filming in the strong light without professional equipment. In other instances bits of my body enter the screen in the moments, which were not planned. For me as a researcher –and for the viewers of the final edit –these failures are reminders that what we see on the screen is a limited and partial representation of narrators' experiences. They provide insight into the process of the research and bear witness to the relations between research participants and the researcher. Silverman and Back, while aware of their limitations, insist that recordings can be helpful in analysing social worlds, providing their role is understood 'as activity awaiting analysis and not as a picture awaiting a commentary' (Silverman, 2007: 56; Back, 2012; 249). The more time that passed from the interview, the more certain I became that the devices helped me to remember, conjuring details of the encounter. It was good to go back to the recordings, to hear the voices of my research participants, and to bring their storytelling to life.

### **3.4. Conclusion. Shifting perspectives and ethical responsibilities**

Constructing the fieldwork as a series of 'back and forth' journeys involved a constant change in my position as a researcher. I began the research as an 'active listener' to oral stories, and then I became a 'follower', trying to 'trace' and 'walk' some of these stories. Sometimes I felt like a detective looking for something that is 'not to be seen'. On my returns to the research participants, I felt like a 'messenger' sharing the details of the journey. This shift of positions activated a 'chain of reflexive responses' between me and the participants (Puwar and Sharma, 2012: 54). In this sense it was reminiscent of the 'call and response' methodology of exchange, which, in Puwar and Sharma's words, is 'premised upon a process of exchange that involves stages whereby materials are passed and returned, transformed, only to be carried over to the next practitioner involved in the relay of co-production' (*ibid.*). I would respond to participants' stories and later to the environment and landscape I was coming across on my journeys. Research participants would react to my stories, but also the material artefacts I brought and share more stories. Stretched across different geographies and different temporal dimensions, these sets of exchanges, interaction and responses become central to the production of in this study.

In each of the step of this process, my relationship with research participants and the fieldwork evolved, acquiring new meanings. While, following Bourdieu's reflection on simultaneous research in Kabylia, Algeria, and Bern, France (2004: 436), I saw the change of proximities and distance as being of critical value to the research and to the analytical possibilities it offered, I felt a deep sense of responsibility related to these shifting positions and my evolving relationship with participants. At each step of this journey I was taking and each footprint I was leaving, I was faced with difficult ethical dilemmas related to the process of research itself, as well as my ability to carry the experiences and stories in a way that was not only academic, but also conveyed the sense of human urgency that I was encountering on my journey.

In describing my role in the first part of this process, I specifically use the phrase 'active listener' to emphasize the role and the complicity of the researcher in conceiving these stories by research participants. Portelli sees the oral history interview as a dialogical exchange in which the researcher is as much part of the story as the narrator (2009). Gunaratnam similarly names the researcher a 'midwife to the narrative', whose role is in 'skillfully helping and coaxing a narrative into the world, by encouraging and supporting deeper recall and a "being there" experience' (2009: 49). Both of these views imply a deep level of engagement in the encounter, a need for attentiveness.

While I concur with both of these descriptions, this supportive role was sometimes challenging, especially in moments when narrators spoke about sensitive issues, for example those related to the death of loved ones or life threatening situations. There were instances, like when Marwan shared his traumatic war experiences in south Lebanon with me, when I left the interview with a stone in my throat and re-lived the story in my head for many days after. I kept questioning my right to make people go back to their painful memories. The dialogical nature of oral history interviews means that the researcher takes responsibility for the wellbeing of both parties, which was at times difficult to maintain. This very much echoed Frank's assertion that while 'dialogical narrative analysis prescribes no ethical criteria, it also resists moral relativism' (2010: 153).

The participants knew that they were talking to a non-Palestinian Polish woman, and I was aware that they adapted their story according to their perception of my expectations and

cultural background. Sometimes they tried to find a common ground between our experiences. For instance, one participant compared Polish and Palestinian history, saying: 'You must know how it is to live under occupation, because Poland was under occupation for so many years.' In other cases, I would hear that 'it was a European project to transfer Jews to Palestine,' thus pointing towards my complicity in Palestinian dispersion. Several interviewees told me, 'It was guys from Poland that kicked us out in 1948 and built Israel.' Rather than claiming transparency or neutrality of the researcher in the interview process, I build on Donna Haraway's call for a 'situated knowledge' that can emerge from the research: a knowledge that recognises and tries to make apparent and accountable a partial sight and a situated view. Haraway advocates recognising that, as researchers, we are always speaking from 'somewhere' and never from 'nowhere', thus rejecting the notion of 'disengaged knowledge' (1988: 590). She writes: 'I am arguing for a view from a body, always complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured below, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity' (*ibid.*: 589).

The visual ethnography transformed the 'active listening' of research into the process of following the steps of the journeys of the research participants. The partial, fragmented and subjective character of this process involved different kinds of political and personal dilemmas. I was not directly following these journeys. Rather I was re-drawing the stories that I heard with my footwork and the camera. To go back to Ingold's work, my journeys were about mapping participants' journeys and do not lay claims to any form of representation of their experiences. The collective footage cannot be seen as representation of their memories, rather it is an impressionistic interpretation of their memories.

While engaged in visual ethnography, I appreciated my privilege to be able to carry out this type of research that involved travelling to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Palestinian refugees and their ancestors are still denied the right to return or even visit their ancestral homeland as Palestinians. It means that for some of the research participants it is impossible to repeat the journeys or even just to travel to Israel and Palestine, unless they have a passport from their host country. Holding a Polish passport and insisting at the Ben Gurion airport that I was visiting the 'Holy Land' as a tourist might have been stressful and unpleasant, but it allowed me to continue these back and forth journeys without major difficulties.

Another challenge was the awareness that what I was doing in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was not neutral and it was not seen as such by people whom I was meeting on my journeys. By following the contested and obscured histories of my participants in the context of current Israeli policies of erasure, I became aware of the political implications entangled in the process. The journeys to ancestral places of Palestinians who left in 1948 and 1967 were not neutral visits to 'historical sites,' but journeys to locations that were absent from Israeli maps – and, from the perspective of Israeli authorities, absent for a reason. And then, being a Polish non-Jew, I was aware of the 'weight' that my ethnicity carried, which added another layer of complexity. All these entanglements continued to possess my imagination as I was continuing my research and they were occasionally externalized when asked by passing people in the former village of Al-Tira (now a suburb of Haifa), in the forest of Suhmata or in Nesher what I was doing there, what right did I have to be there, and where I was from. On the other end of the spectrum of responses, I met dozens of supportive people in Israel – like people at the Israeli NGO Zochrot – who were very sympathetic towards the research process.<sup>17</sup> The journeys to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, on the other hand, and the experience of living in East Jerusalem were a daily wake up call to me that Palestinian dispossession is not a historical event, but that it continues today. Marcus writes that

in conducting multi-sited research, one finds oneself with all sorts of cross-cutting and contradictory personal commitments. These conflicts are resolved, perhaps ambivalently, not by refuge in being a detached anthropological scholar, but in being sort of ethnographer-activist, renegotiating identities in different sites as one learns more about a slice of a world system. (1999: 98)

Indeed, the main struggle during my three and a half months and my later visits in Palestine and Israel was in realising my complicity and then in maintaining the ability to work with it – as an academic and as a person involved in pro-Palestinian advocacy work in Poland. In doing so, my goal was to maintain a sense of openness to the possibility of dialogue and

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<sup>17</sup> Zochrot is an Israeli NGO that strive to educate the Israeli public about the impact of the Nakba and the establishment of the State of Israel. <http://zochrot.org>

attentiveness to the presence of alternative, or rather conflicting, views, histories and memories of Israel and Palestine.

On my returns to Poland and England after periods of filming, I would meet with the research participants and then my role changed again. These 'return visits' resulted in another wave of encounters producing space for more stories and experiences to emerge. I soon realized, however, that these moments were emotionally demanding both for research participants and for myself. Returning back to my participants with the footage, with the photographs and artefacts from Palestine/Israel initiated a process in which the 'presence' of their memories was confronted with the absences and changes I had often encountered and recorded 'in the field'. Here their imagined geographies of Israel and Palestine were juxtaposed with the contemporary landscape. While all the research participants were well aware of the transformations of the landscape of historic Palestine, being aware was a different feeling than seeing a photograph. These were particularly difficult moments, often evoking contradictory needs of having to reconcile the position of being 'a researcher' and 'a filmmaker'. While I did bring my camera to some of these 'return visits', I also recognised the vulnerability of the research participants in such emotional moments and realised that filming may not always be appropriate. I recorded these encounters only in a few instances and after clear confirmation from the research participants. All of the research participants whose histories accompany this thesis have been consulted in the process of editing and putting together their stories.

#### *Carrying the stories further: on analysis and interpretation*

In the process of analysing the material and writing up the thesis, I initially struggled to find the right framework that would both do justice to the stories and unsettling experiences from the fieldwork and also comply with the analytical dimensions of my research. It involved making choices around which parts of the material to include and which parts to exclude, and these choices concerned both the oral histories as well as the audio-visual footage. Ken Plummer writes that 'most social science is involved in a process of amputation' and explains how sociologists and psychologists cut life stories to see them only in the context of their interests and their discipline (Plummer 2001: 40). While trying to avoid the literal 'amputation' of the stories, the process of selection did entail the necessity to focus on parts of the oral histories that had been narrated as 'wholes' and then

the necessity of putting them in the context of the academic analysis. For instance, I was less interested in research participants' relationship with the host countries - a subject that has been extensively researched within both transnational and migration studies. Rather, as explained in the theoretical chapter, I was more interested in their shifting relationships to the ancestral homeland based on their diasporic journeys and generational differences. As such, in the process of selecting material, I first placed particular attention on memories of the childhood, growing up and adolescence. These were the parts of the stories in which the narrators told about their memories of Palestine or growing up in Palestinian families. I would then follow their relationships with Palestine throughout the oral story making sure that even though I did select specific portions of material, the analysis is made in the context of the entire story. Similarly with the footage, I edited the material based on the juxtaposition of narrated memories and the footage of the sites of memories, as I explain further in Part III. While I wanted to ensure the transparency of the process, the choices that I made, like any process of translation, necessarily involved a level of subjectivity.

Aware however of the partiality involved in the selection process I was looked to the interpretative and analytical lens that would enable to open up the material rather than provide definitive interpretations. I turned to Frank and his notion of dialogical narrative analysis (2010: 82-110). Frank sees the role of the researcher as offering interpretation that complements the story, but does not try to complete it (*ibid.*). Frank insists that a dialogical process of interpretation should always remain a 'work in progress,' a process that can only result in 'partial interpretation and limited understanding' (*ibid.*: 94). The real value in the stories, according to Frank, lies 'in creating the openings by making narratable' - the fact that the stories were told is already an important achievement (*ibid.*: 92).<sup>18</sup>

The aim of this thesis, in its written and cinematic form, is to offer possible interpretations in a manner that encourages further interpretation, engagement and dialogue. The real role of hermeneutic interpretation - to return to Frank - is to 'ask not only what the story means

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<sup>18</sup> Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin, Frank sees an important distinction between the nature of dialogue and monologue. He writes: 'Dialogue refuses what monologue aspires to, which Bakhtin calls FINALIZATION' (2010: 96, capitalization in the original). He further explains that the 'avoidance of finalization does not mean giving up the unity of an account' (98). Rather, its value is in the acceptance that any form of generalization is a part of the analytical process, but is not absolute. Each interpretative 'closure' is temporary and is subject to change and the possibility of different interpretations (c.f. Gunaratnam, 2003: 35). These different interpretations, or 'revisions', as Frank calls them, can appear not only in the dialogue between the researcher and research participants, but in the fact that the participant changes, as well as the meanings they attach to their experiences and stories (2010:99).

within my horizons, but also how far can I understand what it means within the horizons of the storyteller (...) and how does the story call on me to shift my horizons' (*ibid.*: 96). The role of the analysis, together with the audio-visual work, is to attempt to make this shift of horizon possible.

## **Part II. Generations 'Out of Palestine'**

The following three chapters explore and reflect on different modes of remembering and relating to Palestine among diaspora Palestinians in Poland and in the UK. A departing observation, which guides the organization of the following chapters, is that the ongoingness of Palestinian dispossession has forged a multiplicity of diasporic trajectories, which have generated different memories of homeland.

While the events of the Nakba, 1947- 1948, resulted in the most profound wave of uprooting in Palestinian history, the dispossession of the Palestinian population has been a continuous process, resulting in distinct waves of migration and exile from the remaining parts of historic Palestine. The trajectories of my research participants reflect the lasting character of the dispersal. Only a minority of the interviewees experienced the events of the Nakba directly as children during the expulsion. Many of the interviewees were born in the direct aftermath of the Nakba in the refugee camps of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan as children and grandchildren of the 1948 exiles. Several participants were born within the remaining parts of historic Palestine - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem or Gaza - and left as a direct or indirect result of the Israeli occupation, which began in 1967. For many of the younger participants, the displacement from Palestine was the fate of their parents and they themselves were born already in exile.

During the course of my research and analysis, it became apparent that, while all of the interviewees lived in Europe at the time of our conversation, the conditions of these situated trajectories - the pre-departure experience, or lack of the experience of living in Palestine, the circumstances of leaving, the possibilities of visiting - were instrumental to participants' ways of remembering and relating to the (ancestral) homeland. These diverse experiences shaped the ways in which research participants experienced, imagined and narrated Palestine and the different types of connections they formed with their (ancestral) homeland. In narrating their memories of Palestine, they drew from different sets of 'imageries' located in distinct Palestinian temporalities, geographies and political landscapes.

I propose that these diverse trajectories can be grouped into three categories, which form the basis of the generational analysis that structures the next three chapters. The generational lens that I use to organize the empirical material is not exclusively genealogical. Rather, I delineate generations as a set of similar experiences forged through participants' diasporic trajectories. Here, I draw on the classic work of Karl Mannheim, who argues that a generation emerges not exclusively as an age cohort, but through a 'concrete bond' that is created among people sharing the same 'location' and by being exposed to the 'social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization' (1952: 303). The possibility of emergence of the generational derives from what he calls a 'similarity of location'. He defines it as being in a position to experience certain events and to interpret them in a way that leads to the development of a 'similarly stratified consciousness' (*ibid.*: 171). In Mannheim's view, a generation 'is not a "concrete group" i.e. a group that cannot exist without its members having concrete knowledge of each other' (*ibid.*: 165). It is not a community like family, tribe or sect in which the 'individuals of which they are composed do actually form a group, whether the entity is based on vital, existential ties of "proximity" or on the conscious application of the rational will' (*ibid.*). For him the type of bond that ties the generation happens without individuals ascribing to it. It derives from sharing a similar positioning in the social structure, the same location and position, which implies similar modes of experiencing social reality.

The similarity of location does not lead to the emergence of generation automatically, but creates the potential for it. Mannheim observes that 'actual' generations are likely to realize this potential in periods of rapid social change and political upheavals. In his view, young people who enter adulthood are in a unique position to take part in these processes and be 'sucked into the vortex of social change' (1952: 183). He calls this situation a 'fresh contact' and sees young adults as particularly well positioned to challenge the established ways of seeing the world and engage in the events that would be formative for the emergence of a generation. Mannheim emphasizes the importance of young people's 'personally acquired memories' as having the potential to create 'a concrete bond' essential for the generation to actualize itself (*ibid.*). In their narratives, the diasporic Palestinians I interviewed spent a great deal of time recounting personal events from their youth or adolescence, which often overlapped with memories of the larger scale political developments. The experiences they

described, and which took up a large part of their narratives, related to growing up in the refugee camps, childhood under the occupation or youthful engagement in political activities and shaped their modes of remembering and relating to Palestine.

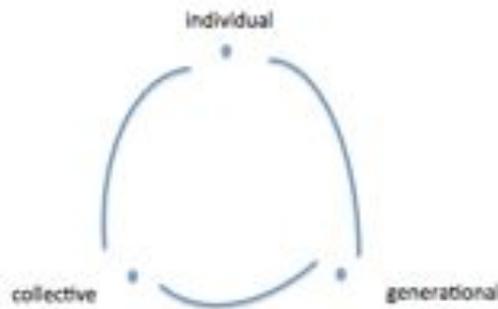
Pickering and Keightley (2012) assert that in highlighting the importance of first hand memories, Mannheim overlooks the importance of intergenerational inheritance in the creation what they call 'communities of memory'. They argue that working through these 'secondhand pasts' is crucial for developing a 'collective senses of being-in-time' (Pickering and Keightley, 2012: 118). Citing the work of Attias-Donfut, they add that 'the feeling of belonging to a generation not only comes about through a horizontal process that links a particular moment in history to a shared experience, but also vertically through family lineages' (*ibid.*). In other words, the generational communities of memory emerge in dialogue between the horizontal workings of the memory in the form of exposure to experiences deriving from similar socio - positioning, but also in the vertical plane through interacting and working with the inherited pasts.

John Collin's (2004) reading of Mannheim's work reflects on the importance of the relationship between the concepts of generation and memory. Collins focuses on the formulation of the generational 'drama' used by Mannheim in relation to the generation-building experiences of young people (2004: 15). He argues that the term 'drama' carries an important yet undeveloped dimension of 'narrativity' related to generational formation. He argues that the term 'generational drama' signifies not only generational experiences themselves, but also the ways in which they are narrated, told, retold and remembered. Collins writes that

in choosing to describe this lasting impact as a 'drama'- rather than simply as a series of discrete events - [Mannheim] calls attention...to the ways in which experiences are fashioned, through the mechanisms of memory, into the form of a story that is likely to contain some combination of heroes, victims and villains; narrative detachment, ironic juxtaposition, and moral judgment; and themes of romance, humor and tragedy. (*ibid.*: 15 - 16)

This observation bears a particular importance in the context of the analysis of the narratives in the following chapters. By observing that is not only the events that ‘make’ a generation, but also how they are remembered and narrated, Collins draws special attention to the role of memory-work, which is undertaken in the present and directed towards the past. The sense of generational outlook is constructed in the process of interpretation and making sense of and giving shape to personal and ancestral pasts.

Sa’di and Abu- Lughold argue that ‘generational time’ is one of the key aspects of Palestinian memory (2007: 19). Reflecting on the legacy of the Nakba they assert: ‘There are processes of transfer from one generation to another - of stories, memories, foods and anger; there is inheritance of identity and burden; but there is also some resistance across the generation to the great significance of the past’ (*ibid.*). They underline that subsequent generations ‘react to this legacy in mixed way’ and often invest in creating their ‘own’ experiences related to Palestine and to the remembering of Palestine (*ibid.*: 20). The next three chapters explore these complexities further, reflecting both on the horizontal workings of the generational memory stemming from sharing particular socio-temporalities of diasporic journey and diasporic existence, as well reflecting on the vertical workings of memory related to the processes intergenerational transmission and modes of making sense of the inherited pasts.



**Figure II.1. Three types of diasporic memory**

This reflection on generational memory complements the relationship between the individual and collective forms of memory discussed earlier. While generational memory is

also a form of collective memory, it offers a distinctive understanding of and relationship with the ancestral homeland based on the distinct socio-temporalities of particular diasporic experiences. The diagram above (figure 3.3) outlines three key dimensions of Palestinian diasporic memory. These three dimensions of memory form a matrix of mutual influences, which overlap and inform each other – individual memories of diasporic subjects coexist in larger generational settings and collective frameworks. None of these forms of memory exist in isolation. Paying attention to these three dimensions allows for a mapping of different planes of diasporic memory and a detailed exploration of the processes of consolidation, as well as differentiation, of modes of remembering amongst Palestinian diasporic subjects.

The generations that emerge from the fieldwork are: the Exiles; the Occupied from Within and the Children of the Idea of Palestine. The chart below provides an overview of the three generations and employs a Mannheimian taxonomy to highlight the specific generational themes, which will be further explored in the following chapters.

<b>Generation</b>	<b>'Similarity of location'</b>	<b>Generational 'dramas'</b>	<b>Generational memory</b>
<b>The Exiles</b>	Born in the aftermath of 1948 in the refugee camps or as exiles from Palestine	Directly affected by the consequences of largely un-lived catastrophe	Emergence of postmemory
<b>The Occupied from within</b>	Born in the Palestinian territories – West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem	Experience of ongoing occupation that affected all aspects of their lives	Spatialization & embodiment of the memory
<b>The Children of the idea of Palestine</b>	Born in the countries in temporal and geographical detachment from Palestine and the events of the Nakba in their parents' exile	Political developments in Israel/Palestine that 'reconnect' them with Palestine	Politicization and universalization of Palestinian memory – Palestine as global cause for justice

Figure II.2. Overview of three Palestinian diasporic generations using a Mannheimian taxonomy

## **Chapter 4. The Exiles. Postmemory and beyond**

### **4.1. Overview**

This chapter reflects on the particular spatio-temporal positioning of the generation of the Exiles between the largely un-lived events of the Nakba and the *aftermath* of the Nakba, experienced in the form of physical uprooting and the loss of homeland. I interrogate how these two temporalities - the un-lived past and the experience of growing up in the shadow of this past - inform their modes of remembering and relating to Palestine. Employing the conception of 'postmemory', the chapter discusses how this generation, whom I call the Exiles, create an emotive relationship with Palestine and how the indirect memory of the Nakba catastrophe dominates their own experiences of growing up. I argue that these two simultaneous temporalities of diasporic memory overlap, creating a sense of 'unfinishedness' around the Nakba narrative and, often, ossifying the Palestinian memory in an idyllic pre-Nakba landscape. The chapter closes by discussing participants' stories of engagement in the early PLO, movement, reflecting on the possibilities of interacting with 'postmemory' and creating other modes of relating to and remembering Palestine among this generation.

### **4.2. Those who came after and the 'unfinishedness' of the Nakba**

The diverse biographies of the Palestinians whose oral histories I discuss in this chapter have been shaped in the context of a specific historical and political situation related to the *aftermath* of the events of 1948, which influenced their sense of identity and their relationship with Palestine. The research participants in this group had either been children at the time of expulsion or did not experience the events of the Nakba themselves. Thus, most of them did not have direct memories of living in Palestine and many of them had never been able to visit their ancestral homeland.

Overview of the generation of 'The Exiles' <sup>19</sup>							
Demographic details				Diasporic journey			
No	Nickname	Gender	Age bracket	Place of origin	Place of birth	Subsequent place(s) of exile	Location of the interview
1	Mamdooh	M	45 - 60	Haifa, Palestine (now Israel)	Damascus, Syria	Syria -> Poland	Warsaw, Poland
2	Omar	M	60+	Al Zanghariyya, Upper Galilee, Palestine (now Israel)	Sanaber refugee camp, Syria	Syria -> Poland-> UAE -> Poland	Krakow, Poland
3	Marwan	M	45 - 60	Balad-Al-Sheikh, Palestine (now Neshet, Israel)	Refugee camp, Jordan	Jordan -> Syria -> Lebanon -> Syria -> Czech Republic -> Poland	Warsaw - Katowice, Poland
4	Emad	M	18-35	Suhmata, Upper Galilee, Palestine (now Israel)	Nahr- Al - Bared camp, Tripoli, Lebanon	Lebanon -> Poland	Warsaw, Poland
5	Antoine	M	60+	Haifa, Palestine (now Israel)	Haifa, Palestine	Lebanon -> USA -> UK	London, UK
6	Joseph	M	60+	Haifa, Palestine (now Israel)	Haifa, Palestine	Lebanon -> UAE->Lebanon -> USA -> UK	London, UK

**Figure 4.1. Overview of the generation of The Exiles**

The majority of the research participants in this group were born in the 1950s and 1960s in the Palestinian refugee camps of Syria, Lebanon or Jordan. A minority in the sample managed to escape the fate of the refugee camp experience. The material situation of their families allowed their parents to rent or buy new houses in the neighbouring Arab countries

<sup>19</sup> In describing the sample it is important to comment on the overrepresentation of men in this group. This has to do with the historical shape of the Palestinian migration to Poland. As noted in the Introduction chapter, while there were a limited number of women arriving with PLO scholarships, none of them, according to my informants, stayed in Poland after having completed their studies. The majority of men who stayed married locally. While this chapter builds on the ethnographies of this generation undertaken specifically with Palestinian women by R. Sayigh (1979) and, more recently, F. Kassem (2011), it needs to be stated the analysis undertaken in this chapter is based on interviews with men.

away from the refugee camps.<sup>20</sup> While for the majority of the research participants in this group the Nakba is a defining event of their ancestors' past, I argue that it continues to be a 'living memory' in terms of uprooting, exile and inability to return to home. As a result, the memories of the Exiles, are situated in a peculiar position between the largely un-lived catastrophe and the overwhelming consequences that catastrophe exerted on their present – and the experiences of growing up and becoming adolescent away from Palestine, yet always in its shadow.

An interdisciplinary body of scholarship on Palestine discusses the importance of the catastrophe of 1948 for Palestinian society. For the thousands of families who in 1948 found themselves outside their homes and homeland, it meant an abrupt end to the life they had known and lived for generations. Elias Sanbar, a Palestinian historian, writes that the events of the Nakba mark the beginning of 'Palestinian time' and that 'the Nakba has become a key event in the Palestinian calendar – the baseline for personal histories and the storying of generations' (2001: 5). Sanbar's words encourage a particular attentiveness to the ways in which the memory of Palestine and its loss are carried across time and space in the narratives of the Exiles' generation.

When conducting and analysing the interviews with the participants in this group, I became particularly struck by the ways in which the Exiles began narrating their life stories. While I asked them to 'please tell me the story of your life and all the events that you consider important in your life story', they started their narratives in pre-Nakba Palestine. Many of the narratives would take us to the villages and neighbourhoods where their parents or grandparents lived before they were forced to leave and then focused on the details of their departure from their houses in early 1948. Unlike other participants of the study, it seemed that in order to tell their own life story and make sense out of it, they needed to begin with events that largely preceded their birth.

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<sup>20</sup> The generation of the Exiles in this work exceeds the scope of the term 'second generation' of refugees sometimes used in the literature on the subject (c.f. Ben Ze'ev, 2005). Based on the analysis of the fieldwork data, the generation of the Exiles encompasses the subsequent generations of original Palestinian refugees who are born and continue to be born in the Palestinian refugee camps spread out across the Arab world. I argue here, that for the generation of the Exiles, their specific relationship with the 'ancestral' homeland does not end with the 'second generation' of the refugees. It remains open-ended as there are still Palestinians in the refugee camps like Emad, who, 66 years after the Nakba, remain directly affected by the consequences of the 1948. The youngest participant in that group, Emad was in his early 30s at the time of interview and was born in the third generation of refugees in the Nahr Al - Bared refugee camp near Tripoli in Lebanon.

I would like to begin this discussion by examining the initial extract of the oral history of Mamdooh. Born in Damascus in the early 50s, he has never been to Palestine, and thus has never been to his parents' house in Haifa. At the time of the interview, he had lived in Poland for nearly 30 years. When he heard that I was interested in hearing the 'entire' story, he invited me to the back of his shop, where, smoking one cigarette after another, he began his history with the following words:

In 1947 my parents built their house in Haifa. My dad was a well-to-do merchant and they were very happy to move into this house. But their happy time did not last very long. Until 1948 ... My parents ended up in Lebanon and then went to Syria. ... My mother left our house in her slippers. She took my 3-month-old older sister and left. She took nothing, nothing, with her. She left all the money behind, everything, and fled to Lebanon. My father, who was fighting [in the Arab – Israeli war] found her later in Lebanon...At that time, my dad could have received British citizenship and gone to Britain easily because of his business. But he did not want to do that. He thought we would return soon. He would be always repeating 'Palestine' and 'Palestine' and nothing else. All Arab governments were saying they would be back next week, then in two weeks time, so my father waited and waited. He waited until 1951 and spent all his savings waiting to go back to Haifa, which never happened. Our house, it's still there. A Jewish family from Iraq lives there. Imagine, unknown people moving into your house.

[Mamdooh, Warsaw, dentist by education,  
restaurant worker by profession]

The first part of Mamdooh's narrative, the story of his mother leaving her house in slippers with his 3-month-old sister, is strikingly suggestive. Mamdooh's imagined reconstruction of the event, possibly reinforced by the number of times this story was told and re-told, is so internalized by him that it feels as if he had experienced it himself.

In order to explore the ways in which the history of the ancestral past is present in the oral stories of the research participants, it is useful to think with Marianne Hirsch and Eva Hoffman's examinations of indirect memory. Hirsch and Hoffman, based on their own experiences as second generation Jews born after the Holocaust, have been particularly

concerned with ways in which the traumatic pasts of their ancestors had affected the generation of those who 'came after'. Reflecting on the ways in which the ancestral past bears on her generation, Hoffman writes:

The paradoxes of indirect knowledge haunt many of us who came after. The formative events of the twentieth century have crucially informed our biographies, threatening sometimes to overshadow and overwhelm our own lives. We did not see them, suffer through them, experience their impact directly. (2004: 25)

Trying to explain the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural and collective trauma forms with the experiences of those who came before Hirsch develops the concept of 'postmemory' (2008: 107). She insists that the inherited memory among the children whose parents had been affected by the traumatic events is different than just 'remembrance' and maintains the element of a 'living connection' to the past despite the children not having experienced it. She adds that 'these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right' (*ibid.*). In my view, both of these observations offer a helpful perspective for understanding the role of the un-lived catastrophe for the generation of those Palestinians who 'came after' and the ways in which the Nakba events shape their memory of Palestine. Hirsch suggests that the concept of postmemory could 'usefully describe other second generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences' (1997: 22). It provides a useful distinction between the collective forms of remembering the past and a 'living memory'. The latter indicates the existence of an affective relationship, conscious or unconscious, between the generation of those 'who come after' and the traumatic events experienced by their predecessors, which have a critical impact on their lives.

Reflecting on the nature of the postmemory of the second generation, Hirsch writes that while it implies a deep meaningful connection with the traumatic experiences of the war generation, it also signifies an unbridgeable divide separating the 'second generation' from the un-lived past (2008: 109). Hirsch adds it is not *literal* memory because the trauma of the past 'exceeds' comprehension. Commenting on the difficulty or inability of transmitting the experiences of the Holocaust, Dan Bar-On (1992) writes of a 'conspiracy of silence' that surrounded the children of the survivors. Based on her research with second generation

Israelis, Carol A. Kidron writes that they grew up in a 'partially silent matrix of Holocaust presence, which is perpetually interwoven within the everyday domestic life-world' (2010: 193). Hirsch emphasises the impossibility of re-embodiment or re-creating the cataclysm their parents experienced (2008: 106). It seems that, in Hirsch's theorizing, it is from this impossibility of imagining the horrors of their ancestors' past yet being profoundly affected by them that the sense of postmemory emerges for the children of Holocaust survivors.

In the case of Mamdooh and other research participants, I suggest that the process of postmemory construction can be read as taking a different form. Listening to the stories of Mamdooh, Omar, Marwan and others, the events of the Nakba seem to be possible to conceive, and are imagined by them as they re-produce the stories narrated to them by parents and grandparents.<sup>21</sup> They narrate them vividly, not shying away from telling the details as if re-creating the 'being there' experience. Listening to Mamdooh's story it is possible to envision his mother desperately fleeing the family house in Haifa and completely unprepared for what was happening and what was coming. We can see, through Mamdooh's eyes, that she had no idea that it was her last departure from the house. Similarly we can imagine the slippers in which Mamdooh's mother leaves their house, a common object of everyday, intimate family life, which stand in stark opposition to the calamity that is coming. The slippers in Mamdooh's story can be interpreted as a symbol of rapid flight, but also the assumed temporary character of this departure. The scale of the catastrophe does not become apparent immediately to Mamdooh's parents. The full picture of the tragedy is revealed only gradually, as days and weeks pass and as the hopes of a quick return home start to fade. The totality of the catastrophe narrated by Mamdooh and other participants seems to derive from the creeping realization of the collapse of the everydayness of the life they had lived in Palestine. It is this gradual character of unfolding catastrophe that continues or, rather, seeps into Mamdooh's present, bridging it with the past. It is Mamdooh's parents who had been forced to leave their house, but it is both them and Mamdooh who are prevented from returning. Thus, what constitutes the postmemory in case of Mamdooh and other participants is not their inability to re-create the experience of the flight. Rather, we grasp something of the Nakba as an ongoing and continuing

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<sup>21</sup> While some of the accounts of post-1948 environment recount shame and hence silence as accompanying the first years after the Nakba, my research participants, speaking sixty years later, both recall the events in detail as well as members of their families narrating the stories of Palestine and its loss.

experience. This 'open-endedness' of the Nakba narrative creates the situation in which the un-lived events of the past become part of Mamdooh's own life story.

Taking into account the 'open-endedness' of the narratives of this generation, it helps if we turn again to Das and her theorizing of the social in terms of 'unfinished stories' (2007: 108). Researching the impact of violence in the Indian context, Das proposes that we treat the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and the wave of violence that broke out afterwards in terms of 'unfinished stories'. For Das, the sense of 'unfinishedness' is related to the impossibility of establishing and grasping what really happened, as well as the anticipation, based on rumours and intuition, that the violence would continue (*ibid.*:120). It is related to different ways in which past events continue into present, leading to the impossibility of establishing a boundary between the past and the present (*ibid.*). It seems to me that with the memories of the Nakba, the 'unfinishedness' of the narratives stems from the ongoingness of the consequences of the catastrophe and the continuity of the dispersal. The past continues in the present.

The consequences of this blurring of past and present can be traced in the writings of Lena Jayyusi, who reflects on the symbolisms of the Nakba and directs our attention to its possessive character for all past and future events (2007: 107-130). She observes that while the Nakba has not been the last site of Palestinian collective trauma, it has come to be seen as a 'foundational station in an unfolding and continuing saga of dispossession, negations and erasure' (*ibid.*: 109). She remarks that the Nakba's symbolism 'enabled Palestinians to reinsert each new episode in relation to the intent, vision and objective of the original rupture' (*ibid.*: 110). The past is re-lived by the events happening in the present and is ingrained in the fabric of the present. But also, each new episode of the unfolding of Palestinian history is 'qualified' as part of the ongoing and unfinished narrative of the Nakba.

The potential reinsertion or appropriation of new events into the Nakba narratives, and their 'unfinishedness', encourages me to reflect on the nature of the temporal dimensions of diasporic memories. When listening to research participants, I felt that they moved between two spatio-temporalities of memory, which overlapped in their narratives. One was the spatio-temporality of pre-1948 Palestine, of which they had no direct memory.

Here, the narratives evolved around often romanticized descriptions of villages and pastoral landscapes and, importantly, the lifestyle that their families had before they had to leave (c.f. Sayigh, 1979). The other spatio-temporal layer of their memory centred on growing up in the aftermath of the catastrophe. When listening to the stories of the research participants, I realized that these two spatio-temporalities permeated one another, mutually reinforcing each other. The context of deprivation and loss in which the majority of the research participants were born and brought up fortified the role of the narratives of the past. The stories of Palestine and peaceful life imagined there - were emphasized by the harshness and hardship of the dispersal.

I will now explore both spatio-temporalities, questioning the extent to which their overlapping and mutual contrast constituted or even ossified the modes of remembering the homeland amongst this generation. For the sake of the clarity I lead the discussion in the next section in a linear manner, beginning by reflecting on the modes of creation and maintenance of postmemory. Following that, I explore the role of postmemories in the context of participants' narratives of growing up in the refugee camps. It is important to emphasize that the narratives themselves did not follow this linear causality - the temporal layers were overlapping. The chart below sketches the main elements that constitute the different temporal layers of diasporic memory, which will be discussed in the following sections.

<b>Simultaneous temporalities of diasporic memory in the narratives of the Exiles</b>	
<b>The Nakba postmemory</b>	<b>Refugee camp memory</b>
Family driven memory transmission	Temporality of the camp experience
Canonization of the memory	Social and economic deprivation
The Nakba memory as a 'counter-memory'	Sense of shame related to the flight

**Figure 4.2. Spatio-temporalities of diasporic memories in the narratives of the Exiles**

### 4.3. The emergence, crystallization and canonization of postmemory

#### *'Learning' to remember Palestine*

Despite Mamdooh's ability to recreate his mother's departure in detail, his memory is mediated. As with all other forms of memory, there is a process of 'learning' to remember and to make sense out of the ancestral past. Mamdooh says that 'every Palestinian', from the moment they open their eyes, is told about Palestine. In this section, based on the oral histories of research participants, I explore the meanings and ways in which this particular 'living connection' with the ancestral homeland is produced. I begin this discussion reflecting on extracts from the oral stories of Omar and Marwan. Omar, whose family was from Al-Zanghariyya in Upper Galilee, was born in a tent in the village of Sanabel in the Golan Heights in the immediate aftermath of his parent's departure from Palestine. After the death of his father, his mother moved with her five children to a refugee camp close to Damascus. He recalls 'learning' about Palestine in the following way:

My mother, she could not read nor write, but she told us everything about Palestine, about our land. I still can recall her singing in the house. It was like a lullaby. I have never been to Palestine, but I knew everything about it, how we plough the land, our customs, traditions and clothes. For a wedding we would sing national songs, patriotic songs, we would dress in Palestinian clothes. Everything was different back then, there was no TV or radio. Everything I knew was from my mother's stories and songs (...) My father, he was a fighter. When he would come home, which was only rarely, he would always bring me fruit; grapes, figs and hoh, an Arabic plum. And he would say: 'This is from our land in Al-Zanghariyya, from which we had been expelled.'

[Omar, bakery-owner, political activist, Kraków]

Marwan, who was born in a refugee camp in Jordan, recalls how he and his siblings and cousins would beg their aunt to tell them the stories about genies that lived in the caves of Mount Carmel in Haifa, not far from Balad-Al-Sheikh, where his family lived before they had to leave Palestine:

My aunt, she really had great a memory. She died only recently, but everybody, even the most educated people were coming to her to ask about past events. I remember we would be sitting attached to her dress and listen to her stories. These stories were always about genies and they always took place in Mount Carmel and its surroundings. I remember a story about an evil woman who would transform into a beauty to seduce men and kidnap them. There were also stories about hyenas that could hypnotize men and eat them or about genies who came into your house when you wanted be alone. But also there were good genies. For instance, when my family found a well of water in our land, it was also attributed to the good deeds of genies. Most of the time, however, the stories were so scary that I would wake up at night too scared to go to the bathroom alone. But they were really connected to the place. When I went to Haifa once, very unexpectedly, the genies were leading my way to our village. It was my first time. I had never been there before but I could tell you exactly how to get to different places there. I knew the hills, the streets, as if I lived there. All from my aunt's stories.

[Marwan, journalist, Katowice]

These extracts from the oral histories of Marwan and Omar both refer to the figure of a relative who passes on the memories, imageries and stories related to Palestine. This person acts like a medium, connecting the research participants with the ancestral homeland, and maintains a special status in their lives. Both Marwan and Omar recall these 'narrative acts' as precious moments of great importance. Perhaps these moments also provided a connection and 'escape' to a different reality, away from the misery and limitation of the camps in which they were both brought up. When I listened to the interviews, their voices changed and became quieter and warmer as they described these moments. I immediately saw them again as little boys clinging to the knees of their grandmothers.

Memories were not just transmitted through stories. Omar got to know Palestine from the lullabies sang by his mother. He also got to know Palestine by tasting the fruit brought to him by his father from their village. The transmission of memory engaged many senses. In their oral histories, other participants narrated Palestine through the beauty of the landscape, evoking the smells of the orange groves and the beauty of the olive terraces in

relation to descriptions of specific villages and places of importance — as if the people transmitting the stories were trying to re-create the whole life experience that was lost.

Jayyusi writes that 'it is in and through the body that the place is...experienced, shaped and navigated; it is through this relationship to the body that it is remembered and narrated' (2007: 121). The sensuousness of the transmitted memories was accompanied by their topographical situatedness (c.f. Connerton, 1989; Casey, 1997). The stories that are told and re-told by Omar and Marwan provide concrete descriptions of locations, as if their role was to establish an organic connection with the lost landscape. They echo Edward S. Casey's reflection that it is through bodily memory that individuals are able to relate and locate themselves in place and topography (1997: 202 – 243). Antoine, another participant in this generation, asks his siblings to sketch the plans of their house in Haifa to maintain and pass on the memory of it. Omar is able to describe the location of his family's village, house and even the tree planted by his father. The historic and geographic details of Haifa and Carmel Mountain provide the setting for Marwan's aunt's moral tales. The events of the Nakba did not break this tradition. A physical displacement did not displace the imagination of and the linkage to the place.

In telling their life stories, the interviewees of this generation would always relate their narratives not just to Palestine, but to a specific location in Palestine. For this generation Palestine seemed to be rooted in a particular geography and a particular location of the pre-1948 map, in today's Israel. This came out most strongly in the interview with Omar, who asked me to bring him soil from Al-Zanghariyya when I was preparing to follow the memory sites of his narrative. Interestingly, this topographical imaginative connection is reproduced in the realities of the refugee camps. The narratives of my research participants echo the work of Sayigh (1979) and Tamari (2002), who claim that even the structure of the refugee camps reflected the structure of the Palestinian villages and the social relations between them.

It is striking that most of the narrative acts of memory transmission that my interviewees recall were performed by female narrators. It was mothers, grandmothers and aunts that told my research participants about Palestine. Rosemary Sayigh, who has been collecting oral testimonies from women in Lebanese camps, observes that in Palestinian society it was

traditionally men who had the privilege to know and tell 'history' (2007: 137). Women could just tell 'stories' and spread rumours, or, perhaps, just 'fill in' the missing gaps of male narratives. She points out the distinction in Arabic between the *hikaya* – a fable or folktale – and the *qissa* – 'an account of real happening' (*ibid.*). It was the *hikayat* (plural form) that were 'the speciality' of women until the Nakba. In her view, the Nakba created a new situation for a generation of Palestinian women in which these traditional divisions were at least partially levelled, as it was now women who were telling about 'real happenings'. While the Palestinian historians (when they re-emerged after the years of silencing that followed the events of 1948) were educated men coming from privileged backgrounds, in the refugee camps it was women, most of the time uneducated, who were the narrators of the past. She writes that 'it was generally mothers or grandmothers who described villages of origin – dwellings, landscape, neighbours, work, celebration, fruits and other products' (Sayigh, 2007: 138).

Let us return to the role of Omar's mother and Marwan's aunt. Why do Omar and Marwan recall stories told by women and not men? In both narratives, the stories they describe seem to combine the elements of *hikayat* and *qissa*. They tell about the departure and the war, but they go beyond the descriptions of the factual accounts on Palestine and narrate details that feed the imagination. They transmit the fabric of everyday lives, customs, traditions and values. Perhaps the *hikayat* provided the texture of the lost world necessary to enable the Exiles to imagine and to recreate the 'being-there' experience. In a world that had broken down, the role of women like Omar's mother and Marwan's aunt in the refugee camps was to maintain the sense of continuity to a life that bore no continuity.

#### *Canonization of the narratives - from family story to collective narrative of resistance*

It is important to note that the research participants use similar expressions and similar imageries in their narratives relating to Palestine, despite their dispersal and often very different biographies. There are some recurrent elements referring to beauty of the landscape and the fertility of the soil. As noted, almost all of the participants recall the smell of olives and orange trees, creating and recreating sensations of pre-1948 Palestine. Their descriptions all share the idealized and romanticized images of the landscape. Palestine emerges from these stories as a paradise lost. There are also some similarities in

descriptions of the events of 1948. The flight is narrated as unexpected, rushed and 'temporary'. The Zionist forces' conquest of Palestine is described in terms comparing it to the violation of a woman's body.

Carol Bardenstein observes that each diaspora produces its own lexicon of expressions, meanings and metaphors that reinforce and ease the process of collective remembering (2007: 22). She argues that in Palestinians' diasporic writing, it is possible to trace some repeating *diasporic fragments*, which are often elements of the landscape, like olives or lemon trees, and which figure 'as metonymic fragments of an idealized version of homeland before displacement' (*ibid.*: 23). These diasporic fragments echo the imageries of idyllic rural life. Further on, she writes about *diasporic anachronisms* to refer to disjunctures of Palestinian time (*ibid.*: 25). In her view, these anachronisms - keys, old deeds or surnames indicating descent from a particular village - link the diasporic present to the Palestinian past. Eventually, she points to the *narrative conformity* of diasporic Palestinian writing, which she defines as a 'pressure for diasporic narratives to fall into relatively predictable patterns' (*ibid.*: 27). In this process, some elements of the Palestinian past, which might not have been idyllic or heroic, are excluded.

Jayyusi (2007) asserts that the repetitiveness of the oral tales - which are at once distinct, as each narrator tells of personal experiences, and yet the same, as all narrators explain the common events of the expulsion - is instrumental to the process of shaping a collective memory out of the multiplicity of individually narrated stories. She writes:

It is in and through the iteration of similar tales, similar stories of attack, death and expulsion, like tales of loss, that the character of the catastrophe is shaped and understood. Each new tale is an echo within the echo, focusing and conjuring the collective predicament through the individual and ramifying the significances and symbolic meanings of the individual experience through the collective. (2007: 110)

Jayyusi here draws attention to the important relationship between the individual and collective forms of remembering and how the repetitiveness of the individually told and re-told stories constitutes the collective meaning of the tragedy. This process of narrative canonization of multiple individual accounts has particular importance in the context of

dispossession and dispersal. Told in the refugee camp, these narratives played a particular role for the dispersed communities – not only in terms of remembering, but also in terms of surviving the harsh realities of the refugee camp. In this context, the role of the narrative exceeded just the individual memory. In order to reflect on the role the narratives played for these communities, I would like to return to the narrative of Marwan, who continues the story of his childhood.

I was brought up in a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan. Back then in this refugee camp, this sense of Palestinian-ness was always nourished. It was nourished despite the fact that at school they were trying to tell us that Palestinians did not exist... and that we were all Jordanians. They [Jordanian authorities] were trying to change history, but we knew our history, we knew what the truth was. At that time, the notion of Palestinian-ness, self-identification with Palestinians as a nation, it caused lots of troubles.

I remember once, we wrote Palestinian slogans on the walls, to be honest we did not understand a thing of what we were writing, but we felt so proud. Our teacher saw us and told us not to risk our safety in this stupid way.

[Marwan, journalist, Katowice]

This extract provides details of the context in which the process of emergence and crystallization of Palestinian memory takes place. Listening to his story, it is possible to understand how Palestinian identity was celebrated in the camp, but at the same time denied, banned and punished by the Jordanian authorities. His desperate act of writing patriotic slogans on the school walls points to the realities in which Palestinians are denied the possibility of mourning for this homeland and articulating their sense of loss and belonging. Marwan's story draws attention to the precarious status of Palestinians in the refugee camp. In this context, the act of telling and re-telling the homeland acquires particular meaning.

Barbara Allen and William Mantell claim that the term oral history 'can refer to the method by which oral information about the past is collected and recorded, and it can also mean a body of knowledge that exists only in people's memories and will be lost otherwise' (1981:

23). It was in the kitchens and on the streets of the refugee camps where Palestinian collective memory crystallized out of this multiplicity of told and re-told stories. Masalha thus sees oral histories as a bottom-up process of memory construction forming a 'counter-hegemonic narrative', which gives voice to the memory of the 'colonized' and the 'subaltern', countering powerful Zionist and colonialist narratives, as well as the propaganda of neighbouring Arab countries (2012: 10).

Both of these theoretical insights - Masalha's conceptualisation of a bottom-up 'counter-memory' and Allen's and Mantell's earlier notion of memory under threat - offer interesting interpretations of the emergence, persistence and canonization of postmemories in the narratives of the Exiles in the context of the realities in which they grew up. Referring back to Marwan's story in light of these insights, it is possible to see the postmemories of my research participants not just as forms of meaning-making, but also forms of resistance. As much as they were narrating their personal stories and trying to make sense of their past, they were also telling me the history of Palestine that, in their experience, has been threatened, silenced, denied and manipulated. Jayyusi (2007) observes that this conviction that Palestinian history has been silenced and manipulated has been particularly strong among the refugees. She recalls that in her encounters with refugees, they would always raise 'the spoken appeal and injunction: tell them, let them know what is happening, in which 'the "them" was the rest of the world' (2007: 125). Research participants were not just telling their life stories; they were using the opportunity to tell the story of their collective fate to the external listener.

#### **4.4. In the shadow of the Nakba - growing up in the refugee camp**

Hirsch observes that the prefix "post" in "postmemory" signals more than a temporal delay and more than a location in an aftermath' (2008: 106). For her it symbolizes a positioning that is more directed towards the relationship with the past than one of initiating new paradigms. She argues that 'to grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation' (*ibid.*). For her postmemory is like an anchor locking the generation in 'the guardianship' of the past (*ibid.*: 104).

Hirsch's reflection about 'postness' provides an interesting starting point for the second part of this chapter, which shifts focus from the construction and crystallization of postmemory to the ways in which it informs and impacts participants' lives in exile. In the beginning of this chapter, drawing on Das, I reflected on the 'unfinishedness' of the Nakba narrative and the way in which it flows into the present of subsequent generations.

When researching and analysing the oral histories of the participants of the Exile generation, an important difference in which this sense of the 'unfinishedness' of the Nakba was carried into exile became salient. Whilst all of the participants in this group suffered from the direct consequences of the uprooting, the 'unfinishedness' of the Nakba narrative had been experienced differently by those participants who ended up in the refugee camps than by those who managed to avoid this experience. It is this observation that brings me to consider the refugee camp as a particularly dominant site of diasporic Palestinian postmemory. I would like to begin this reflection by discussing the narrative of Antoine. After their departure from Haifa in April 1948, Antoine's family fled to Lebanon:

My family, thanks to my grandfather, rented an accommodation in Tripoli Lebanon. But very soon, he died. I think he died out of depression. With his death, we lost our link to Palestine ... Palestine was gone.

Slowly we established ourselves in our second homeland in Lebanon. I became interested in painting and I was studying really hard. Everything in our household was Palestinian, but there was no talk of returning. I was thinking about the future. Palestine stayed somewhere in the background.

[Antoine, architect, London]

This extract from Antoine's narrative reveals how the family, despite the dramatic rupture of the Nakba, manages to gradually restore their life in Lebanon. His grandfather seems to have played a decisive role in helping the family find security after the catastrophe, yet he was in insoluble pain after the loss of his homeland. The grandfather's rapid death just two years after the catastrophe was a loss for the entire family. For Antoine it also symbolizes

the final separation from Palestine, the loss of a direct link to the family past.

Let me now move to another extract from Mamdooh before I return to Antoine. Mamdooh's family fled to Syria, and he grew up in the refugee camp in Damascus. In the short extract below he recalls his childhood and adolescence.

The entire life in the refugee camp evolved around Palestine. I remember there was a celebration, demonstration or protest every day. Even if you wanted to forget, you weren't allowed to. Everybody was talking about nothing else but Palestine. In the camp, you breathed Palestine.

[Mamdooh, Warsaw]

Based on the extracts from their narratives, it is possible to observe how these different environments create distinct relationships with Palestine and the Palestinian catastrophe. While equally affected by the loss of homeland, Antoine is able to leave the traumatic experiences behind and work towards restoring his life in another location. From then on, for many years, Palestine is delegated to 'somewhere in the background'. In the case of Mamdooh, we can see how the memory of loss and Palestine remains a central experience of growing up. This link to Palestine remains alive and overshadows the lives of those in the refugee camps. The camp environment constantly re-enacts the past. In these circumstances, it seems like new experiences are delegated to the background and subordinated to re-living the loss of Palestine. While Antoine is 'thinking about the future', the environment in which Mamdooh grows up doesn't allow him to forget about the past.

This orientation towards the past, crucial in Hirsch's theorizing of postmemory, creates a specific relationship with Palestine and its loss that remains central to the life of the refugees despite the passage of time. It is in this sense, to build on Hirsch's observation from the beginning of the section, that their lives are dominated by the sense of 'postness'. Reflecting on this condition among displaced Palestinians, Sami Tamiri uses the term 'frozen' in relation to the inherited images of past (2002: 103). He suggests that this past becomes the main point of reference and the basic framework of the everyday life of the refugees. The past is at the same time an object of longing, an identity, and a dream of return.

The sense of the ossifying of memory in pre-1948 Palestine is enabled and reinforced by the particularity of the environment of the refugee camps, which 'conserve' this particular orientation towards Palestine. The refugee camps were set up in the aftermath of the events of 1948 to offer shelter for the families forced to flee their homes. Since the beginning of their existence, they were treated as a temporary measure – until the refugees would be able to return home or another solution was found. This provisional character of the refugee camps has led to the development of a particular type of 'spatio-temporality' among the refugees, in which the 'normal' passage of time is suspended (Sayigh, 1979: 99-137; Jayyusi; 2007: 130). Being reduced to 'waiting for the return', refugees idealized the past. The temporary character of the refugee camps prevented the creation of any 'permanent' attachments with a new place (*ibid.*). This specific 'spatio-temporality' of the refugee camp has strengthened a certain image of Palestine and a certain type of relationship with Palestine, which is oriented towards restoration of the past as it was. Furthermore, the marginal positioning of the refugee camp within the realms of the respective countries in which they are located has further anchored the camp in its own time and a particular type of memory.

Another important aspect is that while the refugee camps served as a main site of collective Palestinian identity, they were also sites of social and economic deprivation (Sayigh 1979: 103 – 136). These circumstances reinforced the feelings of loss and victimhood and led to the further idealizing of the time before the Nakba. Oral histories were thus transmitted in the context of the severe humiliation related to the expulsion and refugeehood. Rosemary Sayigh observes that years after the catastrophe the main problem of refugees was not just poverty, but also the psychological trauma that accrued from the complete rupture of their lives, the destruction of their lifestyle, and the inability to adjust to new circumstances that required new skills (1979: 99- 137). She also underlines the damaging impact of the passivity or hostility among the non-Palestinian population. Beyond politically proclaimed Arab unity, Palestinians were often treated as the ones who 'sold' their land to the enemy (*ibid.*). Here, I would like to shift attention to another narrative, this time drawing from the experiences of Emad:

When you are born in a camp you know you are Palestinian. You don't have documents, you can't get out freely, you can't work, you are always constrained. When you are always missing something, that's when you know you are Palestinian (...) In my town, in my closed town, everybody carries weapons.<sup>22</sup> Everyone has a Kalashnikov in his house. People get killed. Political militarized groups are controlling the camp. It's crazy there. It's very quiet here [in Warsaw].

[Emad, construction worker, Warsaw]

In examining earlier extracts, I discussed the centrality of Palestine to the life of the refugee camps and reflected on the specific meaning of Palestinian-ness that developed in the camp context. The above extract offers insight into the reality of growing up in the refugee camps and the atmosphere surrounding the refugees and the difficulty of their position within the Lebanese society. In Emad's case, the narrated experience of everydayness in Naher-Al Bared stands in stark opposition to his grandfather's stories about life in the village of Suhmata in Upper Galilee. He associates being Palestinian with a position of 'always missing something', of not being able to live on equal terms with Lebanese, of constant threat and of lack of stability. For him it implies a status of intrinsic inferiority. Emad explains that being born as a Palestinian in a refugee camp is associated with burden and ongoing limitations.

The oral history of Emad, the youngest interviewee from this group, who only recently managed to escape the refugee camp in Tripoli to seek asylum in Poland, symbolizes the lasting character of the displacement and the entanglement in the 'camp time' that fails to move forward. While Emad's age puts him closer to many participants of the other generations that will be discussed in this thesis, his experiences of growing up in the camp in the shadow of the Nakba and of the ways in which he narrates his ancestral homeland situate him in the Exiles generation.

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<sup>22</sup> Emad uses the phrase 'closed town' to describe his camp.

#### **4.5. 'The world was with us'. Beyond postmemory?**

The flow of the oral histories of the Exiles progressed around the changing political developments, which accompanied their exile and the subsequent locations of their exile. The events of the Nakba dominated their memories of growing up, but also set their lives in a continuous motion. In this section of this chapter, I shift focus from the participants' memories of childhood to those around the process of entering adulthood. In particular, I discuss the interviewees' engagement in the PLO, which served as an important point in the narratives of this generation. I explore how their experiences of direct political action interacted with their inherited modes of remembering Palestine and the extent to which this experience shifted their relationship with the ancestral homeland.

The PLO, which emerged in 1964 under the leadership of Yassir Arafat, managed to re-articulate the Palestinian national narrative and helped to frame the Palestinian national cause after sixteen years of silence and dispersion. It became a major political and resistance movement, organizing the fight for the liberation of Palestine from the Zionist forces. According to Rashid Khalidi, the PLO helped to give the Nakba narrative its final shape and led to a re-birth of the Palestinian cause after decades of disappearance (1997: 195). The rise of the PLO as a major political force in the region marks an important turning point for several of the research participants who were coming to maturity at the time of peak of PLO activity in Jordan and subsequently in Syria and Lebanon. Many of them become influenced by the revolutionary ideas of the PLO, which not only gave them new language with which to relate to the ancestral homeland, but which also created the possibility of new forms of engagement with Palestine. I would like to return to the extracts of the oral histories of Mamdooh and Omar to discuss in more detail how these experiences informed and influenced their relationship with Palestine.

Mamdooh recalls his engagement with the PLO in a shifting political landscape:

I volunteered to work for Red Cross during the Lebanon War. It was really tough, there were so many killed and wounded. I was working in the ambulance. One thing was really amazing about that time. After all those years of complete silence, the word wanted to help us when Israel invaded us in Lebanon. There were all those

youngsters from the West coming to Damascus to help. But to be honest they were sometimes more of a burden than help, but it was great to see that finally somebody cared about our fate.

We did not have a country, but we had the PLO. For years we thought we were forgotten, but then the world was suddenly with us.

[Mamdooh, Warsaw]

Omar's narrative reflects on his participation in the resistance movement in the following way:

I joined the liberation movement in 1968. I became active with the PFLP.<sup>23</sup> I remember the first book I read there was the Communist Manifesto of Engels. I think because I read a lot, very soon I was promoted for a head of the unit. I had been engaged with transferring the weapons, with many things. I had thought before [until 1967] that the world was with us and knew the injustice that happened to us. I was shocked to learn that the world saw terrorist Zionist forces who took our land as victims. It was a shock, it was like a second huge humiliation. But then, the 70s was like a golden era for Palestinians. A whole bunch of revolutionaries came from all over the world. Even Carlos visited us, I met him a few times. The girls from Italy came to see us, visitors from everywhere. It was like a shining page in the history of Arabs. People recall it with pride even today. We were proud to be Palestinians again.

[Omar, Kraków]

Participation in the political movements of that time – in Omar's case the 60s and 70s and in Marwan and Mamdooh's the 80s – gave them a new sense of pride related to being Palestinian, which resonates in their oral histories.<sup>24</sup> During the time of their adolescence, Palestinian identity, as discussed earlier, was something that was denied to them and associated with a sense of shame and embarrassment. Suddenly after the defeat of the Six Day War, which Omar sees as another instance of Palestinian humiliation, the Palestinian

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<sup>23</sup> The Popular Front of Liberation of Palestine, a left wing organization associated with the PLO.

<sup>24</sup> These experiences were only shared by Polish research participants from this generation. Most of the research participants arrived in Poland (and other then Eastern Block countries) after previously being active in the PLO. Following the Mannheimian description of generation, in the case this subgroup, we could delineate a specific 'generation unit' within the Exile generation.

cause re-emerged with pride and glory, gaining international recognition. We can see the change of mood when Omar talks about that time being exhilarating and the best years for the Palestinian cause. Similarly, Mamdooh recalls the moment when Palestinians received international recognition after yeas of silencing. Again the importance of the fact that 'the world' recognized Palestinian struggle is highlighted.

In these moments of their oral stories, Palestine is no longer a memory of the idealized past. Palestine is no longer a lost cause. It becomes a dream of liberation. For the interviewees, participation in the emerging resistance movement opened a new conduit of belonging to Palestine that could transcend the narrative of loss. For many of the research participants born in the refugee camps and growing up with the sense of victimhood and shame, the revolutionary ideas of 'liberation' offered a renewed hope and brought pride related to being Palestinian. From being a part of a neglected community whose identity was denied, their struggle became legitimized and oriented toward a future goal. Suddenly, the return to Palestine emerged as something real. The enemy becomes real, the struggle becomes physical – from the imagined past it becomes a tangible presence.

What is also changing is their own positioning within this storying of Palestine. Engagement with the PLO offered a promise of taking their collective fate into their own hands. And Omar, Mamdooh and others among my research participants became part of this struggle. There is a marked shift in their narratives as they start to be the actors in the events they are narrating. In this sense, it is important to reflect on the transition from the inherited memories, in which they take no part, to their own memories, where they become an integral part of the events and the stories they narrate.

However, these feelings of being an active force shaping a relationship with Palestine are not necessarily expressed throughout the rest of their narratives. As they move on with descriptions of their engagement with the PLO, it is possible to observe a gradual decline of the hopes engendered through the movement and the narrative distancing of their own participation within it. From the initial enthusiasm, the narratives become bitter. This disillusionment with the PLO, echoed throughout the narratives, also impacted upon the kind of relationship with Palestine that participants describe. In order to discuss this transformation I would like to discuss the final extract from Marwan:

I continued to be engaged in the different underground resistance movements until 1982 when Israel attacked the PLO in Lebanon and I volunteered to go to the war. I went there alongside my best friends. It was a short period but irreversibly changed a lot in my life. It was the first time in my life when I saw death in front of my eyes. In this war, I lost many friends from my childhood. My fiancée, who was also taking part in the fight, died in this war. I lost both of my best friends. One of them had been a friend since school. He died trying to protect me.

Until Lebanon I had always thought that war was something romantic, something remote, something worth fighting for and sacrificing your life for, where everyone becomes a hero. But then in that war I realized that, at the end of the day, we were nothing more than ammunition in the hands of politicians. We did not count at all, not for Arafat, nor for anyone. It did not matter whether all of us would die or whether all of us would survive. It began to change my attitude towards the Palestinian cause, towards the violence and politics. I realized that war is senseless. That it was completely senseless. That it was just a political game. And we were puppets in that game.

[Marwan, journalist, Warsaw]

I quote this extract to trace the biographical evolution of Marwan's views and experiences. We meet Marwan as a young child clinging to the knees of his aunt as he listens to stories about genies. Subsequently we see him next at school, when he needs to confront the denial of his identity and demonstrate his attachment to Palestine. The act of volunteering to go to the war is a consequence of his 'patriotic upbringing', as he puts it. He joins the war and gradually the tragedy of his position unfolds in front of his eyes as he loses his closest companions. Marwan's comment that 'we were puppets in that game' reflects a moment of realization that he and his friends had been used as an object to fulfil someone else's vision and to perform on somebody else's stage. As his closest friends die, he realizes the naivety of the ideals on which he was brought up and the drastic consequences of living them out. Until that moment in South Lebanon, Marwan equated the national narrative with his own story. He lived the collective narrative and the decision to join the ranks was the personification of that narrative. After his traumatic experiences in the war in Lebanon, he

begins the process of disassociating and distancing himself from the Palestine this narrative sought to create. Suddenly he realizes that there is a rift between Arafat and the role he is given in the war and the ideals he personally believes in. He realizes that he had been a product of his nation's romanticized past.

Listening to Marwan and the transformation that he narrates, it becomes clear that while in some ways participation in the PLO reoriented interviewees' relationship with Palestine, it can also be interpreted as a continuation of the same narrative passed on to them by their ancestors. Rather than engaging in alternative ways of engaging with Palestine, activism in the resistance movement remained entrenched in the memory and stories on which they had been brought up. It is only through the process of realizing his own complicity and exploitation that Marwan is able to open up a space for a different relationship with his ancestral country. The bitter moment of realization that strikes him in the mountains of Lebanon can be seen as a moment in which he distances himself from unequivocal legacy of postmemory and is able to reflect on the inherited memories and narratives of homeland in a more critical way.

Reflecting on the gradual decline of the PLO and the generational character of this experience for the Nakba generation, it is useful to go back to Khalidi (1997) and then link this experience to the earlier discussions of the notion of 'unfinishedness' of the Nakba narrative. Khalidi argues that the sequence of dramatic losses Palestinians suffered - from the collapse of the Arab Revolt in the 1930s, through the Nakba to the decline of the resistance movement - has taken on a specific interpretation in Palestinian collective memory. He observes the emergence of a particular approach to Palestinian history that he sees as 'narrative of triumph', in which the 'repeated, crushing failure [that] has been surmounted and survived' has been represented and remembered as the acts of national pride and resilience (1997: 194). This narrative, in his view, has allowed Palestinians to see themselves as innocent victims embattled against stronger enemies, be they British, Zionist or Arab forces, and 'absolves the Palestinians from the responsibility of their own fate' (*ibid.*: 195). He argues that the emergence of the PLO allowed this narrative to crystallize and that the movement's own loss was also subsequently presented as part of this continuous narrative. This narrative of 'failure as triumph' resonates with the notion of the 'unfinishedness' of the Nakba discussed earlier, rendering different parts of Palestinian

history as the elements of the same overarching narrative. The generation of the Exiles seems to not only 'carry' the Nakba postmemory, but also, at least to a certain degree, and at particular moments in their lives, to reinforce and strengthen this narrative. It is only the following generations of diasporic Palestinians, whose experiences I discuss in the coming chapters, who are able to assess this narrative critically and develop own understandings and modes of relating to Palestine, without being entangled in the postmemory of Palestine.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

Fortier (2005) reminds us that memory has the ability to link the temporalities of then and now. She asserts that by creating points of attachment across time and space, diasporic memory spins 'threads of continuity', many of which no longer have any connection with the homeland (2005: 184). In thinking through the role of indirect memory for the generation of the Exiles, it is possible to see the existence of postmemory as creating continuity across time and space where continuity had been broken. It can be seen as a source of stability for refugees who have been affected by rupture, uprooting and change. In the context of ongoing dispossession, physical uprooting and the sense of shame around becoming refugees, canonized and idealized postmemory served as an important source of identity and pride in the homeland that had been lost. While this 'guardianship' of the Nakba and pre-1948 Palestine remains an important legacy for this generation, this chapter has reflected on how their stories interact with and modify their postmemories. Through their engagement with the PLO, the research participants were not only the carriers of the un-lived past, but also the actors of the events they were narrating. The stories that they tell about their engagement with the PLO can be seen as both producing narrative continuity and being a telling of the consequences of growing up surrounded by the narratives of the catastrophe. It is not possible to deduce from these narratives alone whether these forms of story are an attempt to create a wholly alternative relationship with Palestine. In the introduction to their book about the memory of the Nakba, Sa'di and Abu Lughod and claim that 'what happened is not over' (2007: 18). Indeed, oral histories of the generation of the Exiles reveal how, despite the passage of 66 years, the narrative the Nakba continues to be open-ended, guiding diasporic modes of remembering Palestine.

## Chapter 5. 'Occupied from Within'. Memory, body and place

### 5.1. Overview

This chapter reflects on the relationship between memory, body and place, drawing on the narratives of the generation I refer to as 'Occupied from Within'. As opposed to the experiences of the Exiles, who had limited or no contact with their ancestral homeland, memories of Palestine among this generation are rooted in direct experiences of growing up and living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Employing the literature that theorizes Palestinian political reality as a 'colonial present' (Derek, 1994), as well as drawing from scholarship on 'body memory', this chapter argues that the memories of those Palestinians who left the Occupied Palestinian Territories are still embedded in and activated through sensual and bodily experience. The chapter begins by discussing how diasporic bodies remain subject to colonial oppression, despite having left Palestine. Subsequently, it reflects on how the memories of Palestine exert a force on the subject in public and private spaces, as well as on their physical and bodily character. I conclude by exploring how the same bodies of diasporic subjects can simultaneously be seen as sites of resistance through their memories of actively reclaiming colonial space (as during the First Intifada) and of steadfastness and survival (*sumud*).

### 5.2. Generation of the occupation

The analysis that forms the basis of this chapter derives from the narratives of Palestinians who were born in the Palestinian Territories in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and subsequently left as a result of the Israeli occupation.<sup>25</sup> After the Six Day War of 1967, all of the remaining areas of pre-1948 Palestine fell under Israeli control in the form of de facto annexation (East Jerusalem) and ongoing occupation (Gaza and West Bank). Despite the fragmentation of the Palestinian territories, the experience of being born and brought up within them creates important similarities in the way in which these participants

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<sup>25</sup> Specifically, five of the research participants were born in the West Bank, four were born in Gaza, two in East Jerusalem and one in Umm-El-Fahm in today's Israel. After the 1948 War, these places fell under Egyptian (Gaza) and Jordanian control (West Bank, East Jerusalem).

experienced Palestine and ways in which they relate to their homeland once they found themselves away from it.<sup>26</sup>

Overview of the generation of the 'Occupied from within'					
Demographic details				Details of trajectory	
No.	Nickname	Gender	Age bracket	Place of birth	Current location
1	Mona	F	18-30	Khan Younis, Gaza	Łódź, Poland
2	Yousef	M	35-45	Tulkarem	Warsaw, Poland
3	Aziz	M	35-45	Ramallah	Warsaw, Poland
4	Razi	M	35-45	Ramallah	Warsaw, Poland
5	Jakub	M	34-45	Bejta	Warsaw, Poland
6	Jumana	F	45-60	Gaza/Gaza City	London, UK
7	Tarek	M	35-45	Gaza City	London UK
8	Wael	M	45-60	Jerusalem	Glasgow, Scotland
9	Bassam	M	35-45	Bejta	London, UK
10	Hannen	F	45- 60	Nablus	London, UK
11	Firas	M	35-45	Nablus	London, UK
12	Shadi	M	35-45	Jerusalem	London

**Figure 5.1. Overview of the Generation of the Occupied from Within**

The circumstances of leaving Palestine for this group are different from those under which Palestinian families fled in 1948. They were not subjected to mass expulsions. In most cases,

<sup>26</sup> Palestinians living in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories live under four different regimes of control. This leads to a situation in which neighbours can be assigned different statuses and accorded different rights. Twenty per cent of Israeli society consists of Palestinians who remained after 1948 – they are Arab citizens of the state, formally banned from visiting their families in the West Bank or Gaza. There are Palestinians in annexed East Jerusalem that do not have Israeli citizenship but Jerusalem IDs that allow them to work and travel in Israel. Finally, there are residents of the West Bank and Gaza who have Palestinian IDs granted by the Palestinian Authority (after Oslo), which do not allow them to travel beyond the West Bank and Gaza. If they need to go to Jerusalem, they need to apply for a permit from the Israeli Civil Administration; these are difficult to obtain – especially for young people and men. When in Gaza, Palestinians carry Gaza IDs that prevent them from travelling to Israel and through Israel to Palestinian territories. In theory it is possible to get a permit, but permits are given only in rare and selected humanitarian cases relating to hospital treatments (see: B'TSELEM, 2014; BADIL, 2012; Pappé, 2006)

the decision to leave was a direct or indirect result of the worsening living conditions within the ongoing occupation. Juliane Hammer observes that besides the actual wars of 1948 and 1967, the Israeli administration, using a combination of political, social and economic factors, pressured Palestinian communities to leave (2005: 15). Jamil Hilal writes that in 2006 'nearly half of the households in the West Bank and Gaza strip reported at least one immigrant' since the beginning of the occupation (2006: 224). The majority of my research participants left the West Bank and Gaza to study in Poland and the UK, as the education system and socio-economic conditions in these areas have remained underdeveloped due to political instability. The rest of them left as a consequence of political and economic insecurity, especially after the First or Second Intifada. In some cases, at the time of the research, the lives of participants in this group were broadly similar to transnational migrants who commute back and forth and maintain their lives across borders (c.f. Glick Shiller, 1992). These 'return visits' to Palestine, as they referred to them, would usually happen during summer vacations or on religious holidays.

Many of the research participants decided to stay abroad as a result of worsening political and economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza. Two of them have been unable to return as Israeli authorities revoked their Jerusalem IDs. Thus, participants from this group often saw themselves as victims of a clandestine ethnic cleansing and part of a continuous Nakba that continues to displace a generation of Palestinians in and outside Palestine.

The experience of having being born in the Palestinian territories and not having left during the expulsions of 1948 brings a different understanding of and relationship with Palestine and Palestinian history. The events of the Palestinian Nakba, while important in terms of national history, are not central to the personal narratives of this generation. 'Staying on the land' after the events of 1948 and 1967 has exposed them to different sets of political developments that influence their biographies and memories. In the oral stories of the generation of Palestinians born in exile, who had no or limited contact with their homeland, Palestine often emerged as a romanticized and idealized place narrated in relation to its loss. In contrast, research participants from this group had diverse personal experiences to relate to and to draw upon. Their memories of Palestine are embedded in the physical and tangible experiences of contact with the place in which they grew up. The image of Palestine that emerges from their narratives is far from idealized. Palestine is remembered in relation

to the ongoing and overwhelming experience of occupation, which had affected all aspects of life in their homeland. Their memories of Palestine and Palestinian-ness that they describe often evoke images of everyday life led in the shadow of unrelenting control and oppression.

### **5.3. Embodied occupation**

When listening to and transcribing the interviews with the participants of this generation, I was struck by how memories of the occupation were narrated not only as personal, social and political experiences, but also as bodily sensations. It felt as if the research participants remained subjected to the occupation despite the geographical and temporal distance that separated them from Palestine. Hannen, who has lived in London for almost 20 years, said in the interview:

[Ever since I left Palestine], I found myself writing and following the situation and it continues like it forever . [tears appear in her eyes].

Now I live in London, I'm married, I have a son, but I feel like... [she pauses]... like I have something lost in me.

I live in a free country. But I am not free. I feel occupied from inside still.

[Hannen, journalist, London]

This extract of Hannen's narrative (from which I have drawn the name of this generation), echoes Frantz Fanon's (1968) theorization of colonial power as always inscribed in the body of colonized subjects. Hannen's description of 'feeling occupied' despite having left Palestine invites reflection on the lasting character of colonial oppression and the psychosensory consequences of the occupation on diasporic subjects (c.f. Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2010). Pierre Bourdieu's (1999) work on social suffering draws attention to the 'invisible' consequences of injustice, which are difficult to research, quantify or even articulate, but which create lasting pain for the people being subjected to violence. Edward S. Casey observes that some traumatic memories 'never lose their painful and devastating sting, especially when they are accompanied by some form of humiliation of one's own person' (2000: 156). Similarly, Juhani Pallasma (2009) draws attention to ways in which the

body preserves memory. Drawing on his own memories of his ancestral house, he writes: 'My eyes have forgotten what they once saw, but my body still remembers. We internalize our experiences as lived situational, multi-sensory images and they are fused with our body experience. Human memory is embodied, skeletal and muscular in its essence, not merely cerebral' (2009: 21).

In trying to understand the lasting character of memories ingrained in the body, some scholars have thought of the bodies of oppressed subjects as archives of their traumatic pasts. Gayatri Gopinath reflects on the ways in which queer diasporic bodies become archives of multiple displacement and colonial histories (2010: 172). Using palliative care studies, Yasmin Gunaratnam examines the 'somatosensory' effects that migration and dislocation have on migrants' bodies at the end of their lives (2013: 14). Both of these accounts open up new analytical paths, reminding us that displacement and dislocation involve a journey of bodies out of place – and that these bodies contain both physical and symbolic memory traces of these movements. Thinking of the body as a 'memory archive' draws attention to the enduring character of past violations.

Casey conceptualises 'body memory' as 'memory that is intrinsic to the body, to its own ways of remembering: how we remember in and by and through the body' (2000: 147). He defines several types of 'body memories', including 'traumatic body memory', which is related to the experience of pain, conflict and violence. He asserts that this form of body memory is experienced by subjects as the 'fragmentation of the lived body' (*ibid.*: 151). This strongly resonates with Hannen's experience of remembering life in Palestine as a sense of 'having lost something inside me' and an occupation 'from inside' In opposition to other types of body memory, i.e., the habitual body memory, which has an enabling character, traumatic body memory has a 'disabling' influence on the body which 'inhibit[s] action' (*ibid.*: 155-156).

The disabling character of traumatic body memory is highlighted in other interviewees' narratives, in which they describe their experiences relating of leaving Palestine and settling in Europe in terms of bodily sensations. I was particularly struck by the way in which Mona and Bassam narrated memories of settling in Warsaw and Dubai using words that describe paralysis and death:

When I first came to Poland I was shocked. I felt like I was in a forest – so green, so many trees and then so many big buildings, roads, so many cars.

And then I remember that every time I would hear a plane over my head, my body would go on alert... And I would think... is it going to kill me this time? It's hard to comprehend, but every time this happened, my body would freeze in anticipation of an explosion. I had to calm myself, convince myself it's just a passenger plane, and not an F16, and that I'm in Warsaw, not in Gaza.

[Mona, 24, student and Arabic teacher, Warsaw]

For me, the first time I left Palestine was to travel to Dubai. It took me a while to adapt. The sound of a Ford Van I overheard there... it was the same sound made by Israeli military trucks. And then I'm at my home in Dubai and I hear this sound... I would immediately panic, thinking, 'Oh my God, Israelis are in town'.

And simultaneously I would realize that I am no longer in Palestine.  
Before, I never realized that sound had consciousness.

[Bassam, 33, works as a business consultant in London]

Both of these accounts narrate particular sensory deceptions. Mona and Bassam were outside of Palestine, but their bodies reacted as if they were still there. They associated the sounds of a plane and a van with the violence of the occupation. Mona recalls her body freezing to the sound of a civilian plane over Warsaw, which reminded her of an Israeli F16 shelling Gaza. She had to 'calm' herself, as her body instinctively became filled with dread/fear. The engine of a common vehicle did not sound innocent to Bassam when he first arrived in Dubai. It evoked his memories of the Israeli military entering his village. Bassam's comment about realizing that the sound 'had consciousness' highlights the significance of associations and memories embedded in sounds and voices. The significance of sonic memory is taken up by Michael Bull and Les Back who assert that sounds 'test our sense of the social to the limits' (2003: 1). They suggest that 'sound has both utopian and dystopian associations: it enables individuals to create intimate, manageable and

aestheticized spaces, but it can also become an unwanted and deafening roar threatening the body politic of the subject' (*ibid.*).

Mona's and Bassam's narrations of sensory deception necessitates a consideration of how time is experienced within memories of violence. Veena Das (1990) observes that in instances of violence 'succession and seriality give way to simultaneity' within the subject's experience of past and present. She writes that in such instances 'the present is stuck like a gramophone needle in the groove of one fateful moment in the past' (1990: 359). Drawing on this insight, Michael Jackson asserts that 'one's sense of time unfolding is so disturbed that the future is continually referred back to this moment in the past and cannot break free of it' (2002: 103). Thus, for its victims, violence can be read as bringing about a collapse of the passage of time. Das and Jackson's reflections bring me back to Casey's observations on how traumatic body memory links the past with the present, enabling the past to continue in the present. Casey uses the word 'immanence' to conceptualise how the past merges with the present. He writes: 'This means that in body memories the past is a direct constituent of the present, a constituent mediated neither by image nor by word. In this way the past is prolonged, given a new lease of life' (2000: 157). Mona's and Bassam's traumatic experiences of the occupation seem to be given 'a new lease of life' in Warsaw and Dubai. Casey develops the term 'after-glow' to emphasize the power that memories of the past bear on a subject's body in the present (*ibid.*). He writes that 'the phenomena of after-glow and ruminescence strongly suggest that many body traumas remain threatening to us even, or rather precisely, as remembered. The return to the initial trauma that their bodily remembering entails brings with it an at least minor trauma of its own' (*ibid.*).<sup>27</sup> Thomas Fuchs writes that 'body memory does not represent the past, but re-enacts it. But precisely through this, it also establishes an access to the past itself, not through images or words but through immediate experience and action' (2012: 19). While the imminent threat is no longer there, the trauma of the occupation can be reignited in the bodies of Mona and Bassam through re-collection. In this sense, the occupation continues to be threatening to them, despite the fact that they are no longer within its physical parameters.

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<sup>27</sup> Casey coins the term 'ruminescence', which is a combination of reminiscence and rumination (2000:46)

#### **5.4. Spatialized memories of Palestine**

Extracts from the stories of Mona and Bassam suggest the importance of a specific type of liminality involved in leaving Palestine, which leaves an imprint on memory formation. For both of them, the departure from Palestine and arrival in a new place enabled them to grasp the extent of the occupation practices that they had experienced. Only after Bassam had been outside of Palestine did he realize the full scale of the oppression in which he had lived in the West Bank, the extent to which his rights had been taken away from him and the physical and mental constraints that were forced upon him. Similarly, Mona feels strange walking on the streets of Warsaw without having to worry about her own safety; she finds it difficult to adapt to life without physical constraints. Her experiences call attention to the ways in which memories are also constructed in the process of movement (c.f. Malkki, 1992; Fortier, 2005).

This section departs from the observation that participants' memories of Palestine were often narrated around different aspects of the occupation and had a strong repetitive spatial dimension. Palestine was remembered and narrated through borders, checkpoints, barriers, and surveillance, which revealed the totality of control of space and subjects. John Collins observes that the 'spatialization' of popular memory occurs as a result of the occupation, which is 'enacted and reproduced through a variety of practices, both direct and indirect, involving the control of both public and private spaces' (2004: 112). The assemblage of my participants' narratives began to create a map of occupied Palestine that reveals a particular cartography. It is a cartography in which space is produced but is a site of ongoing oppression relating to constraint and control – of bodies, of movement and of intentions. I would like to return to another extract of Bassam's narrative, when he recalls his early years in the West Bank, where he was born:

Our childhood was always connected with the occupation. For instance, if you want to go Nablus, where I studied, you always had to think and calculate... 'Oh no, I cannot go this way... maybe there is a flying checkpoint there, or maybe I'll just stay home to avoid harassment.' If you want to get married, you can't get married to

anyone you want because you might not get there. Sometimes I would ask my mother to go whenever I needed something in Nablus, because soldiers were particularly targeting young Palestinian boys.

When I commuted to Birzeit to university, the soldiers would regularly harass me, would take me to interrogation. It happened five or six times just because I was a Palestinian youth – at that time they wanted to kill my dignity, they wanted to break us. Sometimes I would just... give up going.

Once, I remember my grandma had problems with her eyes so I had to go to Huwwara to apply for a permit for her to go and see a doctor in Jerusalem<sup>28</sup>. They questioned me for hours and then started beating me. When I protested, one of them asked ‘Do you want to be on Al-Jazeera tomorrow?’ At that moment, I realized that my life meant nothing to them.

[Bassam, 33, works as a business consultant in London]

Bassam’s narrative is focused on places he needs to go and the often-insurmountable difficulties in reaching them. It is through the bodily harassment at the checkpoints and his inability to move from place to place that he remembers his everyday life in Palestine. Paul Connerton’s (2011) approach, which asserts that the body is always ‘spatially’ situated, is useful for considering Bassam’s recollections of his life in Palestine. Connerton suggests that ‘human spatial memory is so powerful because it has this bodily self-aware frame of reference; the primary set of relationships within the network of places in the relationship between those topographic features and the person’ (2011: 83). At the heart of Connerton’s definition of spatial memory is the body’s ability to locate itself in relation to places. Building on this mode of thinking about the spatial character of memory, it is interesting to realize what constitutes this recall in Bassam’s memories, but also what is missing from them. His memories of the structure of occupation, in the form of checkpoints, harassment and the inability to move, stand in stark opposition to the memories of the generation of the Exiles, who narrated Palestine in relation to its beautiful landscape, marked by hills, valleys and nature.

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<sup>28</sup> Huwwara is a village in between Nablus and Ramallah, a nearby checkpoint and a division of Civil Administration unit of the Israeli army operate took its name after the village.

In making sense of the relationship between the body and colonial space, Nirmal Puwar's conception of the figure of the 'space invader' is illuminating. She writes:

There is a connection between bodies and space, which is built, repeated and contested over time [...] Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong, while others are marked out as 'trespassers', who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually) 'out of place' [...] they are space invaders. (2004: 8)

To examine Bassam's oral story, it is useful to apply Puwar's ideas in an inverted form and to reflect on the ways in which colonial space invades the bodies of the occupational subject. Bassam's account enables us to understand ways in which occupation literally invades the subject's body on a daily basis in the form of restrictions on movement and physical violence. The language and vocabulary that he uses ('they wanted to kill my dignity...to break us') illustrates the crushing mental and physical impact of the occupational power.

Hannen remembers her life in Nablus through the feeling of being 'stuck'. She recalls the absurdity of navigation through the matrix of different checkpoints and permits, and the continuously changing system of closures. Aziz, another participant from this group, literally drew a map to show me how he would navigate through different barriers. These experiences of having to navigate through the endless web of Israeli checkpoints lead to a feeling of losing control over space, time and one's own life. Hannen compares her life under occupation to 'living in a movie, in a thriller, where you always take the part of the oppressed lot'. Israeli restriction of Palestinian space creates a situation in which Palestinians no longer feel ownership of it. Hannen feels like a character in a film, always playing the same role of a victim. She no longer feels like an agent of her own life.

These feelings of loss in the spatio-temporality are reflected in Palestinian scholarship in a number of interesting ways. In *After the Last Sky* (1986), Edward Said reflects on the experience of losing a sense of control over territory and time in the following words:

The stability of geography and the continuity of land – these have completely disappeared from my life and the life of all Palestinians. If we are not stopped at

borders, or herded into new camps, or denied re-entry and residence, or barred from travel from one place to another, more of our land is taken, our lives are interfered with arbitrarily, our voices are prevented from reaching each other, our identity is confined to frightened little islands in an inhospitable environment of superior military force sanitized by the clinical jargon of pure administration. (1986: 19)

Helga Tawil-Souri reflects on her experience of crossing Qalandia, one of the largest checkpoints in the West Bank, commenting: 'What checkpoints reinforce is Palestinians' loss of orderly space-time, of the missing foundation of their existence, the lost ground of their origin, the broken link with their land and their past' (2010: 41).

Importantly, as both these reflections and those of my participants make clear, the loss of a sense of time-space is intimately related to losing the sense of agency over one's own life. Bassam's narrative above delineates the lack of predictability in his life. His conviction that nothing depends on him but rather on the arbitrary decisions of soldiers adds to the feeling of powerless over his own movement, plans and life. He recalls a life in which every decision – including those around even the most mundane activities– needs to be negotiated vis-à-vis the potential presence of soldiers, checkpoints, barriers and restrictions. He also remembers refraining from leaving the house in anticipation of the difficulties and risks. To understand this inaction it is useful to turn to Michel Foucault's (1980) concept of 'disciplining' power under which subjects 'police' themselves and impose 'self-control'. According to Foucault, 'disciplinary power' is never accumulated or located in one place or with one agent, but is spatially distributed. He writes: 'Power is not a thing, instead power is a force that is constructed, enacted and transmitted through institutions, social structures, dominant rhetoric, means of communication and physical and psychic levels that constitute life' (1980: 174). He emphasizes that individuals 'are vehicles of power, not its points of application' (*ibid.*: 98). Subjects are constantly in the process of undergoing but also 'exercising power'. This notion will be especially important in analysing memories relating to oppression, as well as resistance. Building on Foucault's insight, Collins notes that in the context of Palestinian reality 'disciplinary power' is produced not through the most visible actors of the state, but through 'micropractices' of everyday life (2004: 112). Maha Samman asserts that this strategy of 'self-restraint' is in line with the occupational strategy of the

Israeli forces. She writes that 'the aim of the colonizer is not only to control space and people, but to control time and the permanency of the ability to control it' (2013: 47). As well as the physical existence of control, it is also the possibility of being stopped at any time at one of the checkpoints that creates a feeling of total domination.

*Memories of the occupation and private spaces*

The occupational cartography of Palestine arising from the memories of research participants in this group charts more than physical harassment and restriction in public places. Many memories of the occupation relate to the oppression of the subjects' bodies in private spaces, reaching deep into the fabric of the family. Their spatial memories involved memories of homes, which are also transformed by the experience of the occupation. Below I return to Hannen's narrative, in which she explains how the arrest of her brother changed the life of her family:

When my brother was arrested it was 1968, it was a year after the occupation started. You cannot imagine how life in the house changed. If you eat you hear your parents saying: 'Oh, how can we eat if we are not sure if he is eating?' Or, 'Oh, how can we sleep if we are not sure if they are not beating him?' 'Does he sleep?' 'Is he ok?' All those questions.

You are always in the situation in which you have a sad family, sad parents. When you see your dad crying, the image... you know... of your dad. He is the one protecting you, the one who is there to nourish you... and when you see him crying you lose so many things. You want revenge, but you don't know what to do, how to do it... It's never about... Am I going to have this dress, or am I going to listen to this music? It's always, 'How's your dad today, does he feel any better?'... This is the sort of life that it becomes.

Only now I realize what kind of a restrained life it must have been for my parents. The military was there, social life suddenly became different, the economic situation became different. Your life becomes different.

For us, it was like a dead period.

[Hannen, 55, journalist, London]

Hannen's memories of home evolve around her recollection of how the arrest of her brother disrupted family life and how it irreversibly changed her childhood. It becomes a symbolic moment in which 'the outside' world breaks into their intimate home life and causes destabilization and anxiety. Suddenly, her childhood is no longer about clothes and music – objects that symbolize carefreeness and happiness. It becomes centred around worrying about her parents. From the perspective of a young girl, the outside world has punctured her entire sense of security. The prevailing memory that she has is of the overwhelming sense of irrevocable loss, that something had been taken away from her that cannot be healed by the passage of time.

Lisa Taraki, the editor of the book *Living Palestine*, states that the Palestinian family has been portrayed in literary discourse as a 'shock absorber', providing comfort, security and a sense of stability despite the turbulence of living under occupation (2006: xii). She writes: 'Like the silently suffering mother heroine who bears the burden of her family's survival with stoicism and fortitude, the family is idealized as the privileged symbol of Palestinian resilience in the face of occupation and its adversities' (*ibid.*: xvii). In the same edition, Eileen Kuttab asks to what extent a Palestinian family can absorb so many shocks and reflects on the limits of the 'coping mechanisms' that can be provided by families in the face of the occupation (*ibid.*: xviii).

These questions bring me back to Hannen's memories of the drastic change that occurred in her family life and the disturbances entailed after her brother's arrest. Here there is no trace of the idealization of the family that Taraki identifies in Palestinian collective narratives. Rather, Hannen's memory reveals the painful impact of the physical and emotional costs carried by her family. Kuttab also discusses the 'crisis of the male breadwinner' caused by occupational realities. She argues that the rise in male unemployment had a considerable economic impact on families. It also carried severe psychological consequences, which shifted the established pattern of relations within the families and increased the sense of instability (2006: 234-266). For Hannen, the transformation of her father from a source of security and 'nourishment' to someone anxious and vulnerable ruptures her and her family's life and deepens a sense of instability.

These spatialized memories of the occupation, which narrate both private as well as public places, convey something of the totalising character of Israeli control. Occupation is not a singular political event – it is an ongoing experience that disintegrates the fabric of everyday life. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian emphasizes that the occupation is ‘a structure not an event’ and asserts that the ‘violation of basic rights permeates every aspect of life, irrevocably altering the daily reality of those targeted by this violence. This trauma spirals out and impacts the body, mind, social networks, economic status, etc. of all those involved’ (2010: 6).

Hannen finishes the extract concluding that her childhood and adolescence was a ‘dead period’ – the vitality, the meaning and joy of life were taken away. What remains is the feeling of loss, of sadness and insecurity. Hannen’s use of the word ‘dead’ to describe her years under the occupation is reminiscent of the writings of Rosemary Sayigh (1979), who collected oral testimonies of Palestinian refugees in the camps in Lebanon. She observed that the refugees used a morbid vocabulary to describe to their lives post-1948, employing words relating to death such as ‘paralysis’, ‘non-existence’, and ‘loss’. This resonates with other scholarship that has situated Palestinian life in the ‘present absence’. This notion of present absence describes lives in which Palestinians are present, but face daily absences – the absence of citizenship, borders, and sovereignty, as well as their situation of being made ‘absent’ from the world’s gaze. Lloyd thus argues that Palestinians ‘inhabit a shadowland’ (2012: 60).

## **5.5. Spatialized memories of resistance**

In this section, I extend my discussion of the spatialization of memories to reflect on the ways in which memories related to spatial domination and oppression often coexist in the narratives of my research participants with memories of the same spaces as sites of resistance. In doing so, I wish to avoid teleological readings which posit that forms of oppression are followed by forms of liberation manifested in active collective resistance. These are not coequal developments. Considering how space is produced in daily practices and, especially, how the space is resisted, I return to Lefebvre (1991). Lefebvre’s distinction between three spatial moments - conceived, perceived and lived space - allows a more dynamic conception of space that is constantly under production and reproduction.

Foucault's and Lefebvre's conceptions of power and space are important in understanding how space constrains the body, but also how the same space, through daily practices can be reclaimed, and rearranged. Employing these conceptions, Zawawi et al. (2012) stress that in occupational realities 'subjects' are produced by spatial relations, but that they also reproduce these spatial relations. Their work on the production and reproduction of social space in Dawar, the old city of Nablus, provides an analysis of how the memories of the resistance of the First and Second Intifada are constructed in relation to space. Using Lefebvre's taxonomy of social space, the authors claim that social space in Dawar was first conceived by those who were in power, namely Israeli occupational forces, through a number of checkpoints and surveillance installations. They argue, however, that subsequently the inhabitants of Nablus, through their everyday practices, were able to integrate that hostile environment into their behaviour. The heavily controlled space of Dawar became a key site of resistance during the First Intifada, a site of violence in the Second Intifada and later the site of an ongoing commemoration (2012: 9-14).

*Re-claiming public places: memories of the Intifada*

I begin this section with extracts from Yousef's narrative of his memories of participation in the First Intifada. The First Intifada, which broke out in late 1987, was the first civil uprising in the Palestinian Territories against the Israeli occupation (Collins, 2004; Bucaille, 2004). The Intifada became a mass civil, largely peaceful process, demanding an end to the occupation (c.f., Khalidi, 1997; Collins, 2004; Bucaille, 2004). What is important from the generational perspective of this thesis is that many of the research participants in this group, who were teenagers at that time, took an active part in the uprising. Stories of collective forms of protest against the Israeli occupation constituted a significant part of their narratives. Yousef, who now lives in Warsaw and works as a doctor, was a 16-year-old student at that time. Like many other teenage boys of his generation, he was in the vanguard of the uprising.

We would get out from our school and take to the streets, and join the protests. But then everybody would join us – women, children, and elderly. It was peaceful, we did not carry guns or anything. I would often walk with my dad. We would shout and scream patriotic slogans, until we met Israeli soldiers... and the clashes would erupt.

I remember how happy we were that for the first time we carried the Palestinian flag. Suddenly we were not afraid, suddenly the fear was gone. It felt like... the biggest dream come true. And we would shout the word 'Palestine', which was also illegal at that time...The Intifada was the best time of my life.

Later, they came to arrest me. I spent eight months in the prison, but I don't regret it. I hadn't done anything wrong, I haven't hurt a single person. When I left the prison I felt like a hero.

[Yousef, doctor, Warsaw]

Yousef's narrative exemplifies the ways in which everyday memories of the occupation co-exist with memories of resistance. When Yousef relates to his memories of the Intifada, he starts to smile and his body shows a sense of release. The emotion he conveys is about regaining a sense of freedom, of control and reclaiming streets. It is interesting to note how the same spaces that in other parts of the narrative function as spaces of oppression suddenly become reclaimed and transformed into sites of resistance. The multiplicity of these narratives reveals the multi-layered character of space, which consists of different palimpsests of meaning and roles (c.f. Huyssen, 2003; Donald, 1997)

In his study of memories of the Intifada, Collins (2004) emphasizes the importance of a physical 'reclaiming' of the spaces and places, which, until the outbreak of the uprising, had been appropriated by the Israeli military. In his view, it was a crucial point of the Intifada. He asserts how the notion of claiming back the space of domination and control provided a sense of empowerment for young people brought up in the shadow of the occupation. This sense of empowerment, he argues, was also important in relation to the context of the narrative of their parents, which had been about loss and the sense of victimhood (2004: 141-162). Similarly, Laetitia Bucaille (2006) emphasizes the significance of the generational character of the Intifada. She insists that while the uprising was directed against the Israeli forces, it also subverted the 'older' generation's strategies of coping with the occupation. Suddenly it was the *shebab* – the teenagers – that were in the streets, taking power from their elders – parents, teachers and party leaders (2006: 22-26). This generational story is

also reflected in the accounts of other research participants. For instance, Tarek, who was born and grew up in Gaza as the son of refugees from '1948 Palestine' describes his experience.

The Intifada was an amazing political experience – throwing stones and embarrassing Israelis in this way. The generation of my parents accepted the occupation, suddenly we were resisting it and we were fighting for our dignity in a peaceful way.

[Tarek, teacher, London]

The narratives of both Yousef and Tarek express a sense of relief related to reclaiming public space and personal agency. Describing this sudden removal of fear, they remember feelings of personal freedom and empowerment. They are both beaming when they talk about 'embarrassing the soldiers' or 'carrying the Palestinian flag'. Towards the end of the Intifada, Yousef was arrested and sent to detention camp for eight months. He recalls the time in prison as harsh, but also an excellent experience in political education. Twenty-five years later, as a doctor in one of Warsaw's top hospitals, he remembers feeling 'like a hero' when he left the prison. His eyes are shining and he smiles with pride.

#### *Facing the occupation: personal 'disobedience'*

While the memories of major acts of collective and generational resistance during the Intifada emerge from the narratives, research participants also often narrated stories of personal acts of 'disobedience' and finding different ways of 'outsmarting' the system. Interestingly, these narratives, like the memories of the Intifada, convey memories of the same places that had served as sites of surveillance and control – checkpoints and institutions of the occupation. It is helpful to reflect on this 'plurality' of modes remembering the space in Palestine with Foucault, who insists on the inseparability of power and resistance and observes that every application of power creates a potential for resistance (Foucault, 1978; Zawawi, 2012; Ryan, 2013). What is important from the perspective of my analysis is that resistance does not need to be centralized. According to Foucault, 'there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of rebellions or

pure law that is revolutionary. Instead, there is a plurality of resistances, each of them is a special case' (1978: 95). In order to reflect on the way in which memories of occupation coexist with memories of resistance, I wish to come back to Hannen's narrative to discuss her experience of returning to the West Bank and visiting Jerusalem:

There are lots of small things that make you hate going back – the way they search you for instance. Sometimes it can take you the whole day to cross the Allenby Bridge: you wait, wait and wait.<sup>29</sup> [...] But the minute I cross the bridge and I am about to enter my city, the minute I get in, I take a deep breath I... you cannot imagine how relaxed I feel... it's like hugging your mother.

The last time I went to Jerusalem, it was five years ago. I sneaked in – although I have a British Passport, I cannot legally go. Can you imagine not being able to go to Jerusalem? So I sneaked in. We were on the bus to Jerusalem from Ramallah. And when you are on the bus at the Qalandia checkpoint you usually hold the passport or the document. And I just showed mine and passed. I was the only one they did not check and I passed.

How does it feel? Being back in Jerusalem is like hugging your mum and dad. Walking in the old city, going to Al Aqsa mosque, to the church, just to walk the streets, smell the streets, it was just amazing.

[Hannen, journalist, London]

This extract of Hannen's narrative reveals an array of feelings inscribed in the body relating to her memory of going back to Palestine. The memory of physical oppression ('body searching and waiting') at Allenby Bridge is followed by expressions of relief embodied in her feelings of 'relaxation' and 'taking a deep breath' when finding herself back in the West Bank. For Hannen, the return to Nablus feels like 'hugging [her] mother' – it refreshes her memories of home, of safety, love and her mother's touch. The same places that she

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<sup>29</sup> Allenby Bridge Border Crossing is one of the several crossings between the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Jordan fully controlled by Israeli forces. It is the only crossing that West Bank Palestinians are allowed to use to enter and exit the country.

associated with control, fear and sadness recalling her childhood memories are at the same time places of comfort and 'feeling at home'.

Asked about her last visit to Jerusalem, she responds with the story about 'sneaking in'. Hannen decided to risk passing the checkpoint without a permit. The subversive act of crossing without having the right documents can be read in a multiple ways. It can be read as a sign of determination, a willingness to take risks or even 'playing' the system. With this act of disobedience, she manages to resist the system that she otherwise dreads. Hannen's memory of getting to Jerusalem is reminiscent of an anecdote Suad Amiry relates in her book, *Sharon and My Mother in Law* (2004). Amiry recalls taking her dog to a Jewish Israeli doctor, who works in an Israeli settlement near Ramallah (in the act of boycotting the male Palestinian vet who refuses to treat her puppy with respect because the puppy is female). At the visit with the Jewish vet, the puppy gets all the necessary medications and surprisingly gets registered as a Jerusalem dog and is given a Jerusalem ID. Amiry is jealous of her dog for becoming a citizen of Jerusalem, something that is off limits to her. Not only is she denied the right to residency, she is even forbidden from visiting Jerusalem. In frustration, she decides to 'take her dog for a walk to Jerusalem'. At the Qalandia checkpoint she explains to a confused soldier that she is just the 'driver' for the Jerusalem dog, since the dog cannot possibly drive by itself. The soldier screams 'Maze?' ('What' in Hebrew) and, in utter amusement, lets her pass. Amiry comments that 'one never knows when the occupation is serious and when it is just a joke' (2004: 107-117).

Hannen's ability to outsmart the system and Amiry's account of manoeuvring her way through the checkpoint resonates with the writing of Nurhan Abujidi, who observes that the regime of the occupation has soaked into the bodies and daily practices of Palestinian individuals (2014: 225). Drawing from Foucault's formulation of resistance, power and knowledge, Abujidi demonstrates, however, that with experience and knowledge of the operation of the occupation,

Palestinians can break through this network of surveillance and engage in [a] variety of resistance practices [...] Palestinians unconsciously mentally map the patterns and rhythms generated by the control network, thus formulating strategies or tactics to infiltrate the particular system of control (e.g. a checkpoint or the

Apartheid Wall). This knowledge can be used for empowerment, creativity, and resistance, as well as suppression. (*ibid.*: 217)

Neither Amiry's nor Hannen's experience ends at the checkpoint (although they could have). In both cases, crossing the checkpoint 'illegally' is primarily about going to Jerusalem. Their actions are not overtly directed at the Israeli soldiers or the structures of occupation. It is Jerusalem and its holy sites, streets and smells that they want to reclaim. Their acts of 'sneaking in' and 'passing by surprising' can be read as moments of resistance, in which the women are determined to live life as if the occupation was not there and to reclaim something of a limited freedom from control. These moments also demonstrate the arbitrariness of the system. Both of these subversive acts can be interpreted as means of delegitimizing the system through trying to carry on life as normal.

It is illuminating to read their accounts of 'illegal crossing' in light of Václav Havel's work on the sense of humanity regained in personal acts of resistance. In his essay called 'Power of the Powerless' (2000 [1978]), Havel, a Czech dissident, poet and playwright, theorizes individual acts of resistance not in terms of power and a re-claiming of agency to overthrow the system, but in purely ethical terms. Referring to the situation under the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, he argues that the act of resistance has to reject the 'system of lies' on which the authoritarian systems are built. Using the example of a grocer, Havel speculates what would happen if the man stopped legitimizing the regime by refusing to hang propaganda posters in his shop window. In Havel's view, an act of personal disobedience, in this instance pulling down the posters, would allow an individual to break with the system of lies and attempt to live within the truth. The power of this act comes from refusing to take part in the power-matrix game (as Foucault would argue). Its power comes from the moral stance of this act. For Havel, if the entire system is built on lies and manipulation, the decision to follow 'the truth' has profound consequences – including political delegitimization – that goes beyond an individual (1985 [1978]: 28-31).

In relation to the resistance memories of the Palestinian narrators, Havel's theorizing enables us to examine the moral perspective of Hannen and Amiry's acts, prompting a reflection on the relationship between ethics and politics. Their refusal to accept the occupational reality could be read as resistance to participation in the system of control and

to the subjectification practices that system perpetrates. Havel's argument about the morality of resistance enables us to conceptualise it beyond its (very important) political dimension as acts of regaining dignity and humanity in times of violence.

### *Carrying on*

Attempts to continue to live as if the occupation did not exist are interesting to consider alongside another extract from Mona's narrative, in which she reflects on her memories of Gaza.

Growing up we had many situations that, from the perspective of where we talk today, sound scary, sound unimaginable. Once, I woke up, opened my eyes and saw both of my parents next to my bed. I look around and see glass all over the room and on my bed. Everywhere. My parents were sure that I was dead. But I was just asleep and I was fine. I remember the fear in my parents' eyes. I cannot forget it. I think I will never forget it. And this sense of powerlessness – there is nothing I could do or my parents could do. That feeling that something can hit you any second. It's a feeling of being completely helpless and broken by fear. And that's the worst I suppose. But then you carry on.

There is always this overarching sense of anxiety related to the fact that when your dad goes to pick up bread or your mother goes shopping, somewhere in the back of your head you know that they might not be back.

People here in Europe think that it is possible to have things under control, at least to some degree. In Gaza, nothing is under your control. But despite that, you still carry on. As a European, if I saw phosphorus falling down and burning human beings, I would be in a shock. I would think, 'Oh my god, where am I? It's a massacre, I'm in hell.' And as a Palestinian or anyone who sees death every day, it's just... the only thing you can do... is to carry you. You try to carry on as normal. You learn a different attitude towards death.

[Mona, 24, student and Arabic teacher, Warsaw]

In her narrative Mona recalls the memories of growing up in Gaza. She finds it difficult to narrate the traumatic events that she was a part of. She tells me that she is worried the words fail to describe her emotions and experiences. As she begins talking, she speaks very quickly, as if she fears that she might not be understood. The memory of the past in Gaza and her current life are so different that she struggles to find connections between the two parts of her biography.

Mona's narrative invites reflection on John Collins's argument that the situation in Palestine is not a series of 'rounds of violence', as the media often portrays it, but rather a 'constant state of emergency' (2004: 5). Drawing on Walter Benjamin, he argues that the occupation's continuation over many years does not make it less 'emergency-like' (*ibid.*). It remains a situation in which hundreds of thousands of families live under extraordinary conditions that affect all aspects of their existence – jobs, planning, security, and their personal lives. Mona's experiences exemplify the scale of everyday violence in Gaza, which is not a situation of exception, but rather a permanent state of threat. In the scenes she recalls, which occurred during the Israeli Operation Cast Lead, the expressions of fear that she remembers in her parents' eyes and the vulnerability felt in the body evoke the constant state of anxiety from which there seems to be no escape. There is no 'safe haven'.

What is striking in Mona's narrative is how her family strive to maintain an ordinary life within an 'extraordinary time'. Mona's recollection of total fear is followed by her descriptions of mundane routines in which she and her family seek to get on with their everyday life – her parents with work, she and her brother with school. It is in these everyday attempts at 'carrying on as normal' that they try to maintain their spirit. Mona repeats the phrase 'carrying on' several times as if she wants to reinforce the importance of maintaining the continuity of everydayness when faced with the violence that breaks it. She also recalls her parents' attempts to make 'jokes' as they were forced to spend countless nights on the floor to avoid shelling.

Mona closes this extract of the narrative by asserting, 'The time in Gaza was harsh, but we survived. We survived and that is what matters.' This notion of survival against a backdrop of ongoing violence emerges as especially significant and reverberates through the other narratives. It can be read on several levels. It is about physical survival – staying alive as a

family despite constant mortal danger. But the notion of survival can also be read in an existential way, following Michael Jackson, as 'being able to make plans again, to choose, to outlive that time when one was reduced to nothingness, beaten like an animal, ordered to do the most shameful and terrible things in order to be allowed to live, defeated by one's abject powerlessness' (2002: 113). In this context, 'survival' carries a specific moral role. It can also be interpreted with Havel as a moral act of resistance - as maintaining a sense of humanity and a sense of dignity in a time of oppression.

The theme of 'surviving' the occupation and the recurrent violence is also echoed more broadly in Palestinian literature and arts. The often-repeated phrase 'existence as resistance' has gained a special importance for Palestinians living under occupation. Lisa Taraki notes that the everyday practices of Palestinian families under occupation can be interpreted in the context of Palestinian *sumud* – steadfastness and resilience despite difficulties, ongoing tension and risks (2006: xx). The practice of *sumud* was particularly widespread during the First Intifada in the form of developing a bottom-up social and economic network independent from Israeli supplies. Hammami (2004) notes that with the rise of sanctions and restrictions on movement in the wake of the Second Intifada, the act of 'simply getting there' through different barriers and checkpoints has become an achievement (Hammami 2004, cited in Taraki, 2006: xx). Thus, Mona's family being able to carry on 'normal lives' and her final claim of 'having survived' can be read as important acts of resistance.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed ways in which narratives of the bodily experiences of research participants from the generation of the Occupied from Within can be read as archives of occupational memory. In their narratives, the body acts as a medium that activates the recollection of their lives in Palestine. These bodily-mediated re-collections reveal the occupational cartography of Palestine, where both public and private spaces are subject to control and surveillance. These memories coexist with those of 'bodily resistance' in the form of collective or personal acts of reclaiming or surviving within these spaces of domination.

This generation's memories of Palestine stand in some distinction to the ways in which the postmemories of Palestine are produced among the generation of the Exiles. In their case, their relationships with Palestine are built on an unfulfilled longing. Palestine is narrated in relation to the loss of its beautiful landscape and idealized lifestyle. The Palestine that emerges from the memories of the Occupied from Within generation is far from the image of a paradise lost. It emerges as a site of an ongoing violence, but also an everyday struggle to remain on the land.

It is possible, however, to observe important commonalities between these two generations. In both cases, the Palestine remembered is characterised by its 'incompleteness'. For one group, Palestine is ideal, but absent; for those for whom it is present, it is wounded by the occupation. For one group, Palestine is a dream; for the other, it is under occupation – it is 'a land that is not', to paraphrase the words of Said (1984). Crucially, memories of Palestinians in diaspora reveal a plurality of sites of attachment to Palestine. These attachments spread across space and time, undermining the fixity and continuity of nation-state categories. I will continue to trace these sites of attachment in the following chapter, where I discuss the production of memories of and the relationship to Palestine among the third generation of diasporic Palestinians, brought up in Poland and in the UK for whom Palestine is the homeland of their parents and grandparents.

## Chapter 6. Children of the Idea of Palestine: Making sense of the inherited pasts, creating connections with Palestine

### 6.1. Overview

Drawing on the narratives of the children of Palestinian exiles living in Poland and the UK, this chapter discusses the processes through which they make sense of their inherited memories of Palestine and build relationships with the ancestral homeland.<sup>30</sup> Employing the literatures on the experiences of second-generation migrants (King and Christou, 2008; King et al., 2009; Levitt, 2009) and memory transmission (Connerton, 1989; Baronian et al, 2007; Keightley and Pickering, 2012), this chapter considers the ways in which Palestinian pasts remain, or rather *become*, important for Polish and British Palestinians. Building on observations made by scholars of the Palestinian exile (Lindholm Schultz, 2003; Hammer, 2005; Marvoudi, 2007). I propose that, for this group of diasporic Palestinians, the modes of intergenerational transmission are especially fragmented and full of uncertainties and ambiguities. I argue that participants in this group imagine and connect with Palestine through their own forms of active creation and strategic construction, rather than through a straightforward chain of intergenerational transmission. Furthermore, I consider the circumstances in which these fractured inherited pasts can become politically mobilized, appropriated and transformed into new relationships with Palestine. I propose that the processes of actively reclaiming connection with an ancestral homeland are often mobilized by the lasting character of Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the dispossession of the Palestinian population, which has continued unabated since 1948. I conclude this chapter by discussing the extent to which ‘ancestral return’ (King, 1978) remains possible for this generation. I argue that that these journeys of ‘ancestral return’ often become a means of ‘reinventing routes’ to Palestine rather than a direct form of ‘reclaiming roots’ (Gilroy, 1993).

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<sup>30</sup> I use the word ‘inheritance’ to refer to intergenerational transmission of memory. As indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, I use the word ‘ancestral’ in relation to Palestine being the country of origin of participants’ parents and grandparents. My usage of the term does not assume fixity or naturalness of this relationship – rather it reflects the vocabulary of my research participants and the connections they have sought to form with the homeland of their parents and grandparents.

## 6.2. Children of the Idea of Palestine – connecting with the ancestral homeland

I refer to this generation of diasporic Palestinians as Children of the Idea of Palestine. Born and/or brought up in the West as children of Palestinian exiles, often in mixed families, they had heterogeneous cultural affiliations and diverse, often conflicting, senses of belonging. In Poland, all of the research participants in the sample had joint Polish–Palestinian heritage. All of them had Polish mothers and fathers who belonged to the group of Palestinians who were born in the refugee camps of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria and later came to Poland as part of the PLO scholarships. The interviewees in Poland sometimes referred to themselves as both ‘Polish’ and ‘Palestinian’ or, often, as ‘half-ers’ (*połówka* in Polish). Research participants from the UK part of the sample either had two Palestinian parents or grew up in mixed families of Arab ancestry, with the non-Palestinian parent being of Algerian, Lebanese, or Jordanian heritage.

Unlike the generation of the Exiles, the interviewees in this group had not been exposed to the direct consequences of the Nakba and did not think of themselves as exiled from Palestine. ‘Exile’ was a term that they often reserved for their parents and grandparents. Displacement from Palestine was part of their family’s experience, but unlike the Exiles, they did not consider it part of their personal story. It thus affected them in different, less direct ways. Unlike the generation of the Occupied from Within, they did not have firsthand experiences of the occupation or growing up in Palestine, which were so central to the life stories of the former. The geographical separation from Palestine and temporal detachment from the events of the Nakba shaped their relationship with their ancestral homeland, and their means of forming memories of Palestine, in distinct ways.<sup>31</sup>

For the two generations discussed earlier, the physical experience of displacement (or relocation) from Palestine has been central to their biographies and narratives. The experience of movement *from Palestine* informed their memories *of* Palestine. The experiences of the Children of the Idea of Palestine are different in this respect. Their

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<sup>31</sup> When analysing the memories of the generation of Children of the Idea of Palestine I will be occasionally referring to the literature on ‘second generation migrants’ and thus will be using this term in relation to the experiences of this generation. Yet, as King and Christou rightly observe, the term ‘second generation migrant’ itself ‘is an oxymoron’, as the people whom it designates were born in their parents’ host country, and thus haven’t migrated (2008: 2). Despite the ambiguity it involves, I will be using this term to maintain consistency with the literature I discuss.

memories were not triggered by their own departure or their parents' departure from Palestine. When asked about memories of Palestine, their narratives would often take me not to Palestine, but to the time of their childhood. The narratives would start not with memories *of* Palestine but rather with the memories of growing up in (partly) Palestinian households outside of Palestine and often focused on the process of realizing they had Palestinian ancestry. As I was listening to and analysing the interviews, it became clear that the narratives they shared were also the narratives of journeys. They were the journeys, often difficult, of trying to give meaning to their Palestinian heritage and of forming a relationship with Palestine. Sometimes, they were the journeys of what Kings calls 'ancestral return' – symbolic attempts of at 'reclaiming' or rather 'creating' a connection with Palestine (King, 1978; King et al, 2009, King and Christou 2008). In this sense, they were not memories *of* Palestine but memories *'to'* Palestine. This chapter deals with these memories *'to'* Palestine – the complex, ambivalent and unfinished processes through which this generation makes sense of their inherited pasts and frames their connection to their ancestral homeland.

Overview of the generation of the <i>Children of the Idea of Palestine</i>							
Demographic details				ancestral diasporic journey			
No.	Nickname	Gender	Age bracket	Place of ancestral origin	Place of birth	Subsequent place(s) of residence	Location of the interview
1	Mona	F	18-35	Gaza	Warsaw	Poland	Warsaw, Poland
2	Lena	F	18-35	Haifa (Palestine 48)	Warsaw	Poland - Lebanon - West Bank - Jordan - UK	Warsaw, Poland
3	Konrad	M	18-35	Gaza (Palestine 67)	Łódź	Poland	Łódź, Poland
4	Emil	M	18-35	Nablus (Palestine 67)	Wrocław	Poland	Wrocław, Poland
5	Lahali	F	35- 45	Tulkarem (Palestine 67)	London	UK, Jordan	London, UK
6	Nada	F	35- 45	Haifa (Palestine 48)	Lebanon	UK	London, UK
7	Hayat	F	35- 45	Tulkarem (Palestine 67)	Cairo	Cairo, Egypt - UK	London, UK

8	Reham	F	35- 45	Tulkarem (Palestine 67)	Cairo	Cairo, Egypt - UK	Sussex, UK
9	Fayez	M	18-35	Tarsiha (Palestine 48)	London	UK	London, UK
10	Amr	M	18-35	Ramle (Palestine 48)	London	UK	London, UK
11	Leen	F	18-35	Ramle (Palestine 48)	London	UK	London, UK
12	Tala	F	18-35	Tulkarem (Palestine 67)	Kuwait	UK	London, UK
13	Ala	F	18-35	Zangaryja (Palestine 48)	Kraków	Poland	Kraków, Poland

**Figure 6.1. Overview of the Generation of the Children of the Idea of Palestine**

### 6.3. Complex modes of memory transmission

In narratives of this generation, memories of Palestine were not particularly grounded in direct experience, even among the minority of participants who were able to visit Palestine as children. These early memories were the only encounter with ‘Palestine’ that they had at their disposal. Yet these encounters were often fragmented and, at times, alienating rather than sustaining. While most of the research participants have been at least partially exposed to the Palestinian culture of one or both of their parents, for many of them the rituals of memory transmission have often been troubling experiences. I begin this reflection on intergenerational transmission with an extract from the narrative of Nada – a London born British Palestinian, who recalls her early memories of growing up in a Palestinian household in the following way:

Palestine was something that was limited to the four walls at home. Me being a Palestinian was not something I could or was expected to talk about at school. Nobody would understand anyway. And at home it was also partial. Palestine was always related to politics, my father watching news, most often tragic or really upsetting news. I did not understand any of this and no-one really tried to explain it. I suppose the image of Palestine that I had as a child was always coming from the negative side.

[Nada, NGO activist, London]

Nada's narrative provides an ambivalent picture of her childhood and relation to Palestine. She begins her narrative by recalling the memories of Palestine as confined to the realms of the 'four walls' of her family home. She gives the sense that the world outside her home, including people at school and her friends, struggle to understand and relate to her Palestinian background. Nada recalls 'being Palestinian' as alienating. Her memories are echoed in the other narratives of this generation. Many of the research participants recalled, sometimes in a humorous way, a sense of misunderstanding or confusion related to their Palestinian ancestry. The confused responses of teachers to their background is a common theme among the participants' childhood memories, for example mixing up 'Palestine' with 'Pakistan' or making comments such as, 'Aah, you mean Israel'. As such, participants often recall growing up as 'Palestinian' as a burden or a source of confusion to the rest of the world. It was understood as something that differentiated them from the rest of their childhood groups in an often-isolating way.<sup>32</sup>

Nada's sense of discrepancy between the home and the outside world is echoed in the memories of the authors growing up in Palestinian or mixed ethnicity families. Ghada Karmi (2002) recalls the confusion of having to navigate between the Palestinian household of her parents and the English environment in which she grew up. Najla Said, a daughter of Edward Said who was brought up in New York recalls in her memoir how she 'struggled desperately to find a way to reconcile the beautiful, comforting loving world of my home, culture, and family with the supposed "barbaric" and "backward" place and society others perceived it to be' (2013: 13). This sense of experiencing difference and confusion between the home and the 'outside' world is strengthened by the stereotypes and clichés of the Arab world and Arabness.

Nada's memory of experiencing Palestinian-ness as alienating when exposed to the outside world is often also associated with recollections of this identity being confusing and difficult to relate to within the realms of her family life as well. One of her childhood memories is of her father sitting in an armchair watching news in Arabic. Not only did she not understand the news, but she also did not like that the tragic events being reported made her parents feel sad and worried. The figure of a father in an armchair 'consuming news' (either

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<sup>32</sup> While, in this chapter I specifically focus on circumstances and processes of 'activating' the relationship with Palestine, a body of postcolonial literature on mixedness discusses how ignorance and racism experienced in the diasporic locations can affect (and hamper) identifications with parents and parental 'homeland' (c.f. Ali, 2003)

watching TV or reading a newspaper) has been a re-occurring image throughout the narratives and gives insight into the difficult process of memory transmission in diasporic contexts. Not only do children find it difficult to relate to abstract political developments in distant places, importantly, this 'transmission' happens in an indirect way. Nada was an observer of her father's behaviour. The sounds and images coming from the TV were a part of the home environment.

Peggy Levitt emphasizes that children of migrants are brought up in an environment that allows them to 'reference homeland ideologically, materially and affectively each day' (2009: 401). They are thus able to maintain links with it, even if they lack opportunities to physically visit or fluency in the language. Drawing on her interviews with Palestinian parents in Greece, Elisabeth Mavroudi writes:

[O]ne can see the role of bringing up children to be Palestinian in diaspora as part of the process of imagining and creating a Palestinian nation where notions of national identity, unity, ethnicity and so forth are actively invoked for political reasons. Such teachings invariably arise from the parents' constructions of what it means to be Palestinian in diaspora. (2007:397)

Nada's account highlights the experiences of the 'receiving' side of the transmission. Her account reveals that the process of memory transmission happens spontaneously and sometimes, unintentionally. It is reminiscent of what Harald Welzer calls the act of remembering the past 'en passant', emphasizing the often unintentional and unconscious character of memory transmission (2001:12). He asserts that memory transition happens through spontaneous 'memory talk' in the family network and becomes a form of 'conversational remembering'.

Reflecting twenty years later on her childhood, Nada regrets that the sense of being Palestinian that she inherited from her parents always came from 'the negative side' and that it was difficult for her, as a young girl, to understand what being Palestinian entailed. By 'negative side', she refers to her parents' obsession with political developments in the region, which she could not understand or relate to. While she recalls her mother cooking Arabic food and organizing banquets, in retrospect, she regrets that her parents did not

offer her more links to Palestinian culture, traditions or religion. Looking back, she feels sad that she did not receive more cultural grounding from her parents that would allow her 'to put meaning to her identity' and complains that she had to do the 'identity work' on her own. The cultural transmission that Nada recalls emerges as partial and often blurred. In her view it did not provide enough cultural grounding for her to be able to fully relate to Palestinian heritage and give meaning to it.

The generation of the Exiles, whose experiences I discussed earlier, were brought up in geographical and temporal proximity to Palestine and the events that lead to Palestinian dispossession, despite not actually having been born there. They lived surrounded by fellow Palestinian communities and within the scope of an Arab world that was socially and culturally similar to Palestine. In the atmosphere of the refugee camp, Palestine was central to the life of their families and the communities in which they lived. In this context, it was easier to maintain Palestinian-ness and pass it on to the children. Angela Keppler (1994) has observed that memory transmission depends not so much on the consistency of the oral stories that are being told, but instead on the continuity of the opportunities for and acts of shared remembering. In the case of the Children of the Idea of Palestine, geographical distance as well as the distinct cultural contexts in which they lived separated them and their families from Palestine and from Palestinian communities. These conditions provided fewer opportunities to expose the children to the richness of Palestinian culture. As Connerton reminds us, a large part of memory transmission happens through a collective recollection and re-enactment of the shared past (1989: 61). As discussed in Chapter Four, it was women, first of all, who facilitated the transmission of memories and stories. It was often women – mothers, grandmothers and aunts – who, by sticking to traditions, engaging in collective activities, as well as well as narrating stories from Palestine, were able to recreate the fabric of Palestinian life and pass it on to the next generations. The research participants in this group, born and brought up in the West, often in ethnically mixed families with only Palestinian fathers, had a limited exposure to the fabric of everyday Palestinian life. Many of the interviewees offered another interpretation for this. They recalled their parents' inability to fully embrace and pass on a sense of Palestinian-ness with the hardship they experienced as exiles arriving in their host countries. Being the first generation of migrants, they wanted to ensure their children became part of the new society and they sought to insulate them from the pain of isolation.

*Resisting the intergenerational transmission*

The fragmentation of cultural transmission was often linked with intergenerational differences between parents and children. The divergences in their experiences could be traced in several narratives, but perhaps resonated most clearly in Tala's. Born in Kuwait to Palestinian parents, she moved with her family to Canada as a child and later relocated to London. She recalled her childhood in the following way:

I always knew I was Palestinian and I think I was raised to be Palestinian. My parents were quite nationalist and I suppose in a very bad way. It was over-the-top. In a way I understand this...There was always this kind of memorabilia at home, like Palestine stuff around the house that did not necessarily fit into the decor, but it was there because it was necessary. We had *The Atlas of Palestine* that was gigantic, sitting on a coffee table, but it was not really a coffee table kind of book (...)

My parents stuffed Palestine down my throat...It's a kind of being forced to be Palestinian, being forced to love everything that is related to Palestine; *debke* [a traditional Palestinian dance] and all these things. And I think it's not right, you end up hating it.

I think I started distancing myself from my parents when my mother had not crossed the Atlantic for 20 years and she preferred living with this romantic idea of Palestine that does not exist in reality. And she just continues to have this romanticism that leads us to nothing.

My parents devoted their life more to Palestine than us, but most of the time from afar. It's like giving the money to charity because you don't want to look at it. I think they wanted us to have nice jobs and Palestine as a hobby.

[Tala, architect, London]

In this extract, Tala takes a very critical stance towards the way in which her parents brought her and her siblings up as Palestinians. She dismisses her parents' attention to Palestinian 'memorabilia', viewing it as a superficial attachment to symbols of national affiliation, like *The Atlas of Palestine*, which did not translate into any form of deeper engagement with Palestine. She rejects their way of expressing Palestinian affiliation and solidarity. In particular, she denounces her parents' behaviour as 'sofa activism', which she

sees as a comfortable position of engagement from afar. From this position, in Tala's view, her parents could have 'Palestine as a hobby', but without being subject to the realities of Palestinian life on the ground. She also refuses to accept the idealized and romanticized ideas of Palestine, which her parents nurtured and which, in her view, had no relation to the contemporary political situation. In a further extract, she dismisses the attachment to the 1948 borders 'that no longer exist', finding it politically destructive. She refuses to affiliate with her parents' sense of victimhood, something that she considers characteristic of the entire generation of exiled Palestinians of her parents' age.

Discussing the experiences of generational transmission among the Palestinian diaspora, Lindholm Schultz observes that the 'younger generations become part of the narrative produced by their parents' (2003: 172). Tala's narrative invites us to acknowledge how children who were born and brought up in the diaspora can also resist the parental heritage. Her experiences illustrate that intergenerational transmission needs to be understood not only as a process, which is complex and problematic, but one which is often also rebelled against. Furthermore, Tala's narrative allows us to reflect on the role of 'generationality' in the processes of remembering and in the modes of making sense of these memories. Tala develops her views not only in opposition to her parents, but in opposition to their entire generation. Pickering and Keighley call these generational modes of remembering 'communities of memory'. They argue that these 'communities' are based not only on sharing a common past, but also having similar interpretations of second-hand memories (2012: 119). Tala's narrative illustrates how different generational interpretations of Palestinian pasts translate into different and contrasting modes of forming relationships with Palestine.

In the context of this discussion about generational remembering, it is particularly interesting to reflect on the role of a 'diasporic home' in the process of memory transmission. When analysing the narratives from this perspective, many of the research participants relate to their family homes as sites of control and tension, often recalling strained relationships with their Palestinian parents. In these narratives, homes are often viewed as hierarchical structures, in which the authority of the parents is not accepted unconditionally. Often, these 'diasporic homes' emerge in their narratives as sites of alienation and insecurity rather than the stabilizing source of belonging. Fortier argues that

migrant and diasporic memories reimagine and reconstitute the ideal of home and challenge the myth of 'home as familiarity' (2001: 407). Home can be a site of an intergenerational learning and passing of memory, but also of contestation and conflict, where relations of power are always in operation (Prosser, 1998; Ahmed, 2004; Blunt, 2005). Brah explores how home can be a place that evokes horror, as well as safety, warning against conceptualizations of home that take its familiarity and security for granted (1996: 178- 207). I want to conclude this section on generational transmission with one final extract from the childhood and adolescent memories of Reham in an attempt to build a nuanced perspective on both the role of 'diasporic' home and the process of intergenerational remembering. Reham was born in Egypt, but her family relocated to England when she was a child. She has lived in the UK ever since.

All my life I have been trying I have been trying to actively forget...The loss of Palestine was such a pain to my father. Looking at my dad, I felt like in order to be Palestinian I would need to deal with all these grave issues. I did not want to pass this uncertainty and sadness to my children. I wanted to make sure that I would fit into Britain as soon as possible. I might be more British than most of the British I know.

[Reham, artist, Sussex]

Having observed her father's pain at the loss of his homeland and his inability to reconcile this loss, Reham had sought to distance herself and her children from her father's heritage of pain and trauma. The memory of Palestine that she had received from her father was connected to a sadness, anxiety and lack of stability that she does not want to carry herself; thus she 'actively [tries] to forget' in an attempt to break the transmission of trauma. Yet, her extract enables us to see the extent to which the traumatic experiences of forbearers can continue to threaten and haunt their descendants (c.f. Cho, 2008; Hirsch, 2012; Ortiz 2014). Cho's observes how even the unacknowledged traumas of the past are unconsciously carried into and passed on in diaspora and can activate themselves across different spatial and temporal moments (2008:166 – 176). Reham's decision to embrace 'Britishness' is her attempt to escape from the painful past of her father, but her dramatic attempt to 'cut off' might also reflect the impossibility of fully breaking away from the parental past. It also reveals her anxiety around the potential of the past to continue to have an effect on her and

her children. Simultaneously it reveals how cultural identity is a process that entails dealing with personal and familial histories, as well as being a matter of 'becoming' in the present (c.f Hall, 1990)

The childhood memories of my participants reveal that the intergenerational transmission of heritage is a complicated and difficult process. Talking about their childhood and adolescence, some participants felt, in retrospect, that their parents did not or could not provide them enough of a grounding to feel fully part of Palestinian culture or to be able to fully appreciate or relate to their Palestinian heritage. Others, as we have seen, actively resisted their parents' attempts to instil particular forms of this heritage. In the context of the fragmented, confusing and sometimes limited transmission of memories, participants' relationship with Palestine has often been developed in parallel - or in opposition to - what they had been exposed to at home. Based on the analysis of my interviewees' accounts, in the next section I discuss how their relationships with Palestine have been forged through processes of individual and active construction or invention (or even sometimes rejection).

#### **6.4. Re-working the inherited pasts**

In the second part of this chapter, I consider the modes and circumstances in which fractured memories of Palestinian pasts become meaningful for the generation of Children of the Idea of Palestine. These processes have often been multifaceted, comprising both of practices of giving meaning to their Palestinian heritage as well as undertaking symbolic and physical journeys to create connections with Palestine. I would like to emphasize that while I will spend the rest of the chapter discussing these complex processes through which participants build connections with Palestine, the very decision to 'connect' cannot be seen as natural. While the qualitative character of this study does not allow for the provision of large-scale quantitative analysis, it is possible that some diasporic Palestinians outside the sample might share Reham's experiences of wanting to separate from her father's past.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, having Palestinian 'roots' does not automatically imply the necessity of embarking on a journey of 're-claiming' them nor does it imply the mode of the journey. I

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<sup>33</sup> As noted previously, I used a recruitment strategy based on the snowball sample, meaning that the participants that were referred to me and agreed to the interviews were individuals for whom Palestinian-ness mattered at least enough to be willing to take part.

would like to reflect on the ways in which research participants try to make sense of their Palestinian heritage and create connections with Palestine by going back to extracts of their narratives. I begin with the narrative of Ala, who was born in a Polish- Palestinian family:

For many years, I have been completely disconnected from my roots. Actually I was actively trying to cut it off, not think about it (...) I think it was related to my strained connection with my father. I have always loved the mountains and the mountains were my escape strategy.

And then things started to change... As I grew older, I become aware of myself. I was about to get married and start my own family and I suddenly felt the urge to sort out these matters. I suddenly felt an urge to re-connect with my roots, to make sense of these different identities. I felt that I needed to answer a few things for myself...And it was like a turning point; from that moment I began a new journey.

[Ala, biologist, Kraków]

In this short extract, Ala indicates how deciding to get married and start her own family encourages her to re-evaluate her relationship with her ancestry. In trying to answer a 'few questions for herself', she embarks on the journey to 'reconnect' with her Palestine and resolve questions about her heritage. In order to be able to embrace the future, she needs to go back and try to connect with a part of her heritage that she had been denying for a long time. Importantly, this journey to the past does not happen through the relationship with her father. Rather, she begins an individual search. This journey is a self-reflective process of coming to terms with who she is.

Analysis of Ala's decision to understand her heritage necessitates an examination of the very notion of 'reclaiming roots' as she articulates it. I use the phrase 'reclaiming roots' to reflect the vocabulary used by Ala and other participants, which could be interpreted as their desire to make sense of their family's past. What is important to emphasize is that the notion of 'reclaiming roots' does not automatically imply the adoption of a ready-made identity. For Ala, this search becomes a journey to her family's past, but equally a journey to her future. As Hall argues, cultural identity is produced and not re-discovered (1990: 224). In this sense, attempts at reclaiming an identity can be grounded in the '*re-telling*' of the

past' rather than its 'archeology' (*ibid.*). Thus reclaiming roots can be read as an ongoing means of interpreting one's own heritage in the present context. Hall concludes that '[c]ultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything, which is historical they undergo constant transformation' (*ibid.*: 225). Michael Rothberg adds that 'our relationship to the past does partially determine who we are in the present, but never straightforwardly and directly' (2009:5).

Figuring out a relationship with the Palestinian past requires giving (new) meanings to one's heritage and using new interpretations to shape the present connection with the ancestral homeland. These processes involve employing imagination and active forms of creation. It is useful to refer here to Appadurai's (2005) reflections on the consequences of the unprecedented rise of imagination in the modern world, fuelled by the development of global media. In his view, these processes have transformed modes of identity building, enabling the creation of new deterritorialized forms of belonging and engagement. The formulation of deterritorialized sites of belonging in the form of different 'global cultural flows,' such as 'ethnoscapes', 'mediascapes', 'ideoscapes', has had particular resonance for diasporic modes of existence and identity (2005: 33). The links to the ancestral homeland do not need to be grounded in physical presence in the land but in an access to and participation in the 'scapes' of these global flows (*ibid.*). Similarly, Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering emphasize the role of imagination in making sense of the inherited pasts (2012:12). They argue that the imagination allows its user to re-shape meaning in the present to the memories of the past so 'it can make something qualitatively new through recombining ideas, objects, practices and experiences' (*ibid.*: 123). Levitt (2009) reminds us that this process of 'making sense' of the inheritance and the connection with the parental homeland is mediated by several factors. She writes that 'the second generation is situated between a variety of different, often competing generational, ideological and moral reference points, including those of their parents, their grandparents and their own real and imagined perspectives about their multiple homelands' (2009: 1238).

The process of reconnecting and forming a relationship with Palestine is not unidirectional and involves searching and uncertainty. In order to reflect on the difficulty of establishing a relationship with the ancestral homeland, I wish to move to an extract from the narrative of Amr, who was born in London to a Palestinian family that emigrated there from Jordan.

Amr recalls that his parents, mindful of their experiences as first generation migrants in the UK, wanted him to 'fit in' as quickly as possible into British society and to protect him from the difficulties they faced. When we spoke for the first time, he was open about his ambivalent and constantly evolving relationship with Palestine.

It's figuring out what that relationship is and I still don't know what that is. I had a moment when I was more engaged with diaspora politics. There were times where I would wear *keffiyeh* and even dated a Palestinian girl, but after a while, it did not feel right. I think the closest I came to understanding my connection is through my interest in African American writing.

For me, Palestine it's a constant process of searching; I think I am constantly trying to figure out what that link is. And I don't know it yet. There are moments where I openly reject my identity as seen from the outside, but yes, there are moments where I do genuinely want to connect. But it's been strange when I was growing up; it's strange now.

[Amr, artist, London]

Unlike Ala, Amr could not trace a single moment when Palestine began to play a more prominent part in his life. For him, Palestine 'has always been there', through dinner conversations or what his father was reading. However, it has always remained 'in the background'. For Amr, his relationship with Palestine is a complex process that involves an ongoing journey of attachments and detachments. It is a journey that is ambivalent and ambiguous and involves continual searching and evolution. This search is neither complete nor does it have a clear direction. This journey of trying to relate to Palestine is both driven by his internal needs ('it has always been there'), but also by the ways in which he is seen and perceived externally. The journey is a constant quest for a relationship that would feel authentic. He is on the search – he tries engaging in diaspora politics, wearing *keffiyeh* or dating a Palestinian. He leaves these attempts when they feel too artificial and constructed. He says his relationship with Palestine 'felt strange' and 'feels strange', highlighting that this connection does not come 'naturally'. He is constantly trying to negotiate the artificiality and naturalness of this relationship. Throughout this process, he remains extremely self-conscious. Amr is aware that the process of constructing a relationship is positional.

Interestingly, he finds a connection with Palestine through relating to the position of marginality and 'outsiderness' that he finds in African American literature. He is finding his own 'routes' to Palestine. In this sense Amr's journey is reminiscent of Stuart Hall's assertion that cultural identity is as much a matter of 'becoming' as of 'being' (1990: 225). And this process of 'becoming' is positional - it happens in relation to the contemporary context. 'It is not an essence - but a positioning', as Hall suggests (1996: 226).

While providing different perspectives, what comes out clearly in Amr's and Ala's narratives is that their Palestinian heritage and their relationship with Palestine do not come as fixed or given, nor is there a single pattern of 'arriving to Palestine'. In trying to understand this unfixed relation of attachments and detachments, it is useful to return again to Marvoudi and her research with first and second generation Palestinians in Greece. Marvoudi maintains that 'the process of learning to be Palestinian in Athens is often far from straightforward' and 'entails having to deal with feeling displaced or physically detached and the need to be attached or reconnected to a territorially defined Palestine' (2007: 393). She concurs with Yeoh and Huang who argue that attempts to search for roots are 'neither purely emancipatory nor reactionary: instead they are provisional, dependent on the confluences of circumstances and continually elude foreclosure' (2000: 415 in Marvoudi 2007: 399). There are different situations and 'moments' that propel Ala and Amr on these fluid, complicated and emotionally charged journeys. They result in an ongoing process of 'figuring out' as Amr calls it: of moulding, making and re-making the relationship with Palestine without a set direction.

Marvoudi's observes that the relationship diasporic Palestinians forge with the homeland of their parents is 'active and strategic' (2007: 407). Ala and Amr's narratives offer insight into the ways in which these strategic choices are made and how they are constantly optimized. For Ala, it comes as a conscious decision of wanting to come to terms with her background before she will have her own children. She begins a journey of embracing her heritage, but in a very individual way. Amr is very aware of each step on the journey he is making; his connections and 'disconnections' with Palestine involve a constant process of negotiating between the desire for authenticity and the realization that each positioning is situational and relational.

*Political mobilization of Palestinian pasts*

Listening to the stories of the research participants, it emerged that these instances of 'reconnection' or of 'seeking' were driven not just by the personal desire to reconnect, but were often triggered by the external environment. In this section, I discuss the circumstances that activate the processes of 'reconnecting' through political developments. In analysing the narratives of this generation, it was possible to observe certain situations and moments in their biographies related to political developments both at home and abroad that prompted them to critically reflect on their own position and their own relationship with Palestine. I begin with an extract from the narrative of Lena, who was born in a Polish-Palestinian family:

The entire university period was a time when I was really trying to understand myself and I was really trying to come to terms with my identity. After September 11, there was this brief moment when Arabic was really fashionable and people wanted me to write to different media outlets in Poland. But, on the other hand, there was lots of criticism, with which I did not feel comfortable. And suddenly I stopped feeling 'at home' here. I already had developed some political views, but I was not yet able to fully articulate them. I felt blocked. On one hand, I was interested; on the other, I was blocked. I started developing my interest in human rights and it was exactly the time when we were sending the troops to Iraq and everybody seemed to be in favour of it. I remember a conversation with a very good friend of mine. He was in favour of the intervention and I was against it. And his position was that 'We need to defend Europe, fight terrorism', and so on. And then in this heated discussion he said something like, 'Lena, so if you like Middle East that much, why are you here, why won't you go there?' And then I told him: 'You know what, I will go. I am going to Lebanon'.

[Lena, NGO worker, Warsaw]

Lena's narrative provides an insight into how 9/11 and the subsequent political events made her feel increasingly disconnected from her environment in Poland. Warsaw, a place where she grew up, studied, worked and had many friends, suddenly ceased to feel familiar. She stopped feeling fully 'at home' with her views and political ideas to the point where she

started looking for ways to leave Poland and relocate in Lebanon. The impact of 9/11 and the 7/7 bombings on the identity of the second-generation migrants has been extensively described elsewhere, and this discussion extends the scope of this research (c.f. Poynting and Mason, 2007; Kunst et al, 2012). What is important from the perspective of analysing and understanding the narratives of this generation is the ways in which these events - or rather European reaction to these events - orient participants' re-engagement with the Middle East and Palestine in particular.

Matar points out that 9/11 forced the otherwise fragmented Palestinian diaspora in England to develop a common consciousness of the events, often in response to the media narratives 'classifying' them as potential terrorists (2006: 1033). The events of 9/11 and their repercussions reappear in almost all of the narratives of this generation. Not only do they often feel personally stigmatized by the over-simplistic representations of Muslims that appear in the media and political discourse, they also are put in a position of having 'to speak for' and/or 'represent' the entire Muslim world - a world that is not only not unified, but also not necessarily theirs (some of the participants are not Muslim). Having been placed in this position in their respective countries, they are forced to develop their own views and to articulate their own positions in relation to political developments. Clifford claims that 'diasporic consciousness is constituted both negatively and positively' (1997: 256). In this sense, political events 'at home' serve as triggers that force Lena and other participants in this group to find connections to Palestine in response to negative labelling. These events thus serve as 'generational moments' in which they begin to re-evaluate their sense of belonging and which galvanize their interests in the ancestral homeland. This experience of political marginalization, reinforced by a growing feeling of alienation among friends, destabilizes Lena's sense of belonging to a culture that she had previously considered her own and makes her even more interested in learning about her heritage.

In parallel to the events that affect research participants 'at home' and make them increasingly self-conscious of their background, there are also developments in Israel and Palestine that 'activated' their relationship with Palestine and which take up a prominent place in their narratives. The interviews took place in the spring of 2012 and the summer of 2013, with some follow-up conversations in 2014, in the shadow of repeated Israeli interventions in Gaza and another round of 'peace process' negotiations initiated by US

Secretary of Defence John Kerry.<sup>34</sup> These events had a profound influence on the research participants, which resonated in the narratives. In reflecting further on this issue, I would like to return to Ala's journey of re-connecting with her Palestinian heritage:

For many long years I thought that I could stay away from politics. I thought that it did not affect me. But then Cast Lead changed everything. I could no longer maintain this thinking. I just could not believe in what was going on and the world kept silent. I just couldn't take it any longer.

After Cast Lead I decided I had to do something. First my boyfriend went to Gaza and then I followed. It was one of the most important experiences of my life. At the beginning, I was not sure how people in Gaza would react. I felt incredibly humbled by the people there...The hardship they have to through everyday and yet they smile, they welcome you, they are so incredibly kind and generous. It was a transformative experience for me.

Since I came back from Gaza, I have been trying to live differently and savour this experience. But I also feel that [by not being there] I have lost something in an irreversible way.

[Ala, biologist, Kraków]

In the previous section, I began discussing Ala's journey to re-claim her Palestinian heritage. In this extract, she reveals the circumstances that further activated her urge to re-connect with Palestine and that directed her initial engagement with her father's homeland. While she has always tried to shy away from politics, Israel's 2009 Cast Lead operation in Gaza becomes a formative moment for Ala. As a result, she went to Gaza with the humanitarian convoy to provide aid to the victims of the invasion. In 2014, when Operation Protective Edge began, she organized a protest in her hometown and became an active voice against the Israeli invasion.

For many other research participants, the ongoing developments in the region and the reoccurring waves of violence serve as constant ignition points that spark their interest in

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<sup>34</sup> Between 2009 and 2014, Israel led three operations in Gaza: the Cast Lead operation of 2009, the Pillar of Defence from 2012 and the Protective Edge in 2014.

and, in some cases, direct engagement with the ancestral homeland. Emil, another participant from Poland, said: 'Even if I wanted to forget, I am not allowed to. Israel would not allow me to - they keep me busy remembering Palestine.' Emil was born and brought up in Wrocław in a Polish-Palestinian family. While his father returned to Hebron in the early 2000s, Emil stayed with his mother in Poland. After the Cast Lead operation in Gaza, he went to see his father for the first time in many years. Like Emil, the other research participants, even those who have been ambivalent about their connection with Palestine, felt profoundly affected by the loss of civilian lives and the scale of destruction to civilian homes and Gaza's infrastructure. Their involvement with the Gaza crisis is reinforced by the conviction that Palestinians are grossly misrepresented in the conflict. Many of them expressed frustration with what they saw as a strong pro-Israeli bias in the media. They felt upset that, behind the discourse of the 'right to self-defence', Israeli human rights violations go unnoticed and unpunished. Many of them sensed that the situation of Palestinians in Gaza and in the Palestinian Occupied Territories was concealed by a more powerful Israeli narrative.

In the absence of direct experience in or personal memories of Palestine, many of the participants from the generation of Children of the Idea of Palestine had been missing a meaningful connection with their ancestral homeland. The re-occurring violence taking place in Palestine forms an emotive connection that draws many of them into different forms of activism and catalyses new modes of connecting with Palestine. These external developments and their internal repercussions in the UK and Poland, then, not only activated participants' relationship to Palestine, but also helped to frame their engagement.

### **6.5. Re - claiming 'roots' or reinventing routes? Limits and transformations of the 'ancestral return'**

In this final section, I reflect further on ways of forging attachments and creating connections with Palestine. Specifically, I begin by discussing the experiences of 'ancestral return' and attempts of physical re-location to Palestine. Subsequently, I discuss the limitations of 'returning' and 're-claiming' heritage more broadly. I finish this chapter with the suggestion that these processes of 'reconnection' are perhaps better thought of in terms

of a 're-invention' of routes, rather than a re-claiming of 'roots', to use Gilroy's (1993) formulation.

Those Palestinians who were exiled in 1948 have never been allowed to return to their towns and villages in what has become Israel. Similarly, the subsequent waves of people who left in 1967 have been prevented from going back to their homes. Many of the original refugees and their children and grandchildren are still prevented even from visiting. In this context, 'the right of return' has gained a particular significance for Palestinians. As Hammer writes: '*Al' Awda*, the return in Arabic, has a highly symbolic and almost mythical meaning' (2005: 80). The right of return has remained a cornerstone of Palestinian identity and resilience (Abu Sitta, 1999: 2000). In the interviews, the participants of the generation of Children of the Idea of Palestine did not conceptualize the 'right of return' in terms of their own right but saw it as belonging to the generation of their parents and grandparents. Nevertheless, the 'right of return' maintained an important symbolic and political dimension for them. And many of them have undertaken their own 'return visits' to Palestine or even attempted to relocate to their ancestors' original homeland.

The concept of 'ancestral return', also referred to as 'return migration', is rarely discussed in the literature on second generation migrants, which often focuses on their relationship with their country of birth. For King and Christou, the term 'return' is problematic in relation to the second generation. They emphasize that the second generation cannot 'return' to a place it never came from in a literal way (2008: 2). However, they maintain the importance of the affective connection with the diasporic homeland. They argue that 'the "return" needs to be understood in a metaphorical sense'. They see the act of the second generation physically returning as a 'performative act of belonging and discovering one's roots' (*ibid.*: 17). They argue that the return can be a 'profound homecoming at multiple levels' (*ibid.*). They write that this act can be seen as 'a return to the "cradle" of a partially-lost collective identity, as the diaspora's cathartic mission to reclaim its sacred sites and to re-enter its mythic space and time' (*ibid.*). Others see the 'return' as the discovery of that place where one feels one most belongs (Basu, 2004: 161) or a search for 'grounded attachment' (Blunt, 2007: 687). I would like to discuss the problem of 'ancestral return' by revisiting the extracts of Lena's narrative, who, after having left Poland and completing her studies in Beirut and Paris, decided to live and work in Ramallah.

When I finally arrived in Palestine, I was sure that this entire identity route of finding myself was already behind me – from trying to figure out who I am, to discovering Arabic language and to understanding what I want to do.

And when I arrived to Palestine, I realized that I have no idea about any of these things. In many respects, my sense of being Palestinian was undermined there more than anywhere before – despite the fact that I spoke fluent Arabic at that time, that I genuinely came to live there. I was immediately qualified as one of those ‘internationals’, just because I would be carrying a backpack, or wearing a bag in slightly different way.

And then there was something else. Many people I was meeting there understood Palestine through the West Bank, through the Gaza Strip and through the occupation. I understood that, but my attachment to Palestine was not limited to it.

You know, in my family history... the hills of the West Bank ... are not really present in my memories, I always heard sea, sea, Haifa, sea, harbour, and sea... And then people would tell me off if I travelled to Haifa for a weekend.

For me, the Palestine I imagine and I feel attached to is the entire place, the entire Palestine.

[Lena, NGO worker, Warsaw]

This part of Lena’s narrative provides insight into both the emotional investment and the difficulties involved in the ‘return’ to Palestine and raises several important issues. Rather than being the ultimate journey in the ‘quest for self’, the experiences of settling in Palestine undermine the sense of belonging that Lena had spent so long searching for. She realizes that, despite her genuine attempts, she cannot very easily fit in to Palestinian society in the West Bank. The feeling of not feeling fully ‘at home’ returns to her - and it reminds her of the feelings she had in Poland after the intervention in Iraq. She feels different and she is perceived as different. She feels like an ‘incomplete’ Palestinian.

Furthermore, the Palestine that she arrives in is a different Palestine than the one she has imagined and has grown attached to, which also underlines the importance of intergenerational transmission even if it happens unconsciously or *en passant*. She struggles to connect the imagined geography of her Palestine with the occupational reality of the West Bank, where she settles. The West Bank and the political reality of the post-Oslo, semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority do not speak to her idea of Palestine. Her weekend travels to Haifa were important and she felt reluctant to give them up, despite realizing that native-born Palestinians in the West Bank do not have the privilege to travel there. Being in Haifa also brought disappointment. She does not have any remaining family there and, despite several attempts, she is not able to locate her grandparent's house, which reveals another difficulty related to the 'ancestral return'.

Lena's inability to fully feel at home within the realities of occupied Palestine and the West Bank and her inability to locate her 'diasporic home' in Haifa provide a crucial insight into the difficulty of 'returning' to the remembered and imagined past. As Elspeth Probyn writes, 'You can never go home. Or rather, once returned, you realize the cliché that home is never what it was' (1996: 14). Probyn's words are reminiscent of Avtar Brah's suggestion about the difficulty of retuning to the imagined homeland even 'if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin"' (1996: 192). The Palestine in which Lena comes to live cannot be the 'entire Palestine' that she imagines. The everyday Palestinian reality she experiences unsettles the imagined geography of the Palestine to which she had grown attached. Mindful of Probyn's reflection on the (im)possibility of 'full' return, Anne Marie Fortier (2001) proposes looking at 'the returns' from a different perspective. She encourages us to reflect on how 'the movement back "home" reworks "home" in different ways' (2001: 412). She proposes an examination of the ways in which this 'return' encourages other 'forms of becoming' – how going 'back' impacts going 'forward' (*ibid.*). She poses the critical question, '[H]ow can migratory subjects reclaim sites of attachment in their refusal to inhabit a particular place?' (*ibid.*: 407). Fortier's questions bring me back to the final part of Lena and Ala's narratives. Lena, after having spent several years in Ramallah, decided to leave the country and return to Europe. Meanwhile, her ways of thinking about her relationship with Palestine evolve:

I've realised that not being in Palestine does not make me less Palestinian. I do not need to have a Palestinian *huwija* [Palestinian ID] to be Palestinian. I might have nothing in common with people from Jenin, or I can have little in common with a person from Nablus, but it does not matter. I understood that there could be a Lena that is interested in Western music and a Lena who drinks alcohol and, on the other hand, loves Palestinian folk [music] and tradition and wears a bikini and is interested in modern art. And I can also love the opera and it does not mean I am less Palestinian than somebody else. And I realised that it is important to find a group that you identify with, because society, I think society operates on many different levels, it is not unified.

(...)

So Palestine is a very fluid experience for me. And I agree with Said that it is more a state of mind and that in a way, you ... even without sharing the roots can be part of this society.

[Lena, Warsaw]

This final extract suggests a transformation in Lena's conceptualization of her relationship to Palestine and the ways in which she articulates her sense of belonging. Fortier asserts that the return to a home that is not the same as the home one imagined nevertheless creates a space for 'grounding self' in the process of 'becoming' (2001: 412). Thinking from this perspective, her time in occupied Palestine enables Lena to develop a different kind of relationship with her ancestral homeland, which, perhaps, she would not have been able to develop otherwise. Lena comes to the conclusion that there can be different ways of relating to Palestine. She realises that her desire to 'reclaim' does not require her to compromise other parts of her identity and that no one really expects her to do so. She concludes that Palestine has become a 'state of mind' for her. She does not need to live in Palestine to be Palestinian and her relationship does not need to be grounded in a physical, tangible relationship with the land. Her relationship has been transformed into a more symbolic, but nevertheless crucially important one that requires an awareness of and attentiveness to injustice, marginalization and remembering. Lena's re-worked and re-configured connection with Palestine allows her to create, or rather, to maintain a meaningful bond with the ancestral homeland in the present; it is not based on the

intergenerational transmission of memory, but becomes a 'living' relationship with Palestine – one that is created and processed by her in the present.

Thinking in Fortier's terms about how 'return' can enable different means of reclaiming sites of attachment, I wish to go back once again to Ala's earlier extract on her first journey to Palestine. Ala's re-engagement with Palestine came with her interest in and subsequent visit to Gaza. Gaza emerges for her as a kind of symbolic 'carrier of Palestinian identity' and is the initial conduit of her 'reconnection' with Palestine. Interestingly, Ala's family was originally from the north of Palestine and might have never been to Gaza. Nevertheless, it is Gaza, and her memory of visiting Gaza, which receives a special status in her mind and becomes an icon of her relationship with Palestine. Her experience is interesting for a number of reasons. First of all, it suggests how attachment to Palestine may transform from being site-specific to something more symbolic for this generation – even though there may still be a certain geography that 'carries' this symbolic attachment. In this case, Gaza, as an epicentre of struggle, is re-imagined as a site of symbolic attachment through which resisting the occupation and fighting its injustice offers new connections to Palestine. For Ala, Palestine becomes less the narrative of lost and reclaimed roots, and increasingly that of moral and political struggle. This shift in the understanding of Palestinian heritage from roots to be 'reclaimed' to routes of attachment and possibility to be forged recalls Jean Makdisi's essay 'Becoming Palestinian', in which she describes what Palestine means to her:

To me Palestine means the overriding injustice that occurred and continues in Palestine, not because it is unique in the annals of imperial mischief, but because it is mine, and because it is emblematic to others. To embrace Palestine means to embrace all other places suffering injustice (...) The paradox is that the more Palestinian one becomes, the less centred one is only on Palestine, and the more on the wider world. How can there ever be justice in Palestine if there is not elsewhere? (2013: 161)

Here Magdisi links the struggle for justice in Palestine with a global injustice and, thus, universalizes it. The Palestine that emerges from this extract ceases to be a personal or familial possession that can be lost or found, buried or excavated. Nor does it materialise through a tangible relationship to a land. The ongoing occupation and injustice happening in

Palestine transforms the nature of her engagement with Palestine. Palestine, like many other places in the world, becomes the site of injustice, but also equally becomes a symbol of the fight for justice – a symbol that resonates not just among Palestinians but with people around the world. Interestingly, while the point of engagement with Palestine begins with a personal interest, it transforms her relationship with Palestine from one that could be read in national terms to one that can be interpreted in universal terms – as joining a global struggle for justice.

The returns discussed in this section are difficult, reorienting and reconstructing the participants' relationships with Palestine. Their narratives of returns juxtapose their imagined geographies of Palestine with the realities of today's Israel and the OPT and their fragmented inherited memories with their desire to create their own experiences. Using Fortier's insights, it is possible to see how these 'returns', sometimes disappointing and upsetting, nevertheless facilitate the creation of new relationships and points of attachment. Through their returns to Palestine – whether physical, in the form of visits or relocation, or less direct, in the form of emotional or political commitment – the participants whose narratives are considered here have not sought to simply restore primordial, unchanging roots but rather have invented their own routes of relating to and caring for Palestine.

## **6.6. Conclusion**

The analysis of participants' narratives has problematized the process of intergenerational transmission of memory among children of Palestinian exiles brought up in the UK and Poland, often in mixed-ethnicity families. This chapter has explored ways in which the generation make sense of their Palestinian heritage and how they engage in forming their own 'routes' to Palestine.

The analysis of the interviews has revealed that the process of connecting with Palestine is both provisional and strategic. It is provisional in terms of the individual's continuously shifting position vis-à-vis Palestine and the constantly changing situation within Israel and Palestine. The Children of the Idea of Palestine constantly sought to negotiate their attitude to and their relationship with Palestine; this relationship, furthermore, was constantly evolving through new experiences and circumstances. Their attachments are situational,

dependent on the place and context in which they have to define themselves and respond to external labelling. The relationship with Palestine is also strategically constructed. All the research participants constantly make choices in terms of modes and types of engagement with Palestine. In doing so, they navigate a very complex matrix of familial, socio-cultural and political conditions. While these choices are carefully selected, participants are also in a constant search for authenticity.

Discussing notions of identity among diasporic Palestinians, Lindholm Schultz (2003) reflects on the 'duality' of the attachments that characterize the generation of Palestinians born outside Palestine. She argues that these 'dual' attachments might ultimately lead to a 'thinning out' of Palestinian identity, which 'runs the risk of diminishing the political strength of the Palestinian movement' (2003: 204). The analysis of the research material here reveals that while their relationship with Palestine changes over time and circumstance, it remains important for the 'second generation' of Palestinian exiles.

The analysis of the narratives of the Children of the Idea of Palestine suggests that the plurality of their different affiliations does not necessarily become weaker. As Lena put it, she can be Palestinian and Polish and an opera lover and a *debke* dancer; none of these affiliations are less authentic or 'diluted' because of the others. However, as argued above, they are all relational and are employed strategically depending on the context and situation. I concur with Marvoudi that 'ambivalence and "in-betweenness" do not necessarily lead to political apathy or disunity, but that the feelings of disillusionment and hope, attachment and detachment to the homeland, all form part of the negotiations about being Palestinian in diaspora' (2007: 408).

Among my participants, any risk of the potential 'thinning out' of Palestinian identity has been attenuated by ongoing political developments in Europe and in Israel and Palestine, which has activated their links to Palestine and set the tone of their relationship with it. These injustices, as Emil put it, do not allow them to forget about the ancestral homeland. I argue that the continuous dispossession of Palestinians from the remaining parts of historical Palestine, the ongoing Israeli occupation and the systematic human rights violations politically mobilize the identities of diasporic Palestinians. It is often in response to the ongoing injustice in Palestine/Israel that this generation of people - who have had no

direct experience with the ancestral homeland – has decided to reconnect with Palestine and to search for new ways of engaging with it. While research participants have sought and experienced their Palestinianness in different ways, their relationship with the ancestral country has often been articulated as a struggle for justice, as a call for the restitution of the rights of their ancestors and as a protest against the violence inflicted upon their forbearers in the past and their fellow Palestinians in the present.

The political mobilization of identities also reflects the changing character of the connections with Palestine that research participants establish. The connections that the Children of the Idea of Palestine have developed are not necessarily anchored to a physical place, but take on much more symbolic dimensions. They are based on constructed ideas of what Palestine is. While certain geographies may be ‘carriers’ of attachment to Palestine, the affiliation to Palestine often has a more universal claim and character. The juxtaposition of the imagined geographies with the reality found on the ground highlights the limits of reclaiming Palestine in its entirety. At the same time, it offers new possibilities for this generation to create their own links and connections.

I argue that it is this very change that allows the emerging generations of Palestinians in diaspora to continually recreate connections with the ancestral homeland. The impossibility of reclaiming Palestine in its entirety simultaneously opens conduits for reclaiming it in a more symbolic way; these might be fragmented and flawed but they form a ‘living’ connection. At the end of the interview, after recounting all of the difficulties and complexities of her journey, Lena comes to the realization that her Palestine ‘is a state of mind’, one that resists the ongoing dispossession and which calls for justice. It is, first and foremost, a human rather than a national condition. Such a framing of her relationship with Palestine, in my view, allows us to conceptualize a sense of connectedness that is not based on any essentialized ethnos, but rather on shared ideals.

### **Part III. Oral histories & audio-visual ethnography**

The role of this thesis is to illuminate how the diverse displacement and migration journeys affect the modes of remembering Palestine among the different generations of diaspora Palestinians. In pursuing this goal, the audio-visual ethnography became a crucial element of learning about the process of production, maintenance and transmission of memories in diaspora. The five films, which accompany this thesis, mirror the main approach of the study in terms of attention given to the diversity of the exilic trajectories of Palestinians. Thus, each of them engages with different individual and familial displacement and migration routes of Palestinians from Poland and the UK, not as a matter of comparison, but to reflect on the multiplicity of Palestinian routes of dispossession– both in terms of the moments of departure from Palestine and the socio– economic conditions of exile. Each of the films engages with different aspects of the dispossession and within each the camera ‘travels’, physically or symbolically, from Poland and the UK to today’s Palestine and Israel to follow the trajectories and the connections that the characters form with their ancestral homeland.

If the oral histories are about engaging in understanding the experiences and memories of separation of people from place, the role of the audio-visual ethnography is to engage with these places and to enquire about the loss and absence of people from them. In other words, given the ongoing multidimensional uprooting of Palestinian population from Palestine, I have used the audio-visual research to attempt to restore access to the materiality of what has been lost, missed and longed for and to the reality of how it has changed. The process of filming often revealed a dramatic contrast between the vitality of participants’ memories of villages, places and landscapes and the changes and absences that the camera was finding on the ground. While tracing, marking, and re-walking the diasporic *journeys* was the guiding principle of the audio-visual ethnography, the key intention was in creating this juxtaposition of participant memories with the physical sites in today’s Israel and Palestine.

The final selection is comprised of five short films from 6 to 10 minutes in length. Two films trace the histories of the 1948 exile, one of them following the story of British Palestinian brothers who were born in Haifa and subsequently expelled and the other the story of

Omar, who was born already in exile in the village of Sanaber in the Golan Heights (at that time in Syria, occupied since 1967 by Israel). Two of the remaining films explore the complex trajectories of the post- 1967 Palestinian migration. One tells the story of Wael, a Jerusalem resident whose ID was revoked when he went to study in the UK and the other of Yakoub, a migrant from the Palestinian village of Beita in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Finally, the fifth film tells the story of Alina, a second-generation Polish Palestinian woman, tracing her changing relationship with Palestine. As I follow Alina's steps and listen to her story, we realize that the camera is not following the route of displacement. Rather it accompanies her route to Palestine as she prepares for running the 'Right to Movement' marathon in Bethlehem.

When conducting the audio-visual ethnography, I felt like I was constantly wearing two hats, that of a researcher and that of a filmmaker. Undertaking these two roles posed the challenge of having to navigate between different goals and perspectives. In my role as a researcher, undertaking the visual ethnography was an integral part of the research and a critical means of learning about and exchanging knowledge with the research participants. My own journeys in search of their displacement journeys, undertaken with the camera, proved to be crucial in enabling new conversations and sparking new recollections. From this perspective, it did not matter if the materials and the footage or the photographs were partial, fragmented or poorly filmed. Collecting them served as a method of eliciting further memories and enabling further exchange. As a filmmaker, on the other hand, I had to manage different priorities. Alongside the well-being of the research participants I had to take into account different sets of elements important for a production of the film: the storyline, footage, audio-recorder, and lighting, as well as gaining permission to film and audio-record and honing the skills to do so on my own. Many times these two roles of researcher and filmmaker were mutually enabling and complementary, for example in terms of mediating memory, but sometimes they presented me with contradictory challenges and ethical dilemmas, for instance the ongoing question about the extent to which the camera should be present in participants' personal lives.

While the five films are an 'end' product of this process, and a fundamental one from the filmmaker's perspective, the *process* itself of engaging in the audio-visual ethnography has significantly contributed to and expanded my research on Palestinian memory and

displacement. The 'back and forth' journeys with the camera between the narrators' oral histories and the site-specific fields facilitated the process of remembering Palestine and opened space for different types of connections with my research participants. Suddenly I was less of an anonymous researcher, who comes 'to the field' and leaves when she has collected 'the data'. The process of discussing and filming the itineraries for the audio-visual work with participants, and then sharing the footage and collected materials with them, was not only transformational for our relationship as researcher and research participants but also created space for participants to contemplate their memories and call up more stories.

I begin the reflection of this chapter with a discussion about the process of undertaking audio-visual ethnography specifically focusing on the role of the video-camera in learning about diaspora memory and the role of footage in mediating it. I then consider some decisions related to the production of the films – from the approach to filming to the issues of editing and montage. I conclude the chapter by reflecting on the role of the films as a 'stand-alone' entity in contributing to the dissemination of knowledge about the histories of Palestinian dispossession.

#### *The relationship between the audio-visual ethnography and the oral stories*

While the oral stories were the key sites of investigation of memories of Palestine among diaspora Palestinians, they also served as the itineraries for further audio-visual research. The audio-visual ethnography, which I earlier described as a 'travel practice', was based on the interplay between the trajectories of the research participants and the journeys undertaken by the researcher to follow their journeys with the camera. The departing element of each of the journeys was an agreement between the research participants and the researcher about the scope and the character of the filming. The films were produced in conversation and dialogue with the research participants, who maintained access to the footage and whom I consulted about the drafts throughout the process of editing. The audio-visual ethnographies were 'guided' by the telling of the narrators, who subsequently became protagonists of the films. Before I go further and explain the itineraries in detail, I would like to reflect on relationship between the oral histories and the audio-visual ethnography and consider the epistemological status of the films, which were produced in relation to the participants' experiences.

The research was based on the analysis of the memories of the research participants as narrated in the oral stories. As indicated in the Chapter 3, in the process of narration the research participants had to put meaning to their life experiences, explaining them in a way they might have never done before (c.f. Portelli, 1997:4; Gunaratnam, 2009:23-24) Sometimes, the narratives were inconsistent or contradictory or cyclical and eluded any particular order of telling. There were silences, sighs, prolonged pauses, broken sentences – those important details that are very difficult to account for with words. This sometimes difficult process of ‘producing oral histories’ has remained largely invisible from the perspective of written texts and has often escaped academic analysis (Fraser and Puwar, 2008: 4-5). Those hesitations and absences of telling made me acutely aware of the existence of memories and experiences that struggle to be, or cannot be, articulated. The narrators often began their stories by saying, ‘It is impossible to imagine,’ or, ‘It is hard explain’. It seemed that sometimes their words failed to ‘represent’ the experience. And then in their written form, the stories were further filtered through the researcher’s translation and interpretation.

The presence of the camera offered a set of new possibilities, but also raised new challenges, in relating to participants’ experiences. I saw the role of the camera as a tool that enables another way of learning about memories beyond words and the writing (Berger and Mohr 1996; Knowles, 2004;). The audio-visual ethnography allowed at least partial access to the context of the telling, and also – through my journeys in search of their sites of memory – to the context of which they told. The camera could reach not only the sites and the landscape, but also the ambience, which provided an important point of reference to the stories. Thus, the filming and the films offered a multi-sensorial means of accessing the materiality and texture of participants’ relationships with Palestine that have been lost with the experience of dispossession and migration.

However, the audio-visual tools, while offering a different way of getting to know the diasporic routes and the avenues of memory, cannot be seen as tools of representation of participants’ experiences. They are not able to represent the hardship and the complexity of participants’ journeys from and relations with Palestine. In fact, as with spoken and written text, audio-visual forms of engagement and expression pose some major constraints in

relating to the subject's reality, succinctly described by the acclaimed film director Krzysztof Kieślowski:

I wonder to what extent for me – as a documentary maker – I can really transcend reality. I think I can touch it only in a very limited extent. I think that only a fragment of the complex reality that surrounds us - becomes available on screen. And when it is, when I touch issues that matter – I am aware that behind these events, problems and views are real people, with real names and faces. How can I be sure that I am not disturbing them, destroying their lives?

(Kieślowski, 1981:1)

In my view, Kieślowski's comment illuminates both the limitations and the delicate role of the camera and the potential conflict raised by its presence in relation to touching subjects' lives. On one hand, the camera struggles to 'transcend' reality and its view is always partial and limited. And when it does get close and is able to 'see' subjects' intimate lives, like in Kieślowski's documentaries, there is always a concern that its role can be disturbing for filmed protagonists. Kieślowski's words highlight some of the ethical concerns that have accompanied me as a researcher and as a filmmaker. Even if I was filming only after having obtained consent from my research participants, sometimes there were moments when I wondered if the camera should actually be there. Should I be filming the tears or should I switch off the camera and comfort the protagonist? One of the crucial moments in this respect involved my returns to the research participants with the footage and materials collected on the journeys. Should I be showing them the footage from their destroyed villages, which lays bare the scale of the loss and absence? How would it shape their imagination of place? Filming those moments of encounters was crucial from the cinematographic perspective, but I felt conflicted about whether, in these highly intimate, emotional instances, it was appropriate to do so.

While the journeys with the camera have been undertaken in relation to participants' experiences of exile and dispossession, they cannot be seen as reproducing those experiences. Rather, what the films strive to achieve is a certain approximation of the context and the imperfect and partial access to the materiality of the memories, which had been lost. But they can never really 'fully touch' or represent the material reality.

Furthermore, the five films that were produced on the basis of audio-visual ethnography were put together and edited from hours of footage, editing and montage – they are selective and subjective in the way that they relate to participants’ reality.

Thus, the ethnographic films that have been produced need to be seen not as a representation of participants’ experiences, but rather as a form of dialogical engagement with their memories and the interpretation of those memories, enabled by the mutual exchange of experiences and stories. The most essential element of the process of conducting the audio-visual research was the possibilities it offered in terms of returning to the research participants with material ‘gifts’ and with the footage. It gave me a reason to go back to and to stay in touch with participants, but also to engage in a more collaborative process of film production in which I asked them for feedback on the edited material.

#### *Audio-visual ethnography as a process of memory mediation*

I based the audio-visual exploration on the physical mapping, following and exploring some the sites of memory that appeared in research participants’ oral stories. These physical itineraries of where to go and how to find these sites were carefully selected and decided upon in collaboration with the research participants. We met before my departures and agreed on the scope of the journeys and places I should visit. The research participants drafted maps and gave instructions both before and after my departure. Others would put me in touch with their friends and distant families in today’s Israel and the OPT.

Many of the oral stories led me to today’s Israel where I was looking for the sites of ancestral towns and villages of pre-1948 Palestine. Sometimes participants’ directions were very detailed and I could trace these places without difficulty. For instance, Antoine’s instructions were very precise. They helped me to look at the contemporary Haifa through the eyes of a young boy from six decades earlier as I looked for Ibn Ateer Street, whose name had now been changed to Zisso Street. In other cases, the participants would ‘send’ me to places that they have never been before, so I would follow their inherited memories. This was the case of Emad, who described Suhmata, his family’s village, from the stories passed down to him by his uncle. In other cases, it was the participants themselves, as in the case of Wael and Alina, who guided me through their childhood memories.

These negotiated itineraries and subsequent travels made me realize the diversity of participants' relationships with Palestine, embedded not just in different geographies, but also in different temporalities. Recognition of this diversity has informed my analysis of participants' stories and memories, especially in terms of attention given to different generational modes of remembering discussed earlier. To explore these different modes, I travelled to what Palestinians in the OPT call 'the 48 Palestine', which is in today's Israel, as well as to East Jerusalem, occupied since 1967, and the West Bank. My subsequent walks and journeys with the video camera created complex and multi-temporal maps of participants' displacements from and connections with Palestine.

My journeys with the camera in search of the participants' sites of memory also revealed something else that has accompanied me throughout this process whether I was looking for destroyed villages in today's Israel or walking across occupied East Jerusalem. All of these journeys involved the necessity of constantly confronting absence, as I continually looked for places which were not there, which I was not supposed to see or which had been turned into something else. The sites and the names I sought were expunged from the Israeli maps and road signs. The places that were there were obscured, the ruins were hidden; the remaining buildings had changed identities to become something else. It felt as if I was doing a peculiar ethnography of absence, which helped to illuminate not just the scale of the dispossession, but also the uncertain and constantly undermined status of Palestinian memories.

One of the experiences that remains the most memorable for me was related to searching for the ancestral sites of Marwan's family. When I first suggested to him that I would like to visit Haifa and look for Balad-Al-Sheikh his eyes glittered and he immediately put me in touch with his distant family, who, as it turned out, he had never seen in his life. Marwan, whom I introduced in the earlier parts of this thesis, was born in Jordan and knew Haifa and his village Balad-Al-Sheikh only from his aunt's stories about the genies. Hassan and Abdul, whom Marwan put me in touch with, belonged to the minority of Palestinians who managed to stay in Haifa and in the surrounding areas after the expulsions of the 1948. Those who remained, like Hassan, Abdul, and their parents, had been moved from their houses and grouped in another neighborhood. They introduced themselves to me as 'present

absentees', a name given by the Israeli administration to all Palestinians who stayed within the territory of the newly established Israel and were unable to return to their houses (Pappé, 2011). My subsequent walks with Hassan and Abdul through the alleys Balad-Al-Sheikh proved the sad relevance of this term. When I met them in the city center of Haifa on a summer afternoon in 2012, they already knew from Marwan that I wanted to see where Marwan's family had lived until 1948. I soon learned that Balad-Al-Sheikh was now called Neshet and was a Jewish Israeli neighborhood of Haifa. I could feel that both Hassan and Abdul were both curious and eager to show me their old neighborhood and simultaneously anxious to go there. On the day of our trip in the autumn of 2012 I wrote the following note:

*It was sad to visit the site of Balad-Al-Sheikh. Hassan and Abdul were confused, trying to negotiate between their childhood memories and the reality of the alleyways of the neighbourhood, which must have changed so much over these years. I could see embarrassment in their eyes, as they could not find what they were trying to show me. Indeed, the village had been completely transformed into a Jewish neighbourhood of Haifa, and we met several Orthodox families passing by. But there were still some 'old' houses, which my hosts would point out to me, desperately, as if they needed to prove that they are not imagining the story, that Balad-Al-Sheikh was there.*

*'Look - there, an old Palestinian house!' they would exclaim and gesture to me and each time I would start filming. They would never come close to where I was filming and stood by the car smoking. I could tell they felt alien here, a little bit anxious in the neighbourhood from which they had been expelled. We were attracting a lot of attention. A few times the passing Israeli Jews asked me what I was doing there. My filming of 'old' houses looked suspicious. But then again, it was fairly easy for me to play tourist.*

*Subsequently we drove to the place where the Marwan's family used to live. There was no trace of the house; instead, there was a big red building that looked like a shopping mall or a storage room. In front of the place there was a large bus stop. I was filming the place and the people at the bus stop must have been wondering if there was anything particular about the ugly building I was staring at and filming<sup>35</sup>*

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<sup>35</sup> In fact, on my first visit one of the random old Palestinian houses I filmed was actually one of the Sahly's family houses, which was transformed into a Jewish prayer house. I only discovered it on my subsequent visit from Zachrot's publication.

This stroll with Hassan and Abdul through the alleys of Nesher in the search of the traces of Balad-Al-Sheikh made me realize the extent to which, without the existence of material referents of their memory, their history can be denied and obscured. Hassan and Abdul, who grew in this neighborhood, felt embarrassed that they could not give me decisive proof to their and Marwan's childhood memories. And although personally I did not need these tangible proofs to believe their story, I realized the extent of the existential problem that has accompanied them since the beginning of the dispossession. Michael Jackson reflects on the struggles of refugees in dealing with past memories, arguing that one of the reasons why they sometimes stop speaking about their experiences of loss is that because no-one would believe them (2012: 102). Similarly, here, the absence of the referent of this remembering emphasized the precarious status of Palestinians' memory, lacking, as it does, the material traces that would speak to the history. In the anxious eyes of Hassan and Abdul, I saw their worry that I could think that they might be imagining the story. At the same time, this afternoon spent with them in search of Marwan's family neighborhood made me realize how much refugees' memories of Palestine were an important site of national heritage. They had to keep through remembering alone what others can commemorate through physical remains. In this sense, I felt that the camera, by filming the traces of these histories, by giving the material referent – even if partial and obscure – was mapping and somehow projecting the memories onto the landscape.

A few days later, I dove up to the Upper Galilee in search of the village of Suhmata, the ancestral village of Emad's family, who fled to Lebanon in 1948 and settled in the Naher Al-Bared camp near Tripolis. Emad's itineraries were very vague. He could describe how Suhmata looked from the stories of his uncle but had difficulties trying to locate them in the actual geographies. With the help of the *Palestine Remembered* website I managed to locate the village. This is an extract of my note from that evening in October 2012:

*I woke up before 6AM and left Tiberias to travel north towards Lebanon. The road was hilly and ascended towards the heights of the Upper Galilee. I was quickly leaving behind sleepy villages, initially Arab and then Drouze, occasionally passing the kibbutz signs. I was heading towards a kibbutz called Tsuriel. From the Google Earth photograph of the location on the 'Palestine Remembered' website I knew that the*

*remaining houses in Suhmata still existed and I should be able to photograph them and bring it back to Emad. As I approached the place, I was surprised to learn that the trees, which looked like benches on the map, looked more like a forest. I got out of the car, feeling a rising anxiety. I started walking towards a forest and suddenly, out of the blue, a man emerged in front of me. I froze. Sophisticated cameras, tripods, sophisticated filming equipment. I felt alarmed. I soon realized he was taking close-up photographs of some local plants. 'Shalom,' he said, 'What are you doing here?' 'Shalom,' I responded and understood, but ignored, the question. 'Sliha, I don't understand Hebrew,' I said and started walking towards the forest. After 50 meters of climbing I spotted a barbed wire. In front of me, there was a yard with a few structures that looked like the remains of a military base or a training base. I took another road that led me to an old paved road. Soon I saw a ramp crossing off the road, the same type of barrier as I see on the agriculture gates in the closed farms of the West Bank. I could see the remains of the old village from here. Or maybe I was imagining it? I thought I would try to reach the village from the other side. As I read the sign 'Access Only for Inhabitants', I somewhat anxiously ignored it and drove in to the sleepy kibbutz. I felt like I was doing something wrong. But even from this side, access to Suhmata looked closed again. Fences and barriers again. I was not brave enough to pass through the fence. A little bit frustrated, I started filming the fences and the ramp. Pictures of nothing. My anxiety turned into frustration.*

The experience of filming in Suhmata proved to be difficult and induced complex emotions. I really wanted to find the ruins of the village and I was sure they were there. I knew that I was very close, that my camera could capture the ruins between the olive trees. Yet, it was impossible for me to get through the fences. The physical obstacles I was facing were accompanied by a growing fear that I was an intruder in the kibbutz. The unexpected meeting with the photographer, however, gave me an important insight into the palimpsest character of the landscape. We were both looking for things that required attentiveness and which could not be seen with an untrained eye – yet they were there. These journeys with the video camera trained my eyes and encouraged me to look at the landscape that surrounds me as a form of palimpsest in which different layers of history and attachment are written and re-written on each other and somehow concealing one another.

Over time I slowly learned how to read a landscape better, how to recognize the stones and how to navigate in between the old and new maps. Indeed, as I was searching for places that no longer existed, I realized that even the most obscured places are never really absent. These traces – what remained of the graveyard in Al Tira, houses in Balad– Al-Sheikh, the abandoned ruins in Suhmata– taught me to read the landscape in a different way. They were subversively cutting through the landscape of today’s Israel and revealing an alternative cartography of now Israel then Palestine. Later on, when analysing the material, I learned about Raja Shehadeh’s journey and about his method of locating the old Palestinian villages in today’s Israel. Shehadeh tried to trace the journey of his late great-uncle, who was escaping from Haifa trying to hide from Ottoman soldiers in the villages of Galilee on his way to Damascus. After initial difficulty in locating the villages, he comes across an almond tree and realizes that almonds need to be planted:

When I looked at the open green fields spread open on both sides of my path, I could see more almond trees that I had failed to notice before I had recognized their significance. They now provided me with a matrix of the possible locations of the destroyed villages. There, to the west, Kufra must have stood and nearby to the south, Bira, Dana and Tireh. With a possible location of Arab villages, the old features of this cemetery of a land began to emerge illuminated by the white blossoms of the almond trees, marked by petals that slowly guided down to the ground around them in utter, hushed silence. (2011: 82)

These journeys and Shehadeh’s words made me realize that the traces remain in place, no matter how much one would want to erase them. My role as a filmmaker and a researcher who follows the memories was to find these material – present or absent – referents of memory.

When filming participants’ stories in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank, I was confronted by different types of absences, or rather instances in which the Palestinians are being made absent– even if they were physically there. Mohammed’s family history was one of over six decades of struggle to remain in their homeland. After having been expelled from Jaffa, the family settled in the East Jerusalem neighborhood Sheikh Jarrah. I met him in 2012 and learned that his family had a new eviction order on their house in Sheikh Jarrah issued by

the Jerusalem administration, but that they were determined to stay on the land. In case of Wael, who lived in Scotland and whom I met again in Jerusalem in 2013 on his family holiday, the situation was different. We agree to start our day close to Jerusalem Hotel on Nablus Road. He took me for a walk to follow his childhood path to and from school. As we walked through the Old City, where he seemed to know every little corner and each shortcut, he looked as if he had never left the city. However, he was only there on a tourist visa and had to leave Jerusalem several days later. He was momentarily present in Jerusalem, but 'made absent' existentially – without the right to live in his own city. This experience has been evocatively described by Mahmoud Darwish, one of Palestine's greatest poets. A few years after having returned from exile to the West Bank, Darwish put together a collection of poems, or rather a book which was a convergence of prose and poetry – which turned out to be his last. In the collection, entitled *In The Presence Of Absence*, he tried to reflect the essential conflict that has preoccupied him throughout his journey: the notion of home and homelessness, exile and return, life and death and the impossible situation of constantly finding oneself present in one's own absence (Darwish, 2011). The accompanying feeling of the continuous existential uncertainty of the Palestinian community in the context of the lasting erasure is also undertaken by a Palestinian filmmaker Yasir Suleiman (2009) in his poetic film 'The Time That Remains: Chronicle of a Present Absentee'. It was against these absences that I felt my camera was rolling.

During my journeys in Israel and Palestine I kept in touch with those whose stories guided my itineraries, who themselves stayed behind in Poland or the UK. The process of being in touch and my subsequent 'returns' to the participants became particularly important in the context of mediating memory. Gerd Beye, who considers the role of Holocaust cinema in activating the memory of different generations of Holocaust survivors, reflects on the story of Myriam, a protagonist of the film *La Petite Prairie aux Bouleaux*, and her regular calls from Kraków to her fellow survivors in Paris (2010:123). She called her friends with new details of her discoveries and with questions to ease her process of remembering. Beye observes how the regular calls which started with the '*Dis-moi*' – 'Tell me' – evoked communal processes of remembering.

Similarly, the demands I placed on my participants made them recall and map details and get in touch with family and friends, establishing a referent for their stories. The audio-

visual ethnography I was conducting in Israel and Palestine provided a means of activating their memories. Sometimes I had additional questions I wanted to ask; in other instances, I wanted to share my experiences and emotions with participants right away. For example, after visiting Haifa Al-Ateequa I emailed Antoine describing the details of the neighborhood – what was there and what was not there, the light, the ambience and different details, asking a few more questions. Antoine, who had not returned to Haifa since the family were forced to flee the city in the 1948, responded by thanking me for ‘bringing him’ closer to Haifa Al-Ateequa and hoping that he would be able to see the photographs as soon as I returned to London.

The material traces I was bringing with me to the research participants – stones, scarves and mandarins – encouraged new conversations, reflections and memories. The photographs and footage from the filming I presented them with was met with curiosity, sparking new waves of interest. For instance, I remember my encounter with Omar. When I brought him the photographs from Al Zanghariyya, he kept repeating, ‘Ah yes, now I remember,’ as we went through the series. He immediately called his distant family in the Upper Galilee to help him to navigate between the inherited memories that he had of the place and the photographs that I brought to him. One of the sequences I filmed was a long take of a eucalyptus tree. Omar looked at it carefully, asking repeatedly for more details. Finally, he exclaimed, ‘This is it! This must be it. My father planted this tree.’ And then he added to my surprise, ‘He was killed under this tree.’ In the process of reviewing the footage and the photographs with Omar, I learned so much more about his ancestral village. And then I could see how looking at the images helped Omar to relate to the stories that he had heard about the place. I was not sure if I had found the ‘correct’ tree. But then, it didn’t matter. The footage helped him to connect the story of his father’s death with a physical landscape and concrete geography. In fact, he ‘used’ the footage to match his memory. Similarly, to my surprise, one day Alina called me and said that my photographs and footage from Upper Galilee made her want to go there and refresh her memory of it. When Yakoub saw the footage from Beita, his eyes lit up as he muttered that In’am was his favorite little sister.

*Towards a more reflexive cinema of dispossession ?*

While as a researcher the entire process of the filmmaking has been crucially important for enriching my analysis, from the perspective of film production, this process had to conclude in editing and putting together these stories as films. In this final section, I reflect on the process of producing the films, discussing some of the technical and aesthetic dilemmas involved. I also consider the ways in which the films serve as a device of disseminating knowledge about the ongoing Palestinian dispossession.

In my approach to the films, as with my analytical approach to researching memory, I was less interested in what the memories tell us about the Palestinian past, although I appreciate the importance of oral history as a source of historical knowledge. Rather, I was interested in understanding what these situated memories 'do' to people's relationship with Palestine in the present. Therefore, I never used archival footage, but was determined to engage with the participants' sites of memory as they are today – even if it meant searching for the ghosts of the villages and houses.

The five films have been put together using footage from three years of journeys back and forth between the participants in Poland and in the UK and the site- specific visits in Israel and Palestine. This process of going back and forth required an extensive amount of planning, but also a readiness for the unexpected developments on the ground, including the potential inability to get there. Each time I returned to Ben Gurion Airport, I worried that it could be my last time and I would be denied entry to the country. While the process involved planning, I never scripted the films and wanted to ensure they had an ethnographic character. The camera travels as the story unfolds in front of it. I wanted to maintain, as much as possible, the openness for the story to develop there.

Traces of this approach are most visible in moments when the 'unexpected' happens on screen. For example, in Haifa Al-Ateeqa, one of the local boys, Omar, spontaneously enters the frame while I am filming at the site of Antoine's and Joseph's house. I decided to leave this sequence and the little conversation we had in the montage – despite not being directly related to the brothers' story. To me, the boy, who speaks both Arabic and Hebrew, signifies a strong sense of *sumud*, the steadfastness of the Palestinian community and the continuity

of the Palestinian presence in Haifa despite the erasure and destruction that I was filming around. I encountered a similar situation with filming Jakub's sister In'am. I was excited to be able to come and visit them, but I was not sure to what extent she would agree to be filmed, if at all. Filming Beita, Jakub's village, unexpectedly involved taking hours of footage in which I was getting to know the village and the villagers – I met In'an's husband and their children, as well as meeting Jakub's uncles and touring their olive factory. In the end, I had to leave some part of the footage out, for the sake of the story's clarity. But I was happy that In'am agreed to be filmed and to show me around and tell me about her and Jakub's childhood, which became a central part of the story.

When filming, I also wanted to account for the process of the filmmaking and ensure that, as a filmmaker, I did not entirely 'hide' behind the camera. I did not want to be anonymous to the viewer as I was not anonymous to the people filmed. Just as the oral histories were told in my company as a researcher, the films were developed in dialogue between myself and the research participants. Thus the filmmaker is very much part of the process and by entering the screen I wanted to emphasize that the stories I filmed in Palestine and Israel presented the filmmakers' POV and were not representing the participants' research experience. I am entering the frame, the video shows my steps and reproduces my voice, which also allows the viewer to see and hear 'the other side' of the camera and to reflect also on the situated-ness of the process.

This approach also meant that I filmed much more footage that I was even able to use in terms of the stories I followed, as well as in terms of the hours of footage that I had to leave behind in the final selection. For the sake of cinematographic quality, I also had to leave behind many of the sequences and angles of the stories. For instance, I had to leave out the entire story of Antoine and Joseph since they left Haifa – a story that could be made into a film in its own right. Similarly, with the story of Alina, the initial idea of the film was centred on an entirely different attempt she made to get to Palestine. For personal and private reasons, I decided not to include any of this in the final story. In the process of montage and editing, I was leaving out most of these aspects as I had to focus on what related to participants' connection with Palestine from the perspective of the thesis. But it also indicated that it is through this process of cutting and the montage that the story 'takes shape'.

Another decision involved choosing some participants' stories for the final selection and leaving those of others behind. The audio-visual ethnography has involved following more displacement routes than the five featured in the films. As indicated earlier, the choice of which storylines would be filmed was based on a combination of important criteria, from the consent of the research participants to the organizational and technical possibilities of engaging in the process of filming. While the films re-enact some of the participants' journeys or their family's journeys, they are highly selective and involved only travels inside today's Israel and Palestine. For instance, while a large number of the exilic trajectories involved exile in Lebanon and Jordan, a direct re-enactment of those journeys extended the scope and the logistic and organizational possibilities of this research. Eventually, in thinking through the final selection, I decided that the films should relate to the generational analysis undertaken earlier in the thesis and engage with the multiplicity of different displacement and diasporic trajectories. Each of the films explores different forms of remembering and different forms of memories, both tracing the 'inherited' pasts and their postmemories, as well as following more symbolic connections.

While in no way representative, the films are produced to engage in dialogue with the written text and to further explore the complexities of Palestinian exile. Rather than creating one film interweaving several different stories I decided to keep each of them as separate films. The initial reason was related to the specificity of filming in Israel and Palestine. I could be stopped at any given moment and I wanted to make sure that I would have enough footage to create at least some of the stories. Later on I decided that keeping them in the form of individual film enabled me to give attention to the specificity of each of the individual journeys, while also leaving open the possibility for the collection to grow.

Another important aspect of the production process was thinking through how the films might be used outside of the thesis. The films have been made with the idea disseminating knowledge of Palestinian dispossession to audiences that might not have access to, or the inclination to engage with, scholarly debates. Given the ongoing displacement of Palestinian refugees and the occupation of Palestine that continues to erode its remaining territories the films seek to bring back a sense urgency about the Palestinian situation in the context of the ongoing memoricide. By focusing on individual stories of displacement and loss, I have

conceived of these films as a 'living archive' of Palestinian memory. At the same time as accompanying the written thesis, they have also been produced as 'travelling films', intended to have a life of their own and to bring the marginalized voices and memories of Palestinian exiles and their descendants to wider audiences.

In each of the films the camera works as specific 'peripatetic device' (Lebow, 2003: 37) that travels across different memory layers and connect spaces and people divided by the dispossession. Lebow uses this terms in relation to Chantal Akerman's film *From the East* (1993), in which the artist travels across several countries in Eastern Europe, which her parents, Polish Jews, had left before the war. Lebow writes that 'this quasi voyage of return could be easily be mistaken for what Akerman herself derisively calls a "back to my roots' kind of film'" (*Ibid.*). In fact, Akerman's camera only slips though the landscape – as if searching for the familiar traces of her parents' past in people's faces, yet never actually trying to engage or re-create the past directly. She is more concerned with 'space, moments and discontinuities' than looking for autobiographical traces (Akerman in Lebow, 2003: 37).

The five films might also be mistaken for a particular version of 'back to my roots' films, except that my research participants' going 'back' is never fully possible; nor do they draw their memories and imaginary of Palestine from the reified sense of 'roots'. The films perhaps can be better described as 'follow the routes' films – engaging with the complex and difficult relationships that different generations of diasporic Palestinians maintain and create with their ancestral homeland and the ways in which they search for and transform these relationships. The camera, acting as a peripatetic device of memory, responds to different temporalities and travels across different spatial layers, crossing borders and engaging with both the presences and absences found on the ground with the aim of engaging the viewer with the sense of rift and the scale of loss which accompanies the experience of exile.

Please see the attached CD.

## Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned with matters of remembering among different generations of Palestinians living in geographical isolation from Palestine and, often, in temporal separation from the events that had caused their families' departure from the country. I have situated the question of diasporic modes of remembering Palestine in the context of the ongoing physical, cultural and political dispossession of Palestinians from their ancestral homeland, which, in different forms, continues today. The unremitting dispossession has resulted in a situation in which generations of Palestinians have been born and brought up without direct experiences of Palestine, while the remaining communities experience a shrinking of their territory through the continuous expansion of Israeli settlement and a continuous pressure to leave. In the wake of this ongoing and lasting uprooting, the 'referent' of diasporic remembering - Palestine itself - has become increasingly contingent and fragmented, without settled boundaries or independent political articulation.

Drawing on the multidisciplinary literature on diaspora and memory, this work has theorized diasporic remembering as a situated and learned process that gives meaning to individual and ancestral pasts (Bauman, 2003; Myszal, 2003; Hintzen, 2004; Erll, 2011). The working and re-working of the past involves interpretation and imagination, which allows diasporic Palestinians to create new meanings and connections with the ancestral homeland (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). I have argued that for generations of diasporic Palestinians, *routes* from Palestine, rather than a fixed relationship with ancestral roots, have been instrumental in shaping their memories and relationships with the homeland (Hall, 1990; Gilroy, 1994; Malkki, 1992; Brah, 1996; Fortier, 2005). These diasporic trajectories - the pre-departure experience, or lack of experience of living in Palestine, the circumstances of leaving, the possibilities of visiting - have been instrumental in shaping the ways in which diaspora Palestinians experience, imagine and narrate Palestine.

This thesis has looked at the different memory narratives of research participants through the lens of generation (Mannheim, 1952), arguing that the shared diasporic trajectories create similar 'generational experiences'. The three generations of diasporic Palestinians whose narratives I examine in the study remember and relate to Palestine in different ways,

drawing from and situating their memories in different Palestinian geographies and temporalities. Considering them in context reminds us that there is no single diasporic memory but multiple and diverse diasporic memories.

For many participants in the generation of the Exiles, memories of Palestine have been shaped by inherited stories of pre-1948 Palestine and the subsequent catastrophe. My argument is that these events, largely un-lived by the participants themselves, led to the development of an affective relationship with the ancestral past to which they had no direct access, but which, nevertheless, dominates their own memories of growing up in the refugee camps. Their Palestine is rooted in the ossified memories of the idyll before the Nakba, which stands in contrast to the sense of loss and, often, shame that accompanied the lives of the refugees.

Amongst the generation of the Occupied from Within, modes of remembering the homeland are embedded in physical and direct experiences of living in Palestine and are often narrated as bodily memories of the oppression and control in which they grew up. While this generation relates to the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948 as a part of national history, their memory of Palestine is rooted in a different temporality and different political circumstances. Their relationship with Palestine is framed by the post-1967 realities and the lasting Israeli occupation. In remembering Palestine, they narrated physical, often very harsh, experiences of life under the occupation, focusing on the ways in which they survived, and sometimes resisted, the occupation.

The spatio-temporal framework of connection with Palestine amongst the Children of the Idea of the Palestine is constructed differently. Unlike the two previous generations, their relationship with Palestine is not based on a memory of an ancestral village or a physical experience of occupation, nor it is framed by a direct experience of the dispossession. Their attachment to Palestine is constructed on symbolic terms. It is less about the relationship with roots, and more about creating their own 'routes' to Palestine. In this sense, the Palestine that they relate to is not necessarily (only) the Palestine of their familial origins, rather they search for routes and connections within what are often fragmented and confused familial inheritances of Palestine. While the personal circumstances that 'activate' the desire to forge own paths to the homeland vary, they are often mobilized by the lasting

character of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Their relation to it is not necessarily framed in national terms, but as a struggle against ongoing injustice.

The narratives of the three generations of diasporic Palestinians reveal the palimpsestic character of diasporic memories of Palestine. The five ethnographic études further explore the layered character of connections and memories situated in different Palestinian times and places. I called the series of films the *The Chronotopes of Palestine* borrowing the concept of ‘chronotope’ from Mikhail Bakhtin (1981). Bakhtin defines the chronotope as the

intrinsic connectedness of spatial and temporal relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. It expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. (1981: 84)

Examining the relationship between memory, time and place, each of the films creates and explores different Palestinian chronotopes in which Palestine is not only narrated and remembered, but also constituted in different ways. Each of the films can be seen as a chronotopic ‘whole’ – possessing distinctive spatial and temporal features. However, the films, in my view, also disrupt the linear notions of time and show the contingency of space. By blurring the different temporalities and juxtaposing the memories of the past with the realities of today’s Israel/ Palestine, they reveal the contested and conflicting articulations of space and time. The films also work in relation to each other – revealing a diversity of chronotopic relations and engagements with Palestine.

Glenn Bowman sees the compartmentalization of Palestinian diasporic memory as a potential challenge for the development of a ‘national simultaneity’ in exile that could be a vehicle that carries the promise of ‘territorial re- establishment’ (1988: 37). He asserts that Palestine was only constituted as an imaginable entity at the moment of its loss and, in his view, ‘there were few explicitly national traditions’ that could be carried into exile (*ibid.*). Bowman argues that this absence of a common platform of memory results in fragmentation and isolation of different streams of diasporic memory. He perceives this as an obstacle in the creation of a unified national identity in diaspora that would translate into a ‘cohesive national movement’ (*ibid.*: 39). He argues that ‘variations in perception, and in imagination, may create real problems when it comes to propagating, and maintaining, ‘a

will to live together' amongst the exilic Palestinians (*ibid.*: 38). Thus, Bowman sees diasporic memory as capable of imagining a common past, but not necessarily a shared future.

In my view, the 'variations' of diasporic memories and attachments to Palestine do not need to be seen as limiting the potential articulation of support for the vision of a common Palestinian future. Rather, I see the ability of those in diaspora to maintain attachments to Palestine, despite the absence of stable boundaries or a single spatio-temporality, as an asset to (post) national state building and to the process of imagining a future state. Here I would like to briefly return to Michael Rothberg (2009) and his conception of multidirectional memory. While developed in the context of different debates, it is useful here in thinking about the fragmentation of memories as constructive, rather than debilitating. Rothberg argues that different memories do not need to contest each other. He writes:

Against the framework that understands collective memory as competitive memory – as a zero-sum struggle of scarce resources – I suggest that we consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative. (2009: 3)

Following Rothberg's insightful suggestion, I argue that these different memory layers, or different Palestinian chronotopes, should not be seen as mutually exclusive, but mutually enabling. In relation to the second-generation Palestinians growing up in Poland and the UK, it is possible to see that this generation's efforts to create affective connections with the ancestral homeland, while different from and even, sometimes, diametrically opposed to those of their parents, were nevertheless enabled by their parents' memories and narratives. One mode of remembering enables other modes of remembering and creates a sense of attentiveness towards the present that activates different understandings of the ways in which it is informed by the past. It is in this sense, I argue, that this plurality of diasporic memories can act as a constructive force for dispossessed Palestinians.

This heterogeneity also allows the Palestinian nation to endure despite decades of loss and attempts at erasure, fortifying Palestinians' ability to draw on different experiences and constantly reformulating their memories and relationships. Memory of Palestine is, as several of my research participants put it, a 'living memory'. The ongoingness of the

dispossession allows the generations of Palestinians in diaspora, who often live in alienation from each other and in isolation from the Palestinian Territories, to experience their identities and shape their connections to Palestine distinctly from but *in relation* to each other. As Edward Said so eloquently expresses in *After the Last Sky*:

Our characteristic mode, then, is not a narrative, in which scenes take place *seriatum*, but rather broken narratives, fragmentary compositions, and self-consciously staged testimonials, in which the narrative voice keeps stumbling over itself, its obligations and its limitations. (1984: 39)

Perhaps the multiplicity and fragmentation of Palestinians' narratives, memories and connections are crucial for the resilience of a nation that has continued to exist in dispersion and without a stable territory for more than six decades.

The role of this thesis and the accompanying films has also been to contribute to the development of a social research methodology that is more attentive to accounting for people's experiences of loss and displacement, as well as the ways in which these acknowledged and unacknowledged traumas can be carried into diaspora and across generations. In this work I have sought to develop a more dynamic approach, able to engage with participants' journeys of exile in order to grasp a better understanding of the context of the Palestinian dispossession and the sense of loss involved in these experiences. In doing so, I wanted to go beyond the methodological nationalism that has framed some work within migration studies (c.f. Glick Schiller & Fouron, 2001), recognizing, even at the level of the research design, that the experiences of exile and migration transcend the boundaries of nation states and involve shifting relationships with locations and geographies. In the spirit of Clifford's conception of fieldwork as 'a travel practice', I engaged in multi-sited research in which the participants' routes of exile served as the itineraries for the audio-visual research locations. The oral history interviews served as departing points for physically mapping, tracing and re-walking some of these routes of exile in which I travelled with the video-camera from the UK and Poland, where the participants lived, to today's Israel and Palestine, from where they or their families originated. This fieldwork design allowed me not only to listen to and collect people's stories and memories of exile, but also to engage with the materiality of these experiences;

to explore some of the sites of these memories and to seek their material and symbolic referents. In this way I was able to trace their journeys across multiple geographies and temporalities and better understand the shifting relationships with place, home and homeland, as well as the role of memory, in the context of the separation of people from space.

The desire to place participants' diasporic journeys at the center of the research approach was accompanied by an attempt to create a more collaborative research design that could enable the development of researcher-participant relationships that transcended the one-off interview encounter. Many of the participants have since become long-term companions of the research process to whom I have returned at different stages of the research process. The decision to physically follow some of their routes of exile gave me the opportunity to meet with them again, to exchange experiences and thoughts and to return to them with the photographs, footage and material artefacts that I had collected on the journey.

It is exactly in this potential of 'communicating back' with the group one is studying that Jean Rouch (2003), a French anthropologist and filmmaker, saw the critical potential of the ethnographic film in advancing ethnography as a reflexive discipline. In his words, '[f]ilm is the only method I have to show another just how I see him ... In other words, for me, my prime audience is (after the pleasure of the "cine-trance" during the filming and editing) the other person, the one I am filming' (2003: 94-95). In his view, this promises a more equal relationship between the researcher and research participants, which he envisions as a researcher's descent from the the 'ivory tower' (2003:96). He presents the footage first of all to the researched, which he calls 'communicating back,' an 'audio-visual counter-gift' that provides a stimulus for mutual understanding and feedback (*ibid.*). This approach, in Rouch's view, offers the potential for undertaking a 'shared ethnography' - an ethnography that is more collaborative and is carried out with respect for other people and openness to their input in the process.

In the case of my films, the process of doing audio-visual ethnography, which involved this 'communicating back' with the research participants, enabled the mediation of the process of remembering and in this created important new opportunities for learning about diaspora memories. These mediations were multi-faceted and happened at each stage of

the audio-visual ethnography: when we were discussing itineraries; when I was in the 'field' and contacting research participants for details; and when I was bringing back the footage and the 'items' from the journeys. The audio-visual ethnography became an important tool in keeping the conversation going, encouraging the research participants to respond to the material artefacts I brought them and – based on the footage and the photographs I shared with them- to the changes that had taken place in environment and landscape. It thus opened the possibility of creating a more dialogical relationship with the research participants. It was not just me 'collecting' stories from them but also contributing something in return. What Rouch calls a 'visual- counter gift' became a crucial part of my research process leading to more exchanges and a more collaborative process of film production. Each of the subsequent elements of the circuit of exchange offered stimulus for further dialogue about participants' memories and stories. By striving to engage in more collaborative process of doing research this study contributes to development 'shared ethnography' of the dispossession – a more attentive research that strives to produce knowledge in the collaboration 'with' the researched participants rather than 'on' them and in the spirit of the mutual learning and exchange.

Finally, in addition to seeking new ways to learn about diaspora memory and to forge more collaborative processes of research, the audio-visual ethnography and the five films that accompany the thesis have also aimed to contribute to a scholarship that fosters dialogue and sheds light on experiences that have been overlooked or overwritten by mainstream histories of the region. In order to illuminate the human dimension of the scale of Palestinian displacement, the films have been created as 'travelling' elements of the thesis, which will disseminate this knowledge more broadly and beyond the realms of the academic debates. Here, I have been mindful of Puwar and Sharma's call for the development of a sociology that 'shares the methodological commitment to collaborative knowledge production for creative public intervention and engagement' (Puwar and Sharma, 2012:43). This is a sociology that is vested in seeking collaborative cross- and trans-disciplinary ways of doing research, and which is also attentive to ways in which research can create new interactions and exchanges with participants and with audiences. It is in this sense, that my multimedia thesis seeks to contribute to an imaginative sociology (Mills, 1959) by engaging academic and non-academic audiences with the complexity of the

Palestinian dispossession and, in so doing, to support the struggle against ongoing attempts at memocide.

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