ROUTLEDGE

LATE MODERN PALESTINE

The subject and representation of the second intifada

INTERVENTIONS

LAURA JUNKA-AIKIO

Late Modern Palestine

Late Modern Palestine looks at the ways in which the relationship between the subject and representation and the political problematic of postcolonial late modernity is articulated in the context of the Palestinians' struggle for liberation. Junko-Aikio provides a rich, theoretically and empirically, and in part also visually, grounded study of the complex ways in which ordinary Palestinians face, negotiate and resist multiple regimes of power and desire in the context of everyday life in the West Bank and Gaza.

The volume examines the early years of the second Palestinian uprising, an intifada whose political status remains highly disputed. The book examines the ways in which Palestinian politics during the second intifada has been entangled with the broader social and political changes that are associated with postcolonial late modernity. It is argued that the dislocation between modern colonial and late modern/postcolonial regimes of power and subjectivity greatly complicates the map of power and resistance in contemporary Palestine, and also renders articulation of national unity and hegemonic political strategy increasingly unlikely.

This work will be of great interest to students and scholars of Middle East Studies, Postcolonial Studies, International Relations, Political Sociology, Critical Security Studies and Political Theory.

Laura Junka-Aikio is a post-doctoral researcher at the Giellagas Institute, University of Oulu.

Interventions

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‘We teach life, sir’. Originally a title of a poem released in 2011 by the Canadian-Palestinian poet and activist Rafeef Ziadah, today this statement has become an eminent symbol of Palestinian everyday struggles and persistence against occupation. According to Ziadah, she wrote the poem during Israeli attacks in winter 2008–09 as the bombs were falling on Gaza, and in response to a question made to her by a random journalist – a question that so many Palestinians are used to hearing: ‘Wouldn’t everything be resolved if you Palestinians just stopped teaching your children so much hatred?’ The poem conveys her emotions and thoughts as she is struggling to reply politely. It begins by a sharp critique, ‘Today, my body was a TVed massacre that had to fit into sound bites and word limits’, and ends defiantly: “We teach life, sir. We teach life, sir. We Palestinians wake up every morning to teach the rest of the world life, sir.’[1]

The statement reminds how, in a place like Gaza, no parent can totally shield a child from the violent reality they live in. Even more importantly, it underlines how, decade after decade, the Palestinians have drawn on every imaginable resource to maintain their sense of human dignity, to preserve hopes of a better future, and to nourish their love of life, despite and against the degrading conditions of a military occupation. Although this aspect of the Palestinians’ struggle is rarely acknowledged in international news coverage of the conflict, it is a quality that constantly amazes those who actually visit Palestine – myself included. This book is dedicated to all the Palestinians who keep teaching life.

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me life every day, and every day I am grateful for the chance to share this life together with you.

Laura Junka-Aikio
September 2015
Rovaniemi, Finland

Note

1 The poem is available at the *Electronic Intifada* website, https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/watch-palestinian-poets-remi-kanazi-and-rafeef-ziadah-we-teach-life-sir [accessed 2nd July, 2015].

Introduction

Palestine and the politics of postcolonial late modernity

> Palestine is the last colony in the world, and the first state without land, a plaything of both the old and the new Empire.[1]

The above observation, made by a group of Brussels-based artists visiting the West Bank in 2002, invites attention to a question that seems increasingly vital: what do 'postcolonialism' and 'late modernity' mean in Palestine,[2] and for the Palestinians' struggle for liberation? One of the central traits that is generally associated with postcolonial late modernity is the gradual dissolution of the political master-narratives and economic, social and political structures, which used to support and guide the constitution of collective political identities and action in the context of modernity. The predominant structures and ideologies of the modern era, it is argued, supported and privileged collective political forms organised around hegemonic identities such as 'the nation', 'workers' and 'race', and a clear separation between the public and the private, or what is conceived as political and non-political. For the past decades, the dominance of these structures and categories has been increasingly challenged however, giving rise to new forms of subjectivity and action, which are hard to represent within the old categories of modern political thought. This has led to an increasing need and desire within cultural and political theory and among political activists to 'rethink the political', to create political thought, aesthetics and practices that wouldn't depend on such rigid separations, or on the existence of overarching collective unity. How, it is being asked increasingly, might political subjectivity and action be re-imagined, rearticulated and represented in a world of increasingly complex subjectivities and amidst social, cultural, ideological and economic transformations which run counter to the formation of collective unity and concerted political action?

This book draws attention on some of the ways in which the political problematic of postcolonial late modernity, and specifically questions concerning the subject and the politics of their representation, has been articulated in the Palestinian context. In particular, I focus upon Palestinian politics in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during the second Palestinian uprising, or the second intifada, whose political status remains highly disputed until today. The second intifada began in 2000, in the immediate aftermath of the break-up of the Oslo

Accords, and it is usually considered to have drawn to a close roughly five years later. Although the uprising seemed, at first, to fall well within the narrative framework of Palestinian national liberation, and to renew the legacies of Palestinian popular resistance against Israel's colonial occupation, in practice it followed a trajectory that appears highly tragic.

Firstly, since the beginning of the second intifada, Israel has unleashed unprecedented levels of violence against the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, using military tactics and weaponry that would probably have been unimaginable during earlier phases of the occupation. This open violence has been coupled by less visible, yet collectively even more devastating processes of land grab, blockade and siege, which were already being implemented during the Oslo Accords, but which drastically intensified starting with the beginning of the second intifada. Over the course of the second intifada, Israel has secured increasingly tight control of the West Bank and Gaza, for instance through settlement expansion, an elaborate system of checkpoints and other mechanisms of closure, the construction of the apartheid wall in the West Bank, and through the expansion of military no-go zones and Access Restricted Areas (ARAs). Today, the results of this policy of open-air incarceration, which has not been lifted nor eased since the gradual dissolution of the second intifada by the mid-2000s, are especially tangible in the Gaza Strip, where the ARAs alone have, since the formal withdrawal of Israeli settlements in 2005, rendered significant areas of vital agricultural land uncultivable, and crammed the over-sized population further into an increasingly narrow stretch of land which is penned by Israel on the one side and by the sea, on the other. Together with the blockade, which has devastated the Palestinian economy and severely restricts the movement of people and goods in and out of the Gaza Strip, as well as the damages that Gaza's vital infrastructure has endured during repeated military operations since the turn of the millennium, the future that Gazans are facing today seems increasingly dire. Indeed, the UN has estimated that the Gaza Strip will be officially uninhabitable by 2020, unless urgent action is taken to end the blockade.[3] Other commentators, however, argue that by many standards, Gaza is virtually uninhabitable already (Bartlett 2014).

Secondly, at the same time as this tragedy has unfolded, Palestinian politics has been defined by the apparent disintegration of the national struggle. Instead of collective unity, the second intifada has been marked by the fragmentation of the Palestinian political field, and by the intensification of internal violence and hostilities between different political groups, especially Hamas and Fatah. Moreover, in place of popular protests, Palestinian resistance during the second intifada was already concentrated early on in the hands of different militant groups and factions, which operated separately and without adherence to strong organisational discipline, or a clear sense of accountability to the population at large. The second intifada therefore never succeeded at establishing a cohesive polity, a clear sense of collective purpose, or a unified leadership able to execute a consistent vision of liberation (see Pearlman 2011: 150–86). According to one estimate, only up to 5 per cent of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) was ever actively involved in the second intifada

(Parsons 2005: 265, in Pearlman 2011: 163). Instead of bringing the Palestinians closer to national independence, this intifada has been wrought by widespread political confusion, disagreement and a deep sense of disempowerment and disillusionment among the Palestinians themselves.

Thirdly, these processes of militarisation, fragmentation and de-democratisation have contributed to the rise of increasingly polarising representations of Palestinian political subjectivity and agency, which tend to reduce the Palestinians into suicide bombers, militants fighting one another, or passive victims of Israeli violence. Instead of empowering Palestinian popular resistance or generating wide international sympathy for the Palestinians, such representations have been instrumental at conflating the Palestinians' struggles with the wider discourses of Islamic militancy and the so-called War on Terror, and at obscuring the nature of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as one involving a coloniser and a colonised population.

The second intifada's political status appears even more problematic when placed in comparison with the first intifada (1987–91), which is known for democratic and highly innovative campaigns of civil disobedience and relatively non-violent resistance, and which was backed by high levels of collective unity and political determination among the populations of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Although also the first intifada ended in failure – the political negotiations and the peace process that followed it did not put an end to Israeli occupation – it was highly successful at bringing worldwide support for the Palestinians' cause; even today, the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza remember it as a high point in their own politicisation (Collins 2004).

Rather than an apex of Palestinian political agency and resistance, the second intifada therefore tends to be seen as a crisis of the national struggle, and as a moment of error, which calls for a return to the old paradigms of organised popular resistance and national unity that were central to the first intifada. This nostalgia is highly understandable, given the aura of political empowerment that still surround the earlier uprising, but it is also problematic. Stuart Hall (1988) suggests that contemporary political crises should not be seen simply as systemic errors, for they tend to be reflective of, and responsive to wider processes of social and political transformation. Drawing on Gramsci, Hall argues that instead of *conjunctural* crises which take place within a certain predefined framework of politics, political crises that are characteristic of the present late modern era tend to be deep, *organic* crises which affect the conditions of possibility of political subjectivity and action. Understood in this latter sense, a crisis implicates a qualitative change in the terrain of political struggle. What such crises demand is therefore not the recuperation of pre-existing identities and forms of political action but rather a shift in theoretical perspective, and a readiness to produce and articulate new political philosophies, aesthetics and idioms that are better able to appreciate the new terrain of struggle, in its historical specificity and difference.

The present book takes the crisis of national liberation associated with the second intifada as a central starting point, but it does so in adherence to this deeper

interpretation of the concept. Here, an emphasis on the notion of crisis presumes, above all, attention to the wider context of social, political and discursive transformations within which this crisis has been constituted, and an urge to look behind the dominant political frameworks and discourses of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In addition to analyses of the failures and strategic calculations of Palestinian political leadership, elites and organisations, or of Israel's role in the dissolution of the national movement, the second intifada, I argue, invites questions that go deep into the affective, discursive and social aspects of the Palestinian body politic and which interrogate profound questions regarding the nature of the 'political' in contemporary Palestine. What, one might ask after Hall, does the crisis associated with the second intifada tell about the wider context and processes of social and political transformation that are taking place in Palestine currently? How have the conditions of possibility of political subjectivity transformed since the end of the first intifada, and by the beginning of the second one? To what extent are hegemonic discourses of Palestinian nationalism and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict able to appreciate these changes, or the present complexity of political terrains in the Occupied Palestinian Territories? What alternative ways exist for analysing and representing politics and the political subject in post-Oslo Palestine?

In addition to grounding analyses of the second intifada as an *organic* crisis, questions such as these place attention on the shifting space and distance between the Palestinian subject, and those political discourses, that are available for the subject's representation. This distance might be inevitable (see, for instance Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1985, 1988), but the discrepancy between the conditions of possibility of political subjectivity, and the political discourses that seek to account for it, might be greater and more significant in some historical and social conjunctures than in others. What I therefore seek to do is to reframe the political problematic of the second intifada not just as a crisis of the subject, but also as a crisis of representation which follows from a growing gap between Palestinian political subjectivity and the hegemonic discourses of the Palestinians' struggle and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The crisis of Palestinian political subjectivity, I suggest, brings forth questions regarding the politics of representation and articulation. Conversely, in order to understand why the second intifada has been characterised by increasingly polarised portrayals of Palestinian political subjectivity and agency, attention needs to be placed on subaltern aspects of Palestinian politics and resistance and on those processes and developments that are taking place beyond the current 'distribution of the sensible' (Rancière 2009: 7–42; 2010: 36–7) of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In this sense, questions of the subject and representation are thus intimately entangled.

'Representing' the second intifada: a note on practice

This approach to the second intifada is grounded in my own concrete attempts, admittedly as an outsider or a *bordering actor* (Otnes 2006; see also www.borderingactors.org), to 'represent' the uprising over its first few years. Unpacking those experiences here might therefore help to clarify the nature and stakes of

my argument. The following short auto-ethnography doubles as an opportunity to sketch out the positioning and location from which I write – like all texts, this study also was written by someone, and for particular reasons.

I was born in Helsinki, Finland, in the late 1970s. When the second intifada broke out in 2000, I was an aspiring photojournalist, and just about to move to Jerusalem to spend a student exchange year studying photography at Hebrew University's Bezalel Academy of Fine Arts. The decision to study in Jerusalem was inspired by a general interest in the Middle East and Islamic and Arabic cultures that I had developed some years earlier. As a photojournalist, I felt compelled to work towards the deconstruction of Western stereotypes of the Middle East, given the hardening rhetoric of the 'Clash of Civilizations' and the juxtaposition between the West and the Islamic world that had been growing throughout the 1990s. Since Bezalel was the only Middle Eastern institution of higher education where my university in Helsinki had established formal ties, it was clear that I would go there.

I arrived in Jerusalem in September 2000, only one month after the second intifada had started. I rented a flat in West Jerusalem, and during the week, attended classes at the Mount Scopus campus of Hebrew University. At the weekends, however, I used every opportunity to travel to the West Bank, especially Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron, in order to learn about the situation there, and to pursue my photographic projects. Soon, collaboration with political scientist Wendy Pearlman, who was compiling a book of interviews of the Palestinians under the second intifada (Pearlman 2003) and who needed a photographer for the project, provided a fruitful framework for these travels and aspirations.

Accordingly, my exchange year abroad resulted in intensive shuffling between Israeli and Palestinian spaces. This was a highly transformative experience, for what was probably most striking was the level of inequality between the two peoples, and the ways in which this inequality was inscribed in space. At my Israeli campus and around my flat in West Jerusalem, life continued relatively undisturbed, apart from the general anxiety that one would occasionally feel on the bus or in a restaurant due to the potential scare of suicide bombings. In contrast, in Palestinian cities and villages, severe blockade, curfews, military incursions and nightly shelling prevented anyone from forgetting the occupation and the conflict. Against this background, 'giving voice' to what I felt was the Palestinian side of the story became the focus of my work. In addition to the portraits for Wendy's book, I photographed street demonstrations and funerals, injured people, roadblocks, ruins of demolished and shelled homes and uprooted olive trees – all of them sites that were readily available for anyone wanting to document the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

These efforts to document the conflict were highly motivating at the start, but over time, I felt increasingly uncomfortable. Firstly, I started questioning whether the idiom of conflict photography that I was reproducing in my own work could do much to change pre-existing conceptions regarding the conflict. For one viewer, a photograph of a Palestinian mother crying at her son's funeral, shot dead by Israeli soldiers while throwing stones, stands as a proof of Israel's mindless

violence and disregard for Palestinian lives. But for another, the same image is likely to symbolise Palestinian terrorism and a culture of martyrdom, which turns innocent children into pawns of an armed conflict. The discursive frameworks within which the meanings of these images would be decoded and interpreted were certainly stronger than the images themselves.

Secondly, the idiom of conflict photography began to seem rather inadequate for the task of representing the reality of the occupation. Like most discourses of war and conflict, conventional conflict photography tends to fix attention on open violence, on suffering and victimhood, and on taken-for-granted sites and symbols of Palestinian politics and resistance, such as street demonstrations, flags, guns and high-end official meetings and negotiations. While important, open violence is just the tip of the iceberg, however, and symbols and official speeches and meetings tell very little about the daily reality of life in the West Bank and Gaza. Most importantly, significant aspects of the occupation take place on a much more mundane level, in the middle of everyday life, yet they are much harder to draw into the realm of media representation. How does one visually represent, for example, the difficulty of planning for day-to-day life and the future, due to the ever-shifting systems of curfew, siege and closure? An image of empty streets is not very telling, and a pile of earth mounted on a road tells very little about the ways in which these roadblocks actually affect Palestinian lives in the West Bank.

The same, of course, can be said about representations of Palestinian subjectivity and agency. Amidst the realities of the occupation, the ability and attempts of Palestinian society to circumvent and withstand the effects of the closures, to establish opportunities, and to affirm life and hope, appeared as highly significant and meaningful. Yet, this was not reflected in hegemonic representations of the intifada, which focused on the theatrical and the dramatic – most especially on the 'necropolitical' (see Mbembe 2003) and masculine aesthetics of the suicide bomber, or on feminised and infantilised portrayals of Palestinian victimhood. The general 'distribution of the sensible' of the second intifada thus seemed entirely oblivious to aspects of Palestinian resistance and political subjectivity that, in my understanding, were absolutely central, not only in terms of individual lives and resilience but also in terms of the dynamics of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict at large.

Instead of running after images of destruction, or of Palestinian street demonstrations and other official and recognised sites of Palestinian resistance, I began to photograph these everyday aspects of the struggle, particularly the different ways in which the Palestinians sought to make the best of their lives and leisure time under occupation. Certainly, the idea was not to *replace* existing images of the second intifada with more 'truthful' representations, for destruction, victimhood and militancy were certainly important aspects of the conflict and struggle that should not be omitted. Rather, the point was to visually *intervene* in the already existing, highly over-coded visual realm by drawing attention to the multiple ways in which the Palestinians were facing and resisting the occupation 'non-violently', on a day-to-day level and beyond the radar of dominant political discourses. This work would concentrate on Gaza, not least because out of all Palestinians spaces,

it is precisely the Gaza Strip that tends to be viewed as the most culturally 'backward', militant, and deprived of hope, even among the Palestinians themselves. Creating images of joy, hope and leisure in a place that is widely recognised as the opposite of all of those qualities, I hoped to destabilise hegemonic representations, and to create space for alternative, inherently more hopeful imaginaries and aesthetics of Palestinian politics during the second intifada.

To this end, I spent two summers (2003 and 2005) in Gaza, where the focus of the project soon shifted to the beach, for it was on the sandy shores of the Gaza Strip, set beside the glistening blue Mediterranean, that the contrasts between hope and despair, freedom and closure, dreams and the lack of prospects were articulated most startlingly.[4] During the hot summer months, the beach was turned into a zone of leisure, as people from all walks of the society would go there to spend time outdoors. Full of life, the beach appeared also full of meaning, both as a space of everyday resistance which stood against dehumanising conditions of violence and the occupation, and as an inherently deconstructive space. The visual landscape and the joyful aesthetics of the beach, I felt, had the capacity to question virtually all the different stereotypes that had become associated with the Palestinians in Gaza and the second intifada, ranging from victimity to Islamic militancy.

Alas, the beachgoers themselves did not necessarily share this sense of celebratory appreciation. Many expressed the view that holidaymaking was actually the antithesis of everyday resistance and indicative of the defeat of the national movement. I was told that during the first intifada, nobody went to the beach, because at that time, the society was highly united around a shared determination to resist the occupation. Personal enjoyment and leisure would have obstructed the practice of 'intifada activities' that were central to the grass-roots strategy of liberation, and corrupted the sense of a shared nationalist purpose and *sumud*, steadfastness, which united people and made everyone feel equal with one another.

Against this background, my fascination with the beach reveals a common tendency, among well-meaning researchers and research-activists, to 'romanticize resistance' (Abu-Lughod 1990) and to read resistance practically everywhere where people negotiate the different forces they are affected by. Having said that, it is also clear that since the beginning of the second intifada, the very idea of everyday resistance, and especially the practice of *sumud*, or 'steadfastness', which has been central for Palestinian struggles to persist as a people on an occupied land, has undergone significant changes. Rita Hammami notes that the Palestinian ethos of *sumud* and of 'staying put', which used to have rather ascetic connotations in the past, has now been replaced by a broader and more proactive interpretation. Today, she argues, the idea of *sumud* crystallises in the common, widespread saying *al hayyaat lazim yistamir*, 'life must go on', and particularly in an active insistence on maintaining personal *mobility* at the face of the immobilising systems of siege and closure (Hammami 2004; see also Hass 2001; Taraki 2006: xx). Especially in the West Bank, checkpoints are among the only remaining spaces where the Palestinians still meet face to face with the occupier. In this context, enduring uncertainty, queues and unnecessarily long

journeys along bumpy cart tracks, either to pass through the checkpoints or to avoid them, has become a central aspect of the 'collectively understood, but individually achieved, daily resistance of simply getting there' (Hammami 2004).

Hammami is right to point at the ways in which changes in the regimes of Israeli occupation have impacted upon Palestinian understandings of and opportunities for everyday resistance. Having said that, increasingly tight siege and closure cannot, in and by itself, account for all the changes that have taken place in the Palestinians' relation to the society, collective action, and everyday life since the first intifada. For instance, on the beach, the practice of leisure time, and the rise of an aesthetics of joy and pleasure that it entails, highlights not only a shift from strategic to tactical forms of everyday resistance in de Certeau's (1984) sense, but also towards increasingly individualistic attitudes to the self, life and society. As such, the micropolitics of the beach bring attention to a potentially much broader and more complex set of questions regarding social transformation and the conditions of possibility of political subjectivity and action. Why, indeed, has the beach been used in such different ways during the two intifadas? What do these differences tell us about the sociopolitical, economic, cultural and spatial conjunctures in which the two intifadas have taken place? And, given the differences in context, how should the political meaning inscribed in the beach be interpreted in the present, which is characterised by political fragmentation and disempowerment of the Palestinian national movement on the one hand, and by the militarisation of Palestinian resistance, on the other?

The politics of Gaza Beach is the particular topic of Chapter 3 of this book. In practice, however, the beach has been the point of departure for this study as a whole. In particular, the beach draws attention effectively to the fact that whereas during the first intifada, Palestinian practices of everyday life were articulated in ways that were easily identifiable as 'political' given their concerted, strategic and collective nature, in the context of the second intifada, the politics of everyday life take place increasingly through spaces, articulations and forms of action that are incommensurable with the available political frameworks and hegemonic discourses of interpretation and representation. My ultimate aim in this book is to explore the complex constellation of forces that have produced this change, and to critically examine the implications that the change has for the analysis of Palestinian politics and resistance at large.

National liberation and the 'Great Disillusion'

In the opening phrase of her edited volume, *Living Palestine: Family survival, resistance and mobility under occupation*, Linda Taraki states that 'No account of Palestine and the Palestinians can ignore the momentous impact, significance, and consequences of the two defining moments in modern Palestinian political history, the *Nakba*[5] (literally, a disaster) in 1948 and the military occupation of the rest of Palestine in 1967' (Taraki 2006: xi). What she goes on to suggest, however, is that Palestine scholarship's excessive focus on wars, dispossession and military occupation has resulted in a tendency towards reductionist social

and political analyses, which produce Palestinians 'as one-dimensional political subjects' and hence 'do not render Palestinian lives very approachable or accessible'. In place of such reductionism, Taraki advocates an approach that would take more seriously the internal dynamics and tensions of Palestinian society as well as the sensibilities and subjectivities of individuals, without forgetting the political reality of the occupation against which these dynamics and subjectivities unfold (Taraki 2006: xi–xii).

Bringing together these two entangled dimensions of Palestinian political subjectivity – processes that pertain to the daily life of the society 'away from the barricades', and those that pertain to the occupation – is certainly an endeavour that this book seeks to contribute to. Having said that, it is worth emphasising that supplementing earlier, reductive frameworks with an anthropological or sociological focus on the *internal* life of the Palestinian society and subjectivity does not imply that this 'inside' could be studied as a self-sufficient, bounded and clearly demarcated entity or location. Turning to the internal life of the society necessarily implies a move to interrogate the ways in which the social, political, cultural and economic processes that are shaping (political) subjectivities globally are entangled with, and articulate in the (local) Palestinian context.

This entails focusing the lens on the ways in which the political problematic of postcolonial late modernity might be implicated in contemporary Palestine. The constitution and nature of the 'crisis' of the second intifada, I argue, cannot be understood without paying attention to Palestine as a prematurely postcolonised space, or as a space which is defined by a strong tension between *modern colonial* and *postcolonial*, *late modern* regimes of power and subjectivity. Although the societies in Gaza and the West Bank face the brutality and violence of the occupation on a daily basis and the struggle for national liberation remains therefore high on the agenda, they are also subject to the processes of hybridisation, individualisation, pluralisation and de-territorialisation, which dominate contemporary postcolonial societies and are characteristic of late modernity. This contradictory, ambiguous location greatly complicates the map of power and resistances in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and it is making also the re-emergence and articulation of national unity and hegemonic political strategy increasingly unlikely.

Before I can elaborate on this argument, some clarification of the conceptual framework might be in order. Modern coloniality and postcolonial late modernity are conceived here as broad paradigms of power whose modes of operation, and hence the political subjectivities that they nurture, differ in some important ways. These paradigms do bear some temporal reference: as a paradigm of power, modern colonialism was certainly dominant during the heydays of European colonialism from the sixteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. This notwithstanding, the difference between colonialism and postcolonial late modernity cannot be understood in simple temporal terms, for these paradigms of power tend to overlap. Far from being 'over', the heritage of European colonialism, its mental and discursive landscapes, its economic and social structures, and the international (dis)order that it established, are constitutive of contemporary societies that are

considered as 'postcolonial'. In this sense, postcoloniality doesn't signify here something that would come strictly after colonialism, just like discussions of 'late modernity' do not generally expect a clear break from early modernity but rather its qualitative transmutation and intensification into something new.

What thus might distinguish modern colonialism most clearly is its reliance on territorial domination through direct conquest and control of land, and through the implanting of settlements (Said 1994: 8). Also importantly, modern colonialism relied on a relatively clear, albeit inherently unstable, discursive system, which established normative divisions between civilisations and barbarians, between the European, white colonisers and the native, 'dark-skinned' colonised.[6] The coloniser was constructed as modern, human, civilised, rational and capable of political self-rule and sovereignty – and subsequently, the colonised Other as pre-modern, uncivilised, irrational and in need of guidance and paternal government. These racialising discourses had deep psychic and material effects, given that they served to naturalise colonial conquest and oppression, and to render it acceptable, in the minds of both the coloniser and the colonised (Fanon 2001; McClintock 1995; Memmi 2003; Nandy 1983; Said 1994, 2003).

But although modern colonialism enforced geographical, political, economic and cultural boundaries, it also took part in another, opposite tendency: modernity's globalising impulse to bring locations, peoples and ideas in touch with one another.[7] Consequently, those ideas, values, philosophies and political metanarratives that had underpinned European modernity and European conceptions of the civilised and enlightened self – most importantly the ideas of freedom, universal emancipation, teleological progress and self-determination – became important also for anti-colonialists, who used them to empower their own struggles for independence and freedom (see Anderson 2005; Khalili 2007; Malley 1996; Young 2001). Colonial modernity thus produced anti-colonial political subjectivities, which resisted territorial colonial rule directly, and through the appropriation and use of the same discursive strategies that colonialism had disseminated globally. Most importantly, nationalist aspirations, and the demand that the ideals of political self-determination and territorial sovereignty be applied to non-Western and colonised peoples as well, became a central aspect of the anti-colonial political movements of the twentieth century. Although anti-colonial nationalism might have had far less to do with the 'imagined spectacle of the beauties of the nation-state' than with basic demands for social justice and freedom (Davidson 1992: 164), discourses of nationalism and the nation-state allowed for the articulation of collective political identities that were not only highly translatable from one location to another, but which had appeal for people both in the West and in the colonised world. Albert Memmi (2003: 173) offers a sober description of this strategy: 'The colonized fights in the name of the very values of the colonizer, uses his techniques of thought and his methods of combat. It must be added that this is the only action that the colonizer understands.' Against territorially defined control and colonial racism, and confident in the inevitability of progress, anti-colonial movements harnessed the colonial subjects' energies, hopes and aspirations effectively for a shared project of

national liberation, and for the inclusion of the colonised people within the History of the Modern Man.

In contrast, *postcoloniality* is conceived here as a paradigm of power and subjectivity that has become prevalent in the aftermath of formal decolonisation, and which is intrinsically related to the crisis of modernity and to the political problematic of late or postmodernity (Venn, 2000). For this reason, I prefer using the longer term, 'postcolonial late modernity'. Like discussions of late modernity, also theories of postcoloniality draw attention to fundamental questions regarding the nature of the political and the changing conditions of possibility of political subjectivity and action.

Following David Scott (2004), one helpful way to think about the subjects of modern coloniality and postcolonial late modernity, and about the ways in which they differ, concerns their respective problem-spaces and narrative modes. Scott defines problem-spaces as ensembles of possible questions and answers, which define the horizon of identifiable stakes and futures at any given time. This space, he argues, is characterised not only 'by the particular problems that get posed as problems as such', but also by 'the particular questions that seem worth asking, and the kind of answers that seem worth having'. A problem-space is therefore the discursive landscape and horizon of expectations which defines the conditions of possibility for the articulation of political subjectivity, and which may alter historically, because problems are not timeless. 'In new historical conditions', Scott writes, 'old questions might lose their salience, their bite, and so lead the range of old answers that once attached to them to appear as lifeless, quaint, not so much wrong as irrelevant' (Scott 2004: 4).

Subsequently, Scott argues that in the context of the transition to a postcolonial problem-space, those questions, answers and narratives that once constituted anti-colonialism and anti-colonial political subjectivities have lost much of their credibility and potential. The narrative mode of anti-colonialism presented 'a classic instance of modern longing for a revolution' (Scott 2004: 6), which imagined political agency and resistance through narratives of redemption and salvation. In so doing, anti-colonialism relied on a strong belief in the necessity of historical change and progress, and in the potential of collective human agency to advance and achieve that change. In the context of postcoloniality, however, this narrative mode and the forms of collective political subjectivity it encouraged might no longer be salient, mainly due to changes and alterations in the global political landscape that have resulted in the general decline of the hopes and expectations that once animated anti-colonial movements. 'The old languages of moral-political vision and hope', Scott writes

> . . . are no longer in sync with the world they were meant to describe and normatively criticise. The result is that our time is suffering from what Raymond Williams aptly described as 'the loss of hope; the slowly settling loss of any acceptable future'. (Scott 2004: 2)

The problem-space that we are facing in the present is thus fundamentally different from the one encountered by the decolonising movements of the twentieth century.

One central aspect of this change concerns the ideas of national emancipation and liberation. Formal decolonisation and the establishment of postcolonial states has undoubtedly been one of the most remarkable achievements in the world history of popular struggles, and it would make little sense to dispute its importance for anyone interested in a more just world and society. This notwithstanding, there exists a general understanding and experience within the formerly colonised world that in practice, national liberation has not realised those great hopes and expectations that were once invested in the idea of a postcolonial nation-state. Instead of equality and elimination of poverty, societies in the formerly colonised world have chiefly seen the nations' wealth concentrated in the hands of small national elites, or funnelled abroad. Instead of steady investments in public welfare through housing, education and health, postcoloniality is distinguished by the gradual degradation of these national infrastructures, and, more recently, by spiralling privatisation and the extraction of shared natural resources, including water. Thirdly, in place of political empowerment, stability and self-government, postcoloniality has been marked by authoritarian regimes, by expanding internal security apparatuses, and by a succession of inter-state and civil wars, which have further crippled the society and produced unseen levels of human suffering. Except for the first one or two decades after decolonisation, when certain improvements might have been tangible, the popular experience of decolonisation has therefore largely been one of disappointment, or of a 'Great Disillusion' (Memmi 2006) with the promise of universal emancipation that was once attached to the ideas of national liberation (Davidson 1992; Malley 1996; Mamdani 1996).

The discrepancy between expectations that were invested in national liberation, and the actual outcomes of formal decolonisation can be considered from a number of viewpoints. Some, like Albert Memmi (2006), explain the failures of the postcolonial state in reference to the presumed incompetence, corruption and egotism of postcolonial political leaders and elites. Others place the onus upon structural and discursive constraints, which have tied postcolonial states tightly to the legacies of colonialism and undermined their sovereignty and independence. For instance Basil Davidson (1992) notes that instead of being built upon institutions and cultures that would have been indigenous to colonised societies themselves and which had served these societies' democratic needs and aspirations very well in the past, postcolonial states in Africa were established along territorial divisions, boundaries and systems of government that were inherited from colonial rule. These new African nation-states, Davidson argues, inherited from Europeans neither democracy, nor that spirit and culture of political enlightenment on which the colonisers prided themselves, but rather, dictatorship and tyrannical political systems which supposed that the actual work of government 'would be exercised by a bureaucracy trained and tested in authoritarian habits and practices' (Davidson 1992: 208).

A related perspective, which originates in theories of neocolonialism and economic dependency, focuses attention on the asymmetric international economic context into which newly established postcolonial states were born, suggesting that instead of existing as sovereign states among their Western equals, the postcolonial

state remained subordinate to Western needs and to the needs of globalised capitalism (Amin 1973, 1974, 1977; Nkrumah 1965; Wallerstein 1975). From this perspective, formal decolonisation did not deliver a break-up of the exploitative relationships between Western powers and the former colonies but rather, the beginning of a new era of *indirect* exploitation, which does not depend on direct territorial domination, as was the case with modern colonialism. These transformations have coincided with intensive *cultural* globalisation and with the hegemonisation of the ideological structures of neoliberalism. Today, capitalism operates increasingly above and below the territorial nation-state and, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, in the form of de-territorialised and biopolitical regimes which govern through the production of individualised and hybridised subjectivities and an increasingly complex map of social divisions and differences (Hardt and Negri 2000). In line with Hardt and Negri's account, Vivienne Jabri (2013) illuminates the ways in which the meaning of postcolonial politics and subjectivity is complicated by the fact that the global, late modern regimes that postcolonial subjects face are essentially biopolitical. In such a context, every 'claim to politics' by the postcolonial subject is always already subject to interventions that seek to control and govern, rather than simply oppose, these claims and assertions to political agency. Although these arguments regarding de-territorialisation and biopoliticisation of late modern government are not unqualified – since the publication of Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, for example, the world has witnessed an unseen build-up of US-led military operations and attempts towards territorial control, and an ever-growing scramble for the world's remaining natural resources – it is clear that the transition from modern colonialism to postcolonial late modernity has had a profound impact upon the conditions of possibility of political subjectivity and action globally, in the West, as well as in the societies that were once colonised by the West.

In sum, the political problem-space that postcolonial subjects occupy is very different from the one that was prevalent during the heydays of Third World nationalism, when trust in collective political agency and in the ability of people to change the course of history together was relatively high. Given the multiplication of social divisions and antagonisms and an increasingly complex map of power and resistances that characterise postcolonial late modernity, it is no surprise if discourses of nationalism and national identities might no longer exercise the same levels of social and political authority as in the past. So far, this loss of earlier, modern political metanarratives and horizons of expectation has been articulated in two major forms. On the one hand, there has been the (often violent) drive to enforce new certainties. The rise of religious fundamentalisms, conservative right-wing parties and governments, and ethnic separatism and violence, for instance, could be analysed against this background. On the other hand, there has been a general process of withdrawal from public to private, from the ideals of collective action and emancipation to the pursuit of happiness on an individual level. This process is evident in the neoliberalisation and consumerisation of the society and in the growing role that 'lifestyle' choices and personal development play for contemporary subjectivities.

The 'Arab Spring' and the multitude of struggles associated with it seemed to suggest a third alternative, a new articulation of a distinctly postcolonial politics which is adequate to contemporary desires, experiences and sensibilities, and thus able to harness collective energies despite the absence of an overarching, shared identity or political unity (Hardt and Negri 2011; Jabri 2013; Dabashi 2012). And yet, half a decade after the revolts in Tunis, growing disappointment and pessimism regarding the actual effectiveness of these articulations of political agency appears also warranted (see Bayat 2013). In Egypt, the broad-based uprising against the Mubarak regime has been toppled by a conservative backlash and military retake. In the Gulf region, the revolts have so far failed to yield significant changes in government. Most tragically, in Syria, the popular uprising has evolved into a seemingly endless civil war and a stage for an increasingly brutal international conflict involving foreign funding, military assistance and interventions, as well as motley volunteer fighters who might be more committed to the violent hard-line aesthetics of the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) than to the faith of the Syrian society as such. The crucial challenge, now, concerns our ability to constitute any collective resistance that would be genuinely effective against those forms of (global) power that are prevalent in the present, and to imagine alternative futures that would rest on ideals of equality, fairness and coexistence, or, as is being done increasingly in Latin America, on an ecologically and socially sustainable philosophy of *buen vivir*, rather than on hyper-extractivism and perpetual violence.

~~(Post)~~colonial Palestine?

In her 1992 article, 'The angel of progress: pitfalls of the term postcolonialism', Annie McClintock argues that in places such as Palestine, any talk about postcolonialism is prematurely celebratory. As she puts it, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories colonialism continues to condition life thoroughly and thus for the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, 'there may be nothing "post" about colonialism at all' (1992: 97).

McClintock is certainly right to highlight that Palestine continues to suffer under an actual colonial occupation, and making this point in the early 1990s, when many believed that the early steps towards bilateral negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leaders would lead towards a just solution to the question of Palestine, must have been particularly timely. Indeed, if postcolonialism is understood as a temporal category which indicates a clear break from colonialism, as a period that comes 'after colonialism' and which is free from colonial power relations, then talking about postcolonialism in Palestine would make no sense. However, if postcolonialism, or postcoloniality, is understood in the way that I have sketched out here, as a paradigm of power and subjectivity which refers to multiple social, political, economic and cultural processes that have become prevalent in the aftermath of formal colonisation and in parallel with the political problematic of late modernity, then the argument looks rather different. In this case, postcolonialism is no longer understood as a concept which indicates the presence or absence of colonial power relations, but rather, a concept

which distinguishes the present from (early) modern coloniality, and identifies and describes certain political logics and tendencies that are characteristic of the present era at large.

Accordingly, instead of asking with Stuart Hall '*when* was the post-colonial?' in Palestine (Hall 1996, emphasis added), the relationship between Palestine and postcolonialism might rather be explored through the questions of *how*, *where*, and *in what ways* is the postcolonial in Palestine? To what extent and how is the political problem space in Palestine transformed by the multiple changes that are associated with postcolonial late modernity? How might the 'postcolonial' be entangled with, and articulated in contemporary Palestinian struggles? In what ways is the crisis of the second intifada linked to the broader crisis of politics and the political that is associated with postcolonial late modernity? Rather than set the colonial/anti-colonial and postcolonial frames of reference against one another and argue for the correctness of one frame over the wrongness of the other, these questions highlight the need to interrogate the complex ways in which both colonial/anti-colonial and postcolonial political logics might intersect in the Palestinian context, its continued subjection to a colonial occupation notwithstanding.

In making this point, I am close to the approach taken by Ella Shohat who argues that different concepts and frames of analysis, including *postcolonialism*, *neocolonialism*, the *Third World* and *post-independence*, can at best illuminate 'only partial aspects of systemic modes of domination, of overlapping collective identities, and of contemporary global relations' (Shohat 1992: 111–12). To paraphrase Shohat, instead of trying to find a perfect concept for the analysis of contemporary political realities in the non-West, or the formerly colonised world, flexible relations among various different conceptual frameworks need to be established, in order to theorise and describe more adequately the complexities of the contemporary world and to address the politics of location. This, Shohat writes, 'is important not only for pointing out historical and geographical contradictions and differences, but also for reaffirming historical and geographic links, structural analogies, and openings for agency and resistance' (Shohat 1992: 112).

Shohat's point is pertinent to practically any location in time and space, for every historical conjuncture is subjected, to a higher or lesser extent, to various regimes and modalities of power and subjectivity. However, what I argue is that in Palestine, the question of multiple and flexible frameworks of analysis is particularly appropriate, given the highly dominant position that Israeli occupation and modern discourses of (anti-colonial) nationalism have in representations and analysis of Palestinian politics, and because during the past twenty-five years or so, the Palestinian societies in the West Bank and Gaza have been exposed to a variety of significant transformations that do not follow the dialectical logic of colonialism/anti-colonialism, on which these discourses are largely based. In other words, parallel to the ongoing condition of colonial occupation and subsequent persistence of Palestinian anti-colonial nationalism, the subject in Palestine is produced also, increasingly, in relation to questions, struggles and problem-spaces that are

central to neoliberal globalisation and postcolonial late modernity, and which tend to run counter to the formation and articulation of collective national unity. In this sense, what this book suggests is a reading of the subject in Palestine as a specifically *late modern subject of colonial occupation*, as a subject that is dislocated between mutually incommensurable paradigms of power and subjectivity, and thus inarticulatable and unrepresentable in terms of either of them.

Lyotard's philosophy of the *differend* might further clarify the nature of this argument (Lyotard 1982 and 2002). To put it simply, Lyotard uses this notion to describe injustice that is suffered by those who experience a wrong, but who, in the absence of a shared idiom or rules of judgement that would be adequate to this wrong, cannot make a case. A *differend* occurs when two or more genres of discourse coincide but do not meet, since these genres speak radically different idioms. Consequently, Lyotard argues that instead of seeking to resolve and reconcile *differends* – which would always end up doing injustice to one of the parties – the task (of philosophy, of the arts, etc.) is to 'bear witness to the *differend*', to recognise and highlight its presence, and in so doing, to create space for new political idioms which might enable the enunciation of hitherto unrepresented worlds and subject positions (Lyotard 2002: 13).

Many scholars have used this idea of a *differend* to describe the politics of representation between a colonial power and an Indigenous population. Bill Readings (1991: 118) applies it on a conflict over land that erupted between a mining company and Australian aboriginals, as represented in a film by Werner Herzog, *Where the Green Ants Dream*. Readings argues that in the case of this conflict, it was the notion of property as such that was the locus of a *differend*: The aboriginals lost their case, because they were unable to make claims within a system of justice that was based on an idea of land ownership governed by a secular state: their case was unrepresentable to the court. Couze Venn (2000: 28), in turn, applies the notion upon the ways in which the conflict between the coloniser and the colonised articulates itself in the competing, mutually incommensurable Palestinian and Zionist narratives of Palestine/Israel.

Although these approaches are interesting, reducing the problematic of the *differend* to a binary relationship between the discourses of a modern state and an Indigenous society, the coloniser and the colonised, or the obvious conflict between the warring narratives of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, however, is not what I seek to do here. In fact, it is questionable whether the conflict between two competing nationalist narratives can be considered as a moment of *differend* at all, in so far as they do participate in the same narrative framework of national emancipation and liberation (Bennington 1988: 161). A more illuminating approach to the notion is established when, instead of applying the philosophy of the *differend* to a conflict between two directly opposing narratives, the *differend* is recognized in the problematic of incommensurability which arises when two or more opposing narratives, *and something else that is inarticulatable within the terms of each*, are investigated. This, I argue, provides a more fruitful, and also challenging starting point from which to think about the variety of crises and subalternities proposed by the second intifada.

In this book, the figure of a *differend* emerges through a number of case studies, which examine the relationship between Palestinian political subjectivity and the politics of its representation, each from a slightly different angle. Chapter 1 offers a more detailed introduction to the politics of the first and the second intifada, and explores critically some ways in which the crisis associated with the second one has been perceived in existing research literature. Differentiating between two main approaches – the 'liberal-nationalist' and the 'exceptionalist' – the chapter suggests that ultimately, both of these approaches fail to provide a sufficient methodologically and politically viable account of the Palestinian subject and of the politics of its representation. Subsequently, I argue for a need to examine the crisis in relation to a variety of different forces and power relations, many of which have no bearing to with the dialectics of the occupation, and introduce the notion of a *late modern subject of colonial occupation* as a tool for the analysis of political complexity in contemporary Palestine.

Chapter 2 elaborates on these concerns by looking at the ways in which Palestinian everyday resistance has been articulated in one of the less represented, subaltern spaces of Palestinian daily life in Gaza: the beach. Revealing vast differences in the ways in which the beach was articulated politically during the first intifada and the second one, this study argues that instead of radicalisation, Islamisation and militarisation of Palestinian resistance, the micropolitics of the beach reveals a hybridisation of political subjectivities and the rise of an aesthetics of joy and hope in the immanent present. In Chapter 3, attention is focused upon the ways in which the challenges associated with the postcolonial state, and the more general problematic of state power, intersect in the Palestinian context. Here, I argue that although Palestine is still subject to territorial colonial occupation and hence the national struggle remains central on the agenda, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and of the nascent structures of a Palestinian state have turned it into a prematurely postcolonised space in which the articulation of a collective unity and a hegemonic national movement against Israeli occupation has become increasingly unlikely.

Chapter 4 turns to neoliberalism and to the rise of corporate power in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. To do so, the chapter examines a number of struggles and discursive developments that have emerged around mobile telephony in the West Bank and Gaza, in parallel with the second intifada. Finally, Chapter 5 looks at the ways in which the political problematic of postcolonial late modernity is articulated – and responded to – in Palestinian filmmaker Elia Suleiman's *Palestine Trilogy*. This chapter argues that Suleiman's films detach the Palestinians' struggle from the national paradigm, and create a political aesthetics that does not reduce the Palestinians to passive victims, nor depends upon their ability to reconstruct national unity and a coherent struggle for liberation. The political importance of this cinematic postnationalism cannot, however, be understood unless it is tied to the specific historical, social and discursive conjuncture in which the Palestinians exist today. In the final chapter, the arguments presented in this book will be studied in relation to the emergence of the Arab Spring and its reverberations in the West Bank and Gaza.

Together, these studies build an image of a late modern subject of colonial occupation as a subject that is constituted at the crossroads of largely incommensurable regimes of power and representation. Consequently, each chapter addresses a range of practical as well as analytical questions that follow from this problematic, such as, how can resistance be articulated in the context of contemporary colonialism where brutal, territorial colonial occupation and the imperative to resist it intersect with powerful de-territorialising and hybridising processes? How can the complexity of power relations within which Palestinian political subjectivities are currently constituted be accounted for in research, methodologically and in terms of theory? And finally, what implications does all this have for the *politics* of representation of the Palestinians' struggle?

Reframing the subject in Palestine studies

In posing these questions, the present book sketches out a research agenda that is surprisingly novel within Palestine Studies. In comparison to the abundance of existing research on the second intifada and especially on the associated crisis of the Palestinian national movement, so far their scope has been relatively limited. Some scholars have suggested that the Palestinians' inability to organise as a consistent collective national movement, and the near-absence of mass-based popular protests during the second intifada should be understood as a result of the *politicide* of the Palestinian people, or of Israel's successful strategic attempts to weaken the Palestinian national movement and to truncate any prospects of Palestinian independence (Kimmerling 2003; Reinhart 2002). Others point out that in addition to being a product of Israeli policies and aggression, the crisis of Palestinian nationalism must be understood as a result of elite fragmentation and of the failure by Palestinian economic and political elites to put aside personal interest in order to constitute a unified national strategy (Blecher 2006; Jamal 2005; Shikaki 2002).

Wendy Pearlman's (2011) detailed analysis offers a broader insight, which focuses attention on the organisational structures of the Palestinian national movement. She argues that whereas in the context of the first intifada, the hegemony of broad-based popular struggle was supported by a cohesive organisational structure, that is by the existence of a thick network of popular and neighbourhood committees, a unified leadership and a strong sense of shared purpose; by the second intifada, these structures were no longer in place due to several processes which took place under the Oslo Accords and which have all but demolished Palestinian civil society. Also Penny Johnsson and Eileen Kuttab (2001) explain the absence of popular resistance by pointing at the increasing hierarchisation of Palestinian society under the Oslo Accords. They argue that this hierarchisation was encouraged not only by Israel's apartheid logic, which established new divisions within Palestinian society and heightened old ones, but also by the Palestinian Authority's 'authoritarian populism', which de-democratised Palestinian political culture and destroyed organisational infrastructures that had supported democratic grass-roots organisation in the OPT prior to the arrival of

the PA. The latter development, they argue, has led to the gradual exclusion of civil society, particularly women, from the Palestinian public sphere, and contributed to the emergence of increasingly masculinist, militarised and individualised modes of resistance in the context of the second intifada.

Each of these arguments is well grounded and important at shedding light on some of the tensions and causes that have led to the dissolution of a mass-based national movement and popular resistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: in this sense, I do not dispute them. Having said that, in most cases, the conception of power and politics on which these arguments are built tends to be rather conventional, and/or predisposed to rely upon the analytical framework of nationalism and the nation-state. For this reason, they tend to focus attention upon the actions of taken-for-granted political actors such as the Israeli military and government, Palestinian elites, Palestinian NGOs, Palestinian political parties and groups (including their military wings), and the Palestinian Authority. This bias has produced a substantial, well-formed and well-argued body of work on the organisational, institutional and factional aspects of the Palestinian political community, but it has left those aspects of Palestinian politics and subjectivity that might fall under the radar of these political discourses widely under-researched.

Although attempts to break beyond dialectical and national-statist discourses of political subjectivity and action are today common across political and cultural studies, as well as within the fields of international and world politics, it is therefore fair to say that apart from some recent exceptions (Allen 2013; Khalidi 2012; Maira 2013; Taraki 2008a, 2008b), relatively little effort has been put into thinking about such questions in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Several reasons might explain this. On the one hand, the lack of theoretically elaborate studies on Palestinian politics might be understood as a result of the contexts and funding opportunities that frame research on Palestine. Although universities provide a major outlet for academic research on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, much research is also produced in think tanks, NGOs and independent research centres, whose agenda and objectives tend to revolve around policy making, conflict resolution and state building instead of those concerns that underpin critical political and cultural theory. Hence, scholarship on Palestine often follows a 'problem-solving' ethos (Cox 1996: 49–59), while neglecting the importance of critical reflection on the very framework within which these 'problems' are identified and examined.

On the other hand, as Stein and Swedenburg (2005: 5–7) argue, Palestine Studies continue to be shaped by an 'unquestioned dominance of the national paradigm', which predefines its fields of visibility by installing 'the nation or the nation-state as the inherent logic guiding critical analysis'. Research on Palestine, they suggest, is often guided by a sense of emergency and political commitment caused by the exigencies of the occupation and by the dramatic history of Palestinian dispossession. These, often personal, political concerns and sensitivities, have deterred many scholars from venturing beyond the national paradigm, and prevented attempts to expand understandings of power and politics in Palestine. This is the case even today, when many scholars working on Palestine no longer base their

work on those epistemological and ontological claims that have been constitutive of the emergence of modern nationalist thought. Julie Peteet (2005: x) describes the researcher's predicament succinctly: 'Those writing on Palestine often face a unique dilemma – how to avoid nativism and nationalist historical discourse and their sometimes stultifying historical outcomes without however denying the nation project of those who are stateless?' A scholar on Palestine cannot escape questions that are political, ethical as well as moral in nature. 'In freeing ourselves from the nationalist paradigm which has structured scholarship on Palestine', Peteet argues, 'we face the task of developing alternative approaches that recognize the Palestinian need for security, equality and citizenship in a state.'

If scholarship on Palestine has, at large, failed to expand analyses of the second intifada beyond the 'national paradigm', one would assume that the question of Palestinian political subjectivity and the politics of its representation would have received broader theoretical and methodological attention within the field of postcolonial studies. After all, theorisations of power, political subjectivity and representation in colonial situations, as well as in the aftermath of colonial rule, constitute the very core of what is commonly understood by this field of study. Despite that, postcolonial studies and theory in general have had relatively little to say on Palestine. Instead of contemporary forms of colonial occupation, postcolonial scholarship has most often focused on the study of past colonialisms, or on questions posed by present postcolonial or neocolonial societies. Moreover, research that does look at Palestine drawing on postcolonial theory tends to focus on the politics of representation in a rather limited sense and in ways that are derivative of Edward Said's critique of Orientalism (Goldstein 2005; Hasan 2003; Said and Hitchens 2001). Instead of elaborating directly on the constitutive relationship between Palestinian political subjectivity and the discourses that are available for its articulation, these studies tend to focus upon the ways in which representations of the Palestinians contribute to the external, discursive construction of the Palestinians and to the visual realpolitik of the conflict.

One reason behind the relative distance between Palestine Studies and postcolonial theory beyond the work of Edward Said might lie in the latter's inherent vulnerability to criticism regarding its political promise and status.[8] Although the ethico-political concerns that frame postcolonial studies – namely, a preoccupation with the nature of colonial power relations and with questions of resistance – are grounded deep in the history of anti-colonial liberation struggles, this field has developed to its present form in close connection with ideas and concerns that are central also to post-structuralism (Young 2001; Ahluwalia 2010). In particular, what both share is a strong reliance on a *deconstructive research ethos* (Junka-Aikio 2014), which emphasises the constructed nature of all social reality, and which tends to limit ethical and political criticism to the deconstruction of established truths and identities. This ethos has contributed to the prominence of the critique of nationalism and the nation-state within the wider body of postcolonial theory, and it appears particularly clear in the works of seminal writers such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, who use deconstruction, hybridity and subversion as central categories of postcolonial politics (Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1985, 1988, 1996).

Although this trajectory has allowed postcolonial studies to develop into a particularly innovative and open field as far as theoretical and methodological explorations are concerned, the dominance of deconstructive methods, concepts and research ethos that postcolonial theory shares with post-structuralism can also be criticised on several grounds. As post-structural scholarship, postcolonial theory has commonly been singled out for an inability to provide any ground on which politics and resistance could be based, and for the failure to acknowledge the material and physical nature of colonial power and domination (Ahmed 1992; Dirlik 1994: Lazarus 1999; Parry 2004; Shohat 1992). Some critics reject 'post-structuralism' in postcolonial theory on this basis rather unconditionally (Ahmed 1992). Others, who might not be critical of the theoretical and methodological orientation as such, simply point out that the political value of hybridity, ambivalence and textual analysis needs to considered within the specific social and historical conjuncture within which the subject of the analysis evolves, and that theory needs to take into account the unevenness between the West and 'the rest' (Radhakrishnan 2003; Junka-Aikio 2014).

In their most simple form, both arguments are easily taken to imply a neat spatial division between spaces where deconstructive methods and concepts are relevant, and those where they are not. From such a perspective, criticism of nationalism would be appropriate in late modern and postcolonial contexts in which the nature and organisation of power relations has become more and more complex, resulting in the hybridisation of subjectivities and multiplication of social divisions and antagonisms. Conversely, criticism of nationalism is considered inappropriate in colonial contexts, where the existence of a colonial relation of oppression underpins a persistent need for collective struggle, and creates also the structural conditions for the articulation of a unified (anti-colonial) national identity.[9] Accordingly, occupied Palestine is often presented as an example of a place where the theoretical interventions associated with postcolonial and post-structural theory are particularly misplaced (McClintock 1992: 87; Lazarus 1999: 137). In other words, Palestine is constructed as a political space, which highlights the *limitations* of postcolonial and post-structural methods and analytical frameworks, rather than their potential.

What I argue, however, is that presumption, which dichotomises between colonial and postcolonial situations, and places Palestine unconditionally within the first one, is highly problematic. Although Palestine continues to be governed by Israeli occupation, a dialectical view of Palestinian political subjectivity, on which discourses of anti-colonial nationalism are largely based, fails to appreciate the complexity of power relations and forces in contemporary Palestine. Obviously, no colonial situation has ever followed as neat a division of power relations as the dialectical thought propagated by anti-colonial writers such as Aimé Césaire (2000), Frantz Fanon (2001), Albert Memmi (2003), or Jean-Paul Sartre (2001) would suggest. However, as the cases studied in this book demonstrate, in Palestine the gap between dialectical discourses of resistance, and the complex map of forces and power relations within and against which Palestinian political subjectivities are constituted, has become increasingly wide. Instead of

presenting a colonial space dominated by a simple division between Israel and the Palestinians, contemporary Palestinian societies are constituted at the intersections of a variety of different forces, many of which are rooted in processes and transformations that have more to do with neoliberal and cultural globalisation, with the great postcolonial 'disillusion' and the shifting landscape of hopes and expectations, or with the general problematic of state power, than with the Israeli occupation per se. Also these processes need to be examined and taken into account, in order to appreciate not only the challenges, but also the sense of hope and political potential that are present in Palestine.

This, then, is the ultimate aim that the present book seeks to advance: to help to ground 'what ought to be' on 'what is'. Talking about the crisis of the Left in Thatcher's Britain, Stuart Hall argued passionately for a need to engage in a frank, yet politically conscious analysis of those forces that were reshaping the social at the time, whether or not they fitted with the existing frameworks of Marxist analysis. This, he argued, was important not only for reasons of intellectual honesty, but also in order to construct and articulate a hegemonic Leftist strategy that would be able to appreciate the character of the time, and thus be genuinely effective. In Hall's words, 'we must first attend "violently" to things as they are, without illusions of false hopes, if we are to transcend the present' (Hall 1988: 14). Aware of the extreme odds and the long history of oppression against which the Palestinians are asserting their right for self-determination, my sincere hope is that this book will contribute, at least in some modest way, to such an effort.

Notes

1 Asselberghs et al. 2004: 133.
2 Although this book focuses mainly upon politics in the West Bank and Gaza, or the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), I acknowledge that the notion of Palestine should not be limited to these geographical entities only; 'Palestine' can also be used to refer to the historical Palestine within the 1948 borders (now Israel), or to the social and discursive realm consisting also of the Palestinian Diaspora and its struggles. The fact that my own field work has been limited to the OPT does not seek to deny this point.
3 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/22/gaza-uninhabitable-blockade-united-nations
4 The project resulted in two overlapping photographic works, 'Happy in Gaza' and 'Camping in Gaza'. I am grateful for numerous individuals in Gaza, most especially to Mr Abdellrahman Abdoullah and his extended family in Rafah, as well as to Khaled abu-Kwik and his family in Gaza City, for their invaluable and generous help throughout the project.
5 *Nakba* refers to the events of the 1948 when the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel resulted in the large-scale displacement and, arguably, ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians from the areas now constituting Israel. See Masalha (2012) and Sa'di and Abu-Lughod (2007).
6 More recently, the binary and dialectical structure of colonial discourses and subjectivities has come under critical interrogation. One of the achievements of the so-called postcolonial studies has been to question the extent to which this regime of colonial divisions was ever successful, and to bring attention to the complexity of power relations, social divisions and racial encounters that characterised colonial societies. See, for example Anderson (2005), Bhabha (1994), Said (1994), Young (2004).

7 Indeed, it may be argued that the common conception of modernity as an intrinsically European project which resulted in a one-way dissemination of *European* ideas and structures to the rest of the world through colonial and imperial conquest ignores the 'rhizomatic' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004) and pluralist nature of encounters and exchanges that have defined the modern era. Far from being passive receivers of what Lawrence Grossberg (2010) calls as 'euro-modernity', the societies of the non-West have actively influenced the shapes and directions that modernity, understood here as a plurality of processes, articulations and epistemes, has taken over time. In this sense, anti-colonial movements have not simply appropriated European modern discourses: they have actively contributed to them. See, for instance, Bhambra (2007).
8 This distance is also visible in the relationship between postcolonial theory and contemporary Indigenous Studies, for reasons that are largely similar to those listed here.
9 This dichotomy is surprisingly central to the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and most visible in the their tendency to differentiate between what they call the 'logic of equivalence' and the 'logic of difference', or between 'popular' and 'democratic' subject positions (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 127–45). I will return to this point in Chapter 5.

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1 Late modern subjects of colonial occupation

The second intifada began in September 2000, two months after the Camp David II summit, which ended in failure. The stated aim of the summit was to bring to a tentative conclusion seven years of political negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority under the aegis of the Oslo Interim Accords, and to reach an agreement on a number of central issues relating to the prospective two-state solution. These issues included the political status of Jerusalem, the fate of Palestinian refugees, and the borders of the possible Palestinian state.[1] However, the meeting was unsuccessful, and led Yasser Arafat to reject the conditions of agreement stipulated by Ehud Barak's government. Since the two parties did not reach an agreement, there exists no official documentation on the precise content of the Camp David II negotiations and hence the causes behind their failure are subject to an intense debate. Initially, Barak's offer to Yasser Arafat was framed primarily as 'generous' in the international media, and the blame for the diplomatic dead-end was placed strongly upon Yasser Arafat's shoulders. Later on, a great number of studies have exposed the actual contents of Barak's offer as entirely incongruous with the most basic Palestinian political demands. Most importantly, the offer would have left almost intact the system of checkpoints and cantons that had been introduced to the Palestinian landscape during the Oslo agreements, offering the Palestinians the prospect of a state that consisted of a fragmented and divided patchwork of isolated territories and enclaves (Cook 2008; Finkelstein 2007; Reinhart 2002).

When Ariel Sharon paid a provocative visit to Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque in September 2011, the sense of political confusion and tension that followed from the multiple failures of the Oslo negotiations turned into open confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians. The visit was deliberately offensive in both national and religious terms, and resulted in violent clashes between Israeli police and the Palestinians at the site of the mosque. Following the visit, tens of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel proper took to the streets to express their anger and frustration. These demonstrations are generally seen as the beginning of the second intifada, also known as the al-Aqsa intifada.

At first, by describing the unrest in 2000 in terms of a new intifada, the international media as well as the Palestinians themselves seemed to locate these events in a direct succession with the wider narrative of Palestinian national liberation. Demonstrations in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza indicated that

the Palestinians had lost faith in the peace process, and that they were still willing to fight for a more just solution to the problem of Israeli occupation. However, already during the first weeks and months of the new uprising, views on its political character became ambiguous and divided. Importantly, there was disagreement and debate on whether the uprising should be understood as a genuine intifada at all, that is, as a positive mass-based popular struggle for national self-determination (Allen 2003; Carey 2002; Hammami and Tamari 2001; Johnsson and Kuttab 2001; MERIP 2000). Instead of persuasively representing a people's struggle against a colonial occupation, it appeared as if the uprising itself, and the years that have followed, were reflective of a political dead-end and of a deep crisis of the Palestinian national struggle for liberation. This chapter elaborates on some of the questions and problems that the discrepancy between the expectations carried by the idea of an intifada, and the reality on the ground, invites in regard to the analysis of the Palestinian political subject and the politics of its representation.

The first intifada

Literally, the Arabic word *intifada* means 'shaking off', but in political contexts it tends to refer to comprehensive and formative grass-roots movements against ruling groups. When people talk about an intifada, they generally are designating a democratic people's struggle, which proceeds on every possible front in the thick texture of everyday life. The word became known internationally during the first Palestinian uprising against Israel, which lasted from December 1987 until the early 1990s.[2] That intifada was highly successful in mobilising various layers of the Palestinian population in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and at turning the world's attention and sympathy to the Palestinians' cause for national liberation.

Until the first intifada, the onus of the struggle for Palestine had rested largely outside the OPT, in the hands of Arab governments and guerrilla movements which operated in the Palestinian Diaspora. For the first two decades following the establishment of Israel in 1948, Palestinian political imagination drew almost exclusively on the promises of the pan-Arab movement, which emphasised state-led action as a means to liberate Palestine. When this ideological structure crumbled in the late 1960s, the leadership of the struggle was taken over by Palestinian guerrilla movements and militant organisations which were based in Jordan and Lebanon, and led by the Palestine Liberation Organisation – the PLO (Khalili 2007; Peteet 2005; Sayigh 2007). These movements were able to pose a powerful challenge to Israel and draw the world's attention to the Palestinians' cause in the 1970s, but by 1982 they were significantly weakened, and ultimately defeated, as a result of Israeli invasions into Lebanon, the Lebanese civil war, and the PLO's forced expulsion to Tunis. This caused a vacuum in Palestinian leadership and paved the way for a spatial shift whereby the fulcrum of the Palestinian national movement moved, for the first time in its history, from Arab governments and the Diaspora into the Occupied Palestinian Territories themselves.

The spatial shift was congruent with a qualitative shift in the practice of resistance, for it was in the context of the first intifada that ordinary, unarmed Palestinians became recognised as the main agents of Palestinian resistance. Naturally, pan-Arabism and the guerrilla movements had enjoyed wide and active support among the Palestinian populations at large, but in the end both were based on a hierarchical structure of command and rule, which confined resistance activities against Israel to a limited realm. Despite articulating a trans-state ideology, in practice pan-Arabism took on state-centred forms, which were predisposed for politics on high levels and which tended to imagine political agency as the privilege and responsibility of postcolonial Arab governments. Conversely, in the ideology of guerrilla movements, agency is placed largely on the shoulders of exemplary and dedicated men (and sometimes women), who supposedly liberate the nation at large through armed struggle and through personal effort and sacrifice. This did not erase the agency of the wider Palestinian population, including Palestinian women, during the revolutionary period of the 1970s. Indeed, given the high level of national unity and support for the militant strategy, it may well be argued that the struggle then did encompass all layers of the society (see, for instance Khalili 2007; Peteet 1991). This notwithstanding, even at the height of popular mobilisation, there was a clear hierarchy between different forms of political participation, between actual resistance – armed struggle – and everyday activities that would support the conduct of armed struggle.

In contrast with these movements, the first intifada began as a spontaneous and unmediated popular revolt that emerged from below and took place directly at the heart of the occupation, on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip and to a lesser extent, Israel proper. The first intifada began in Gaza in December 1987 when a number of street protests broke out in response to rumours over the intentional nature of a traffic accident in which an Israeli military jeep had crushed four Palestinians to death. As Mishal and Aharoni (1994: 1) point out, the occurrence of street protests as such was nothing new in Gaza. This time, however, the protests were different from anything that had taken place before them.

First, instead of dying off in a few days, these street protests kept intensifying and spreading to other parts of the OPT as well. Second, alongside the street protests and a more confined campaign of armed struggle, soon also a variety of other innovative resistance activities, such as widespread general strikes, economic boycotts, cultural and educational programmes and collective refusals to pay tax to Israel, were developed. The main aim of these activities was to make the occupation unsustainable and costly for Israel and to build Palestinian economic, social and political independence from the occupation authorities. At the same time, they supported the unity and continuity of the uprising and consolidated Palestinian resistance on a grass-roots level.

The extent and particular qualities of the different forms of popular resistance during the first intifada have been described in great detail in several existing studies (Hiltermann 1991; Hunter 1993; Nassar and Heacock 1990; King 2007; Lockman and Beinin 1990; Pearlman 2011). Particularly central was so-called

'quiet everyday resistance' (Hunter 1993: 120), which consisted of several tactics to survive curfews and other Israeli anti-insurgency measures *collectively.* For instance, when the Israeli military sought to control the insurgency by closing Palestinian schools until further notice, the Palestinians promoted the continuity of primary and secondary education by transferring school classes to private spaces and by running them on a voluntary basis. Glenn Robinson (1997: 100–105) argues that ultimately, this practice amounted to the creation of 'an informal education system', which substituted almost entirely for the losses incurred by Israeli closure policies. Yamila Hussein (2005) goes as far as to suggest that instead of putting down the uprising and depriving Palestinians of education, Israeli countermeasures ended up creating a space in which the Palestinians assumed responsibility for their own education and in which they were able, for the first time in their history, to decide 'what their children should learn, who would teach them, and how'.

Another aspect that merits attention was the invigoration of several agricultural food self-sufficiency and 'backyard farming' schemes under the guidance and coordination of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU)[3] and local relief committees, most importantly the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC).[4] These self-sufficiency schemes encompassed the distribution of seeds, seedlings, fertilisers and livestock for free or at minimal cost to local households, as well as the provision of assistance and advice on how to produce food locally on small farms, in backyards and even on balconies and rooftops. The immediate aim was to secure the steady supply of food despite Israeli closures, but they were also regarded as an important long-term strategy. In particular, promoting West Bank and Gaza food self-sufficiency was understood as instrumental in enforcing a greater degree of separation of the Palestinian economy from the abusive colonial regime, and in depriving the colonial regime of any chance to profit economically from the Palestinians (Robinson 1997: 74–6).

Through these and other means, the intifada articulated Palestinian demands for self-determination clearly and compellingly. In addition to promoting popular participation, hope and feelings of togetherness among the Palestinians themselves, the first intifada located the Palestinians' cause firmly and effectively within the wider framework of anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles, and generated wide international support. The highly effective yet democratic nature of Palestinian grass-roots struggles was particularly successful at gaining the Palestinians wide admiration among left-wing and human right activists across the world, and at turning the Palestinians' cause not only into an object of solidarity, but also into a central source of political inspiration. Palestine became a political space *par excellence*, which received a steady stream of international solidarity delegations and groups wishing to both support the cause and learn from the Palestinian's struggle (see Jean-Klein 2002).

The heroic images of children and teenagers who defied Israeli soldiers and tanks with stones and slingshots supported this aura of glory. 'The public face of this remarkable insurrection', recalls one commentator,

> . . . called to mind the biblical story of David and Goliath, but with a potent symbolic inversion: the Palestinian stone throwers were both obliterating and appropriating Israel's long-standing definition as a tiny, youthful nation surrounded by powerful enemies. (Collins, 2004: 2)

Such images challenged the legitimacy of the occupation, and exposed Israel as a military regime that was colonising a largely unarmed population.

Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation continued on several fronts from 1987 up until 1993, but much of the spontaneity, immediacy and vibrancy was arguably lost after the first year or two (Pearlman 2011: 114–23). The Palestinian society was worn down under Israeli countermeasures, internal divisions deepened, and third parties outside the OPT – above all the PLO – began to exercise increasing control over the direction of the uprising. The formal end to the intifada came in 1993, when Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles, also known as the Oslo Accord, and began a process of political negotiations for the tentative establishment of a Palestinian state.

Whether the intifada actually achieved anything is therefore a matter of dispute. In so far as one sees the Oslo peace process as a direct outcome of the uprising, and as the culmination of years of struggle, the answer must be negative. Instead of paving a way for Palestinian national independence, the Oslo process has led to increasing misery, impoverishment and de-development of the OPT and to their further geographic diminution and fragmentation (Beinin and Stein 2006; Cook 2008; Efrat 2006; Hass 1996; Roy 2001).

However, if one looks at the uprising itself rather than at the negotiations that followed, the image is very different. Despite the fact that the outcomes of the intifada were more than disappointing, the intifada was highly successful as a moment of collective political subjectification, and even today the Palestinians in the OPT remember it with excitement and pride, as a period which brought the fragmented Palestinian society together (Collins 2004). The first intifada was effective also in so far as it gave international exposure to Israel's violence against the Palestinians internationally, and substituted images of Palestinian militants, which had dominated the representation of the Palestinians' cause in the 1960s and 1970s, with a new iconography of a non-violent popular uprising. This shift was in accordance with the international political environment of the 1980s, in which the centrality of armed struggle as an acceptable means of resistance was quickly declining. Mounting international pressure caused by the intifada, and the challenge that Palestinian campaigns of civil disobedience and resistance presented to Israel's ability to govern the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, forced Israel to recognize the PLO and the Palestinian nation, and to formally acknowledge Palestinian demands for an independent Palestinian state.

The second intifada

Against this narrative of liberation, the second intifada occupies a position that is very different. Firstly, the second intifada erupted not only against the Israeli

occupation, but also in response to the immanent failures of ten years of negotiations in Oslo, and as a rebellion against the Palestinian Authority, which was held responsible for these failures. Instead of providing the foundation for a Palestinian state, Oslo led to a sharp deterioration of living conditions on the West Bank and in Gaza, and worked to undermine the very possibility of Palestinian independence. During these years, Israel imposed an increasingly strict system of closure on the West Bank and Gaza, and expanded the construction of illegal settlements and by-pass roads. In addition to strangling and immobilising Palestinian economic and social life, they turned the Occupied Palestinian Territories into a fragmented patchwork of isolated enclaves or 'bantustans', thus negating the very possibility and potential for a geographic entity called a Palestinian state (Farsakh 2005).

Although these transformations were the result of Israel's unilateral practices, they took place under the implicit consent of Yasser Arafat and his negotiating team. Despite the magnitude of political issues and decisions that were at stake, the Oslo negotiations were conducted in secrecy, between a small group of Palestinians, the state of Israel, and the US leadership. The views of ordinary Palestinians, the agents of the first intifada, were largely excluded. This alienated many Palestinians from their newly established political representation. The legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority was problematised further by the fact that the Oslo Accord had obligated the PA to police the Palestinian population largely in the name of Israel's, rather than the Palestinians', security. This highlighted the PA's complicity and subservience to Israel and contributed to a growing gap between the PA, Palestinian subjects, and the wider project of Palestinian national liberation. By September 2000, the fact that Yasser Arafat and his negotiating team had failed to secure any tangible basis for a future Palestinian state had become impossible to conceal or to overlook.

Secondly, the second intifada and the years that have followed have failed to gather the Palestinian masses under a hegemonic goal of a Palestinian state, or to engage the public at large in the way that the first intifada did (Pearlman 2011). Apart from the first weeks, which saw Palestinians demonstrate en masse, the uprising has been criticised for the absence of Palestinian crowds, and for a lack of an overarching strategy of liberation. Instead of representing a culture of resistance that allows everyone to join in, the second intifada soon became associated with increasingly militarised, individualised and masculinised resistance practices. Hammami and Tamari (2000) observed already in late 2000 that 'save for candlelight marches and funeral processions within the cities, the larger population has relinquished any active role in the uprising'. Lori Allen (2003) suggests that by the third anniversary of the second intifada even these forms of popular participation were waning and yielding space for widespread cynicism and political passivity among large parts of the Palestinian population.

Instead of galvanising the society at large, Palestinian resistance activities were thus concentrated increasingly in the hands of often mutually hostile and armed cells and groups, whose mode of operation draws Palestinian resistance toward armed attacks and suicide operations rather than mass-based grass-roots resistance. The timing of attacks conducted by these groups, as well as the

motivations underlying them, may often have had more to do with domestic rivalry and group-specific short-term gains than any overall strategy of national liberation (Pearlman 2011: 164–71). Even more problematic is the fact that these forms of resistance and the aesthetics of militarism they rely on tend to highlight the contributions of the individual and the martyr, and reduce the mass of Palestinians to spectators instead of installing them as the protagonists of the intifada (Hage 2003; Johnson and Kuttab 2001). As such, resistance during the second intifada largely failed to strengthen and support the popular base of the struggle, even though support for the militants and armed resistance has been relatively high (albeit not unproblematic; see Allen 2002) within Palestinian society throughout the past decade.

Thirdly, given the asymmetry of power between Israel and the Palestinians, and the fact that fear inside Israel has only served to sanction more and more violent and unilateral policies against the Palestinians, the militarisation of Palestinian resistance in the context of the second intifada has often been criticised as both suicidal and counterproductive. Indeed, Israel's response to Palestinian resistance during the second intifada has been excessively violent, and in several ways incomparable to those employed during the first intifada. Since the end of the Oslo Accords, Israel has mobilised nearly every aspect of its military arsenal against the Palestinians, using fighter planes, tanks, missiles and helicopters on Palestinian residential areas. Such attacks have resulted in very high casualty tolls; already the first two months of the second intifada saw as many fatalities among the Palestinians as did the seven years of the first intifada.[5] During the following five years, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza endured several overwhelmingly destructive and intensive military assaults, which would probably have been unimaginable during the first intifada. For instance, 'Operation Defensive Shield', an extensive, one-month-long military incursion into six West Bank cities in spring 2002, entailed strict prolonged curfews, heavy weaponry used on tightly packed residential areas and mass arrests; it left an estimated 497 Palestinians dead, 1,447 injured, 17,000 without a home or in need of shelter rehabilitation, hence becoming the largest military operation in the West Bank since the Six Day War in 1967.[6]

The Israeli use of excessive force has been coupled with a variety of other, less spectacular yet equally violent, countermeasures to put down Palestinian resistance. These countermeasures, most crucially siege and closure, have devastated Palestinian social, economic, political and cultural life, and in so doing suffocated Palestinian political energies. Already four months into the intifada, the Israeli journalist Amira Hass (2001) wrote that as a result of Israeli siege and countermeasures, what remained of the Intifada was its suppression. 'During the first months, there was still a sense that multitudes were taking part in an uprising', Hass writes. 'Thousands marched to the roadblocks, hundreds dared to clash with the soldiers. Meetings and rallies called for continuing the uprising and for developing it in forms of mass action.' All this changed when Israeli countermeasures began to take effect on the population, forcing them to focus on daily attempts to devise ways to break the strangling blockade. In this context, one could no longer

talk about an intifada, unless the meaning of resistance and intifada was reconsidered: 'The Intifada is therefore now, above all, a day-to-day struggle against suppression. Every car trip is a minor uprising, a personal uprising that adds up, along with others, to a collective uprising.'

As of 2015, none of this has really changed. For instance on the West Bank, the construction of the 'separation fence' (the Israeli term for what Palestinians call the 'apartheid wall') since 2002 has dramatically deepened the experience of incarceration, isolation, territorial fragmentation and economic impoverishment that have become distinctive of life in the OPT (Dolphin 2006; Makdisi 2008). The Gaza Strip, in turn, has suffered from an almost total closure of all border crossings, especially since Hamas's victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006, and its political and military takeover of the Gaza Strip a year later.

This brings us to the fourth problem or 'failure' that has been associated with the second intifada. Despite the magnitude of aggression and devastation, the situation in Palestine has not stirred waves of international solidarity with Palestinians that could be compared with those evoked by the first intifada. Particular events, such as the death of Muhammed al-Durra,[7] or the more spectacular instances of military assault, for instance the invasion in Jenin (2002) or the 'wars' in Gaza (2006, 2008–09, 2014), have provoked demonstrations and opposition against Israel globally. Moreover, direct action movements that have emerged during the second intifada, such as the International Solidarity Movement (the ISM), the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS), the series of anti-wall campaigns on the West Bank and international activists' attempts to break the Gaza blockade by sea have creatively reinforced new links between the Palestinians and people from other parts of the world (see Sandercock et al. 2004). Yet, even though these movements have been successful at gaining visibility to the Palestinians' cause and have even secured some political victories, such as the re-routing of the separation wall in the context of some particular West Bank villages, they have not been able to build a consistent challenge to Israeli power or bring Palestine to the centre of contemporary political struggles the world over. In the case of the ISM, even support from the Palestinian side has been less than firm, despite the fact that the movement is, in principle, Palestinian-led.[8] More recently, a number of other political upheavals in the Middle East, including the rise of the Arab Spring, the counter-revolution in Egypt, the civil war in Syria, and Israel's success in articulating Iran's nuclear programme as a central question in the Middle East has served to push Palestine even further down the international political agenda (Karmi 2013).

The fifth problem concerns the politics of representation of the second intifada. As has already been argued, the first intifada was dominated by heroic images of a popular struggle in which the Palestinians appeared united, politically determined and active in the pursuit of collective goals. In the context of the second intifada, however, conceptions of Palestinian political subjectivity and agency have become increasingly polarised around two, mutually opposing discourses. At the one end, there has been the rise of an increasingly violent iconography of

Palestinian political subjectivity which tends to reduce Palestinian resistance to Islamic radicalism or to 'terrorism', to acts of barbarism that are detached from their wider political and social context. Edward Said argues that the image of the Palestinian as a terrorist dominated understandings of Palestinians during the earlier phases of the struggle, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. To some extent, the first intifada broke beyond this discursive field by mobilising imaginaries that could no longer be reduced to narratives of Palestinian terrorism (Said 1980, 2004; Said and Hitchens 2001). However, by the second intifada, the image of the Palestinian terrorist has made its way back to public imaginaries and speech, for instead of stone-throwing teenagers and mass protests, masked gunmen, kidnappers and suicide bombers have occupied the central stage as symbols of the Palestinians' struggle. These images and imaginaries generate little support and understanding for the Palestinians' cause in the wider international context, and they have also served to conflate the Israeli–Palestinian conflict with the totalising discourses of Islamic militancy, and the war on terror (Gregory 2004).

At the other end, the second intifada has been marked by the portrayal of Palestinians as passive victims of Israeli violence: images of funerals, of crying women and children, and of families waiting for aid in refugee tents or on the rubble of their demolished homes are the first to spring to mind.[9] These representations might provide an important interpretive framework through which the mobilisation of support for the Palestinians can attract attention and acquire strategic coherence, but they can hardly challenge the wider matrix of (colonial) power relations within which the persistent subordination of the Palestinians is constituted. As Edward Said argued in *Orientalism*, it was through the construction of stereotyped imaginaries of the Middle Eastern people as aggressive and barbarian and, at the same time, as passive and childlike, that the Western colonisation of the Middle East was constituted and naturalised. By fixing the Orient under clearly definable categories, these collective imaginaries and stereotypes established a sense of control and knowledge over the unfamiliar and unknown, and legitimised colonial rule by constructing the Arab-Oriental as less than sovereign, as opposite to rational, peaceful and liberal Western subjects.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that Edward Said himself was one of the loudest critics of the second intifada, which for him represented a political disaster. Said argued, for instance, that the campaigns of suicide bombings and the prevailing state of violence and anarchy on the West Bank and Gaza have caused increasing misery in the Occupied Territories, and undermined the Palestinian cause in the eyes of the international community. 'Despite the remarkable fortitude of a militarily occupied, unarmed, poorly led and still dispossessed people that has defied the pitiless ravages of Israel's war machine', writes Said, the second intifada has 'little to show for itself politically' (Said 2004: 144). While portrayals of Palestinian victimhood do little to empower Palestinians as political subjects and as subjects in control of their own destiny, Palestinian resistance movements employing tactics of suicide operations and militancy participate actively in the very construction of the image of the Palestinian 'terrorist'. Said believed firmly that any prospect of Palestinian liberation depended on the Palestinians' ability

to gain the support of large Western audiences and to occupy the 'moral high ground' of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. This is also why, in Said's view, it was an imperative for Palestinians to resume national unity, to develop a concerted strategy of liberation, and to reinvent non-violent tactics of popular resistance which had proved so effective during the first uprising (Said 2000).

By the mid-2000s, Palestinian suicide bombings in Israel were declining, in tandem with the more general weakening of Palestinian armed resistance – in fact, the period around 2005 is usually considered to be the actual end of the second intifada. According to the Israeli Intelligence and Information Centre, the number of Israeli casualties and deaths resulting from Palestinian armed resistance was reduced to a record low by 2007 and the number has not risen since then.[10] The decline in armed resistance was not, however, coupled with a rise of broad-based and non-armed popular resistance. Instead, the same period was marked by the intensification of intra-Palestinian violence, as Palestinian society itself become increasingly fragmented around, and antagonised by, a variety of divisions. In 2006, which saw a Hamas victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections, armed clashes between Palestinian factions, most notably Fatah and Hamas, were becoming so common that there was increasing speculation as to whether or not Palestinian society was facing the threat of a civil war (Parry 2006). At the tentative end of the second intifada, it might thus have been internal fighting between Fatah and Hamas, rather than resistance against Israel that had become the most visible and known aspect of politics in Palestine.

The tide has not turned during the years that have followed. During the present decade, internal violence in Palestine has no longer dominated international headlines – but neither has the Palestinians' struggle as such. As the world's attention is fixed on the new upheavals that are changing the political map of the region, such as the war in Syria and the revolutions and subsequent violence in Egypt, Palestine risks becoming invisible even on a regional level. The range of possibilities and opportunities that are available to Palestinian parties and factions are transforming in ways that are hard to predict, and support for the struggle from neighbouring countries, themselves struggling under political unrest, seems less likely (IPS Roundtable 2013).

The vast differences between the two intifadas provoke important questions regarding the constitution of political subjectivity and the politics of its representation in contemporary Palestine. For those activists and academics (the author of this book included) who are concerned with the future that is awaiting the Palestinians, these questions are not limited to mere academic curiosity, but extend also to ethical and political concerns over how one might do justice to the Palestinians' struggle, and how to work and act in support of this struggle in a context where hope seems to be a decreasing resource. In the latter part of this chapter, I examine critically some of the ways in which these questions, and the problematic of the second intifada at large, have been deciphered in contemporary discourses circulated by researchers and political activists sympathetic to the Palestinians' cause. Differentiating between 'liberal-nationalist' and 'exceptionist' approaches, I argue that neither of these dominant approaches has been able to

provide a sufficient, both methodologically *and* politically viable account of the subject and the politics of its representation in the context of the second intifada. Subsequently, I argue that in order to better understand the nature of the crisis that the Palestinians' struggle for national liberation is facing currently, it is important to focus attention on the ways in which the relationship between the political subject and the politics of its representation might have changed in Palestine between the two intifadas, and to explore the problematic of the second intifada in relation to the much wider problematic of postcolonial late modernity.

Liberal-nationalist discourses and the return to national unity

Echoing Edward Said's pleas for the need to hold on to the 'moral high ground', the second intifada has been framed by consistent pleas, on behalf of academics and activists in Palestine and abroad, for the Palestinians to resume the popular character of the uprising, and to turn it into a consistent, organised movement with clear aims and a strategy. For instance, Mouin Rabbani, director of the American Palestinian Research Center in Ramallah, argued already at the beginning of the second intifada that what the Palestinian uprising needs is 'a strategy to transform what remains an uprising into a disciplined and sustained struggle for national liberation'. 'The al-Aqsa Intifada', he writes,

> . . . can only succeed through the purposeful mobilisation of the various sectors of Palestinian society, the promulgation of clear and achievable political objectives, and strict adherence to a sophisticated (and therefore sufficiently flexible) program to realise these objectives. (Rabbani 2001: 83)

Nancy Murray, the former director of the Middle East Justice Network, notes that the second intifada 'has not engaged all sectors of the society in the manner of the first intifada, and its goals have never been clearly articulated' (Murray 2001). Comparing the Palestinian struggle with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, she emphasises the importance to the Palestinian national movement of 'knowing where you want to go, and of clearly and insistently articulating not just a goal or goals of struggle but a vision of a new society that can engage the population and form the basis for an international solidarity work' (Murray 2001: 339). Similarly, Edward Said's numerous comments and essays on the second intifada, many of which are collected in his 2004 book, *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map*, argue for a need to generate a persistent and creative collective front of non-violent popular resistance. 'Only a mass-movement employing tactics and strategy that maximise the popular element', Said (2000) writes, 'has ever made any difference on the occupier and/or oppressor.'

Despite the fact that it is hard *not to* embrace these calls for unity and strategy whole-heartedly, it is important to note that what they implicitly share is a plea for a return to the forms of political agency that were central to the first intifada: mass demonstrations, well-organised and concerted modes of popular resistance,

and a rhetoric of secular nationalist values. As such, they tend to compare and analyse the second intifada against a pre-existing model of national liberation struggle, which in this case pertains to the first intifada. Measured against this yardstick, the second intifada falls short in almost every way. It appears as a failing uprising, devoid of any credible vision of a Palestinian state or of means to achieve it. Ultimately, then, the call is for the Palestinians to rationally step back, evaluate the problem, identify the goals, and formulate an effective strategy that corresponds with present realities.

Although compelling in many ways, such a stance provokes a series of specific and rather uncomfortable questions. What is it that is so specific to this second Palestinian uprising? Why have these calls for national unity and organised struggle never materialised? Why have the Palestinians failed to respond to these criticisms? Why have the Palestinians not been able to turn the second uprising from a chaotic, anarchic and disaster-prone struggle into a well-organised and consistent political movement when this is clearly in their personal and national interest? Can this failure really be explained simply in terms of the corruption and fragmentation of Palestinian political elites? Are Palestinian leaders today more corrupt than previous ones? Or is the current generation of young Palestinians simply less capable of pursuing national unity and discipline than their predecessors were? In sum, for what reason have the Palestinians abandoned secular nationalist discourse and discipline, and the tactics of the first intifada, when the first intifada is considered a success both in Palestine and internationally and the second a failure?

As these questions indicate, the problem here is that the burden of representation is placed implicitly on the Palestinians, and the success or failure of the second intifada traced back to inherent qualities of Palestinian political 'consciousness', which is to be blamed or praised for political developments in Palestine. In this sense, this strand of thought marries nationalist ideas with the liberal humanist tradition of political thought, which puts the idea of a rational individual at the heart of human agency. In short, liberal humanism considers human individuals as entities who pre-exist their society and who form their identities and judge their interests through rational reflection on the world surrounding them. Language, in turn, is considered a transparent medium, through which individuals can express their interests and calculate, strategise and devise the best means of achieving and securing these ends. Accordingly, ideas of morality, ethics and emancipation are considered as products of the resilience of human nature, of the progress and development of moral consciousness, and of the innate capacity of human subjects to pursue human freedom and ideals. In other words, the subject is conceived as an independent agent with a capacity to rationalise, strategise and choose the forms and language in which its resistance and demands are articulated. Here, individual subjects are the source and location of human agency.

Given the strong emphasis on individualism and on reason as the guiding principle of human activity, liberal humanism tends to sport strong universalist and supra-nationalist ambitions. This pits liberal humanism against the nation-state and against communitarian and republican nationalisms. Instead of emphasising

individual reason and agency, these traditions of thought focus attention on the role that the community has in defining the identity and interests of the individual, and stress the importance of civic virtue and common good as principles of societal organisation.[11] Despite the differences between liberal humanist and nationalist thought, in the context of the Palestinians' struggle, however, these strands of thought often exist side by side. For instance, all the commentators that I have cited above tend to subscribe to both liberal-humanist and nationalist rhetoric, and to bring them together in the pursuit of Palestinian liberation. The force and appeal of the rhetoric that they use, and the undying hope for a return to national unity that they portray, is embedded firmly in the liberal-humanist philosophy of a unified, rational subject. At the same time, the message they hope to convey is directed towards the continuation of national struggle and of forms of political organisation that take the possibility and desirability of national unity as their starting point. This is why I call this line of response as 'liberal-nationalist'. It is liberal, because the political task that the commentators ascribe to the subject in Palestine is to rationally step back, identify the problem and formulate the cure; and nationalist, because given the exigencies of the occupation, the interests of each individual and rational subject must lie in the construction of anticolonial national unity.[12] Based as it is on an assumption that all Palestinians share a common oppositional position vis-à-vis Israel, which is identified as the primary source of oppression, resuming national unity in order to overthrow the colonial regime is thought to be in the best interest of each Palestinian. This is not because national identity would reflect some primordial and essential quality of the Palestinian subject, but because it is an effective tool in the struggle against colonial occupation. As such, its nationalist pretension notwithstanding, liberal-nationalist responses to the second intifada are anchored firmly within the tradition of liberal humanism and based on the idea of a rational individual subject.

While it is certainly not my aim to argue *against* the desirability of national unity in Palestine, the critical questions that need to be asked in this context are whether the notion of the rational and individual subject on which this response is ultimately based on continues to be plausible today, and whether it continues to provide a firm ground on which activist and academic discourses on Palestinian liberation might be based in future. Over the past decades, the liberal-humanist notion of the subject has received persistent criticism from several theoretical traditions which point attention to the contingent nature of human subjectivity and to the role of power, history and culture in the very constitution of the idea of a sovereign individual on which liberal theory rests. This line of critique is particularly central in the work of Foucault, who argues that instead of taking the subject as a pre-existing entity with freedom and capacity for agency, subjects and human agency are effects of power relations, which take both physical and discursive forms. A political philosophy and practice, which fails to problematise the very notion of the subject or the individual, he argues, misses the most important aspect of the political. Being so heavily reliant on the notion of subject, liberal humanism leaves out of the analysis the level of life and politics on which

individual and collective subjects, desires and forms of action are created and made possible. Subsequently, Foucault focused attention upon the multiple and shifting mechanisms, discourses and practices through which the subject is constituted in modern societies (Foucault 1982). On this understanding, also resistance and political agency must be understood as indicative of power relations rather than in direct opposition to them: 'Resistance is a part of this strategic relationship of which power consists. Resistance really always relies upon the situation against which it struggles' (Foucault 1989: 387).

This perspective upon the subject raises a series of questions which humanist appeals for a 'rational' return to earlier forms of Palestinian resistance fail to problematise or address properly. Instead of asking where the uprising went wrong, and what the Palestinians should be doing under present realities, it highlights the need to understand the crisis of the second intifada in relation to the wider conjuncture of power relations and 'problem spaces' (Scott 2004) within which Palestinian political subjectivities and resistances are currently constituted. In other words, instead of expecting the Palestinians' struggle to conform to a certain pre-existing and preferred discourse of Palestinian liberation, analyses need to be grounded on the subject – rather than on certain conception of resistance – and aim towards the articulation of new, alternative political discourses that would be better able to appreciate the subject that emerges from such analysis. Why, might one ask, have Palestinian political subjectivities and action in the present context taken these specific forms, and not some others? What do the vast differences between the two intifadas tell us about the shifting conditions of possibility of Palestinian political subjectivity and resistance? And finally, how and through what strategies of representation might academic and activist discourses on Palestinian liberation support the struggle in this particular situation? In other words, how might a *politics* of representation of the Palestinians be reformulated in the present context?

These questions might seem both self-important and depoliticising for anyone concerned with the liberation rather than the theorisation of the Palestinian subject. Firstly, given the exigencies of the occupation and the fact that the political subject of the first intifada was so effective at attracting the world's attention to the Palestinians cause and at evoking international solidarity, one might well ask what, if anything, could be achieved by trading a preoccupation with the strategies and rhetoric of national unity and mass-based collective action that were tested during the first intifada for deconstructive strategies, and for the questions of subalternity? Why would one discredit and deconstruct appeals to humanist values and norms, since they continue to provide an internationally accepted and efficient interpretative framework against which the Palestinian struggle might be articulated and represented? Secondly, it is clear that the humanist call for national unity and strategy should not be refused simply because of its perceived lack of philosophical and theoretical sophistication and consistency. Ultimately, the calls for unity and hegemonic strategy are performative statements, or 'speech-acts' (Austin 1976; Butler 2008), whose aim is to produce effects on the ground, to support the construction and articulation

of collective unity and action, and hence, to change and transform the political field in Palestine to the desired direction. These calls do not merely reflect certain epistemologies and ontologies – they perform them, and in so doing, they also affirm the political subjectivity and agency of the authors and commentators themselves.

What I believe, however, is that given the *organic* nature of the political crisis in Palestine, it is precisely the last point that needs to be questioned. To what extent does this strategy of political rhetoric and these appeals to 'right' and 'proper' forms of resistance continue to be effective in the present context of political fragmentation in Palestine? Despite the volume of convincing arguments as to why Palestinians should, indeed, resume national unity and a non-violent strategy of national liberation, these transformations have not taken place on the ground. Instead, ever since the beginning of the second uprising, humanist appeals and the reality that is manifested on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territories have seemed to move further and further apart from one another. This is why questioning the extent to which campaigns for Palestinian liberation might rely, in the current context, on a normative call for certain (in this case, liberal-secular and non-violent) forms of resistance has become increasingly important. What if the Palestinians will not resume the kind of agency and collective that the humanist response to the crisis of the second intifada tends to privilege? What if the Occupied Palestinian Territories will not countenance in the foreseeable future this kind of organised, clearly articulated collective popular struggle? What if hegemonic expressions of Palestinian political agency continue instead to take on more and more anarchic and violent forms, or wind down altogether? What if the Palestinians fail to reclaim the 'moral high ground' described by Edward Said? On what might the advocacy of their rights be based in that eventuality? Must the 'rightness' of the Palestinians' cause forever rest on a presumption of their ability to conduct 'right' forms of resistance?

Instead of expecting Palestinian resistance to conform to forms of popular struggle that are defined by existing discourses on national liberation, the theoretical and political challenge set up by the crisis of the second intifada lies in the need to rethink the terms of the struggle more fundamentally. This would involve looking behind and beyond the hegemonic discourses of Palestinian politics, and trying to articulate new, alternative idioms for thinking and representing resistance and the political subject in Palestine – idioms that are more adequate to the complexity of power relations within which Palestinian resistances are constituted today.

Next, however, I will look briefly at another strand of thought, which has been characteristic of academic attempts to understand the dynamics of Palestinian political subjectivity and resistance in the context of the second intifada. This stance, which I call here the 'exceptionist response', incorporates some of Foucault's ideas and avoids many of the traps and problems that are posed by the humanist framework. However, this approach is also laden with problems and ends up offering a simplified and politically disempowering account of the subject in Palestine.

Palestine in a state of exception

Conversely, supporters and researchers who do not propose the 'right' forms of resistance for the Palestinians have often confined the language of advocacy of Palestinian rights to rather tragic descriptions of an impending crisis. On a general level, discourses of Palestinian victimhood occupy more and more central ground as strategic points of representation of the Palestinians' cause (Khalili 2007). Instead of organising and rallying behind Palestinian resistance, activists, solidarity campaigners and the bloated NGO sector have used time and resources for the dissemination of images of Palestinian suffering, with the aim of generating empathy and support for the Palestinians outside the OPT. This proliferation of discourses of Palestinian victimity is reflected also in academic analyses where portraying the Palestinians as 'living dead' (Mbembe 2003), or more commonly, as Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer*, bodies of bare life placed under a 'state of exception' (Agamben 1998, 2005) has become increasingly popular.

Already, in the early years of the second intifada, a number of authors began to draw links between Agamben's texts and the situation in Palestine (Gregory 2004; Shehadeh 2003), and over time references to *homo sacer* and the 'state of exception' have became more and more common. For instance, several essays in A*gainst the Wall: Israel's Barrier to Peace* (Sorkin, 2005b), a book whose stated aim was to raise awareness against the construction of Israel's apartheid wall in the West Bank, take Agamben's theory as a central point of reference (Azoulay and Ophir 2005; Hanafi 2005; Sorkin 2005a). A year later, the Department of Sociology in Trinity College Dublin organised a conference called 'Palestine and the state of exception' in an explicit bow towards Agamben's work. Many of the papers that were presented in this conference are now available in the book *Thinking Palestine* (Lentin 2008), which claims to offer 'a novel examination of how the Palestinian experience of being governed under what Giorgio Agamben names a "state of exception" may be theorised as paradigmatic for new forms of global governance'. As such, Agamben's work and especially the notions of *homo sacer* and a 'state of exception' have been suggested widely as a new framework for the study of power and the subject in Palestine.

Broadly speaking, Agamben's work concerns the nature of sovereign power, and particularly those forms of sovereignty that prevail in modern democratic societies. He argues that sovereign power has always been constituted along a differentiation between bare life, *zōē*, and politically qualified life, *bios*. The former expresses life in its most naked form, the simple fact of living, which is common to all living beings, while the latter indicates a form of living that belongs to proper subjects, to individuals and groups who are included in the realm of politics, law and 'good life' (Agamben 1998: 1). Ultimately, the exercise of sovereign power is constituted by this border of inclusion/exclusion which defines who are included in the realm of the political community and law, and who are seen as *homo sacer*, as bare life that is disposable and beyond the law (Agamben 1998: 8). The political and judicial framework which maintains this division in modern democratic societies is conceptualised by Agamben as 'the state of exception'.

In the Palestinian context, Agamben's conceptual framework is normally employed for the analysis of the economy of power and dehumanisation either between Israel and the Palestinians, or between the Palestinians and the international community. Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir write that the whole space of the Occupied Territories should be understood as a zone where a state of exception prevails and where the suspension of the law, rather than its application, is the norm. Here, Gaza and the West Bank are imagined as an enclosed space where 'the exceptional and temporary suspension of the law becomes the rule and a state of emergency becomes the normal state of affairs' (Azoulay and Ophir 2005: 18). Instead of active subjects of government evoked in the works of Foucault, the Palestinians are reduced to mere objects that are governed through naked power, domination and coercion rather than ideology or bio-political production.

Similarly, Derek Gregory (2004) argues that the extraordinary level of control and violence harnessed by the Israeli military have turned the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories into *homo sacer*, into ultimate objects of violence who no longer qualify, in the eyes of the Israelis or the rest of the world, for protection by any law, norm, or ethics. The technologies used to humiliate and oppress the Palestinians on a daily basis have turned the entire population 'not only into enemies but also into aliens . . . for whom the rights and protections of international law could be systematically withdrawn' (Gregory 2004: 121). Using ample references to journalistic and first-hand accounts of events in Palestine, Gregory demonstrates the harshness of the occupying army and suggests this as the reason why the Palestinian struggle for national liberation has, in the context of the second intifada, been reduced into a struggle over mere existence, over life at its barest. Sari Hanafi (2005) makes a similar point. He explains the upsurge of Palestinian suicide operations and the aesthetics of martyrdom by arguing that the state of exception and what he calls as a 'spacio-cide' in Palestine produce together a suicidal logic of resistance. Spatio-cide, he argues, erodes the subject by leaving the body without space. When this same body explodes him/herself against the enemy, its status as a subject in space is re-established (Hanafi 2005: 169).

The burgeoning adoption of Agamben's ideas might be interpreted as a sign of a need to find a new framework of analysis, beyond humanist discourses, for what is taking place in Palestine. His concepts and thought correspond well with the sense of urgency and extreme violence that is taking place in the West Bank and Gaza, and renders it translatable in contemporary theory beyond the specific context of Palestine. In so doing, his philosophy provides a poetic of the violence of contemporary sovereignty, of which Palestine is only a glaring and extreme example. References to Agamben bring attention to the liminal status that the Palestinians have in the international law, and groups the Palestinians together with other *homines sacri* of the contemporary international order, such as the prisoners of Guantánamo and migrants at the US-Mexican border. Israel has not allowed Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to become citizens of Israel: but it has not allowed them outside the sovereign Israeli state, either. The rule with the Palestinians is that rules do not apply; in this sense, they can be killed and disposed of extrajudicially, without breaking the law.

What is left rather unproblematised, however, is that instead of being specific to situations of military or colonial occupation, the state of exception is a political logic, which is profoundly linked to modern forms of government per se, and to European liberal democracies in particular. It is a political philosophy whose main target is the way in which the idea of a political community is manifested in the form of a territorial nation-state. An Agambean critique of Israeli occupation would therefore be logically joined by a wider critique of the relationship between violence and the nation-state, which challenges the idea that the Palestinian question could be resolved through a two-state solution or other frameworks which privilege nationalism and territorial hierarchy – for this is the very framework which gave rise to the problem, to its racism and its exclusivist logic in the first place.

What I thus argue is that logically, Agamben could also be used to ground a theoretically elaborate argument, for instance, in support of the one state or some other political, non-nationalist solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Yet, in most cases, Agamben is used simply to describe the destruction of a defeated people. This dimension is particularly prominent in Azoulay and Ophir's (2005) account which makes it seem almost as if Palestinian subjectivity was determined, and rendered submissive and controllable, by a single logic of an all-pervasive Zionist violence. For them, power in Palestine appears to work through negation, not production. Understood in this way, Agamben's conceptual framework tends to lead to a simplified and rather polarising image of politics and the subject in Palestine: his terminology and the emphasis on the problem of sovereignty are, in themselves, productive of a reading of Palestinian politics that focuses overwhelmingly on Israeli systems of occupation and control, and leaves out any other forces and power relations that might also be active in Palestine, that might run counter to the sovereign exercise of Israeli state policies, and which might, at times, cut across and even clash with the lines of antagonism between Israel and the Palestinians.

Eventually, these accounts thus tend to drop the possibility of Palestinian political subjectivity and action off the agenda altogether. This is not only theoretically and methodologically reductive, but also politically disempowering. For ultimately, where does this line of argument – that the Palestinians live under a 'state of exception' and their political status has been reduced to 'bare life' – take anyone politically? What are the political potentialities and openings that can be derived from such conclusions?[13] Instead of providing ideas that might be used to rethink the possibilities of resistance and political empowerment in contemporary Palestine, they end up producing and reproducing the Palestinians as passive subjects of Israeli occupation, in the image of a pre-existing theory.

Late modern subjects of colonial occupation

In this chapter, I have offered a reading of two dominant ways in which academics and 'research-activists' supportive of the Palestinians' struggle have attempted to respond to the challenges posed by the second intifada. Whereas one side shares

a preoccupation with the necessity of bringing the Palestinian national movement 'back on the track', the other side has embedded the absence of a consistent national movement in the draconian occupation, which exercises omnipotent sovereign power over the lives and bodies of the Palestinians. Although both perspectives offer important insights into the complex and difficult situation that the Palestinians and the Palestinian national movement are facing currently, they suffer from certain shortcomings that concern, above all, the relationships between the subject and the politics of its representation. By seeking to reground the Palestinians' struggle in the possibility and potential of a consistent secular national movement, the liberal-nationalist argument actually subjects Palestinian demands for justice to their ability to conduct the 'right forms' of resistance, and to regain the 'moral high ground' of the struggle. In so doing, it is highly predisposed towards an analysis of Palestinian politics that focuses upon ideas and representations of how the subject *ought to be*, rather than on a rigorous analyses of the subject that is emerging from what is, from the here-and-now of the second intifada. The exceptionist response, on the other hand, fails to imagine the potential for alternative futures altogether; so far, it has focused mainly upon pointing at Palestinian disempowerment and subjection to omnipotent Israeli regimes of violence and control.

What both of these perspectives therefore eventually lack is a deep curiosity for the possibility of emergent forces and subaltern subjectivities and articulations that might not correspond with the imaginaries of the modern political subject nor with the ideas of *homines sacri* or those unable to resist the occupation and articulate alternative forms of life, but which might nevertheless also be active in Palestine. Although their political value might, at first sight, appear marginal and unimportant, given the imperative of finding new efficient ways of resisting Israeli occupation at the present, what I argue is that they provide an important ground for rethinking the conditions of possibility of a Palestinian struggle against the occupation, and hence for the articulation of a new aesthetics of Palestinian resistance that would be relevant to, and thus efficient, in the present conjuncture.

Accordingly, what I argue, echoing Stuart Hall, is that analyses of Palestinian politics and political subjectivity that take the subject and their resistance as a starting point therefore need to begin with a 'rigorous attendance to things as they are, without illusions or false hopes' (Hall 1988: 14). In the case of Palestine, this implies a need to examine, not only the ways in which the Palestinians are subjected to the regimes of Israeli occupation (which cannot be understood as unified and emblematic of a single 'Israeli' will, either), but also how these forms of power intersect with a variety of other forces which have a stake in Palestine, forces which might not be directly linked with Israeli military rule or state policy, but which might, nevertheless, play an important part in the constitution of contemporary political subjectivities in Palestine. As explained in the introductory chapter, I am particularly interested in the ways in which the ultraterritorial and militarised regimes of Israeli occupation coexist and clash with the much wider social, cultural and political forces and processes that are associated with globalisation and postcolonial late modernity, and in the question of how this conjuncture

of largely incommensurable forces and paradigms affects the possibilities and potential of political subjectivity and resistance in the West Bank and Gaza. The introduction grounded the analysis of such questions in the wider framework of postcoloniality, which, paraphrasing Venn (2002), is intimately entangled with the crisis of modernity and with the political problematic of late or postmodernity. Here, I will take a few lines to elaborate on the latter – on the social and political transformations and 'problem-spaces' that are generally associated with the ideas of late modernity.

In sociology, late modernity is often discussed in parallel with other related notions, such as 'high modernity' (Giddens 1991), 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000), 'second' or 'reflexive modernity' (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994), 'late capitalism' (Jameson 1991) and 'flexible accumulation' (Harvey 1990). What they share is a general understanding of an uneven transition from a certain modern order to a new paradigm of power and subjectivity. Modernity, it is argued, was distinguished by a system of control and by a mode of capitalist production which was based on the establishment of fixed, solid categories and which aimed at promoting a sense of order and familiarity in social life. The rise of the nation-state, the emergence of collective groups such as 'the worker' or 'the nation' as central categories of societal and political organisation, and a strong belief in scientific and socio-political progress are all central to what is now seen as particularly modern life and society. However, owing to a number of technological, structural and discursive changes, including the rise of new information and communication technologies, changes within the mode and structure of capitalism, and the parallel intensification of sociopolitical processes associated with globalisation, this system of control has arguably been challenged by the rise of 'liquid' (as opposed to 'solid') systems of social and political differentiation and control, and by increasing individualisation (Bauman 2000). Instead of fixed identities and clear social and political divisions, late modernity is therefore associated with an increasingly complex mode of capitalist accumulation, with the multiplication of possible identities and subject positions, and with an increasing awareness of uncertainty and risk that has accompanied the modernist project (Beck 1994 and 1997; Laclau 1990 and 2004; Laclaud and Mouffe 2001; Mouffe 2005).

Together, these changes ground the argument that those categories, certainties and narratives that underpinned early modern political projects have lost much of their dominance. For instance, it is argued that the rise of transnational forces associated with globalisation is paralleled by the decreasing importance of the nation-state both as a political and economic category and as a point of collective identification. Similarly, the idea of a unified working class might no longer provide a meaningful sociopolitical referent, given the multiplication of subject positions under advanced capitalism. Finally, the family also has lost its historic role as basic pillar of societal order, given the rising rate of divorce in Western societies which has resulted from women's inclusion in the capitalist workforce and from the challenges that women's liberation movements have posed to patriarchal social orders. In other words, the modern model of politics, which is structured around collective identities, around the nation-state, and a clear separation

between public and private has, in the present context, lost much of its ability to explain, decipher and guide political struggles.

Accordingly, like postcoloniality, late modernity might be understood best as a political problematic which demands a creative rethinking of the political, and which draws attention to the possibility of politics that cannot be expressed through the political discourses that have dominated modernity and the categories of collective identity and action that these discourses privilege.

Despite being central to contemporary sociology and cultural and political theory, academic literatures on the political problematic of late modernity have focused overwhelmingly on the highly industrialised societies of the so-called 'West'. The idea of postcolonial late modernity challenges this trend, for what I want to emphasise is the fact that the problem-spaces of postcolonialism and late modernity are inherently entangled, and that the theorisation and understanding of late modernity cannot be limited to a certain geopolitical space conceived as the 'industrialised West', or to processes that have originated there. Although the ways in which modernity was articulated in and on the non-West and the colony differed greatly from its articulation in the industrial core, it had a profound (and often violent) impact on the ways in which these societies have changed since then. Similarly, processes associated with late modernity take place as much in the 'non-West', or what is now understood as the 'postcolony', as in the 'West' – what differs is the particular way in which these processes are articulated in specific context and conjunctures, and the fact that in the postcolony, late modernity is by necessity built upon the legacies of modern colonialism. This is why I tend to merge the two concepts: just as modernity was constituted globally through colonialism and resistance to it, postcolonialism is the articulation of late modernity on a global scale.

So far, neither concept has made a significant mark in analysis of Palestinian politics or the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. A rare exception is provided by Achille Mbembe, who coined the notion of 'late-modern colonial occupation' in a journal article published in *Public Culture* in 2003, in order to differentiate between early-modern and late-modern forms of colonial occupation, and to explain the rise of suicidal resistance and the aesthetics of martyrdom during the early years of the second intifada (Mbembe 2003). He suggests that late-modern colonial occupation differs from early-modern colonialism mainly in its sophisticated use of a variety of different forms of power and by the employment of increasingly pervasive systems of destruction, which draw on high-tech superiority to achieve full control over colonized subjects. Building on Foucault's work, Mbembe argues that whereas biopower operates through the management and promotion of life rather than through the threat of death from a sovereign, in the colony the central mode has been 'necropower', which derives from the government of death and from the subjection of spaces and populations to a permanent state of exception. Although necropower was essential also to early modern colonialism, the point at which they differ is in the pervasiveness and superior quality of the forms of necropower found in the context of contemporary late-modern colonial occupation. This is particularly visible in Palestine, which, writes Mbembe, presents 'the most accomplished

form of necropower' (Mbembe 2003: 27). There, late-modern colonial occupation is articulated as a 'concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical and necropolitical. The combination of the three allocates to the colonial power absolute domination over the inhabitants of the occupied territory', reducing their status to that of living dead (Mbembe 2003: 30) Under such conditions of living without a life, Mbembe concludes, control over one's own death, that is, the act of martyrdom or suicide bombing, is turned into a meaningful form of agency.

Mbembe's attempt to rethink the dynamics of power and resistance in Palestine is inspiring because instead of viewing Palestine as a static colonial space, he is interested in the ways in which colonial power in contemporary Palestine might differ qualitatively from other and earlier instances of colonialism. Israeli occupation and Palestinian resistance are seen here in relation to a variety of changes which he links with late modernity, and which, according to Mbembe, have dramatically altered the colonial relation between Israel and the Palestinians. Having said this, his account of Palestine suffers from a number of problems. First, although Mbembe chooses to use the notion of late-modern colonial occupation to describe power and politics in Palestine, he uses the term in a surprisingly narrow sense. I have already explained that in the context of contemporary theory, the notion of late modernity tends to refer to a political problematic which encompasses a wide range of issues and concerns regarding the possibility and potential of collective politics. Although Mbembe's account provides a welcome and rare attempt to explore the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as a specifically late-modern colonial situation, in practice it is focused almost exclusively on technological change and on the ways in which new information and communication technologies have boosted Israel's regimes of destruction and control. In this respect, he fails to develop a wider set of political concerns that the notion of late modernity could raise in the Palestinian context. How, for instance, might capitalist globalisation and the dwindling centrality of the nation-state as a category of social and political organisation articulate itself in the context of Israeli occupation of Palestine, as well as in Palestinian resistance?

Secondly, Mbembe's analysis of power and subjectivity in Palestine is reductive in ways that are very similar to the exceptionist strand of thought that I examined earlier. Most importantly, he focuses almost exclusively on the pervasive nature of Israeli occupation and on the web of power relations that run between Israel and the Palestinians. By building his argument on an analysis of Israeli military and state power, Mbembe fails to give attention to a variety of other agents, institutions and force relations that are also active in constituting the subject in Palestine. These actors and forces, many of which might be conceptualised in terms of biopower rather than necropower, cannot be deciphered at all as long as attention is focused somewhat exclusively on the antagonism between Israel and the Palestinians. My third point concerns the fact that by focusing analysis of the resisting subject on the figure of the suicide bomber, the emergence of which he seeks to understand and explain, Mbembe ends up reproducing this image as the most central aspect of Palestinian political activity. This leaves one uncertain about the critical force of his account, for he ends up preserving rather than

challenging dominant representations of Palestinian resistance. Mbembe does not expand critical analysis beyond the image of the Palestinian suicide bomber or beyond hegemonic discourses of the second intifada in any meaningful way.

To better understand the conditions of possibility of Palestinian political subjectivity and to resist the violence that is endured by the Palestinians also on the level of the politics of representation, one thus needs methodological and theoretical interventions that are more comprehensive. This would entail enquiries that are not confined merely to exploring the colonial relation with Israel (although doing so is certainly important!), but which try to understand the subject, and the diversity of possibilities and challenges which constitute the conditions of possibility of Palestinian resistance, as a product of multiple and often conflicting power relations that are pertinent to the historically specific conjuncture of multiple different regimes and paradigms of power that coexist and clash in the context of a late-modern colonial occupation. Such an approach would explore, for instance, the ways in which the globalisation of neoliberalism might have impacted upon the constitution of Palestinian political subjectivity over the last few decades, inquire how changes within the field of transnational political discourses might have affected the articulation of Palestinian resistance in the present, or how the construction of the Palestinian Authority and the nascent structures of a postcolonial nation-state has changed the matrix of power relations in the West Bank and Gaza.

Although not directly related to the occupation, this wider constellation of institutions, power regimes and cultural and discursive formations, too, has a stake and influence in the production of politics and subjectivity in Palestine. Combined with technologies of power that are traceable to Israeli military occupation, they constitute heterogeneous and often conflicting networks of subjection, which produce multiple subject-effects and which cannot be reduced to, or be conceived in terms of, one clearly defined source of exceptional violence. In other words, although Palestine is occupied by the Israeli military, which is able to control Palestinian lives to a great detail, it is not a space of a single sovereign: in addition to the prevalence of military and colonial occupation, the subjects in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are produced and shaped by relations of power that are defined transnationally, not in a narrow, immutable opposition with Israel. Instead of pure negativity, Palestine is grounded in the full *positivity* of our time. In order to take this complexity seriously, one therefore needs to shift analytical focus from power to the subject and examine the *late-modern subject of colonial occupation* and their resistances, rather than the different technologies of Israeli occupation. This implies placing attention upon the micropolitics of Palestinian everyday life where subjection to multiple regimes of power – and also resistance to them – are articulated most clearly.

Notes

1 For the precise content of the Oslo Interim Accords, also known as the Declaration of Principles, see http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/dop.html.
2 Most accounts consider the 1987 uprising as the first Palestinian popular uprising, which is here to be differentiated from the variety of guerrilla movements that had

operated in the Palestinian Diaspora before and after the 1987 intifada. This periodisation, however, refers to Palestinian resistance movements after the establishment of the Israeli state in the 1948, and hence excludes popular and peasant insurgencies that took place against British colonialism and nascent Zionism in the late 1930s. Swedenburg (2003) argues that these pre-1948 revolts might well be understood as the first instance of Palestinian popular protests.

3 UNLU was an underground umbrella or coalition organisation, which embraced a wide variety of political factions in the OPT, and through which these diverse and, at times antagonistic, movements were able to discuss the course of the uprising. One of its main modes of operation consisted of issuing underground leaflets advising people on how to participate in the intifada. These leaflets are collected in Mishal and Aroni (1994).

4 PARC was founded already in 1983 on an ideology of agricultural self-sufficiency and disengagement, but it gained real momentum only in the new context of the intifada.

5 Statistics on Palestinian casualties during the two intifadas are available on the website of the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, B'tselem: http://www.btselem.org/statistics.

6 http://www.un.org/press/en/2002/SG2077.doc.htm.

7 Muhammed al-Durra was a schoolboy from Gaza whose death early on in the second intifada was recorded on videotape and broadcast internationally, provoking widespread demonstrations on behalf of the Palestinians and against Israel.

8 According to Hisham JamJaoum, a veteran coordinator for the ISM, local hostility and suspicion against the movement, which involves foreigners living in Palestinian towns and homes and which advocates non-violent means of resistance, has at times been so high as to cause the ISM seriously to consider ending all operations in the West Bank and Gaza: interview with Hisham JamJoum, 24 August 2006, Jerusalem.

9 It is argued that after the first intifada the representation of the Palestinians has shifted from discourses of heroism to discourses of victimity. In part, this can be explained by the role played in the portrayal of the conflict by a multitude of NGOs that advocate the Palestinian cause through appeals to the international standards of human rights (Collins 2004: 40–50; Khalili 2007).

10 See data on suicide and other bombings attacks in Israel since the Declaration of Principles (1993) at the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/terrorism/palestinian/pages/suicide%20and%20other%20bombing%20attacks%20in%20israel%20since.aspx.

11 Although the ideals of collective self-rule and communal identification that are central to communitarian and republican thought do not necessary lead towards the valorisation of nationalism and the nation-state, these qualities have made them susceptible to nationalist and statist appropriations.

12 This (productive) tension between liberal humanist and nationalist thought is often pointed out as central for understanding the diverse and often contradicting thought of Edward Said. Said himself did not consider these contradictions a problem, and as Ilan Pappe argues, in his later life Said became 'more open than before about unsolved paradoxes in his life and particularly in his work. He mused more freely about his inability to solve many of the inconsistencies that were inevitable in someone cherishing universal cultural values, respected multifarious ways of expressing them and was committed to Palestinian nationalism while abhorring the very notion of nationalism' (Pappe 2004).

13 I thank Prof. Haim Bresheeth for pointing at the centrality of these questions.

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2 Hybrid resistance

The politics of Gaza Beach

Can the subject of the second intifada speak?[1] Instead of portrayals of popular resistance, the second intifada is known mostly for representations which tend to portray the Palestinians as Islamic militants or alternatively, as passive victims of Israeli violence. On the one hand, in the Palestinian territories, a shrinking space and capacity for organised, relatively non-violent forms of popular resistance left many with a feeling that military operations against Israeli were the only option available for the Palestinians. Within the political climate of the early 2000s, this allowed for an easy subordination of the Palestinians' struggle for national liberation to the totalising discourses of the war on terror, transforming masked gunmen and suicide bombers, rather than stone-throwing teenagers and popular demonstrations, into central symbols of Palestinian resistance. On the other hand, when images of Palestinian dead and casualties did appear in the international media, these images were often challenged by views that the subjects were not only victims of Israeli violence but also of Palestinian society, which is devoted to human sacrifice and the aesthetics of martyrdom. Narratives of Palestinian agency and experience, beyond these parameters, rarely travelled past the boundaries of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The overt emphasis on Palestinian violence is often attributed to the imbalanced and distorted media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. For years, Edward Said has insisted that the voices of the Palestinians are under-represented or decontextualised in debates that surround the conflict in the Western media, resulting in their overall dehumanisation (Said 1980, 1986 and 2004). His views find support in several media studies, which demonstrate the extent to which the Western media representation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has been biased towards Israeli, rather than Palestinian perspectives (Abunimah and Ibish 2001; Philo and Berry 2004). Emphasising the relative congruence between Israeli and American interests and the political and economic power that the people behind Israeli policies wield in the West and over the international media, many of these studies tend to lead to a conclusion that there is a systemic, if not conscious, privileging by the mainstream media of dominating Israeli views. Consequently, the task for critical media and civil society is to unravel this hegemony, and to bring to light the voices of the Palestinians, the primary victims of the conflict.

Such arguments are well taken and point at important aspects of the politics of representation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. However, the problem with these forms of criticism is their tendency to lead to the substitution of the image of the Palestinian as a militant and terrorist with an equally narrow stereotype of victimised Palestinians. Palestinians unable to impact on their own lives, and in need of help and assistance from the outside: images of funerals, of crying women and children, and of families waiting for aid in refugee tents or on the rubble of their demolished homes spring first to mind.[2] These representations of Palestinian victimity might provide an important interpretive framework through which the mobilisation of support for the Palestinians can acquire attention and strategic coherence. A broader perspective which places attention on the role that discourses play at constituting, rather than simply reflecting, the world that can be known, however, problematises the extent to which this strategy of oppositional politics and rhetoric of victimity can challenge the wider matrix of (colonial) power relations within which the persistent subordination of the Palestinians is constituted. As Said demonstrated in his seminal work *Orientalism*, the construction of stereotyped imaginaries of Middle Eastern people as both aggressive and barbarian and as passive and childlike has a long colonial history: these were the collective imaginaries through which the European colonisation of the Middle East was constituted and naturalised. On the one hand, such representations fixed the Orient under clearly definable categories and established a sense of control and knowledge over the unfamiliar and unknown. On the other hand, they also served to legitimise colonial rule by constructing the Arab-Oriental as less than sovereign, as opposite to rational, peaceful and liberal Western subjects.

Today, the formal system of colonialism is arguably over, but these discursive economies continue to shape the global (re)production and naturalisation of asymmetric power relations. For example, it is argued that traces of Orientalism are being reproduced in contemporary discourses that divide the world into liberal zones of peace and realist zones of conflict. These discourses naturalise the state of conflict and war outside the affluent North, and direct attention away from responsibility and mutually constitutive relations between these 'units' to the presumed qualities of the people in the zones of war and the zones of peace (Lynn-Doty 1996; Salter 2002). Likewise, locating contemporary, compassionate representations of famine in Africa within the wider legacy of the colonial past, David Campbell (2003) has suggested that rather than challenging prevailing relations of power, themselves responsible for the production of economic and political crises leading to famine, the portrayal of starving Africans as 'passive, pathetic, and demanding help from those with the capacity to intervene' reproduces the discursive economy of colonial power/knowledge, through which Africans are constructed as colonised subjects.[3]

Crucially, then, the strategic value of binary constructions is limited, and the portrayal of unqualified victimhood problematic as well as violent, in so far as images of victimity are equally involved with the production of narrow stereotypes of the Palestinians, while at the same time excluding them from notions of agency

and thus disempowering them politically. Accordingly, apart from the binary realpolitik between Israeli and Palestinian voices, the politics of representation of the conflict must be understood in this broader context of power/knowledge and colonial discourse. Most importantly, concerns evolve around the different mechanisms of representation through which the second intifada became produced as a period defined, above all, by Palestinian militancy, suicidal violence and hopelessness. What forms of Palestinian political subjectivity and agency might exist beyond the narrow parameters of militancy and victimity? And to what extent can these other, subaltern aspects of Palestinian subjectivity be represented within dominant discourses of the conflict and of the Palestinians' struggle? In other words, how might it be possible to create space for more complex understandings of Palestinian political subjectivity and agency?

In her controversial essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that the politics of representation is less about the utterances that are made, than it is about discourses against which utterances are (or are not) interpreted and given meaning. Based on Derridean linguistics, Spivak understands discourse as a pre-established, yet open and contestable field of meaning, which delineates the terms of intelligibility whereby any particular reality can be known and acted upon. She illustrates her argument by drawing from the case of a young Indian woman, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, whose suicide, despite her painstaking effort to articulate a different subject position, was nevertheless appropriated by gendered, dominant systems of representation. According to Spivak, Bhuvaneswari had, in secret, been involved in the armed struggle for Indian independence, and hanged herself after she had been entrusted with a political assassination she felt unable to confront. In order to rule out that her suicide be diagnosed as an outcome of an illicit pregnancy, as well as to rewrite the social text of *Sati*, which in the Indian society has provided a sanctioned interpretive framework for female suicide,[4] Bhuvaneswari waited for the onset of her menstruation before killing herself. Despite this, the explicit point she made to dislocate hegemonic interpretations was never preserved or registered: Bhuvaneswari became inscribed in the family history along dominating systems of signification, as a hapless old maid, and a victim of illegitimate love.

The story of Bhuvaneswari exemplifies powerfully how the articulation of subaltern subject positions is barred and eroded by 'epistemic violence', by the absence of interpretive fields and systems of representation available to them. In the context of the second intifada, the story of Bhuvanesvari reminds us of the need to consider the ways in which the discourses within which the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is articulated themselves might limit the voices, perspectives and experiences that can be articulated through them. Who can speak through these discourses? Discourses on war and conflict are central sites of contestation among oppositional groups, and therefore inherently polarising. In addition, it is now common to acknowledge that conventional perspectives on war and violent conflict tend to devalue the importance of everyday life and experiences of oppression amidst 'ordinariness', privileging instead sites of spectacular violence and politics of high profile (Nordström and Robben 1995). Accordingly, what is

argued here is that received discourses on conflict exclude a multitude of shifting ways in which the Palestinians experience, negotiate and contest the occupation in their day-to-day lives, and block Palestinian voices and subject positions that are more complex and ambivalent. Myriad forms of Palestinian subjectivity and agency simply do not travel in these terms.

On the other hand, Spivak's narrative deconstruction of the story of Bhuvaneswari points at the possibility of contesting the limitations of any given discourse. Her argument – that the subaltern cannot, indeed, speak – is based on a claim that representation is, by definition, involved with the production of subalternity, as the possibility of representing always depends on the absence of underlying complex heterogeneity. However, she introduces deconstruction as a means in which to reduce the space of subalternity. Deconstruction, she argues, can undermine the authority of hegemonic systems of signification, and bring to the fore a condition of aporia, an ambivalence in which pre-existing frameworks of meaning and interpretation begin to disappear, and from which alternative knowledge and subaltern articulations and subject positions might emerge.

The following study of the politics of Gaza beach suggests that in order to move beyond the boundaries of dominating discourses on conflict, and to create space for a more complex understanding of Palestinian political subjectivity and resistance, it is necessary to shift attention from taken-for-granted sites of the conflict to un(der)represented spaces of Palestinian everyday life. Being less coded by existing systems of representation, I argue that spaces of everyday life in general, and the beach in particular, invite the possibility of epistemological 'third spaces', where meaning is not governed by received interpretative frameworks, and where subaltern articulations of Palestinian subjectivity and agency begin to come to the fore. The notion of 'third space' was first suggested and developed by Homi Bhabha (1994: 28–56). Unlike Spivak, who has been accused of offering a totalising account of colonial power and existing regimes of representation (Parry 2004: 19–23), Bhabha argues that the authority of hegemonic signs is never so secure at all. The claim is based on his conception of the ontology underlying meaning and representation. Bhabha sees that signification is marked by a disruptive temporality, by a passage through a 'third space' of enunciation, where meaning is controlled neither by the messenger nor by the receiver (Bhabha 1994: 53). This space of hybridity presents a permanent threat to the fixity of meaning and binary structures of power and knowledge. Accordingly, Bhabha argues that it is through the exploitation of hybridity disclosed in the third space, that the subversion and renegotiation of hegemonic systems of power and signification is possible. In the third space, the authority of dominating cultural signs is provisionally displaced, giving rise to something new and unrepresentable, to other, subaltern voices, and to political subjects beyond anticipation.

Bhabha uses the notion of third space, and the elusive strategies of hybridity implicated in it, to theorise colonial power and resistance. As such, his theory of third space has received justified criticism, for instance, for overseeing the notion of conflict in colonial relations of power, and for ignoring their physical dimensions (Parry 2004: 55–74). Most especially, as this study will also demonstrate, his

dogmatic trust in the political status of hybridity, in disregard of the specific contexts within which different hybridities take place, is problematic (Radhakrishnan 1993). In differentiation from Bhabha, I suggest that the concept is useful if activated as an epistemological strategy and in reference to a physical space where enunciations of Palestinian political subjectivity take manifestly hybrid forms. Instead of being an end in itself, the condition of hybridity disclosed on the beach of Gaza is a starting point, which enables a movement beyond dominating representations of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and a study of subaltern aspects of Palestinian political subjectivity and resistance.

Gaza Beach

Associated with beaches are notions of freedom, escape and pleasure. Being topologically fluctuating, sandy and unstable, beaches provide open and public spaces, which resist appropriation by fixed architecture or any specific actor or group, and where distinctively spontaneous and heterogeneous forms of life take place. While beaches, then, may be surrounded by permanent construction articulated by dominant social, economic and political forces, beaches themselves tend to be predisposed to what Deleuze and Guattari (2004) call 'smooth spaces', spaces where hopes and desires flow in the absence of fixed articulation and overarching organising principles.

Stretching for 42 kilometres along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, the narrow, never more than 12 kilometre-wide Gaza Strip has plenty of beaches and this aspect of the landscape does not go unappreciated by the Palestinians in Gaza. In contrast with Gaza's otherwise extremely tightly built and densely populated landscape of crammed refugee camps and towns, the blue sea and the soft, sandy beach is, for the 1.4 million Palestinians that inhabit Gaza, practically the only open space where one can spend time outdoors, and escape the pressures of daily life.

Thus, despite the prolonged conflict, siege and Gaza's oppressive conditions, during the summer the beach in Gaza is turned into a heterogeneous and colourful

Figures 2.1–2.4 Gaza Beach, summer 2003 (photograph by the author)

zone of leisure, as families and groups of friends flock there in order to go swimming, to have a one-day picnic, or to spend a night or two in a tent on the beach.

I visited the beach for the first time in summer 2000, and returned there in summers 2003 and 2005, in order to prepare a photo-essay of the 'third space' of Gaza beach, and to do ethnographic fieldwork on Palestinian everyday resistance under the second intifada. At each visit, I was particularly fascinated by the way in which a wide spectrum of Palestinian society was present in the provisional, physical architecture of the beach. One prominent feature was the proliferation of tent-like cafeterias, which private entrepreneurs pitch in the sand every year. Despite high prices and Gaza's stagnant economy, these cafeterias were popular and relatively busy throughout the summer season, as numerous Palestinians went there to enjoy coffee or *nargila*[5] until late in the night. On the other hand, more expensive hotels and restaurants also competed for the attention of the wealthier beachgoers at the fringes of the beach. For example, Shalihat, an exclusive resort located right in front of Gaza City, and separated from other parts of the beach by concrete walls, offered a large bathing area with tents, a swimming pool and special services for those who wish to organise a wedding party or some other flamboyant celebration there.

The overwhelming majority of the Palestinians in Gaza, however, enjoyed the beach camping in a variety of private tents and makeshift shelters, which provided shade and relief from the heat of the Mediterranean sun. Bringing their own cooking facilities, food and refreshments with them, camping on the beach for a day or two was an affordable and certainly the most popular way of spending the summer in Gaza.

Despite the fact that the beach was predisposed as a heterogeneous and open space of escape, leisure and hope, in reality all life that took place there was conditioned by the Israeli occupation. Most importantly, since the end of the Oslo

Figure 2.5 Shalihat Beach Club, Gaza, summer 2003 (photograph by the author)

Accords and the beginning of the second intifada, many Palestinians in Gaza had been deprived of the beach altogether. Due to the pervasive system of settlements, roadblocks and closure, not all parts of the beach were open to the Palestinians, nor were all the Palestinians been able to travel to those parts of the beach where they could have accessed the seaside. Until the withdrawal of Israeli settlements in August 2005, only 30 kilometres of Gaza's more than 40-kilometre-long coastline were under Palestinian control. Most importantly, the Israeli settlements of Gush Qatif excluded the whole of southern Gaza and its two major Palestinian cities, Khan Yunis and Rafah, from the otherwise nearby beach. As southern Gaza was also sealed off from other parts of the strip by Israeli roadblocks, reaching the seaside was more or less impossible for the inhabitants of southern Gaza, and had been so already for years.

Moreover, even the wide and blue horizon of the Mediterranean, a significant break from Gaza's otherwise crowded conditions, did not really deliver the promise of space and freedom associated with beaches. While those who could afford it could escape everyday life in Gaza by taking a trip to the sea in *Dolphin 1*, Gaza's only cruiser, or in one of the smaller and simpler boats that offer tours to the sea, the trip was bound to be short. As the sea was also governed by the Israeli military, all that any boat could do was to tour a small circle right in front of Gaza City, over and over again.

Moreover, many Palestinians went to the beach camping in large and solid UN or Red Crescent refugee tents, which have been given to numerous Palestinian families who have lost their homes after Israeli military incursions, bombings and house demolitions. These tents draw clear lines of continuity between the Palestinian past and the current conditions in the Gaza Strip. For example, for the family of Qasir, whose home was demolished in spring 2003, it was already the second time that their condition as refugees was affirmed. In 1948, the Qasirs

Figure 2.6 Cruising the sea on *Dolphin 1*, Gaza, summer 2003 (photograph by the author)

were forced to flee their home in what is now recognised as Israel, and begin life as refugees in Gaza. In the year 2003, the family lost their home again, when the IDF demolished their house after a member of the extended family had killed four settlers and become a martyr. Moreover, their grandmother was killed, as she refused to leave her home upon its demolition. Despite this tragic history, on the beach their refugee tent, a symbol of Palestinian homelessness, despair and exile, was turned into an architecture of joy and leisure. Leaning back in the shadow of the Qasirs' large Red Crescent tent-turned-holiday-shelter, drinking tea and watching from the doorway the blue Mediterranean where children play and laugh, it felt possible for a few minutes to forget that Gaza is under military occupation and practically in a state of war.

Figure 2.7 The Qasirs' refugee tent, turned into a holiday shelter, Gaza, summer 2003 (photograph by the author)

Figure 2.8 The family of Abdoullah camping in a Red Crescent refugee tent, Gaza Beach, summer 2003 (photograph by the author)

The shifting aesthetics of Palestinian resistance

These impressions of the beach stand in sharp contrast to the ways in which Gaza and the Palestinians living there are normally conceived in the media, as well as within academic research. On the one hand, imaginaries of the Gaza Strip tend to be strongly associated with Islamic radicalisation and with the rise of increasingly violent as well as suicidal forms of Palestinian resistance. On the other hand, Gaza is also conceived as the most miserable of all Palestinian spaces, largely due to the very harsh regime of closure that Israel has consolidated over the Gaza Strip, and which has sharply deteriorated the quality of life in Gaza. The architecture for this system of closure was laid down already during the Oslo Accords (Roy 2001) but since then, the closure has intensified immensely, resulting in a serious deterioration in the most basic conditions of life in Gaza. The Palestinians in Gaza lack space, they are sealed off from the outside world, surrounded by electric fences and sniper towers, and assaulted by the Israeli military both on a daily basis as well as in the form of large-scale, prolonged military operations that seem to become more intensive, deadly and violent each time. Parallel to these spectacular forms of violence, the people in Gaza endure several more mundane, but potentially even more lethal aspects of the occupation, such as the current 'water crisis' and the lack of access to potable water, which has resulted largely from the blockade and other occupation measures.[6] It is no surprise, then, that the most familiar nickname for Gaza continues to be '*al cijon*' – a prison.

As such, the Gaza Strip stands as a sign of the ultimate expression of the violence of Israel's colonial occupation. Achille Mbembe (2003) has suggested that in comparison with early-modern forms of colonialism, the colonial rule with which the Palestinians are faced, and especially the physical geographical aspects of it, are nearly uncontestable and leave little space for resistance, due to the complex constellation of different forms of power and hi-tech superiority that stand on the Israeli side. Drawing from Eyal Weizman's studies of the architecture of Israeli occupation, Mbembe argues that while the objective of Israeli policies of settlement expansion, roadblocks and closure on the Occupied Territories has been to divide Palestinian land into a complex web of internal borders and isolated units, it is through these means and measures that Israel has been able to achieve absolute domination over space as well as over the lives of the people it colonises, 'turning the status of the Palestinians into that of "living dead", and their daily experience into an institutionalised, total state of siege' (Mbembe 2003: 39–40). Under these conditions, he argues, the lines between resistance and suicide are also blurred, as in the almost total absence of space for manoeuvre, the exercise of control over one's own death, that is, the act of martyrdom and suicide bombing, is turned into a meaningful form of agency.

Against this background and these descriptions, the cheerful atmosphere that prevailed on the Palestinian parts of the beach, in the heart of the Gaza Strip, during some of the most intensive years of the second intifada comes across as a break that is as surprising as it is hard to locate within dominant representations of the conflict. Produced as a space which is far removed from the conflict yet conditioned by it, on the beach, Palestinian subjectivity and agency seem to take forms

that are as far from militancy and suicide, as they are from passive victimity. In this sense, the beach is a highly aporetic space, a space where the conditions of an epistemological third space seem to materialise. On the beach, the possibility of polarised representations and settled knowledge is blocked, and attention to other, less coded aspects of Palestinian agency and subjectivity is forced out. How does the beach relate to the wider framework of the politics of Palestine and Israel? What can the third space of the beach tell us about Palestinian political subjectivity and agency beyond dominant discourses on the conflict?

One obvious way of approaching these questions and the hybridity disclosed in Gaza Beach would be to draw on the theoretical resources provided by scholars of the politics of everyday life, most especially by the work of Michel de Certeau (1984). In political theory, resistance and political agency has traditionally been defined as a strategic, organized and intentional form of collective action. What Michel de Certeau has famously argued is that this conception of agency is a limited one, and involved with the erosion of those forms of agency that are open to and employed by subaltern subjects. Distinguishing between 'tactics' and 'strategies', de Certeau shows that implicated in the very concept of strategy is an assumption of a position of power, of an ability by a clearly defined subject with will and power to postulate 'a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as a base' (de Certeau 1984: 36). This capacity, however, is what subaltern subjects, by definition, lack. Hence de Certeau suggests that the concept of 'tactics', which designates actions that 'operate in spaces of the other', making use of them and turning them towards other ends, is more appropriate for the understanding and representation of subaltern forms of agency. Subaltern resistances do not control the spaces in which they take place, and are not practices as means to far-off goals, de Certeau asserts. Rather, they consist of tactical, situated practices and expressions, which are enacted within the conditions and spaces to which the subaltern subjects are confined (de Certeau 1984: 34–9).

It is easy to see ways in which the production of the beach as a camping zone is involved with exactly such forms of tactical everyday resistance. On the beach, the Palestinians actively subvert the order of the occupation by transforming the prison-like spaces left to them into spaces of joy and hope. Accordingly, the third space of the beach not only defies banal representations that reduce the Palestinians into passive victims of Israeli violence, but exposes also a blind spot in Mbembe's account of the conditions of possibility of Palestinian agency. On the beach, the claim that the status of 'living dead' limits the space of Palestinian resistance to that of martyrdom and death, clearly does not exhaust the ways in which the Palestinians do, in fact, resist. If what is at stake in Palestine today is the very possibility of life itself and the ability of the Palestinians to exercise control over their colonised bodies and spaces of everyday life, as Mbembe tells us, then not only the affirmation of death, but also the affirmation of life and pleasure, wherever possible, has become a meaningful aspect of the Palestinian struggle.

What is gained through this perspective is that it allows for alternative aesthetics of Palestinian political subjectivity and of forms of resistance other than the Islamic militancy and suicide highlighted in the mainstream media and

dominating discourses on conflict, to come to the fore. Given that the images of armed struggle and Islamic militancy are involved with the erosion of the specific and anti-colonial nature of the Palestinian struggle under the imaginaries of religious fundamentalism and international terrorism, the erosion of those sites of resistance from the discourses on conflict which reflect Palestinians' capacity to endure occupation and hardship on the level of everyday life, is especially violent.

However, the problem (and this is a real problem) with interpreting camping in Gaza Beach simply in terms of resistance, and with ending the analysis of the beach here, is that the complexity of meanings that are currently projected onto the beach and the wider historical, political and social framework within which camping on the beach takes place might be lost from sight. These concerns are summarized by Lila Abu-Lughod (1990), who has criticised some studies of subaltern resistance for 'romanticising resistance', for a tendency to read 'all forms of subaltern agency as signs of the ineffectiveness of the systems of power, and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated'. While the restoration of subaltern agency in these terms only, and an overriding emphasis on finding resistors runs the danger that the also important reality of subaltern subordination is lost from sight, Abu-Lughod suggests that rather than indicating resistance per se, expressions of day-to-day resistance should be understood as diagnostic of the shifting matrix of power relations within which subaltern subjects are constituted.

This is also what Michel Foucault has in mind when he argues, most prominently in his essay 'The Subject and Power' that 'in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations' (1982: 329). While Foucault is primarily interested in the modes in which human beings are made subjects, and sees that the constitution of human subjectivities takes place in power relations that are very complex, he argues that it is through the empirical study of the effects of power that the process of subjectification must be understood. For Foucault, a relationship of power, which he contrasts with a relationship of violence which acts directly upon a body and precludes any possibility of resistance or choice, is always one in which individual or collective subjects are, despite their condition of subjection, 'faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behaviour are available' (Foucault 1982: 342). These possibilities constitute the conditions of political subjectivity, or the space of resistance, which, then, is inherently limited, yet not determined, by the relationship of power. On this understanding, the third space of Gaza Beach provides an interesting starting point not only for the recovery and representation of subaltern aspects of Palestinian agency, but also for the study of the conditions of possibility within which Palestinian subjects are constituted today.

Thus, located within a wider historical and political framework, meanings that can be attributed to the production of the beach as a camping zone and as a space of leisure appear far more ambiguous. Although the affirmation of life and joy that I witnessed on the beach might well be understood as central to subaltern struggles in the specific context of the second intifada, the Palestinians have not always

taken advantage of the beach as a space of pleasure, escape and joy. Illustrative of this are the controversial ways in which the Palestinians themselves tend to relate to the activities that take place on the beach today. Rather than seen as resistance, for the Palestinians in Gaza open holidaymaking and the search for pleasure is often understood to indicate compliance with Israeli occupation, as well as indifference to the national struggle and the suffering of fellow Palestinians. Hence, even those Gazans who do have access to the beach and who tend to spend time there, often express a mixed sense of guilt and desire over holidaymaking there. For example, Khaled abu-Kwik, a television journalist living beside the beach in Gaza City, argued to me that holidaymaking on the beach was harmful for the Palestinians' cause, because it evokes a false sense of normality, and allows for the beachgoers to forget the state of war elsewhere in Palestine, as well as their duty to resist the occupation. Despite this, in order to enhance his, his wife's and children's lives, Khaled himself tends to take his family frequently to the beach.[7]

This controversy surrounding the status of camping on the beach dates back to the first intifada. Instead of being filled by people looking for a refuge from the hardships of the occupation, the first intifada saw the few cafeterias and rent-a-shelter places that served holidaymakers prior to the uprising closing down more or less overnight; all life on the beach was put on ice until the end of the intifada and Israel's formal withdrawal from Gaza. During this time, practically no one went to the beach, and never for the purposes of holidaymaking and amusement. The evacuation of the beach can be partly explained by Israeli security measures. During the first intifada, the IDF used to impose a permanent curfew on Gaza, banning Gazans from staying out in the night between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. This curfew denied the Palestinians the possibility of camping on the beach overnight. A more profound explanation, however, which explains why the beach was empty also during the daytime, is found in the particular ways in which the Palestinians affirmed and manoeuvred their political subjectivities during the first intifada.

As the first two chapters of this book suggest, the first intifada was characterised by popular mass participation and by a resolutely innovative constellation of civil disobedience and non-violent struggle, which took place alongside the more hierarchic structures of armed resistance. A central part of the grass-roots struggle then was what Iris Jean-Klein (2001) has glossed as 'the suspension of everyday life', whereby the Palestinians collectively refused all forms of pleasure and amusement, such as flamboyant wedding parties, picnics, daytrips and nocturnal family visits, from their day-to-day lives. Instead of spending time and energy in amusing themselves, the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories chose to focus on the national struggle against the occupation.

The ideology behind this suspension saw these rituals of everyday life as being involved with 'forgetting' the politics of the occupation, and with the dissipation of valuable energy on activities other than political revolution. In addition, the suspension of everyday life offered a way in which the Palestinians could affirm their newly found national identities, contribute their respect to the dead of the intifada, and demonstrate their own commitment to resistance. Accordingly, as Jean-Klein describes it, during the first intifada a formulaic reply to an invitation

for a daytrip to the beach was 'For Palestinians, there are no holidays and picnics now!', followed by an affirmation that once there would be an independent Palestinian state, then there would be time also for leisure, and normal everyday life could be resumed (Jean-Klein 2001: 86–7).[8]

While being a central dimension of resistance, Jean-Klein maintains that the suspension of everyday life was involved with a practice of 'self-nationalization'. Rather than being simple subjects of power or elite manipulation, here subaltern subjects, 'the ordinary Palestinians' themselves, were involved with the production of collective, political and national identities, tactics of resistance and social and cultural codes which reached a hegemonic status in the Palestinian society. This insight is worth registering, as even today Palestinians across social difference tend to refer to the culture of the first intifada with a resolutely deep sense of nostalgia and pride. Less emphasised in her analysis, however, is a critical discussion of the ways in which also the suspension of everyday life was enforced and policed by the tight-knit Palestinian community itself, as well as by the Islamist and nationalist resistance movements, which sought to restructure and purify the Palestinian society around traditional and religious values.

Thus, Laetitia Boucaille (2004) points out that where it did not happen by conviction, the Spartan life of the intifada was imposed on the Palestinians by obligation. While anyone breaking the strict discipline during the first intifada became considered as lacking determination, as an easy prey for the enemy, and susceptible to collaboration with Israel, those who did not conform to the suspension of everyday life by picnicking on the beach, for example, risked subjection to a widespread denouncement, accusations of collaboration, and even confrontations with Palestinian militants. For the organisers of resistance movements, the Palestinian society had to cleanse itself, before it could confront the enemy (Boucaille 2004: 21–2). While collective surveillance and biopolitical discipline emanating from resistance movements and implemented by the society at large, then, played a central role in the suspension of everyday life and evacuation of the beach, lack of attention to the internal politics among the Palestinians, whereby certain expressions of day-to-day resistance and political agency were affirmed over others, risks simplifying the complexity of power relations within which these expressions of Palestinian political subjectivity took place. Apart from constituting a strategy of resistance against Israeli occupation, suspension of everyday life was also involved with the struggle over 'right' forms of Palestinian identity.

Accordingly, neither camping on the beach, nor the suspension of everyday life, can be interpreted simply in terms of resistance. Instead, these different aesthetics of resistance must be understood as indicative of the shifting matrix of power relations within which the conditions of possibility of Palestinian political subjectivity and agency is constituted. If control over the most intimate aspects of everyday life is one of the few realms over which subaltern subjects can exercise meaningful form of control, then why did this space of manoeuvre translate into the suspension of everyday life during the first intifada, and into its affirmation during the second one? Reasons behind this change may well be inexhaustible and certainly beyond the scope of this study. There are, however, a few points that can

be made here. These evolve around the shifting spatiality of the occupation, and the relationship between hope and political subjectivity.

Geographies of occupation and topologies of resistance

In *A Comparative Study of Intifada 1987 and Intifada 2000*, Ghassan Andoni (2001) observes that differences between Palestinian resistance during the first and the second intifada can partly be explained by the changes in the geographic arrangements of Israeli occupation. According to Andoni, the formal division of land into territories under Israeli and Palestinian sovereignty, during the Oslo Accords in the mid-1990s, complicated representations of the colonial relationship between Israel and the Palestinians, and allowed Israel to portray the conflict in an international context as a state of war between two equal sides. Based on this shift, Andoni argues, Israel has during the second intifada been able to mobilise and employ its full military arsenal against the Palestinians in ways that were unthinkable during even most violent periods of the 1987 intifada. This escalation in the use of military force during the intifada has resulted in horrendous casualty tolls among street demonstrators. Perhaps even more importantly, this spatial reorganisation has changed the sites where the clashes take place substantially: whereas demonstrations in the first intifada were dispersed across the dense topology of refugee camps and Palestinian cities, in the second intifada encounters between the protesters and the military have been confined to specific points at the borders of Palestinian 'sovereignty zones', where the Palestinians have less cover and where they are more exposed targets to Israeli snipers. In these conditions, Andoni concludes, relatively non-violent mass protest has turned into an increasingly impracticable as well as suicidal means of resistance.

Andoni's account draws attention to the fact that some of the most central spaces and sites of resistance that were previously open to the Palestinians are no longer viable. In so doing, his study draws attention to the ways in which the organisation of space and the shifting geographies of the occupation have not only been the objective of power and resistance in Gaza, but also constitutive of them. As the Israeli–Palestinian conflict evolves explicitly around a struggle over living space and issues of identity inscribed in it, attention to the relationships between space, power and resistance is especially helpful for attempts to make sense of the conditions of political subjectivity in Gaza, and more specifically, of the circumstances in which the suspension of everyday life on one hand, and the affirmation of it, on the other, took place.

When the uprising began in December 1987, Israeli civil and military apparatuses were in unmediated charge over Palestinian society, assuming control and responsibility not only over civil order and economic administration, but also over Gaza's social and educational infrastructure. During this time, all expressions of Palestinian national identity, such as displaying the Palestinian flag, and teaching Palestinian history in schools, were criminalised by the occupier, whose one main objective was to prevent the formation of collective political identities among the Palestinians. While this implied that the struggle for Palestinian

identity became a central aspect of resistance, it also implied that the Palestinians in Gaza themselves were involved on multiple fronts in daily encounters with the occupier. Accordingly, activities such as the painting of graffiti,[9] the suspension of everyday life, and other grass-roots displays of national unity and determination constituted both effective and meaningful ways of confronting, challenging and ridiculing the occupation right at its heart.

In the context of the second intifada, these conditions appear nearly reversed. The transfer of power to the Palestinian Authorities in the mid-1990s has implied that the Palestinian nation has been officially acknowledged by Israel, and therefore, the mere display of Palestinian identities can no longer constitute a central aspect of the Palestinian struggle. In addition, the spatial reorganisation of the occupation has also implied that actual encounters between the Israelis and the Palestinians have become increasingly few as well as depersonalised. Today, instead of a permanent, face-to-face presence on every Palestinian street, the Israeli military governs Palestinian territories through high-tech surveillance, through an architecture of occupation consisting of roadblocks, settlements and sniper towers, and through violent, temporary military offences and air strikes (Graham 2003). Hence, if the affirmation of national identity may no longer possess the same symbolic value as it did during the first intifada, when Palestinian nationalism was criminalised. In addition, the capacity of subaltern subjects to deliver a message of collective determination and defiance to the coloniser through the suspension of everyday life and other grass-roots activities has been reduced, as for the late modern occupier, the everyday life of the ordinary Palestinians is increasingly invisible, distant and alien.

Perhaps more crucial to understanding the shift from the suspension of everyday life to its affirmation, however, is the concept of hope, and the relationship between hope and political subjectivity and agency. The decisions to suspend everyday life were embedded in the newly found optimism and confidence that young Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories had in themselves as liberators of Palestine.[10] Until the 1980s, the Palestinians had largely pitched their hopes of freedom on the Palestinian Diaspora movement or on external intervention by neighbouring Arab states. The defeat of the PLO stronghold in Lebanon during the Israeli invasion in 1982, however, put the effectiveness of the Diaspora under question, and forced Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to reclaim responsibility for national independence.

Therefore, during the 1980s, the focus of the resistance shifted from outside to inside the Palestinian territories and, ultimately, to the political subjectivity and identity of the inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank. Common among young Palestinians then was a belief that it was because of the presumed lack of collective political consciousness and inertia among the older Palestinian generations that the Israeli occupation had been sustainable at all. Once Palestinian society would be cleansed along national lines, and a new political consciousness would be created, it was thought, independence would be easy to achieve. It was in this context that the ideal of self-purification, and the suspension of everyday life became widely endorsed and accepted as both a meaningful and effective means of resistance.

Today, decades later, the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are still engaged in a struggle against Israeli occupation, everyday life in Gaza has become increasingly difficult, and the map of Palestinian resistances appears much more complicated. Firstly, instead of improvements, the formal Israeli withdrawal from most parts of the Gaza Strip and the end of the first intifada was followed by an increasingly harsh regime of closure, siege, and economic de-development which now characterize life in Gaza (Hass 1996; Roy 2001). This experience of hardship and siege has only intensified during the second intifada. Secondly, the fact that the quasi-sovereign Palestinian Authority became, soon after the Oslo Accords, associated on the Palestinian street with corruption, elitism and subservience to Israel, has complicated the relations of power within which Palestinian political subjectivities are constituted today. Accordingly, rather than optimism and unity, the second intifada has been characterised by a deep sense of disillusionment, despair and political fragmentation.

Under these conditions, the hopes that animated the suspension of everyday life during the first intifada might no longer be available for the Palestinians in Gaza. Disenchanted with earlier narratives of national liberation, and faced with increasingly violent as well as complex forms of late-modern colonial occupation, the Palestinian society at large has abandoned the strict discipline of the first intifada and returned to the beach, focusing on the affirmation of life and joy in the immanent present rather than in a future which, for many Palestinians, appears indefinitely delayed. As Mohammed Ezzat, a son of a fisherman from Gaza City in his late twenties, comments: 'On the beach, we feel free. What would we do without the beach? We would all go mad!'[11] Even national resistance movements in Gaza, which during the first intifada preached the virtues of the suspension of everyday life in favour of the struggle against the occupation, have adapted their strategies of political mobilisation to Palestinian desire for life. All major political groups

Figure 2.9 Volleyball with Hamas, Gaza Beach, summer 2003 (photograph by the author)

in Gaza have their own public tents on the beach, used for organising summer camps for children and adolescents, and as platforms of support and political strength. During the second intifada one could visit the beach, for example, to play volleyball with Hamas or to go swimming with the Islamic Jihad.

The hoping subject

What, then, does the third space of Gaza Beach tell about the political subject and the politics of its representation during the second intifada? It is commonly held that characteristic of the second intifada has been the radicalisation of Palestinian society, the emergence of increasingly violent forms of Palestinian agency,

Figure 2.10–2.11 The hoping subjects of Gaza Beach, Gaza, summer 2003 and 2005 (photograph by the author)

and a proliferation of Islamic militancy and martyrdom as central aesthetics of Palestinian resistance. Yet, what Gaza Beach indicates is that parallel with this shift has been a process of hybridisation of Palestinian political subjectivities, and the emergence of an aesthetics of life and joy in immanent present. By camping on the beach, Palestinians affirm their right for everyday life, place and pleasure both against the sovereignty of increasingly violent and pervasive late-modern colonial occupation, and against regimes of national liberation based on demands for austere discipline and uniform collective identities.

Such forms of hybridisation have, in the wider body of postcolonial theory, and most especially in the work of Bhabha, been often understood as the locus of subaltern resistance per se, and as a privileged condition of subaltern empowerment. Drawing on his theory of third space, Bhabha has argued that hybridity 'displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination' (Bhabha 1994: 159), because 'there is no simple political or social truth to be learned, for there is no unitary representation of political agency, no fixed hierarchy of political values and effects' (Bhabha 1994: 41). What has been argued here, however, is that on Gaza Beach the political status of hybridity appears much more problematic, for instead of signalling an expanding field of options available for Palestinian subjects, on the beach the emergence of hybrid and increasingly complex forms of subjectivity appears as indicative of the near-disappearance of them. Faced with increasingly pervasive regimes of late-modern colonial occupation, and disillusioned with earlier narratives of national liberation, options available for Palestinian agency have become increasingly narrow.

As such, the beach stands as a sign of the slow defeat of the resisting subaltern, rather than their celebration. Here, distinctions between resistance, hope and escape begin to blur, and articulations of Palestinian politics and resistance take forms that are increasingly unrepresentable as well as unrecognisable within hegemonic discourses of the Palestinians' struggle and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Hopes that are projected on the beach today carry no strategy of final liberation, no belief in the need for self-purification, and no trust in future independence. And yet, perhaps it is exactly in this non-strategic, non-teleological hoping subject of Gaza Beach that a space for Palestinian resistance and for its representation beyond the narrow parameters of suicide and victimity remains open. If expressions of Palestinian resistance in terms of control over death and aesthetics of martyrdom generate little understanding to the Palestinian cause in the wider international context, other, indispensable and more hopeful forms of Palestinian agency and subjectivity have been pushed to the margins of political discourses, where no systems of political representation are available to them. Today, against late-modern colonial occupation, Palestine goes camping.

Notes

1 Most readers will recognise that this question paraphrases the problematic raised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) in her seminal essay 'Can the subaltern speak?'.
2 Khalili (2007) and Collins (2004: 40–50) argue that after the first intifada the representation of the Palestinians has shifted from discourses of heroism to discourses of

victimity. In part, this can be explained by the role that the multitude of NGOs, which advocate the Palestinian cause through appeals to the international standards of human rights, have in the portrayal of the conflict.

3 Campbell (2009) problematises the political value of images of victimity further in a more recent discussion of the representation of the war in Gaza.

4 According to Spivak, the practice of *Sati*, or widow self-immolation, is coded in terms of Hindu religious texts as an exceptional sacred practice rather than an act of suicide. While Bhuvaneswari was not a widow and as such her suicide couldn't be fitted to the discourse of *Sati* unproblematically, her menstruation further displaced the possibility of interpreting the suicide in these terms, as a woman can only commit *Sati* when she is *not* menstruating.

5 A water pipe used widely across the Arab world.

6 See for instance the report by Btselem, accessible online at http://www.btselem.org/gaza_strip/gaza_water_crisis.

7 Personal communication with Khaled abu-Kwik, 28 July 2005, Gaza City.

8 Jean-Klein is writing on the politics of the West Bank, and refers here to the beaches in Israel and at the Dead Sea, then open to the Palestinians of the West Bank (today also these beaches are closed to them). However, these remarks are equally relevant to Gaza.

9 Julie Peteet (1996) describes the power of the graffiti in reclaiming the Palestinian street as well as identity during the first intifada. While the graffiti, painted on the walls by young Palestinians afresh every night, challenged the sovereignty of the occupier who patrolled every street, the persistent re-emergence of the graffiti also sent the message of an ongoing process of liberation to the Palestinians themselves, and provided them with an important space for the articulation of collective political subjectivities.

10 A sense of celebratory optimism is clearly present in texts produced by commentators sympathetic to the Palestinian cause during the first years of the intifada: see, for example essays in Lockman and Benin 1990.

11 Personal communication with Mohammed Ezzat, July 2003, Gaza.

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3 Postcolonising Palestine through state-building

The role of the state at shaping politics in postcolonial and post-revolutionary contexts is a topic that has attracted plenty of attention among cultural and political theorists with postcolonial leanings. One aspect that was discussed already in the Introduction concerned the experiences of a 'Great Disillusion' (Memmi 2006) and disappointment with the postcolonial state resulting from the failed promises of universal emancipation carried by anticolonial national liberation, and from the different projects of privatisation and market liberalisation that have redefined the nature of nation-states especially since the 1980s onwards. Scott (2004 and 1999) argues that what he sees as the *tragic* trajectory of the postcolonial state has had a profound impact upon the questions that define the current conjuncture, the political problem-space of postcolonialism, and the horizon of expectations upon which postcolonial subjects may base hopes for a better future. Instead of teleological, redemptive narratives of collective liberation that were central to anti-colonial imaginaries, postcolonial political subjects negotiate their position amidst increasing uncertainty regarding the eventual impact and consequences of their actions, and in a context in which power and oppression appear increasingly de-territorialising, complex and difficult to address effectively.

In this chapter, I elaborate a little further on the relationship between the problematic of state-power and the crisis of the second intifada, focusing, in particular, on the ways in which the establishment of the nascent structures of a nation-state, embodied in the Palestinian Authority, has impacted upon the political problem-space in which Palestinian politics and resistance are constituted. The following study does not intend to be exhaustive in scope nor detail: my main aim here is to simply make evident that, although the Oslo Accords fell far from laying the foundations for meaningful national independence, it introduced to Palestinian society also several new questions, problems and transformations which are usually associated with formally independent postcolonial states and societies, and which tend to run counter to the demands of an anticolonial movement for national liberation, or at least complicate its formation considerably. In so doing, I argue that the Oslo Accords grounded a premature postcolonisation of Palestinian political spaces and subjectivities, with far-reaching consequences regarding the viability of, and the ability to articulate, a consistent anticolonial national movement such as the one presented by the first intifada.

In sociological and political thought, the modern nation-state tends to be understood as a complex apparatus of discipline, control and biopolitical production, which is geared towards the production of unity and order out of multiplicity and anarchy. Instead of simply reflecting collective identities and a sense of belonging, one of the state's functions is to construct and consolidate such identities, through a variety of mechanisms, including education, media and policing and securitisation of the different borders and boundaries that constitute the inside/outside of the national community and identity (see, for instance Anderson 1991; Gellner 2006; Kedourie 2000; Walker 1995). In the context of anticolonial nationalism, however, the relationship between the state and national identity tends to appear in a light that is rather different: for national liberation movements, the actual act of securing state power presents a range of questions which profoundly problematises the collective identities on which the national movement was built, and on which also the new project of state building ought to be grounded.

Unlike European nation-states, most postcolonial states were born out of a war of liberation, and driven by anticolonial and revolutionary popular movements. Accordingly, in most cases, power over the newly liberated postcolonial state was assumed by the leaders of the nationalist and anticolonial resistance, and hence involved an almost overnight transition from the rhetoric and practice of revolution towards law and state building. Although this transition offers the necessary conditions for a new period of postcolonial national culture, it also undermines the identity of the nationalist liberation movement which, until then, had mobilised collective political identities on a shared position of antagonism vis-à-vis the coloniser.

When the practices of *resistance* are turned into practices of *representation* of a political community, questions regarding the positive content and identity of that community can no longer be deferred. Antonio Hardt and Michael Negri (2000: 101–5, 109–13, 124–34) point out that in order to operate, every nation-state needs to designate *the people* or the nation, which it represents. This implies establishing boundaries between the inside and the outside of the national community, and generating certain levels of unity out of the diversity of subject positions, identities and experiences that actually compose the social field. The existence of a 'nation' is thus predicated on policing, exclusion and violence against the minorities within the boundaries of the political community, and on the waging of war against those who remain outside.

Although nationalism can therefore be said to contain the seeds of totalitarianism and aggression, the extent to which it has functioned as an agent of authoritarianism rather than democracy differs largely depending on the context. Hardt and Negri argue that European nationalisms were most often reactionary, regressive and bourgeois, and productive of political communities in which the exclusivist and authoritarian tendencies were taken furthest (Hardt and Negri 2000: 93–105). Conversely, they see that the anticolonial nationalisms in Africa, Asia and Latin America, were essentially progressive, insurgent and subaltern in nature, in so far as the idea of the 'nation' was conceived in these contexts more as a vehicle of liberation and political modernisation, than as an end in itself:

'Stated most boldly, it appears that *whereas the concept of nation promotes stasis and restoration in the hands of the dominant, it is a weapon for change and revolution in the hands of the subordinated*' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 106, emphasis original). This difference does not, however, derive from the inherent qualities of non-European political movements as such, but rather, from the subordinate position that anticolonialists hold vis-à-vis the colonisers. When the concept of nation is linked to territorial sovereignty and the nationalism of subordinated groups is elevated to the position of hegemonic power, the progressive functions of Third World nationalism 'all but vanish'. As such, the postcolonial state is not immune from the regressive aspects of the nation-state.

The postcolonial state can therefore be seen as a vehicle, which, in many ways, undermines rather than articulates those collective political identities and subjectivities that gave rise to it. Another problematic that is associated with state power and which is equally relevant to present analysis concerns the political practices and cultures of the nation-state. From a Weberian perspective, state building presupposes not only the construction of a shared identity, but also monopolisation of violence and an establishment of hierarchic and bureaucratic structures of rule. However, although centralisation and bureaucratisation of power might be necessary for securing certain levels of security, stability and predictability within the postcolonial or post-liberationist society, it also implies the institutionalisation of new inequalities and privileges, which cut across the social that was previously united in their common opposition to the coloniser. In other words, the political machine of the nation-state does not simply lay down foundations for the construction of an imagined community and for the affirmation and consolidation of state-nationalism from above: it also provides the rationale, the means and the resources for the construction and consolidation of a new web of power relations and of old and new hierarchies and divisions of rank, file, gender and class within the political community that the state claims to represent.

This problem was familiar to Franz Fanon, whose one main concern was that national liberation alone would not suffice as a model of decolonisation. According to Fanon, true liberation and decolonisation would need to entail also a social revolution, an overthrow of all relations of oppression and privilege that define both colonial and capitalist forms of rule. In the absence of such a revolution, he argues that the establishment of a postcolonial state is bound to produce new, localised structures of exploitation and an increasingly complex political problem-space in which the constitution of oppositional collective subjectivities along the axis of us and them – the oppressed colonised and the oppressing colonisers – is increasingly difficult or unlikely. As Fanon puts it in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

> The militant who faces the colonialist war machine with the bare minimum of arms realizes that while he is breaking down colonial oppression he is building up automatically yet another system of exploitation. This discovery is unpleasant, bitter and sickening: and yet everything seemed to be so simple before: the bad people were on one side, and the good on the other. (Fanon 2001: 115–16)

Today, revolutionary hopes for the overthrow of *all* relations of oppression and privilege no longer sound like a workable political agenda. The point I would underscore here, however, is that in the context of a post-liberationist national independence, the ultimately utopian nature of the ideas of national self-determination and collective liberation is exposed and attention turns upon the actual practices of state power, which tend to promote hierarchy and exclusion rather than universal emancipation. Moreover, if the unity of a liberationist movement is not a foundational quality but rather, a product of a shared position of opposition against a common enemy, then the very moment of liberation and national independence coincides with a radical deformation of this identity. Acquiring state power therefore presents a challenge for liberationist movements because despite fulfilling political demands temporarily, it marks the disintegration of the political self that the state was supposed to represent. This might not be a bad thing, in so far as the deconstruction of collective unity might function as a precondition for the continuation of democratic struggles under the lived reality of a post-liberationist, postcolonial state. What interests me here, however, is what happens when the problems of state power that I have just outlined are visited upon a political community such as Palestine, which continues to exist under colonial occupation, and where the constitution of a collective anticolonial struggle is therefore, by necessity, still a central political concern.

From a liberation struggle to a state without liberation

The general framework of the Oslo Accords was laid down between the years 1991 and 1993, when the PLO and the Israeli government engaged in a number of secret negotiations in order to reach an agreement to end the first intifada. These negotiations led to the signing of the joint Document of Principles (DoP), also known as the Oslo Agreement, in September 1993. The stated aim of the Oslo Agreement was to provide a five-year framework for the withdrawal of Israeli forces and for the gradual transition of the West Bank and Gaza into areas of Palestinian self-rule governed by a Palestinian Authority. However, instead of laying foundations for a future Palestinian state, in practice the political developments that took place during the 1990s led towards the re-organisation of the Israeli occupation along lines of separation and disengagement, and through the internal striation of Palestinian spaces (see Halper 2001; Parker 1999; Roy 2001; Weizman 2007). Firstly, the Palestinian territories were divided and classified into three zones, each of which possessed a different 'level' of self-rule.[1] This process was paralleled and aided by the swift, albeit illegal multiplication and enlargement of Israeli settlements throughout the 1990s, as a result of which the territories under the control of the Palestinian Authority were further fragmented, sectioned off and reduced in size. Secondly, despite formal discourses of Palestinian self-determination, the Oslo Agreement allowed Israel to retain full control over the borders of the Palestinian self-rule area, as well as over a variety of other strategic assets, including the main water resources and Palestinian tax collection apparatuses (Brown 2003: 13). Despite the establishment of the nascent

structures of a Palestinian state, the Palestinian territories have thus remained firmly under Israel's colonial occupation throughout the Oslo Accords. After the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, this point has become increasingly clear, given the obvious vulnerability of the Palestinian societies in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to Israeli military interventions and to the technologies of control such as siege, closure and embargo.

Having said all this, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority did, nevertheless, exhibit several patterns that are associated with the formation of postcolonial states on symbolic, affective and material levels, and which have implications for the political problem-space within which contemporary struggles in Palestine are articulated and constituted. The era of the Palestinian Authority began in earnest on 1 July 1994, when Yasser Arafat returned to Gaza from his exile in Tunis, together with the soldiers and officers who then became the nucleus of the Palestinian police and security apparatus. Although support within Palestinian society for the Oslo Accord was not unanimous, Arafat's return, which many saw as symbolic of the Palestinians' historical right of return, was received by Palestinians on the streets amid celebrations and a state of euphoria. The first Palestinian cabinet meeting was held a few weeks later. This was followed by the emergence of a variety of other institutions and symbols of postcolonial statehood, such as a Palestinian flag, telecommunications and media, stamps, identity cards, banks and car registration plates. Most important, however, was the establishment of the Palestinian police force (as well as an accompanying variety of secret police forces), which was recognised by Israel and the international community (Lindholm-Schultz 1997: 9). This police force represented within the Palestinian territories a body having the sole legitimate use of violence – one of Weber's most well-established criteria for statehood – and as such it was instrumental in consolidating the relationship between the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority firmly as that between a state and its subjects.

At first, the Palestinian Authority was met with an optimistic sense of support and expectation on the street. However, already by 1995 political pessimism, frustration and even hostility against the PA were on the rise. This might have been caused in part by hiccups and delays in the negotiation process, which brought many Palestinians to doubt Israel's true intentions and the political path of the Oslo Accords. At least as important, however, was the growing dismay with the practices of the Palestinian Authority itself, which many Palestinians began to associate with the violence and authoritarianism they had become used to under Israel's military rule. Some of this violence was confined to the conflict between the PA and Islamic resistance movements, which in autumn 1994 resulted in violent confrontations between Hamas activists and the Palestinian police force, and led to mass arrests, restrictions on the freedom of the press, movement and assembly, and other repressive measures, including torture by the Palestinian Authority's security forces.

Officially, the objective of these measures was to put down opposition to the Oslo Accords. When these policies were enacted in response to Israeli pressures

to curb Islamic resistance, the PA's violence can be understood as indicative of its subordination to Israeli demands and pressure, and expressive of the utterly uneasy positioning that the PA occupied as a guardian of both Israeli and Palestinian interests. In many occasions, however, this was not the case and over time, the PA became increasingly criticised for adopting repressive political practices quite of its own making. Nathan Brown comments on Palestinian experiences which happened even during the very first year under the PA's rule:

> If a Palestinian wished to travel from Gaza to Ramallah, it was still impossible to ignore the limitations of [Palestinian] statehood. However, if a Palestinian went to school, to court, or to apply for a business license, the PNA [Palestinian National Authority] appeared to be a virtual state. And Palestinians began to complain about the PNA not only because of the ways in which its actions were limited but also because of the way in which it acted: the PNA could be oppressive and corrupt in ways unconnected with the Oslo Accords. (Brown 2003: 14)

Could the legitimacy of the PA and relation of trust between the Palestinians and their political representation have been saved, if the PA had employed more transparent and democratic policies towards the subjects of its rule? Most often, the failure of the PA to gain legitimacy and promote national unity within the Palestinian society has been explained with direct or indirect reference to Yasser Arafat and the culture of political authoritarianism that is associated with his leadership. For example, Amal Jamal (2005: 121) writes that although Arafat alone cannot be blamed for the governmental structures that emerged during the Oslo negotiations, he holds central responsibility for the establishment of a patrimonial political system that placed him above formal institutional procedures. According to Jamal, 'Arafat silenced critics, co-opted enemies, and ostracized dissenters by either integrating them into the government or marginalizing them'. This resulted in the over-inflation of the PA's administrative machine as new titles, positions and even ministries were invented for purposes of co-optation and to reward followers for continued political loyalty, and in the consolidation of familial, tribal and clientelist interests and divisions within the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Jamal 2005: 132–3).

While an overt focus on Arafat's style of leadership is certainly important and can shed light upon some of the reasons why the PA's rule in the Occupied Territories took the precise forms that it did, it can do little to help us understand the broader context in which the gap between the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority evolved. To appreciate this context more fully, a reading which draws connections between the Palestinian Authority's political culture and the wider problematic of the postcolonial state might be useful. One aspect to this problematic that might be helpful here, and which I haven't explored so far, concerns the organisational structures of the liberation movement which precedes the formation of the postcolonial or post-liberationist state, and the ways in which these organisational structures and forms might be linked to the practices of government that the movement is likely to follow at the moment of independence.

Davidson (1992: 208) notes that instead of disseminating and exporting democratic forms of government and a spirit of enlightenment of which the Europeans prided themselves, European colonialism's gift to the rest of the word was the dissemination of authoritarian systems of government which followed the patterns of colonial violence and oppression. Whereas Davidson emphasises the roles that the heritage of colonial rule has had in the formation of postcolonial systems of government, from Hardt and Negri's perspective, the decline of so many postcolonial states towards authoritarian and undemocratic rule in the aftermath of independence bears relation also to the structure and form of the liberation moments, which preceded the formation of the state in question. In contrast with European nation-states, which have evolved through much slower, albeit equally violent, processes and where the development of representative democracy was backed by gradual organisational change, most postcolonial and post-liberationist states possessed, at the eve of independence, no democratic political structures separate from the liberation movement itself. These forms of political organisation might perform well during the liberationist struggle, but once married to sovereign power and vertical structures of command, their weaknesses become apparent and democratic diversity is narrowed down (Hardt and Negri 2004: 69–78).

Hardt and Negri elaborate on this idea by arguing that most anticolonial and revolutionary movements of the twentieth century followed either the model of a people's army or that of a guerrilla movement. A people's army was exemplified by the armed bands of Mao Zedong's Long March in the mid-1930s, or by the 'ragtag rebels' of the Mexican revolution more than two decades earlier. The rise and existence of a people's army relied on the production of new, collective political subjectivities and on the transformation of a variety of separate insurrections into an organised counter-power with a centralised command. The people's army had a democratising and progressive air in so far as it articulated and produced a growing popular desire for democracy and social justice. Paradoxically, the people's army itself was organised around a hierarchic and centralised system of command, which was essentially undemocratic. This quality, they suggest, contributed to the ossification of these popular movements into authoritarian state structures in the aftermath of the revolution (Hardt and Negri 2004: 73).

In the 1960s, this paradigm of movement organisation was superseded by guerrilla movements, exemplified by the Cuban revolution, which presented a more democratic and decentralised alternative to the hierarchic structures of the people's army. In contrast with the people's army, guerrilla movements were organised around a dispersed and decentralised topology of relatively autonomous units and militant groups. Despite this, the democratic and open character of the guerrilla strategy remained equally elusive: in Hardt and Negri's argument, in practice the freedom of guerrilla movements from the control of traditional parties was merely replaced by the control and command of a military authority (2004: 74–5). Accordingly, at the eve of the revolution and independence, guerrilla movements, like the people's army before them, are faced with the same problem of state power. Even though guerrilla movements have almost always been much more democratic than the regimes they replace, in most cases, 'the democratic diversity and

autonomy of the various guerrilla units are narrowed down as the comparatively horizontal military structure is transformed into a vertical state structure of command' (Hardt and Negri 2004: 75–6). The leaders of liberation movements turned into statesmen thus appear less as the agents, than the pawns of this inversion, which turns an insurgent popular movement into a dominating power faced with questions of political representation and centralised government. The point at which anticolonial nationalisms run the danger of losing their progressive nature thus follows the moment at which anticolonialists actually gain state power and become an institutionalised force. 'With national "liberation" and the construction of the nation-state', Hardt and Negri argue, 'all of the oppressive functions of modern sovereignty inevitably blossom in full force' (2004: 109).

This analysis offers a different perspective to the political nature of the Palestinian Authority and to its relationship to the Palestinian population it ought to represent. Like several governments of newly independent postcolonial states, the Palestinian Authority was established almost overnight as the PLO, a former guerrilla organisation, was transformed into an interim government recognised by Israel. The Palestinian Authority's guerrilla past has not been missed by those liberal-secular critics, who complain that the Palestinian Authority never possessed the professional qualities that are required from people running a modern state. For instance, it has been claimed that the Palestinian Authority 'mixes the political-public dimension with the revolutionary-clandestine dimension' and that it is 'full of improvisations and total centrality of power' (Ziad Abu Amr, quoted in Jamal 2005: 131). Robinson (1997: 188) provides a similar but more nuanced critique by suggesting that although the mentality and organisational form of the guerrilla movement might have worked well during the liberationist era, once the culture of the PLO and Arafat's leadership was implanted upon formal, hierarchic structures of state power, it became ossified and the progressive air of the liberation movement gave way to authoritarian practices.[2] In this sense, Robinson sees the authoritarianism associated with Arafat's rule not only as a diversion from the path of Palestinian democratic demands, but also as a regression within the story of the PLO, a deterioration that emerges only once the culture and organisational form of the liberation organisation are married with formal structures of state power.

At least equally as important is the fact that unlike in many other postcolonial contexts, in Palestine, the challenge of transforming a liberationist movement into a state apparatus was exacerbated by a lack of an organic relationship between the liberation movement that took power over the West Bank and Gaza, and the subjects of its rule. The PLO formed as a liberation movement outside the Occupied Palestine, and under geopolitical and discursive circumstances that were very different from the ones that prevailed at the time of the Oslo Accords (see Sayigh 2007). Although the PLO was actively involved in the first intifada, for instance through funding and networks of PLO factions that operated in partnership with UNLU, the intifada's umbrella organisation which represented Palestinian resistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, its actual power bases had never rested within the West Bank or Gaza. Instead, the PLO was affiliated with

Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and, to a lesser extent, Tunis, where the PLO leadership took refuge after its expulsion from Lebanon. Hence, despite the PLO's important role in the history of the Palestinian national struggle and its high symbolic value to all Palestinian irrespective of their location, by the time of the first intifada many Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza regarded the PLO as a diasporic movement which was detached from the actual realities of life under direct Israeli occupation.

Conversely, from the perspective of the PLO, the rise of a new and confident political generation in the Occupied Palestine presented a serious threat to its own power and positioning as the custodian of Palestinian National Liberation. Pearlman (2011: 117–18) argues that as long as the first intifada was characterised by high levels of collective unity and organisational cohesion among the activists in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the PLO was forced to respect the political voice of the 'intifada generation', and to work in equal partnership with the local leaders of the uprising, despite the threat to its own positioning. When, toward the end of the intifada, cohesion and unity on the local level began to dissolve and the uprising splintered, the PLO's leadership assumed a more dictating and dominant role, and intensified several tactics to 'divide and rule' and to distribute patronage, in order to enforce lines of influence between the PLO and local actors who would be answerable to the PLO, rather than to the local leadership. Many of the intifada's activists were thus left feeling that in the end, Yasser Arafat and his cadre 'hijacked' the intifada, which had begun as a local popular uprising.

When the PLO announced, on the eve of the Oslo Accords, that it had secretly negotiated with Israel to end the intifada and to create a framework for a two-state solution, there was widely felt concern that the rationale for this was not only to bring a political solution to the Palestinian cause, but also to ensure the PLO's own survival and continued relevance vis-à-vis the new political generation that had emerged on the West Bank and in Gaza. Accordingly, when the exiled PLO leaders who eventually took over positions in the PA arrived in the Palestinian territories amidst Oslo celebrations, they received a complex welcome. Although the return as such had high symbolic value – after all, the refugees' right of return constituted one of the most central Palestinian political demands – in the local vernacular, these leaders were not described as fellow Palestinians but as 'foreigners', 'Tunisians', or 'returnees'. Later on, sharp differentiations between 'locals' and 'returnees' were aggravated by the fact that the actual agents of the intifada – local activists of the intifada generation who had mobilised the uprising and borne the brunt of Israeli countermeasures – were severely sidelined in the political process of the Oslo Accords (Lindholm-Schultz 1997: 8–9).[3]

Instead of rising organically from within the Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza, one may thus say that the Palestinian Authority was implanted in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Despite the fact that almost all Palestinians held Yasser Arafat in high esteem due to his formative role in the constitution of the Palestinian national movement, the lack of organic links between the PLO/Palestinian Authority and the local population that had endured the brunt of the

occupation and Israeli counter-measures during the intifada may well have been one factor that contributed to the gap between the Palestinian Authority and the populations in the West Bank and Gaza, and hence played a role in the rise of authoritarian policies within the Palestinian Authority. Authoritarianism was deemed necessary by the leaders of the returning PLO, for whom the primary political challenge 'was to neutralize the institutional power bases of the new elite' in the West Bank and Gaza, and to effect social control over a society on whose support they did not fully trust (Robinson 1997: 197–8).

Against this background, explaining the crisis of the Palestinian national struggle in reference to specific personalities and leadership styles that are prevalent within the PA at any given time appears to miss the larger picture. Viewed through the problematic of postcoloniality and state power, the gap between the Palestinians and their political representation appears rather as the cause than the consequence of the Palestinian Authority's authoritarianism. Moreover, consideration of the wider problem of state power in this context invites attention to the ways in which the establishment of a semi-sovereign Palestinian state in the Occupied Palestinian Territories might have changed the very structure and composition of Palestinian politics on a much more fundamental level. Instead of being formed around a hegemonic struggle against Israeli occupation, Palestinian political subjectivities now need to negotiate a complex web of different struggles, antagonisms and hierarchies that have risen in relation to the Palestinian Authority and its institutions of a semi-sovereign 'nation-state'. Describing the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories one year into self-government, Lindholm-Schultz expresses the dilemma succinctly:

> The occupation has not yet ended, and there is a lack of tangible benefits for the majority of the [Palestinian] people. Furthermore, since there is now a Palestinian authority, all the problems and difficulties can no longer be blamed on Israel. It is a fact that the PNA has inherited a skewed structure, disrupted by 27 years of Israeli occupation but matters are complicated as the Palestinian cause changes. No longer is the struggle only about liberation and/or independence, but *also* about what *kind* of internal structures are to be established. (Lindholm-Schultz 1997: 16, emphasis original)

In the unique case of Palestine, the establishment of a 'postcolonial state' despite the persistence of an increasingly violent and oppressive colonial military occupation has thus been productive of an intermittently complex political situation. While the Palestinian population can, quite rightly, expect the Palestinian Authority to perform a double-role as both a state that acts as a guardian of their interests, and as a movement for national liberation, which seeks to secure those interests by pressuring Israel to end the occupation, the Palestinian Authority has not been able to fulfil convincingly either of these functions.[4] Firstly, the Palestinian Authority has never secured meaningful sovereignty over the Occupied Palestinian Territories, given that Israel continues to exercise ultimate control over Palestinian borders, resources and population, and infringes upon the most basic Palestinian rights

structurally and on a daily basis. Secondly, since the Palestinian Authority was built upon the Oslo Accords and hence also its legitimacy and operational abilities have derived from recognition by Israel and foreign donor states, rather than from the Palestinians themselves, its ability and also willingness to press for Palestinian rights and national liberation beyond the framework and rhetoric of the Oslo Accords has been highly curtailed. Lacking meaningful sovereignty and legitimacy, for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinian Authority soon began to appear as a unconvincing and self-interested facade of physical force which 'flaunts a garish face of the state' while offering its subjects nothing but 'empty politics' and 'empty words' (Allen 2013: 131–56, 166).

By establishing a new layer of institutionalised, hierarchic government in between Palestinians and Israel, the formation of the Palestinian Authority at the end of the first intifada gave rise within Palestine to a new set of political concerns, questions, expectations, divisions and antagonisms – in other words, new political problem-spaces and subjectivities – which deconstruct, rather than support, the collective struggle against Israel. While the quasi-state represented by the Palestinian Authority has done little to liberate the Palestinians from Israeli occupation, or to empower them in the pursuit of meaningful forms of self-rule, its emergence has greatly complicated the ground on which struggles on which resistance against Israeli occupation might be articulated and built.

The state and cultures of resistance

Thus far, I have focused attention mainly upon the ways in which the establishment of the Palestinian Authority transformed the structure of power relations within the West Bank and Gaza. This, however, captures only one aspect of the change, while also risking idealising or simplifying the political make-up of the Palestinian society *prior* to the Oslo Accords. No political community has ever been constituted in relation to only one, neatly drawn political frontier. Even during the most active years of the first intifada, when the coherence and unity of the national movement was very strong, the unity of Palestinian resistance was incessantly negotiated and contested by a variety of other struggles, agendas and antagonisms than those pertaining to Israeli occupation. In order to understand better the Palestinian Authority's role in the crisis of the Palestinian national movement associated with the second intifada, it is thus necessary to look at the ways in which the establishment of the Palestinian Authority was received and experienced on the level of Palestinian everyday life, and how the emergence of nascent structures of a nation-state has impacted upon Palestinian political cultures on the ground.

In this context, Lisa Taraki's (2008a, 2008b) analyses of social change in Ramallah are particularly illuminating. Taraki shows that despite the failure of the Oslo Accords to bring about conditions for a Palestinian state, the agreement had far-reaching consequences for the cultural-ideological and social sectors within the Palestinian society. The first victim of the Oslo Accords, she writes, was the Palestinian culture of resistance which had prevailed hegemonic until the end of

the first intifada, but which was replaced after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority by a sense of resignation, by 'a hierarchical culture of officialdom', and by the normalisation of a new, increasingly individualistic ethos of self-enhancement and social mobility (Taraki 2008a: 68). Both of these trends, she points out, closely resemble developments in neighbouring Arab countries where a general disillusionment with the postcolonial nationalist project has provided the space for an increasing valorisation of privatised and individualised social mobility. At the same time, these trends are almost diametrically opposed to the ethos of austerity and egalitarianism that had characterised Palestinian resistance and national struggle until the PA was established (Taraki 2008a: 70–71).

Many of the changes that Taraki describes were subtle, such as the evaporation of a casual atmosphere that had been central to Palestinian institutions and political culture prior to the Oslo Accords. As the new social groups associated with the Palestinian Authority, including government officials, bank executives and businesspeople, began to set new standards of dress and deportment, the egalitarian style was traded for a more formal look, atmosphere and codes of dress and deportment. Parallel to this was the emergence of a new system of titles such as minister, deputy minister, director-general and other high- and low-ranking designations which contributed to a hierarchisation of Palestinian political life, and the rise of a plethora of bodyguards, security personnel, aides, door attendants, chauffeurs and coffee servers around the PA institutions and its new elites. Perhaps most damaging from the perspective of national unity and the resistance culture, however, was the emergence of the VIP system. VIP status, which is allocated by the Israeli authorities, separates those Palestinians who are entitled to cross-border and cross-roadblock mobility and those who are not. Given that for the absolute majority, Oslo displayed a severe loss in freedom of movement resulting from Israel's policy of separation and siege, the ability of the PA affiliates, primarily high-ranking officials and business executives, to circumvent the closure created unprecedented divisions of privilege within Palestinian society.

Taraki argues that at first, changes of this kind were criticised and despised by locals as empty titles and pointless trappings of power and statehood in an authority that lacked any meaningful sovereignty. Soon, however, the mere force of repetition turned symbols of rank and entitlement into an essential part of the local political culture and into assets highly sought after by members of PLO-affiliated factions, especially Fatah (Taraki 2008a: 68–9). The ethos of self-interest within the political sphere was matched in the private sector by the emergence of new lifestyles that embraced leisure, self-enhancement and social mobility. This type of development was particularly clear in Ramallah, where most of the Palestinian Authority's institutions were located. Over a very short time span, the town was transformed from what Taraki calls 'an urban nightmare' that had been ruined by the hardships of the first intifada and Israeli occupation measures, into a hub of urban pleasures where new, mostly commercialised public spaces such as cafés, swimming pools, hotels, restaurants and fitness centres proliferated (Taraki, 2008a: 71). On the one hand, these spaces provided new social and lifestyle opportunities for Palestinians, especially for the younger generations and women. On the other

hand, they were instrumental at increasingly dividing the society between those who could afford such lifestyles and those who could not, and at truncating the culture of austerity and self-sacrifice, which had carried crucial symbolic significance within Palestinian society especially during the first intifada. Many Palestinians interpreted the rise of the new ethos centred on pleasure and individual enjoyment not only as a sign of the lavish and corrupt quality of the Palestinian Authority, but also as a declaration of war against the very culture of the intifada.

Taraki's essay focuses on the rise of the Palestinian middle classes and new forms of urbanity in Ramallah. Although the process she describes is most accentuated there, her arguments carry wider relevance: in many ways, her work can be read as an analysis of the hybridisation and individualisation of Palestinian political subjectivity that I had a chance to observe personally on the beach in Gaza, and which comes to fore also in the next chapter, which looks at Palestinian discourses and struggles concerning mobile telephony. So far, this aspect of social and political change in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has remained highly under-researched, but traces of a similar argument do appear here and there. For instance, Nadia Dabbagh (2005: 82) writes that the existence of the PA and the period of political normalisation associated with it caused the Palestinian society to 'turn in on itself after years of struggling outwardly against the common Israeli enemy', and paved the way for a general trend towards Westernisation. In fact, the very topic of her research – the sudden emergence of private suicide as a phenomenon within the Palestinian society during the latter part of the 1990s – confirms the point for suicide is traditionally understood in Islamic and Palestinian cultural contexts as a specifically Western social phenomenon and utterly un-Palestinian. Moreover, in so far as the ethos of Palestinian resistance has traditionally been grounded on the idea that to be Palestinian is to believe in *sumud* (steadfastness) and to be part of a people who refuse to give up hope no matter what, then to take one's own life and fail one's responsibilities to the community and resistance must be understood as the opposite (Dabbagh 2005: 78).

The processes of disillusionment and division that I have described here should not be understood as unequivocal signs of the dissolution of Palestinian nationalist sensibilities and commitments as such. What they do convey, however, is an insight into the ways in which the articulation of politics and resistance among the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza has been shifting towards forms and spaces that are unrepresentable and unrecognisable, as long as the 'distribution of the sensible' (Ranciére 2009) of Palestinian politics and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is limited to those institutions, discourses and forms of organisation that have conventionally been associated with 'politics' and the 'political'. In fact, one might well argue that political withdrawal and cynicism in Palestine has two different faces: on the one hand, the cynicism, material self-interest and individualism that has become associated with the Palestinian Authority and the rise of the new elites described by Taraki, has led towards increasing internal divisions within the Palestinian society, and contributed greatly to the general sense of disillusionment that the Palestinians have in regard to the collective struggle for national liberation and self-determination.

On the other hand, Lori Allen (2013) argues that cynicism, political withdrawal and anti-political discourses, when launched by ordinary Palestinians and as a critique against prevailing political institutions and elites, can also be interpreted as a consistent attempt, on behalf of the Palestinian population at large, to *reclaim* and *reaffirm* nationalist ethics and morality in an era in which politics as such has become associated almost universally as the opposite of nationalist ethos – as something dirty and utterly corrupt, that people do based on self-interest and opportunism, and in order to improve their personal standing. Indeed, Allen (2013: 157–84) argues that one of the reasons why Hamas has been able to harness Palestinian hopes and desires relatively well follows from its apparent sincerity and practical commitment to self-sacrifice and the common good, especially when compared with Fatah, which has come to embody corruption, oppression and even outright hostility towards the Palestinian project for national liberation and self-determination.

Accordingly, in the eyes of many Palestinians, Islamist politics offered by Hamas represent a potent counterforce to the institutionalised, 'dirty' politics of a secular, Fatah-dominated regime, which has traded commitment to anticolonial liberation for personal gains, privileges and enjoyment. Conversely, for those who do not follow Hamas, the decision to opt out of formal, organised politics altogether can also present an opportunity to affirm their continued commitment to those principles and values that used to uphold Palestinian popular nationalism, before the Oslo Accords created a space and conditions for the institutionalisation and capture of Palestinian life by a complex constellation of forces belonging to the Palestinian Authority, foreign donor states, Israel, and the global circuits of neoliberal ideologies and sensibilities.

Postcolonial politics in Palestine

When thinking about the relationship between the Palestinian Authority and contemporary Palestinian political struggles, one therefore needs to look beyond dominant discourses of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that tend to limit discussion to the stalemate between Israeli and Palestinian national demands, or focus on the power-struggle between the two competing dominant Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas. Despite the fact that the Oslo Accords failed to bring national independence to the Palestinians, the establishment of formal, hierarchic structures of rule represented by the Palestinian Authority, and the air of political normalisation that followed from the 'peace process', have profoundly altered the political problem-space in which Palestinian political subjectivities and action are constituted. In this sense, one might say that ever since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the political in Palestine has developed largely in relation to those questions, struggles and desires that are central to postcolonial, rather than colonial societies and states.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this change is the way and extent to which the establishment of the Palestinian Authority inserted a new layer of centralised and authoritarian government between the Palestinians and the Israeli occupation.

Now, any popular struggle that is genuinely to address oppression and violence in Palestine must negotiate a complex web of different forces and power relations, many of which pertain more to domestic hierarchies, divisions and modes of oppression than to the Israeli occupation. The instalment of a semi-sovereign 'postcolonial state' in the West Bank and Gaza has been coupled by changes in the culture of Palestinian resistance: as Taraki argues, the Oslo Accords paved the way for the rise of an increasingly individualised societal order, as a result of which upward social mobility and personal enhancement are increasingly valorised at the cost of the ethos of shared suffering and self-sacrifice that formed the foundation of Palestinian collective unity in the past.

The irony, of course, is that the consolidation of a postcolonial problem-space has taken place in a context in which Palestine has not yet reached even formal independence. Whereas most postcolonial states were established as a result of the *success* of an anticolonial struggle, in Palestine the nascent structures of a nation-state have been established prematurely, *before* the popular struggle had achieved the overthrow of the former colonial regime. Given the Palestinian Authority's position as representative of not only the formal proceedings of a (failing) peace process but also of a political culture that was diametrically opposed to the culture of the intifada, it is no wonder that Islamic, rather than secular, movements for national liberation have gained increasing popular support among the Palestinians during the Oslo years and in the context of the second intifada. By promoting a culture of resistance, self-sacrifice and religious devotion, the views and ways of life represented by Hamas embody everything that the sumptuous and secular PA associated with Fatah is not. This explains, in part, why the articulation of Palestinian nationalism is increasingly taking place through religious rather than secular discourses of resistance and liberation.

What is less widely recognised, however, is that apart from the rising dichotomy between the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority and its Islamist opposition – a dichotomy which, by the 2006, resulted in a split between a Fatah-dominated 'West Bank PA' and Hamas-dominated 'Gaza PA' (see Allen 2013), the period during and after the Oslo negotiations has been characterised by rising levels of political resignation and fatalism among the population at large, and by a more general withdrawal of Palestinians from the realm of organised political life altogether. Taraki (2008a: 62) connects this process mainly to the Palestinian middle classes who, 'caught up in the currents emanating from the unravelling, if not demise, of the postcolonial nationalist project' began directing their energies increasingly towards a myriad of 'privatised individual and family projects for social mobility and distinction', instead of national liberation. Following Lori Allen's argument regarding the political nature of Palestinian cynicism, one might detect a similar process among the Palestinian population at large, irrespective of class: today, 'staying out of politics' can also appear as a highly individualised attempt to salvage nationalist ethics and morality from contamination by Palestinian institutional life, which is seen as highly corrupt and authoritarian. In this sense, the transformation of the Palestinian political landscape during the Oslo Accords cannot be understood merely in terms of the Islamisation of

Palestinian nationalism, but rather in terms of a more general flight of Palestinian subjects from what Jacques Rancière (1999: 28–9) calls *police* politics, politics conceived in terms of the state, collective groups and party organisation, towards spaces that remain alien to hegemonic discourses of modern politics.

In sum, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority introduced Palestinian societies in the West Bank and Gaza to several processes which are normally associated with postcolonial states and societies, and which tend to run counter to the demands of a collective movement for anticolonial national liberation. Firstly, this premature 'postcolonisation' of Palestinian politics has contributed to the fragmentation of Palestinian political community and to the construction and reinforcement of internal divisions and hierarchies among the Palestinians themselves. At the same time, it has also encouraged the gradual withdrawal of the Palestinian population from the public realm of collective politics, towards individual and private affirmations of survival and action that may, at the first sight, appear as an anathema to the national struggle for liberation. In so far as the aim is to better understand the dynamics of the Palestinian politics and subjectivity, the challenge that academics and activists alike need to respond to is to find ways in which the Palestinians' simultaneous subjection to both anticolonial and postcolonial political problem spaces might be taken into account in analysis and representations of politics and resistance in the West Bank and Gaza.

Notes

1 Areas A, which included major Palestinian cities such as Jericho, Ramallah and Gaza city, were handed over fully to the Palestinian Authority; areas B shared Palestinian civil control and Israeli security control, and areas C were under complete Israeli control, except for the Palestinian civilians in them, who remained under the Palestinian Authority's administrative responsibility.
2 According to Robinson, the PLO had never been democratic, but it had nevertheless always displayed a relatively liberal culture of decision making and Arafat himself was always seen as a person who might mediate, persuade and co-opt, but who did not rule over the PLO with an iron hand, for the PLO would not have followed him.
3 Commenting on the first cabinet meeting of the PA on 26 June 1994, Helena Lindholm-Schultz recalls that all of its members were appointed by Yasser Arafat largely in accordance with family loyalties, regional affiliations and factional (Fatah) interests, with most being old revolutionaries and prominent personalities rather than activists of the intifada.
4 My analysis focuses, in particular, upon the period of the second intifada, 2000–05. Since then, the relationship between the Palestinians and the PA has become complicated even further, due to the fact that the authority has been split into a Fatah-dominated PA in the West Bank, and Hamas-dominated PA in Gaza. For this reason, for instance Allen (2013) prefers to talk about the 'West Bank PA' and 'Gaza PA' as separate categories.

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4 Mobile phones and the rise of neoliberalism

One aspect that no study of contemporary politics and political subjectivities can fail to address completely concerns the globalisation and hegemonisation of neoliberal ideas and ideologies, which have paved the way for the increasing individualisation, commercialisation and competitiveness of social life. In previous chapters, I have examined the ways in which postcolonial late modernity and colonial occupation intersect in Palestinian politics and subjectivity by drawing attention to the different ways in which Palestinian everyday resistance was articulated in the context of the first and the second intifadas, and by looking at some of the ways in which the political problem-space in Palestine has been affected by the establishment and institutionalisation of the nascent structures of a Palestinian nation-state. Although both of these studies have referred, perhaps indirectly, to processes and changes that point towards the rise of neoliberal subjectivities and sensitivities within the West Bank and Gaza, in this chapter my aim is to address the question of neoliberalism explicitly. How, I ask, is the encounter between neoliberalism and Israeli occupation being translated in the context of Palestinian day-to-day life, and what implications does it have upon the conditions of possibility of Palestinian political subjectivity, or the prospect of collective struggle?

In order to address these questions, this chapter looks at a variety of discourses and struggles that have developed around mobile telephony in Palestine, and especially the first Palestinian mobile operator Jawwal, during the first years of the 2000s. Mobile telephony, it has been argued, epitomises a diversity of social processes and ideas that are connected to late modernity and the globalisation of neoliberalism (Castells et al. 2007; Law, Fortunati and Yang 2006; Ling 2008). In Palestine, however, the emergence of mobile telephony and the de-territorialising qualities associated with it have intersected with an ultra-territorial, colonial occupation, resulting in a largely unexamined space of multiple and clashing temporalities, spacialities and identifications. A study of these encounters draws out a figure of a late modern subject of colonial occupation, of a Palestinian subject that is increasingly individualised, hybridised and difficult to represent within the dominant discourses of the Palestinians' struggle.

Since the beginning of the second intifada in 2000 and following Israel's repressive measures to quell Palestinian resistance, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has become more difficult than it might ever have been

before. After years of systematic siege, retaliatory violence and bitter power struggles between Palestinian factions and groups, Palestinian economic, political and cultural institutions are at the brink of a collapse and everyday life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories appears increasingly difficult. In spite of this, this period has also witnessed a veritable mobile phone boom in the West Bank and Gaza. Like almost anywhere else in the world, the access and usage of mobile telephones has risen almost exponentially, and today mobile telephony stands as one of the most vibrant sectors in Palestinian economic life. The first Palestinian mobile phone operator, Jawwal, was established in 1999.[1] Since then, Jawwal has taken on an increasingly ubiquitous role on Palestinian streets and inside people's homes, becoming one of the most successful and iconic Palestinian companies ever, and the most visible actor of the Palestinian mobile phone boom.

The importance of Jawwal as a social actor and an indicator of wider transformations within Palestinian society became particularly clear to me when I was conducting fieldwork on the politics of Gaza Beach during the summers of 2003 and 2005. One aspect of the beach that I was particularly interested in at that time were the variety of different beach camps and public tents that Palestinian political factions, including Hamas, Fatah and Islamic Jihad, tended to erect on the beach. The purpose of these tents was to strengthen the popular base of each faction and exhibit their power publicly while offering a variety of summer camps and other activities for enthusiastic beachgoers.

In summer 2005, these political parties had a challenger, Jawwal. In stark contrast to the poverty and discipline common to some of the political summer camps that I had seen, Jawwal summer camps kicked off with powerful sound systems and Arabic pop music, plenty of free gifts, gender-mixed activities and a programme of sponsored entertainment and fun, including dancing and games such as rope-pulling and musical chairs. As with the political summer camps, also these activities were wrapped in the rhetoric of a good cause: everyone attending the camp received a t-shirt with a text 'Keep our beaches clean – Jawwal', and was encouraged to pick up rubbish from the beaches surrounding the tent. In addition to building Jawwal a brand of environmentalism and green responsibility, the official aim of the summer camp was to train children to take care of the environment and to promote responsible citizenship on the eve of Israeli disengagement from Gaza. In comparison with the nationalist and Islamist discipline propagated at the other camps, Jawwal's summer camp appeared as a celebration of what we might call, after Foucault, the 'seductive dimension of liberal biopower'.

Jawwal's emergence among the politically defined public beach tents in Gaza is indicative of the central and potent role that the company has achieved within Palestinian social and public life. Jawwal, the first Palestinian mobile phone operator, might not be an explicitly political entity, nor does it figure in analyses of Palestinian political or social life. But it is emblematic of neoliberal forces that are challenging and transforming Palestinian subjectivity and the dynamics of resistance. The impact of neoliberalism and globalisation, or what we might call in temporal terms as late modernity, on Palestinian politics, is an elusive topic, which is rarely touched upon within studies of the Israeli–Palestinian

Figure 4.1 Children and free gifts at a Jawwal summer camp in Gaza, August 2005 (photograph by the author)

conflict. While the notion of late modernity in the Palestinian context has acquired some interest during the past decade, so far, studies which look at the relationship between Palestine and late modernity have tended to focus on chiefly *Israeli* regimes of control and government and treat late modernity primarily as a phenomenon that is linked to the advancement of information, communication and military technologies. Consequently, much effort has been put into the argument that contemporary military high-tech and systems of surveillance, or the regime of late-modern colonial occupation, are allowing Israel unprecedented control over the Palestinians (Mbembe 2003; Weizman 2007).

Although these efforts to examine the specificities of late modern control in Palestine are important, such approaches leave out several other processes that are equally central to the economic, social and political phenomena of late modernity, including the globalisation of capitalism and the extension and intensification of neoliberal regimes of power. During the Oslo Peace Process, both Israeli and Palestinian societies began to undergo rapid economic and cultural liberalisation, and intensive inclusion in the circuits of globalised capitalism. Palestinian mobile telephony provides a valuable, albeit limited framework for exploring the ways in which these other forces – forces that are often external to, or in conflict with, the power of the Israeli state – have also impacted on the constitution of Palestinian subjectivities and on the conditions of possibility of Palestinian resistance. Any understanding of the present dynamics of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, or potentialities for its resolution in the near future, I argue, requires an ability to comprehend the ways in which Palestine has, despite its unique condition as a society suffering from a colonial, territorial occupation, also become

entangled in socio-economic processes and political struggles that are usually associated with neoliberalism and the political problematic of late modernity. This point has become all the more important in the present context, in which the articulation of new political subjectivities associated with the 'Arab Spring' or 'Arab Revolutions' are soliciting a re-evaluation and re-imagination of the political promises of late modernity in the formerly colonised world.

A short history of telecommunications in Palestine

Building an independent system of telecommunications is one of the many institutional and infrastructural challenges that new postcolonial and independent national states face. In Palestine, the space for a Palestinian telecommunications sector was created on paper, within the confines of the Oslo negotiations. For thirty years preceding the agreements, responsibility for the installation and maintenance of telecommunications infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territories rested with Israel. This changed in 1995, following Article 36 of the Oslo Interim Agreements, which granted the Palestinian Authority the right to build and operate separate and independent communications systems and infrastructures in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PA decided to delegate the task to the private sector and the first Palestinian Telecommunications Company, Paltel, was established in cooperation with the PA and three larger investors.

At this point, telecommunications in Palestine remained relatively underdeveloped, and the existing infrastructure inherited from the occupying authorities was rather poor, arguably due to Israel's desire to prevent the emergence and consolidation of a Palestinian public sphere and connections to the outside world (Bahour 1998). Within a few years of its establishment, Paltel improved the Palestinian telephone network significantly, and expended efforts and resources in building an infrastructure for all main digital communications technologies, including the Internet and mobile telephony. Jawwal, the first Palestinian mobile phone operator and a subsidiary to Paltel, was established in 1999, and the first Jawwal services were made available in the same year.

From the start, Jawwal has occupied an interesting role at the intersection of Palestinian nation building, Israeli occupation, and the expansion of globalised capitalism into the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Although Paltel and Jawwal are private companies, they have strong links to the national project of the Palestinian Authority. When Paltel was established, it was celebrated as one of the first functioning national institutions. The occasion itself was a media event, with televised images of Arafat making the very first Paltel call, declaring it implicitly to be the dawn of a new era in Palestinian history. The existence of an independent telecommunications sector also allowed Palestinians to receive a country code of their own, 970, instead of having to use the Israeli one, 972. All this carried extensive symbolic value for many Palestinians for whom these signs, which replicated similar developments in postcolonial states all over the word, appeared as signs of a definite movement toward an actual statehood and national independence.

However, the broken sovereignty promised by the Oslo Interim Accords ensured that, like every other Palestinian field or endeavour, the formal decolonisation of Palestinian telecommunications did not bring full independence from the former occupier where telecommunications was concerned. On paper, the Oslo Interim Accords were unambiguous about the Palestinians' right to independent telecommunications and a full disengagement from the Israeli system. In the field of mobile telephony, this implied that any company wishing to sell services to Palestinians would need a license from the PA, and would have to pay taxes to it. When Jawwal was established, many Palestinians were already using cellular services offered by Israeli companies such as Pelephone, Cellcom and Orange. Once Jawwal's services were made available, these companies, in the sprit of the Oslo Interim Accords, should have withdrawn from the Palestinian market or sought licenses and tax accountability from the PA.

But that never happened. Instead of withdrawing from the OPT, Israeli companies continued to sell services to Palestinians while failing to meet any economic, social and environmental responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority (Bahour 2004). This breach of the Oslo Accords originates primarily in Israel's policy of settlement expansion. In addition to granting Palestinians a right to disengage from the Israeli sector and to build a market of their own, Oslo secured Israel the right to provide necessary telecommunications services for settlers living in the Palestinian territories. In practice, this has enabled Israeli companies to install and maintain transmission towers in strategic locations throughout the West Bank and Gaza. According to Jawwal's own estimates, Israeli companies are able to cover up to 80 per cent of the Palestinian territories (Rossotto et al. 2008: 6). In fact, since many settlements host only a handful of settlers, it is questionable whether the maintenance of expensive infrastructure in some of these settlements would be profitable at all without the simultaneous capture of the Palestinian market.

Curiously, apart from profiting from the Israeli policy of settlement expansion, in some cases Israeli companies have also encouraged further construction of entirely new settlements. As indicated by Eyal Weizman (2007), the Israeli hilltop settlement of Migron, which was established in 2001 on Palestinian farmers' land near Ramallah, is a case in point. According to Weizman, a group of settlers first complained to the military that their mobile phone reception would cut out on a bend on a highway from Jerusalem to the settlements. The Israeli mobile operator Orange agreed to build a new antenna on a hilltop overlooking the bend, and other companies came along to supply electricity and water to the construction site. Once the tower was built, it had to be manned permanently by a guard, who moved onto the site in a trailer with his wife and children, fenced the hilltop off, and connected their home to electricity and sewage. The next year, five more settler families moved in, and a nursery and a synagogue were built on the site. By mid-2006, Migron had turned into a substantial settlement, with 150 people living in 60 trailers placed on the hilltop around the antenna. In this case, the colonisation of Palestinian airwaves and the telecommunications sector was not only an outcome of the inadequacies of the Oslo Interim Accords, but a driving force behind further territorial conquest (Weizman 2007: 1–6).

That mobile telephony might have proved to be a battleground of nation-statist agendas and a tool for territorial occupation appears to be a contradiction of those qualities that are usually linked to mobile telecommunications. In the wider research context, this field, which liberal techno-enthusiasts have celebrated as 'a fundamental pillar of modern-day individualism' and 'a manifestation of individual freedom in the 21st Century' (Chaoul 2006: 50) has often been associated with new, technology-driven forms of capitalism that encourage de-territorialising processes. Above all, mobiles phones are seen as emblematic of neoliberal, consumerised desires, which value mobility, fluidity and connection, but also individual control and competition. For instance, media philosopher George Myerson sees mobile phones as embodiments of the contemporary spirit of a 'changing environment'. 'If you want to assure yourself that you belong to the new century,' Myerson writes, 'this is the object to have in your hands' (Myerson 2001: 3). For Myerson, the appeal of the mobile phone draws largely on our desire for personal freedom, but he emphasises that this notion of freedom is essentially neoliberal in kind. It is freedom understood not in terms of collective potential or creative becoming, but in terms of individualised control.

On the other side of the argument, mediated yet perpetual interaction via mobiles is associated with the possibility of creating new forms of social cohesion among small, sub-national groups under the atomising and de-territorialising conditions of late modernity (Ling 2008) and with a certain democratising promise. The mobile phone allows for the maintenance of social bonds beyond face-to-face interaction and, like the Internet, it is seen as a medium that can evade centralised government and give rise to spontaneous and non-hierarchic political movements, swarms or 'smart mobs' such as those described by Howard Rheingold (2002) as early as the beginning of the 2000s. According to Rheingold, mediation and the instant connection offered by mobile technologies allow people to cooperate despite the absence of physical or real-term encounters, thus encouraging entirely new forms of collective human action. Similarly, Castells and colleagues (2007: 185–213) suggest that the networked and rhizomatic quality of mobile-enabled communication is producing new possibilities for non-hierarchic and spontaneous 'mobile civil societies' that seem to have materialised in the context of events such as the toppling of President Estrada in the Philippines in 2001, the electoral defeat of the Spanish *Partido Popular* in 2004 and, most recently, the Egyptian revolution. The introduction of camera phones and smart phones, and the assumption that visual evidence produced by these devices can function as an efficient watchdog against governmental, racial and ethnic violence has added further dimensions to the 'digital democracy' debate (Kuntsman and Stein 2011).

This enthusiasm for the mobile as a technology of democratisation can be criticised on several accounts. Popular protests did happen before, and the political potential of the mobile phone depends on the particular uses to which it is put. Moreover, as a potent harbinger of globalised capitalism, the mobile phone was already part of a neoliberal biopolitics, and it has been harnessed also by states, and terrorist movements, a point that also Rheingold has been keen to

make (Rheingold 2002: xviii–xxii). This, however, does not contradict the idea that mobile telephony is strongly *predisposed* towards de-territorialising and decentralising tendencies which challenge previous systems of power and control – systems which Deleuze and Guattari would call 'molar' or 'arborescent' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004).

What makes mobile telephony in Palestine particularly interesting, however, is the fact that there, such de-territorialising tendencies meet with a manifestly ultra-territorialising colonial occupation. In Palestine, the rise of the mobile phone coincided largely with the end of the Oslo negotiations and the beginning of the second intifada. Jawwal was established just one year before the intifada broke out, and its most rapid growth period took place during the first years of the new millennium. Despite the shrinking of the Palestinian economy as the result of the closures and other punitive measures, these years saw the number of Palestinian mobile subscribers soar almost exponentially, turning the Palestinian cellular market into one of the most promising in the whole Middle East region.

This brings up the question of why did the mobile phone become a success in Palestine right at the height of political crisis and economic hardship? The answer is manifold. As has already been pointed out, mobiles are intermittently seductive in a world in which mobility, individual control and consumption are highly appreciated. This is particularly true for Palestinians whose daily existence is trapped by colonial occupation and incarceration within besieged villages and towns. Mobile phones present Palestinians a rare opportunity to get hold of something that is connected strongly to ideas of high modernity, mobility, progress, individual freedom and personal success. Indeed, the occupation might even have intensified Palestinian desires for mobile telephony in exactly these terms. For Palestinians, a feeling that they, too, are taking part in the narrative of technological advancement and globalisation is probably even more tempting than for those who live in the world's metropolitan, liberal and 'smooth' centres. An Internet Gallup poll, conducted by Jawwal in 2005 and published upon the release on Jawwal's website, revealed that instead of functionality, reliability, or economic costs, an overwhelming majority of Palestinian respondents considered special features and looks as the most desirable qualities in a mobile phone. Despite their persistent condition as a colonised people, Palestinians are not immune to the seductions of commoditised, individual self-fashioning.

The occupation has also increased those contexts and situations in which mobile communication as such has become particularly useful. High levels of insecurity and uncertainty within war and conflict zones increase people's need for information and constant touch, and are thus conducive to a thriving mobile telephone sector (Dewachi 2006; Konkel and Heeks 2009: 418; Ribeiro 2006; Yatzbeck 2006). As one commentator on the use of IT in Palestine puts it, 'Mobile phones have become a necessity rather than a luxury in a country where even ambulances and pregnant women can be delayed at checkpoints for hours, and where suspects are summarily detained' (Guest 2004: 31). Perhaps most important in this context is the way in which the Israeli policy of closure and siege has placed struggles over space and basic mobility into the centre of Palestinians'

everyday life. Alongside the wider legal, bureaucratic and military machinery, the closure consists of fences, checkpoints, roadblocks, curfews, settlements and the massive West Bank separation wall. This system of control has virtually incarcerated Palestinians in their cities and villages, turning the Occupied Territories into large open-air prisons. In such a context, mobile phones have become indispensable tools for daily attempts at evading the blockade and mitigating its impacts on everyday life.

For example on the West Bank, Palestinian areas are fragmented by an extensive network of Israeli settlements, by roads that are reserved for settlers only, and by permanent as well as temporary, 'flying', checkpoints. The extent, location and level of closure are never predictable, and the map of the siege can change by the hour. In response, for instance Palestinian taxi drivers have appropriated the mobile phone to enquire about, and keep others informed of the precise location of roadblocks, soldiers and alternative routes. Mohammed Najib, a taxi driver from Nablus whom I interviewed in Ramallah in September 2006, had plenty of experience of this sort of manoeuvring. According to Najib, every morning the first taxi to begin the journey from Nablus to Ramallah informs colleagues about the situation on the road. The practice continues throughout the day, and during particularly heavy closure it is common for drivers to spend most of their time with one hand on the steering wheel, and the other on the phone. Although using the phone is expensive, and takes up a large part of the drivers' meagre salary (Najib earned some 40–50 shekels – about US$13 – a day, and spent around 25 shekels of that sum on mobile telephony alone), no driver could operate without one. 'If you are a taxi driver, you *must* have a phone', he explains.[2] The rise of smart phones has introduced further opportunities: today, young Palestinian entrepreneurs have embarked on developing SMS and iPhone applications to report on the status of checkpoint traffic.[3] As such, in Palestine the mobile phone is working as an agent of de-territorialisation in a very concrete sense. Palestinians who evade the closure collectively are exemplary of Rheingold's 'smart mobs', swarms which use mobile technology '*to act together in new ways and in new situations where collective action was not possible before*' (Rheingold 2002: xviii, emphasis original). Although actions such as these might not amount to strategic resistance against the occupation, they do sustain a spontaneous flow of Palestinian bodies and everyday activities against attempts by the Israeli military to demobilise life in the West Bank and Gaza.

But let us not forget about the question of neoliberalism with which this chapter began. So far, I have pitted the notions of territoriality and de-territorialisation against one another in ways that correspond largely with the territorialising power of the occupation and the de-territorialising quality of Palestinian resistance. Such a juxtaposition carries some obvious risks, one of which is that of simplifying the relationship between power and de-territorialisation, or equating de-territorialisation with resistance per se. This point is particularly important once it is remembered that apart from appropriations of the mobile phone by Israel and the Palestinians along the lines of mutual antagonism, the mobile phone stands as a symbol of distinctly neoliberal forms of power that are also

gaining hold in Palestine, yet much harder to locate within the polarising text of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Keeping this in mind, I will next examine the relationship between Palestinians and the first Palestinian mobile phone operator Jawwal. The main argument that I shall make here is that during its first years of existence (1999–2006, which coincide with the end of the Oslo Accords and the beginning of the second intifada), Jawwal's standing within Palestinian society saw significant changes. These changes reflect the rise of an increasingly consumerised and individualised mode of subjectivity in Palestine, as well as the rise of resistances and struggles that correspond to distinctively neoliberal systems of control rather than the Israeli occupation. While both of these processes are antithetical to the constitution of a strong national movement and collective unity among the Palestinians, they also remain largely invisible as long as the study of Palestinian politics is limited to the analytical frames of national struggle or the rise of Islam.

The nationalist strategy: one voice, one Jawwal

As I have argued so far, war and occupation have actually contributed to the mobile phone boom in Palestine. However, the fact that this boom should have profited Jawwal to the extent that it has should not be taken for granted. When Jawwal was established, Israeli operators enjoyed a firm hold on the growing markets in the West Bank and Gaza. Thousands of Palestinians were subscribers to these companies, and prepaid scratch cards and other Israeli cellular products could be purchased with ease in most grocery shops throughout the Palestinian territories. In this context, Jawwal needed a marketing strategy that would be powerful enough to seduce new customers as well as prompt those who already held an Israeli phone to switch to Jawwal.

During the first years, the answer was nationalism. The nationalist marketing strategy was masterminded by Jawwal's first CEO, Hakam Kanafani, who sought to distinguish Jawwal clearly from its Israeli competitors on national grounds. Kanafani assumed leadership of the company in December 2000, and his first move was to have Jawwal's logo redesigned into one that corresponded with the Palestinian flag. The company's first logo, used for the 18 months of its existence, had been blue in colour, resembling closely Paltel's designs and brand. Instead of blue, which many Palestinians associated with the colour of the Israeli flag, the new logo used the Palestinian national colours (black, red and green on a white surface), a pronounced image of a mobile phone, and a text, which portrayed the company name printed in both Arabic and English.[4]

The nationalist campaign coincided with the start of the second intifada. As the urgency of resistance against Israel returned, the issue of national unity also became an increasingly central concern for the Palestinians. In 2001, Jawwal directly harnessed these anxieties by launching a powerful advertising campaign centred on the slogan 'One Voice, One Jawwal'. The campaign, which stressed the importance of Palestinian unity and resolve, was massive. In addition to Palestine's domestic press and television, 'One Voice, One Jawwal' was broadcast

Figure 4.2 Jawwal's 'nationalist' logo, released in 2000 (courtesy of Jawwal)

through satellite television channels including regional networks like al Jazeera, Abu Dhabi TV and CNN, making Jawwal the first Palestinian company ever to buy advertising space globally on Arab and international networks. These efforts were not wasted: the campaign instantly attracted the public both in Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East, and it was even awarded the precious Golden Award as the best television advertisement in the Middle East for the year 2001. On the ground, the second intifada and the idea of a collective, strategic national struggle was disintegrating. On the level of ideas of how the intifada should proceed, however, the desire for national unity was strong. 'One Voice, One Jawwal' was effective precisely because it managed to tap such hopes and link ideas of national unity to the company's own brand.

How did the Israeli state react to the rise of Jawwal, and the thriving of a genuinely Palestinian mobile communications sector? In just two years under Kanafani's directorship, Jawwal had become one of the most successful Palestinian companies. During the year 2001 alone, the number of Palestinian subscribers increased from 80,000 to 200,000, and the company reported net profits of US$5.8 million. This might not be entirely surprising: after all, information and communications technology, including mobile telephony, are readily understood as an economic sector that has most chances of success in the physically strangling conditions of Israeli occupation. While traditional phone lines presume an extensive network of telephone wires, which are expensive to build and maintain, infrastructure for mobile telephony does not require uninterrupted territorial continuity to function; moreover, it is easier to defend or replace after aggression, thus providing an economic sector that is particularly adaptable for unstable and volatile political spaces.

But there are limits to this extra-territorial potential. By the time that the company was gaining a record number of subscribers and Israeli companies operating in the territories were rapidly losing their customer base, the IDF instituted

Figure 4.3 An example of the advertisement campaign 'One Voice, One Jawwal', from 2001 (courtesy of Jawwal)

measures that would cause significant damage to Jawwal's development and services. The principal of such measure was Israel's decision in the late 2001 to prevent Jawwal from importing goods and equipment that were vital to Jawwal's functions. The Oslo interim accords reserved to Israel the opportunity to control all the borders of the Palestinian territories and, most importantly, to channel all imports to the Palestinian territories via Israeli ports and airports. Although in principle, the same agreements stipulated a 'right' for the Palestinians to import and export freely, in practice, Israel was granted a position to control at will which goods and objects could enter the Palestinian territories, and which could not.

In October 2001, Jawwal, as well as several other Palestinian IT and telecommunications companies, received from the Israeli Ministry of Defence a military order retracting their licence to import equipment. At the same time, the IDF confiscated the technological imports that were already on the way, placed them in large storage facilities, and later even charged Palestinian companies high rents for this storage space. Jawwal alone was forced to pay half a million dollars in demurrage fees for the storing of confiscated equipment.[5] Among the confiscated items were technological devices that were not only very expensive, but central to

Jawwal's continued ability to provide services to its expanding customer base, for example, 60 transmission antennas.

The situation sparked anger and frustration within the Palestinian business community. Officially, the confiscations were made for security reasons, but both Palestinian and Israeli sources proposed that the motivations behind the seizure were manifold. According to Hakam Kanafani, Jawwal's imports began getting stuck in Israel precisely around the same time as Jawwal was hitting record growth:

> In 2001, Jawwal managed to regain 60% of the Palestinian subscribers that were on the Israeli networks. That's precisely why on the 29th of October, 2001, the Israeli authorities blocked 7.5 tons of imported cellular stations . . . Taking Jawwal's equipment 'commercial hostages' paves the way for the Israeli mobile operators to gain back the market share that Jawwal worked so hard to achieve. (Kanafani 2002).

Whatever the reasons behind the confiscations, they weakened Jawwal and its ability to compete with Israeli operators. In 2002, a lack of access to necessary equipment prevented Jawwal from expanding its services despite growing demand, and resulted in the company's decision to stop selling any new subscriptions. On the ground, the availability of Jawwal SIM cards dwindled, and those that were available on the second-hand and black market sold for terribly high prices. When I visited the Palestinian territories in the same summer, I was unable to purchase a Jawwal SIM card for my phone, and had to buy one instead from the Israeli company Orange.

Meanwhile, Israel launched other territorial measures that disrupted Jawwal's operation, for instance preventing the company from installing transmission antennas in places that would be crucial for sustained coverage throughout the West Bank. Only areas A and B of the West Bank are under full jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. In Area C, which consists of large stretches of land between Palestinian villages and towns, permission for construction projects need to be applied for from Israeli officials. Although Israel has not issued an open policy forbidding Jawwal from installing its equipment in area C, it has been very reluctant to grant such permissions.[6] Another problem is related to frequencies. In the Oslo Interim Accords, Israel was placed in charge of the transmission frequencies and of their allocation to the Palestinians, but the number of frequencies defined sufficient for the Palestinians at the time has proven to be seriously underestimated. While the mobile phone boom, which took off a few years after the accords were signed, increased the demand on the Palestinian side to an extent that was unexpected, Israel refused to adjust the extent of frequency allocation to meet the needs of the Palestinian telecommunication sector.

For these reasons, Jawwal was unable to provide uninterrupted coverage on all West Bank roads, or to meet rising demands on its capacity. The situation translated into poor services and unreliable connections, and anyone wishing to enjoy full service on journeys between Palestinian towns had to resort to more than one

handset: one by Jawwal, others by Israeli operators. For the Israeli companies, covering Area C is relatively easy thanks to the strategically placed hilltop settlements and as the case of Migron demonstrates, it has even been ready to establish new settlements to meet the needs of Israeli cellular coverage.

Expecting quality, not equality

How, then, did ordinary Palestinians, customers of both Jawwal and Israeli companies, react to these problems? Given Jawwal's antagonistic position vis-à-vis Israeli operators, and the fact that it is one of the most established and highly performing Palestinian institutions in Gaza and the West Bank, it would be easy to assume that the troubles faced by the company would only strengthen Palestinian commitment to the national mobile phone operator. At the time, Jawwal's customer services might have appeared worse than the services of its Israeli competitors, but after all most of these problems derived from Israeli aggression and occupation policies against Jawwal. Moreover, Jawwal had become one of the largest employers within the Palestinian territories and unlike Israeli companies it carried and fulfilled various social, economic and environmental responsibilities to Palestinian society. In addition to paying taxes to the Palestinian Authority, Jawwal was involved as a sponsor in a variety of Palestinian educational, sport, charity and other social activities in the West Bank and Gaza. And in spring 2002, when West Bank Palestinians endured one of the most aggressive Israeli military incursions in decades – the so-called 'Operation Defensive Shield' – Jawwal was on the firing line: its offices were looted and destroyed, and staff detained for interrogation.

Despite all this, Israeli disruptions of Jawwal's main functions in 2001 and 2002 did not cause Palestinians to side and identify with the Palestinian mobile phone operator. Instead, problems in Jawwal's services raised widespread discontent with and dismay regarding the company. For many, Jawwal's bad coverage, jammed lines and the lack of special discount schemes that Israeli operators were frequently offering to Palestinians stood above all as proof of Jawwal's incompetence and greed. Just like their own government by the Palestinian Authority, towards which Palestinians had become increasingly resentful during the Oslo Interim Accords and which maintained links to Jawwal, Jawwal began to be viewed suspiciously as an embodiment of poor service, incompetence and corruption. In several private conversations in the West Bank and Gaza between the years 2003 and 2006, I heard Palestinians express distrust over the very ethos and capabilities of the Palestinian mobile phone company, and accuse the company of raking in all the profits while offering Palestinians second-class services at expensive prices. Others were dubious about the political and economic standing of *any* Palestinian company, due to the dependent relationship of Palestinian territories to Israel, and saw no point in supporting Jawwal on 'nationalist' grounds. As one Palestinian man, Nasir Hazara from the town of Yatta put it, there is no difference whether one contributes money to an Israeli or Palestinian company. 'In the end, all money goes back to Israel anyways', said Hazara, and explained that

he used an Israeli company instead of Jawwal because Jawwal's services were so bad.[7] Instead of relating to Jawwal as (anticolonial) national subjects who would identify Jawwal's troubles as part of a shared struggle against the occupation, the people whom I talked with related to the company above all as quality-conscious consumers or, alternatively, as sceptics of corporate power in general.

Such feelings were echoed within, and promoted by, the wider Palestinian business community. The loudest opposition has probably come from PITA, the Palestinian IT Association for Companies, which presents itself as the herald of the liberalisation of Palestinian markets.[8] Based on neoliberal ideas, which stress the importance of free competition for the development of any business or service sector, this community has expressed persistent concerns over Jawwal's monopoly position in the Palestinian territories. Another, related, problem for them was the fact that Jawwal shared such close links to the Palestinian Authority. The PA had invested and participated in setting up the company, and granted it market exclusivity for the first five years. Moreover, in the absence of an independent regulator, the PA stayed in charge of all matters relating to the telecommunications sector, such as issuing licences to new operators and promoting market competition.

Together, these matters have subjected both Jawwal and the PA to harsh criticisms by those Palestinians who see liberalisation as a key to developing economic, social and political life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in accordance with neoliberal ideas of self and society. For instance Sam Bahour, himself an American-Palestinian businessman and one of Paltel's (Jawwal's mother company) founding employees who resigned from Paltel in the year 1997 due to these disputes, used to argue that the Palestinian community at large would profit from the opening-up of the Palestinian business space to more competition: services would improve, prices would go down, and the management of business would become more transparent (Bahour 1998 and 2004). This campaign for market liberalisation was successful: in 2006, the PA granted a licence for a second mobile operator, Gulf-based al Wataniya (however, the company could not begin to offer services in the OPT before 2009 due to Israel's refusal to release adequate frequencies for the company). Currently, the PA is planning to open the market to a third operator.

Initially, Jawwal's response to popular criticism was to emphasise Israel's role in creating the crisis, and to position the company side by side with ordinary Palestinians who also suffered from Israeli aggression. At first, in 2002, the company tried to clarify publicly the reasons – the confiscation of equipment, inability to build new antennas in required locations, etc. – that were behind declining service through press releases and by issuing announcements that explained the situation in detail in local newspapers (see Kanafani 2002). Later on, Jawwal launched a sustained advertising campaign in which individual Jawwal employees and their family members, presented as genuine, ordinary Palestinians, declared '*Ana Jawwal*' (I am Jawwal), and told about themselves and their relationship to the company. The obvious aim of the campaign was to emphasise the organic link between Jawwal and Palestinian society and to fight off any negative images that linked Jawwal with corruption, greed, alienation and

indifference to the needs of its customers, 'ordinary Palestinians'. Meanwhile, the company had limited success at finding alternative technical ways in which to improve the company's performance.[9] By taking these steps, the company was able to recover from the worst impact of the crisis and even to begin sell new subscriptions. However the quality of the services and coverage remained significantly lower than Palestinian customers expected, and the campaign '*Ana Jawwal*' did not manage to turn the tide. By 2003, Jawwal's growth rates fell sharply and the company's targets were met only halfway. Giving the fading appeal of the second intifada and the spiralling processes of social and political fragmentation, it appears as if the Palestinians were not willing to suffer poor services and expensive prices under the guise of national solidarity. At least in relation to the sole national mobile phone operator, many Palestinians identified themselves first and foremost as customers expecting quality.

Subaltern militancy and corporate power

Thus far, I have examined the interstices of neoliberalism in Palestine primarily in terms of the rise of a Palestinian consumerist ethos. However, around 2005 there was another change in the relationship between Jawwal and Palestinian society, which is equally interesting. From that year onwards, the main challenge identified by Jawwal no longer emanated from Israeli occupation, nor did it come in the form of a consumerised Palestinian subjectivity that places Jawwal on the same level with Israeli companies. Instead, the challenge has developed within Palestinian society, and in tune with some of the most potent transnational discourses that characterise the politics of late modernity: discourses of health and environmentalism.

During the early 2000s and especially since the year 2005, the Palestinians in the OPT have expressed increasing concerns about the possible health risks of mobile-related radiation, above all radiation emanating form cellular transmission towers. In so doing, they have effectively taken part in a wider health scare or a 'moral panic' (Cohen 1980) which originated in the United States in the mid-1990s and which has, since then, spread globally through information, expert knowledge and rumours disseminated via the Internet, local media, and even the mobile phone itself (Burgess 2004). This panic has entailed campaigns and popular protests against the erection and placement of transmission towers in the vicinity of residential areas, schools and other public institutions in locations as diverse as the UK, Italy, Australia and Egypt (Burgess 2004: 169–215). Although the panic itself may thus be regarded as emblematic of de-territorialised political subjectivity, and as a phenomenon that is closely related to the globalisation of discourses of risk that Beck identifies as central to late modernity (Beck 1992), the actual articulation of the panic and measures of resistance taken against the towers have taken on a variety of different forms depending on the context and location. Of these, Palestine offers an extreme example.

There, concerns for health and the environment have been articulated through direct popular action and even armed attacks against Jawwal's transmission

towers. In a variety of incidents in Gaza and the West Bank, several towers have been burned or destroyed by shooting at the hands of angry protesters who accuse Jawwal's towers of causing cancer to people living in the area. The first incident took place in 2005 in Yatta, a deprived West Bank town at the outskirts of Hebron. There, Jawwal had placed a tower on a hill right in the middle of the town, in a graveyard next to the main mosque. According to the locals, problems around the tower began to accumulate in 2000, when a young Palestinian man from Yatta was diagnosed with cancer. At that time, there were rumours that the doctor in Bethlehem had suspected exposure to radiation as the cause of the cancer and that he had asked the patient whether he lived near a cellular transmission tower. The tentative diagnosis did not provoke public anger, but during the next few years there was an increase in the number of cancer cases in Yatta. Many of the ill were locals living right next to, or very near to the tower, and a significant number of them were young in age. Gradually, people began to link cancer with the tower and in a bid to get rid of it, locals approached the company in order to ask for the tower's removal from the city centre.[10]

When there was no response from Jawwal's side, locals began to attack the tower directly by throwing stones, and threats to burn the tower unless it was removed from the site were issued to Jawwal. These actions caused Jawwal to increase security for the tower, and to pay the municipality for an unarmed police night guard at the site. The reason the police officer in question, Ashraf Shareef, could not possess a gun was dictated by the fear of Israeli military: if IDF soldiers found him outside at night wearing a gun, they would consider him as part of the armed resistance against the Israeli occupation.[11] Over time, attacks on the tower intensified: stones were swapped for bullets fired from a distance and, finally, in 2005, the whole site was burned down. The attack itself was as banal as it was effective. After helping the police officer whose job was to guard the tower to carry his belongings and personal television set out of the cabin underneath the tower, a group of about six anti-tower activists shot up the machinery inside the tower base, poured petrol on the site, and set it on fire. Aware of the fact that the incident would be repeated if a new tower were placed on the same site, Jawwal was forced to bend to local demands and engage in direct and open negotiations to identify a new, better place for the transmission tower. In an eight months' time, Jawwal erected a new tower a relatively long distance from the town, in a place that everyone was happy with – including the landowner who received relatively high compensation for hosting the tower.

After the indisputable success of militant grass-roots activism against Jawwal towers in Yatta, similar incidents spread to other Palestinian locations, including Qalqilya, Beit Fajar and Idna, where towers were also burned down and destroyed. These incidents should not, however, be regarded solely as instances of resistance to cellular transmission towers prompted by transnationally disseminated health concerns. Instead, what I argue is that they have been articulated also in opposition to, and suspicion of, Jawwal's policies and corporate ethics in a twist that associates Jawwal closely with the corrupt and irresponsible nature of the Palestinian Authority, and sees the marriage between corporate power and the

Palestinian Authority as particularly harmful to the interests and physical well-being of ordinary Palestinians.

For instance in Qalqilya, where a tower was placed on top of a residential building in a densely built area and burned down a little later, residents were keen to compare Jawwal's ethics and responsibility to those practiced by Orange, Cellcom and Pelephone – and to speak out in favour of the Israeli companies. Standing on the roof of the building that used to serve as a base for the burned Jawwal tower, one of the residents explained to me that unlike in Palestine, in Israel, the safety and rights of individual citizens were in high regard, and transmission towers were always placed at a safe distance from housing centres. To prove the case, he pointed in the direction of the Israeli border, where we could see an Israeli transmission tower standing alone on a small, green hill. Jawwal, on the other hand, he said, was neglecting safety standards in a bid to find cheapest solutions, and risked public health by constructing towers in densely populated areas. The ultimate responsibility, he argued, lay with the Palestinian Authority, whose poor regulation failed to protect Palestinian citizens from Jawwal's greed. While Palestinians opposing the towers are thus drawing on health concerns that are by no means unique to Palestine, and while their resistance may be interpreted as resistance against neoliberal corporate power, in practice these concerns tend to merge with deep suspicions regarding the morality and conduct of Palestinian economic and governmental institutions, at least when placed in comparison with their Israeli equivalents. In a broader context, this idea is indicative of the success of the liberal political ethos in producing subjectivities that regard the narrative of liberal democratisation as essentially emancipatory and that project regimes that fail to fulfil these standards as backward and totalitarian.

In any case, in the matter of just a few years, popular attacks against Jawwal's infrastructure had become a problem that exceeded, in the company's evaluation, the troubles faced by the Palestinian cellular company in the face of Israeli aggression. In 2009, the company presented itself on the official Jawwal website in the following terms:

> 'We are Innovative. We innovate new methods to overcome obstacles.'
>
> One of the major difficulties Jawwal faces is manifested in the amount of frequency spectrum allocated for its network by the Israeli government. This accounts as one of the major obstacles that Jawwal and perhaps no other telecommunications cellular company around the world encounters. Such obstacles hinder Jawwal's attempts to enhance reception services and expansion strategies in the territories it covers. Jawwal has also been enduring a lot of difficulties manifested in the confiscation of its equipment and information systems, which resulted in the suspension of selling lines to its customers in many different occasions. Jawwal technical staff innovated new creative technological solutions to circumvent such limitations.
>
> One of the major challenges Jawwal faces today is the intense opposition by some communities regarding the building of cellular towers. The cellular towers are constructed to assist in providing better reception services to

> customers in these communities. However, in the past few years, Jawwal towers were burned and vandalized due to the misconceptions by some that these towers have negative effect on the surrounding environment. Jawwal has been committed to, and still is, the international standards determined by specialized international institutions in this field. Thus, the frequencies transmitted by the towers are much lower than the internationally approved minimum limit, which reduces the impact on the surrounding environment and constitutes no danger whatsoever.[12]

Here Jawwal is underlining its Palestinian-ness by resorting to Palestinian discourses of steadfastness (*sumud*). The company's endurance and ability to 'overcome obstacles' under extreme circumstances are strongly emphasised. However, these hardships are not limited to those caused by the Israeli occupation. Instead, 'vandalism' by 'misconceived' Palestinians is identified as the most acute problem.

There are many reasons that might explain the exceptional force of Palestinian anti-tower militancy. One tentative and highly controversial explanation might be found in the micro politics underlying resistance. Talking in the position of a Jawwal official, Kamal Ratrout, Jawwal's chief engineer, suggested that the problem has only intensified after people realised that Jawwal is paying compensation for the land on which towers are erected. According to Ratrout, resistance to towers has been provoked, at least in part, by groups who are jealous of the beneficiaries, or alternatively, who want to raise the stakes of compensation.[13]

Another explanation is found in the relative collapse of governmental structures in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the second intifada. Unlike health- and environment-conscious people in many other parts of the world, Palestinians are shooting and burning the towers down because *they can* do it. They posses the means – and the lack of an effective centralised government, coupled with popular support for the protesters, has meant that thus far, none of the anti-tower militants has been prosecuted. This point is supported by the occurrence of similar, if not higher levels of anti-tower militancy in other societies where the state is weak, such as Iraq and Afghanistan.[14]

Thirdly, although Israeli occupation remains the most burning political issue in the Palestinian territories, a large proportion of the Palestinians today feel rather pessimistic about their possibilities of doing anything to change the situation due to the physical distance from which the Israeli military machine governs the West Bank and Gaza (through the systems of siege and closure), and due to the sophistication and sheer power of the occupying force. Jawwal, on the other hand, is an institution of power which is within the reach of ordinary Palestinians, and against which effective resistance is still possible, as was proved by the case in Yatta. At the same time as the unending encroachments of an ultra-territorial occupation, which include house demolitions, checkpoints, blanket curfews, fences and walls that divide the Palestinian territories into arbitrary enclaves, feed into a Palestinian experience of powerlessness in relationship to their immediate surroundings and living space, resistance against the towers provides them a chance to restore some of their territorial authority – albeit in an extremely limited form.

Against this context, it is not surprising that popular resistance against Jawwal's transmission towers has reached such effective proportions.

Whatever the reasons, for Jawwal to find effective PR strategies for fighting local resistance has become very important. As the last phrase in the quote from Jawwal's website indicates, commitment to international environmental standards has been one of the main discourses through which the company has sought to deal with the crisis. Suzan Jarrar from *Ellam Tam*, a Ramallah-based public relations office in charge of Jawwal's brand management, confirms the case: according to Jarrar, reconstructing the company's brand as green and environmentally responsible was carried out precisely in response to these problems.[15] Thus in the spring of 2006, at an occasion which coincided with the end of Hakam Kanafani's leadership of Jawwal and the installation of the new CEO Ammar Aker, Jawwal released a new logo which replaced the old, nationalist Palestinian looks with abstract blue and green designs. Irene Saadeh, the head of Jawwal's marketing at the time, explains that the green colour was used to communicate the company's 'continuous responsibility towards the environment'. Blue, in turn, was to symbolise high-tech competence. Whereas highlighting Jawwal's image as a serious high-tech company was important due to the mistrust that the Palestinians had developed in response to Jawwal's technological failures (which according to Jawwal derived from Israeli confiscations), environmental responsibility was crucial in the fight against the rising tide of violence and aggression against Jawwal's transmission towers.[16]

Figure 4.4 The new Jawwal logo and advertising campaigns that have been released with it emphasise environmental responsibility and excellence in high-tech through abstract, soft designs and the choice of green and blue colours (courtesy of Jawwal)

Advertisements might well be regarded as one of the quickest media to respond to changing attitudes and desires of dominant social middle classes. Branding and advertisement campaigns are carefully calculated according to the needs and values of the target group. In Palestine, the changing advertising strategies of the largest Palestinian company, Jawwal, are indicative of a gradual process of fragmentation of Palestinian national subjectivity. Although discourses of nationalism were still appealing enough to Palestinians to be used as marketing devices during the early years of the second intifada, by the second half of the decade Jawwal was already drawing primarily on discourses of technological competence and environmental responsibility.

Resistance in a complex world

Sociologists of risk remind us that what becomes perceived as a risk, problem, or threat to a society has no necessary point of reference, but should rather be conceived as a result of social construction and therefore reflective of the society's dominant values, beliefs and identities (Beck 1992; Burgess 2004). Unlike people in the United States, where the health panic concerning mobile-related radiation was first set off, the Palestinians are exposed daily to substantial and direct forms of insecurity and danger from the military occupation, and poverty and social inequality also constitute an increasing problem. In this sense, the identification of Jawwal's towers as a risk demanding direct action and popular intervention is particularly intriguing. What does the prominence of this health panic tell us about politics and political subjectivity in Palestine?

Adam Burgess interprets the global dissemination of anti-tower campaigns as part of a wider culture of heightened risk perception, which is driven by the breakdown of traditional patterns of social life and individualisation of subjectivities (Burgess 2004: 28). This idea is derived from the work of Ulrich Beck, who argues that late modern societies, or what he describes as 'reflexive modernity', are experiencing a large-scale legitimacy crisis caused by the dissolution of trust in modern narratives of emancipation, including narratives of nationalism and scientific, technological and economic progress. This crisis is reflected in the rise of discourses of risk (especially those related to health and the environment), in the de-territorialisation of political, economic and social concerns beyond the level of the nation-state and in the rise of 'subpolitics', which is based on the articulation of individual concerns, life projects and identities rather than large-scale social and political organisation centred on the nation-state and collective identities. This is why the wider debate on the political problematic of late modernity is concerned, above all, with the political status and significance of these new articulations of subjectivity and action, and with their tentative relationship to contemporary forms of power (Beck 1997; Mouffe 2005).

Although the immediate reasons behind the rise of anti-tower campaigns in the Palestinian context are manifold, the phenomenon is deeply entangled with these questions that concern the constitution of politics and political subjectivities within increasingly individualised and globalised societies. By reclaiming

control over their immediate surroundings and spaces of living, the Palestinians who attack Jawwal's transmission towers are clearly resisting neoliberal forms of corporate power and expressing mistrust over the Palestinian Authority, which appears in their eyes as increasingly illegitimate, corrupt and incompetent. However, in doing so, they also participate in the transnational discourses of health and environmentalism which are strongly linked with the 'subpoliticisation' of contemporary social, political and economic struggles and which have become central to the biopolitical regimes of neoliberalism and neoliberal globalisation.

Whatever we might think about the political status of these articulations of subjectivity and resistance, it is important to note that they are increasingly hard to represent within the interpretive frameworks of nationalism or Islamism. What is even more important, none of them can be easily reconciled with the ongoing demand for a collective struggle against the Israeli occupation. Despite the persistence of Israeli occupation and its omnipotent role in Palestinian everyday lives, contemporary Palestine is also entangled in a variety of complex power relations that do not bear any necessary relationship to Israeli occupation and which tend to undermine, rather than support, the constitution of a strong national movement based on collective unity. This is why, in order to understand the dynamics of the Palestinians' struggle, it is necessary to pay attention not only to the Israeli regime of *late modern colonial occupation*, but also to the multifaceted politics and potential of *late modern subjects of colonial occupation.*

This chapter has examined a variety of ways in which mobile communications in Palestine intersect with the Israeli occupation and with the constitution of Palestinian political subjectivity in the context of neoliberal globalisation. I have argued, first, that although mobile telephony presents the Palestinians in a (rare) field of economic activity which is able to thrive relatively well under conditions of military occupation and siege, the de-territorialising quality of the mobile phone is by no means unchallenged, given Israel's ability to physically prevent the movement of goods and people in and out of the Palestinian territories, and to govern the construction of infrastructure necessary for the maintenance of mobile networks. Despite the more general trend towards neoliberal globalisation and market liberalisation in the Middle East, which is arguably pushing back the ability of states to govern citizens and markets, in Palestine also this field is, ultimately, strongly subjected to the territorialising control of the Israeli state.

Secondly, the analysis of the relationship between Palestinians and the first national mobile phone operator Jawwal during the early 2000s demonstrates that in a matter of just few years, this relationship shifted from one epitomised by Jawwal's nationalist campaigning in 'One Voice, One Jawwal' to one in which the company is branded primarily as representative of global high-tech excellence and environmental responsibility. Whereas in the first instance, Palestinians seemed to relate to the company through discourses of Palestinian collective national struggle, in the second this relationship was governed primarily by their identification, above all, as private consumer subjects and as citizens with rights to good health and a clean environment. This change, which is clearly articulated in Jawwal's

marketing strategy (and echoed in the local health panic against its transmission towers) reflects the increasing individualisation, hybridisation and de-territorialisation of Palestinian political subjectivities, and highlights the central role that the political problematic of late modernity has acquired in the Palestinian context.

In conclusion, although the shared antagonism against Israeli occupation is still a defining aspect of political subject formation in Palestine, analyses of Palestinian political subjectivity must also take into account a variety of other forces and power relations that are contributing to the conditions of possibility of Palestinian political subjectivity and action. These forces do not necessarily conform to the polarising text of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, but they, too, play a central part in Palestinian politics and the dynamics of Palestinian resistance. In this sense, the challenge lies in the creation of new discourses of resistance, discourses which might better accommodate the hybridised and individualised subjects of late modern colonial occupation without, however, losing sight from the profound inequalities that structure the Palestinian position vis-à-vis Israel.

Notes

1 Jawwal was licensed by the Palestinian Authority already in 1996 but could not get Israel to release the needed frequencies until 1999; personal communication with Sam Bahour.
2 Interview with Muhammed Najib, 18 August 2006, Ramallah.
3 Many thanks for Sam Bahour for adding this point.
4 Interview with Irene Saadeh, 6 September 2006, Ramallah.
5 Interview with Jawwal CEO Ammar Aker, September 2006, Ramallah.
6 Interview with Sam Bahour, 20 August 2006, Ramallah.
7 Personal communication with Nasir Hazara, 22 August 2006, Yatta.
8 http://www.pita.ps/newweb/index.php.
9 Interview with Jawwal's head of engineering Kamal Ratrout, 31 August 2006, Ramallah.
10 Personal communication with a Palestinian man who identified himself as Merwan, 22 August 2006, Yatta.
11 Interview with Ashraf Shareef's brother Shareef Smerat, 22 August 2006, Yatta.
12 http://www.jawwal.ps/index.php?lang=en&page=corporate.about_jawwal.company.nabtaker&ptype=sub (Accessed on 3 February 2009, since then the link has been removed).
13 Interview with Kamal Ratrout, 31 August 2006, Ramallah. Also Irene Saadeh, the head of Jawwal's marketing team, mentioned jealousy as a possible motivator behind the attacks on the transmission towers in an interview, 6 September 2006, Ramallah.
14 Interview with Ammar Aker, September 2006, Ramallah.
15 Personal conversation with Suzan Jarrar, 3 September 2006, Ramallah.
16 Interview with Irene Saadeh, 6 September 2006, Ramallah.

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5 Transnational political discourses and the aesthetics of living against occupation

The Palestinian filmmaker, Elia Suleiman, sits silent as the taxi leaves the airport in Tel Aviv. It is dark and stormy and the Jewish driver, Menashe, can barely see the road behind the heavy rain. Soon, he has lost the way completely. Desperate and confused, he stops the car at the dark roadside, picks up the radiophone and cries: 'Elie, do you hear me? What am I going to do now? . . . Where am I? Where am I?' The next scene radiates colour and light. We are in Nazareth in the year 1948, when Israel was established.

Thus begins *The Time that Remains* (2009), the last film in Elia Suleiman's Palestine trilogy. The film articulates a history of Palestinian dispossession in response to the current political impasse and the despair of the Israeli taxi driver, who can no longer make sense of where he is, and how he got there. In so doing, it brings forth a tension between historical narrative and the creation of new political subjectivities, in ways that both disrupt and contextualise the political aesthetics of his previous two films, *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996) and *The Divine Intervention* (2002).

This chapter examines questions of political subjectivity and representation in the context of late modern colonialism by reading the Palestine trilogy against a wider history of Palestinian political articulation. In so doing, I draw particular attention on the ways in which *transnational political discourses* (Khalili 2007) intersect with the shifting conditions of possibility of Palestinian political subjectivity. Discourse, we have learned, is not just a semiotic structure through which objects derive meaning. Rather, it is only in and through discourse that objects as such can emerge and exist, and therefore the act of articulation is performative rather than reflective of subjectivity (Butler 2008; Foucault 2005; Laclau and Mouffe 2001). Drawing on this tradition of anti-foundationalist political thought, my aim here is to show that the persistence of national unity among the Palestinians depends, in part, on the existence of a discursive framework that supports the constitution and articulation of collective political subjectivity. When that framework ceases to exist or fails to exercise the necessary authority, politics and resistance take on expressions that are unrepresentable and invisible within the discourses of structured popular struggles and nationalism that are privileged in the modern tradition of political theory and practice.

Transnational political discourses are understood here as discursive frameworks through which a variety of specific needs and desires are, or are not, constituted

as political demands and visions that are communicable on a wider regional and transnational level (Khalili 2007: 11–13). They offer a universalising language able to be appropriated by particular subjects, but in so doing they also shape the subject that speaks through them. Like any discourse, transnational political discourses do not exist as simple abstractions on a plane that is somehow separate from the 'material' or 'non-discursive' world: their pervasiveness depends on openness and malleability for different locations, as well as on a variety of material practices, institutions and networks which support and propagate them, and lend them authority and sociopolitical standing. To study transnational political discourses is therefore to study power on a global scale.

For the Palestinians, the transnational aspect of subject formation has always been of particular importance, and it is hard to imagine a major progressive political discourse of the twentieth century that would not have intersected with and lent force to narratives of liberation in Palestine. The political movements of the 1970s and the 1980s represent the high points within these narratives. The 1970s, or the years of *al thawra* (revolution) saw the emergence of a well-organised Palestinian guerrilla movement among the Diaspora in Lebanon, led by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Yasser Arafat. This era ended in the PLO's defeat and expulsion by the Lebanese and Israeli armies in the 1982. The next wave of Palestinian nationalism, the first intifada (1987–93), emerged roughly a decade later in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, whose political role during the 1970s had been minor.

Both struggles were successful at creating the Palestinians a voice of their own, but their relatively late emergence – two and three decades after the establishment of Israel, or the *Nakba* – casts their timing and success all but self-evident. Perhaps most commonly, this delay is explained by the sense of urgency and vulnerability which dominated the life of Palestinian refugees in the aftermath of the *Nakba*, and which left them little time and energy for organised resistance (Peteet 2005). Another explanation would point at the discursive environment and the fact that although ideas of pan-Arabism led by the Egyptian leader Gamal Nasser were hegemonic throughout the Middle East during the 1950s and 1960s, as a discourse of politics Nasserism emphasised the agency of postcolonial Arab governments rather than pan-Arabism or ordinary Arab subjects (Dawisha 2003). Hence, even though a large majority of the Palestinians might have placed political hopes on pan-Arabism in the aftermath of the *Nakba*, this did not lead inevitably to political mobilisation and activism among the Palestinian masses. The defeat of Arab armies and the subsequent invasion of the West Bank and Gaza by Israeli in the Six Day War in 1967, however, dealt a death blow to the Pan-Arab Movement and ended the monopolisation of the political field by state-led action. This, it may be argued, created the space in which the Palestinians received both the freedom, and the responsibility, to take charge of their own liberation.

Both arguments help to understand the delay in the rise of a Palestinian national movement, but neither of them can account for the exceptional vibrancy, unity and force that became hallmarks of the Palestinians' struggle in the 1970s and during the first intifada. This force, I argue, can be comprehended properly

only once its emergence is examined within the wider context of the transnational political discourses that characterised these periods. Most importantly, the years that followed the 1967 War were uniquely empowering for the Palestinians in so far as they coincided with the global hegemonisation of secular anticolonial liberationist discourses. These discourses combined an experience of Western imperialism and colonialism with a strong modernist belief in the inevitability of progress and emancipation, and in most cases, mixed leftist and socialist revolutionary thought with ideas of nationalism and national and cultural liberation (Khalili 2007; Malley 1996; Young 2001). Although anticolonial thought had already flourished in the Third World for a long time – arguably since the Haitian revolution (1791–1803) – it was only in the 1960s that it became hegemonic as a potent discourse of progressive and liberationist politics the world over. In this new historical conjuncture, anticolonial discourses of liberation came to signify progress and emancipation not only in the Third World and in societies subjected to colonialism, but also in the eyes of Western left-wing intellectuals and activists.

This development was backed in the late 1960s by a growing sense of disillusionment with Marxist and socialist orthodoxy in the West, particularly in Europe, where the conditions and meanings of an anti-capitalist revolution were stirring considerable critical debate. On the one hand, the mutation of capitalism from Fordist to post-Fordist forms under the sociopolitical conditions of highly industrial societies implied that some of the most central political and social categories that had structured Marxist analyses of power and revolution now appeared increasingly problematic. At the same time, the European Left was increasingly divided on the question of the Soviet Union, which, despite – or because of – its organisation along socialist principles had descended into totalitarianism. These debates long pre-existed the events of 1968, but the proliferation of social movements and the fragmentation of 'truths' about Marxism that were exposed in this context gave the debates a new sense of urgency. On the other hand, the rapid processes of decolonisation since the late 1940s, the realisation of the 'dark side' of European modernity in the aftermath of the Second World War, and several ethical and political paradoxes that coloured the French colonial war in Algeria undermined the confidence that the West and particularly Europe had had in its moral and political supremacy (see Malley 1996: 2; Salter 2002: 91–113). Hence, by the late 1960s, progressive political movements in the West were more and more inclined to examine world politics as a story of colonial exploitation, and were willing to explore European self-images critically. Texts written during this period by intellectuals with leftist leanings, including Jean-Paul Sartre (2001), Jean-François Lyotard (1993) and a few years later even Michel Foucault (Foucault, in Afary and Anderson 2005), reveal a consistent desire to reject the primacy of proletarian revolution in industrialised societies and to look beyond Western political idioms and societies for the prospects of progress and emancipation.

Against this background, it is not surprising that by the 1970s many of those revolutionary aspirations and hopes that the European and Western Left had entertained within their own societies were transported to anticolonial liberation struggles in the Third World. Susan Buck-Morss (2003) recalls that the marriage

of Western and Third World activists in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in a surprisingly coherent, global discursive terrain that made particular, local demands communicable all over the world. This marriage contained several points of conflict, as Buck-Morrs is also careful to point out, most importantly because Marxist-Leninist narratives of progress still set highly industrialised Western societies rather than the 'non-West' as the yardstick of historical development (Buck-Morss 2003: 7–8). Even so, the two participated in the same modern paradigm of politics and power, and shared a common narrative structure. This explains, in part, why in the political climate of the 1970s, anticolonial and Third Worldist discourses were able to bring together highly disparate and dispersed social and political struggles, in relative disregard of divisions between the 'West' and 'the rest'.

The emergence of this hegemonic formation was crucial for the rise of Palestinian nationalism. It offered the Palestinians a necessary framework through which the articulation of a collective popular struggle became possible in ways that empowered the Palestinian population at large, and rendered their struggle highly communicable for wider audiences across the world. This point is argued carefully by Laleh Khalili (2007), who demonstrates that the discursive environment of anticolonial liberation and Third Worldism provided Palestinians ample reference points, inspiration and consistent discourses for the articulation of political subjectivity, as well as material and institutional networks of support that empowered the mobilisation and organisation of the Palestinian populace in Lebanon for armed resistance. While Khalili does not focus in detail on the role of the Soviet Union in funding and facilitating Palestinian resistance during this period, its crucial influence should also be taken into account. While the Soviet Union was the most frequent supporter of anticolonial movements in various parts of the world during this time, given their Marxist-Leninist leanings and a shared language of anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism, the bond between the Soviet Union and the Palestinians became even stronger in the aftermath of the 1967 War when the formerly left-leaning state of Israel took a turn towards the political right and was transformed into a central US ally (Abu an-Namel 2003). Hence, throughout the 1970s and well into the 1980s, the Soviet Union funded institutions and networks which propagated and reproduced leftist discourses in Palestine and other parts of the Middle East, and allocated grants for Palestinian students in Soviet universities, themselves vibrant meeting points for revolutionary men and women from all over the world.

In addition, the narrative mode of the transnational political discourses that were prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s and, to some extent still in the 1980s, had an impact upon the vibrancy of Palestinian nationalism. David Scott (2004) argues that the transition from anticolonial to postcolonial political problem-space and subjectivity has been accompanied by changes in the narrative mode: whereas anticolonialism was characterised by a redemptive narrative which vested political hopes in the actions of revolutionary men and women, a tragic narrative mode might be more adequate for contemporary postcolonial political subjectivities and sensitivities. Khalili (2007) seems to confirm this point in the Palestinian context

when she observes that in the past, especially in the Lebanese refugee camps of the early and mid-1970s, discourses of Palestinian nationalism evolved around heroic representations of courageous fighters, guerrillas and liberationists. Although these representations were highly efficient at mobilising popular hopes and action for the purposes of the national struggle, since the 1970s, this framework has been challenged, and in many parts replaced, by a tragic narrative mode, which in the Palestinian case focuses on human suffering. According to Khalili, the shift took place somewhere between mid-1980s and early 1990s, and it was linked closely to changes in the sphere of transnational political discourses. Just like the availability and circulation of anticolonial and Third Worldist discourses enabled the articulation of Palestinian nationalism through heroic narratives, the gradual turn to tragic narrative mode has, according to Khalili, been 'profoundly entangled' with the rise of humanitarian and human rights discourses into global prominence, and with the increasing sense of hopelessness that is defining Palestinian experiences on the ground (Khalili 2007: 34).

Late modernity and the 'crisis of the Left'

The point Khalili makes is compelling, and I will return to it later. However, what needs further emphasis is the wider historical and political context in which the demise of heroic narratives and the hegemonisation of human rights discourse has take place. Clearly, this transition has been defined largely by the intensification of global liberal governance, which promotes the humanitarianisation of politics and the securitisation of humanitarianism (Dillon and Reid 2000; Duffield 2007). Even more importantly for my purposes here, the rise of liberal humanitarianism and a sense of hopelessness in Palestine are linked to the broader crisis of modernity and to the demise of both secular anticolonial and leftist revolutionary ideas over the same period. Third Worldism and secular anticolonialism might have lost leverage as powerful transnational discourses as a result of several socio-economic processes, which undermined the credibility and relevance of their basic claims and aspirations. However, Third Worldism was not the only political discourse that was losing relevance during this period. As Robert Malley notes, although Third Worldism had all but expired by the early 1980s, it never received a proper burial, 'because so much else around it was dying as well: the Soviet Union, the Eastern bloc, socialism, communism, and all that had accompanied them'. 'In the end', Malley argues, 'Third Worldism too had lost its *lettres de nobless*, the power of the Word along with the nobility of those institutions (states, parties, etc.) that had produced and maintained it' (Malley 1996: 168, emphasis original).

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe describe a similar process when they note that in the early 1980s Europe, 'Eurocommunism was still seen as a viable project, going beyond both Leninism and social democracy'. However, along with the end of the Cold War, with the disintegration of the Soviet system and 'drastic transformations of the social structure' in what they see as highly advanced capitalist societies, Marxist and communist ideas about power and emancipation began to lose credibility and critical edge, as the intellectual reflection of the Left centred

around themes such as 'the new social movements, multiculturalism, the globalization and deterritorialization of the economy and the ensemble of issues linked to the question of postmodernity' (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: vii). This conjuncture, which is often conceptualised in terms of the crisis of the Left or the political problematic of late modernity, has urged criticism on the continued relevance of modern categories and ideals of political thought and encouraged desires to create new ways to understand and conceptualise politics and resistance that are more relevant to the character of our time. In the words of Stuart Hall, 'The issue, now, is not *whether* but *how* to rethink' (Hall 1988: 271, emphasis added).

In practice, however, such efforts to rethink the political are often premised on an implicit geography which differentiates between the ways in which politics and subjectivity are understood and imagined in the West and in the presumably 'less complex' and 'less late modern' societies of the Third World. Laclau and Mouffe provide a case in point. In their seminal work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, they argue that the fall of secular revolutionary and liberationist discourses occurred simultaneously with the rise of a *differential political logic*, which they associate primarily with late modern Western societies (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 127–34). To make the point, Laclau and Mouffe compare politics in the highly industrialised West with the Third World where, according to them, brutal and centralised forms of colonial and imperialist domination support the division of the social into two antagonistic camps and encourage the formation of a 'popular subject position' that is predisposed to collective identification and unity. In contrast, in the late modern societies of the West, power operates through multiple points of antagonism which give rise to a 'democratic subject position' and to various cross-cutting social movements. This, they argue, is why the articulation of democratic demands through large-scale political movements has in the West become increasingly unlikely and why the need to rethink the nature of political struggles is so timely (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 131).

The differentiation that Laclau and Mouffe offer might be helpful for understanding the social structures and political nature of late modernity, but from the perspective of the so-called Third World, including Palestine, its value appears very limited: one might ask, for instance, if the kind of a neatly divided social structure that is attributed to the colonised and/or exploited Third World societies ever really existed, and whether or not it is a recurrent feature of any colonial situation, irrespective of time and place. Although Laclau and Mouffe have not, to my knowledge, applied the category of popular subject position to analyse politics in Palestine, these questions appear particularly relevant in this context because not surprisingly, contemporary analyses of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict tend to share very similar assumptions. This is evident, for instance, in the persistent tendency to maintain anticolonial nationalism (secular or Islamic) as the ultimate frame of reference against which Palestinian politics is measured and analysed, and to regard national unity as either an overt or a tacit horizon of expectations. The hegemony of the national paradigm is understandable, given the persistence of Israeli colonialism and oppression and the sense of emergency this places upon scholars working on Palestine, but it raises several problems that are both

methodological and political (Stein and Swedenburg 2005: 5–7). One central point to be made here is that political articulation in Palestine cannot exist in a vacuum, detached from the transnational discursive environment. If articulation is formative rather than reflective of political subjectivity, as also Laclau and Mouffe argue, then major discursive changes and shifts are bound to have a profound impact upon the conditions of possibility of collective struggle in Palestine, too, *despite* their being persistently subjected to a colonial relation of power.

I have now arrived at one of my main points. Viewed from this perspective, the absence of a coherent strategy and national unity among the Palestinians derives, at least in part, from the parallel fragmentation of the discursive environment in which such a struggle could once take place. Even though the Palestinians are still suffering a brutal and military colonial occupation and are therefore preoccupied by a distinctively anticolonial agenda, the articulation of a strong liberationist movement in the style of the 1970s and the 1980s is problematical because the discourses that once underpinned the emergence of a collective Palestinian subject have lost their credibility and capacity to order everyday life both transnationally and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In other words, the condition of a colonial occupation alone cannot bring collective unity and enforce a 'popular subject position' among the Palestinians. For the collective subject of national liberation to persist, they need a discourse that could reinvest hope and meaning in such a struggle, make it appear credible and worthwhile, and make it communicable to other struggles sharing the same paradigm of power and resistance.

Humanitarianism, Islamism, and the question of hegemony

What, then, about those discourses that have replaced the liberationist framework of the 1970s and 1980s? Khalili (2007) observes that the last three decades have been defined by the rise of liberal humanitarianism to global prominence. In this context, discourses of human rights and their closest organisational associate, the NGO sector, have offered many Palestinians new channels and modes of sociopolitical engagement. These discourses do not, however, provide the Palestinians with a framework of political activism comparable to the liberationist and revolutionary discourses of the previous era, as also Khalili is careful to point out. Firstly, instead of political and collective rights, humanitarian discourses refer to 'human rights' possessed by an individual. Secondly, instead of supporting a unified nationalist movement aimed at the establishment of a *representative* state, these discourses encourage the empowerment of the civil society, and most often in favour of social and political hybridity. And thirdly, instead of locating agency within those constituencies suffering 'wrong', humanitarian discourses are directed towards the agency of foreign, especially Western audiences, who possess the capacity to influence and pressure their own governments or transnational organisations into action (see also Allen 2013). At the same time, the political nature and man-made origins of this 'wrong' is often blurred and likened to natural disasters that are unfortunate yet inevitable, and which therefore require

humanitarian alleviation rather than political intervention on part of these governments and organisations.

Thus, while discourses of human rights and humanitarian ethos might provide a powerful idiom for the advocacy of the Palestinians' cause on an international level, they are not particularly efficient at supporting the constitution and mobilisation of a transnational *political* struggle, nor a popular struggle among the Palestinians themselves. Nassar Ibrahim, a veteran left-wing activist living in Beit Sahour, makes the point succinctly: 'The danger of making NGOs the sole representation of Palestinian leftist forces is that it gives the false impression that Palestinians are concerned with nothing but their own immediate concerns, as if we care only about this or that humanitarian project'. The problem, he argues, does not have to do with the dominance of the humanitarian and liberal discourses only, but with the failure of Palestinian leftists and secular forces critical of the Oslo framework to articulate an alternative: 'With well-meaning but depressing reductivity,' he laments

> . . . we are paraded in front of international audiences to describe our difficulties in getting to the conference, and even applauded for overcoming these obstacles. With even more depressing regularity, Palestinian representatives find they have little else to talk about. (Ibrahim 2003: 76)

Compared with the passivity, individualism, victimisation and depoliticisation offered by the liberal humanitarian discourse, discourses of Islamism and Islamic liberation provide a more solid base for the articulation of a collective political subjectivity. This is the case also in Palestine, where resistance is articulated increasingly through Islamic discourses and where a high number of Hamas's supporters are actually former leftists and secularists. During the 1990s and the early years of the second Intifada, the popularity of Islamic parties grew steadily, benefiting from an oppositional position vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority and the Oslo Accords, and peaking at Hamas's surprise victory in the Palestinian general elections in 2006. In the contemporary world, in which conflicts are articulated increasingly through discourses of religion, Islamism provides Palestinians with rarities such as a coherent narrative structure, a wide community of support and, above all, a share of hope at times when hope itself is in scarce supply.

This notwithstanding, Islamism has not, and probably cannot, reach the same levels of hegemony within Palestine or transnationally as did earlier discourses of liberation in the 1970s and 1980s. Firstly, while leftist discourses of liberation enabled, at least on the level of praxis, a separation of religion from politics and were thus able to accommodate also those Palestinians who had a strong religious identity, discourses of Islamic liberation are not equally open to all Palestinians, as many of them are not Muslims. Secondly, violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas demonstrate that Palestinians of all faiths are anything but united behind a hegemonic idea of Islamic liberation or a particular party speaking in its name. In fact, the Hamas election victory in 2006 was interpreted above all in terms of Palestinian rejection of Fatah and its corrupt rule and ideals, rather than a full-hearted

embracing of an Islamist worldview. While this might tell more about the large number of Palestinian political drop-outs who do not associate themselves with any specific party or political stand, than about the realpolitik between Hamas and Fatah, the point is clear: Hamas or other Islamic parties in Palestine have not been able to hegemonise Palestinian political spaces.

Thirdly, although Islamism could be counted as an offspring rather than the antithesis of Marxist and secular discourses of liberation, there is an important difference where their respective geographies are concerned. Secular and leftist discourses of national liberation were particularly empowering because by speaking the idioms of Marxist, Leninist, Maoist and Fanonist liberation, and by translating them into a desire for an independent Palestinian state, Palestinians participated in, and became vanguards of a 'global' space of solidarity and struggle. I put 'global' in quotation marks, because this space was certainly prejudiced in favour of a Western tradition of political thought. Nevertheless, it was a shared political space or 'a common discursive terrain in which critics of exploitation and domination could agree (often vehemently, even violently) to disagree' (Buck-Morss 2003: 7). Now, however, the hegemony of the West is violently contested, and such discursive unity is no longer available, despite liberalism's attempts to rebuild its foundations on narratives of a common humanity. The fragmentation of transnational discursive space should be welcomed in so far as it is the product of successful decolonisation and democratisation in political thought, but it has also intensified the problematic of incommensurability on the level of world politics.

Thus, despite a shared suspicion of the United States, Islamism does not communicate very well with contemporary political movements on the Left. For Islamists, cooperation with the Left is problematic because, as British Islamic activist Iqbal Siddiqui (2009) argues, despite sharing a critical stance towards neoliberalism and especially the United States, 'the anti-US trend is strongest among those who are also the most anti-religious and – in particular – anti-Islam'. Islamist discourses inhabit a political space whose geography is considerably different from that established by previous liberationist discourses, and despite occasional flirting with the Stop the War coalition, anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist movements, the paradigms of power and resistance that these movements occupy are very different. In this sense, Palestinians who articulate their politics through discourses of Islam no longer look to the West for political inspiration and support: the rise of Islamism is indicative of a politics performed primarily in and towards the East.

In conclusion, the absence of national unity in Palestine does not emanate solely from the internal dynamics of the Palestinian society nor Israeli attempts to truncate resistance. The fragmentation of the national struggle needs to be understood also against a discursive environment, which is no longer able to support the articulation of such struggles as it used to in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, in their inability to constitute a 'united popular struggle', 'coherent strategy' and 'clear goals', Palestinians are certainly not alone. In addition to exhibiting a radicalisation and Islamisation of Palestinian resistance, Palestinian politics after Oslo are indicative of political and social disintegration and of the loss of a hegemonic

space of political articulation. In this sense, at least, the so-called 'crisis of the Left' that is associated with late modernity is not at all far from the political problematic of the second intifada.

Therefore, what might be most important about the present situation is the variety of subject positions that lay beyond the polarising representations of victimity and Islamic militancy, as well as beyond modern discourses that emphasise collective unity. Dominant media representations notwithstanding, the lack of a hegemonic political discourse in Palestine does not imply a neat division of political space between liberal and 'moderate' (Fatah, international NGOs), and the Islamic and 'radical' (Hamas), but a division of space between these two and *something else* – that is, struggles that cannot be articulated, political subjects that have no discourse and therefore cannot be represented or understood as a political force. What is lacking representation is a multitude of hybridised, late modern subjects of colonial occupation whose lives are profoundly entangled in politics and resistance without articulating a hegemonic struggle.

Suleiman and the disappearance of the collective subject

How, then, to imagine this space of politics beyond articulation? One way to approach this question is to turn our gaze to the work of Palestinian filmmaker Elia Suleiman, and especially on his main work, a set of three full-length films that are also known as the 'Palestine Trilogy'. In my reading, it is precisely the loss, indeed, the impossibility of hegemonic political articulation in the current socio-historical context that is a central, concurrent theme in these films, as is the search for a different aesthetics of Palestinian politics – for an aesthetics that seeks to detach the claims for land and life from demands for coherence, clarity and unity of the Palestinians' struggle.

The 'Palestine Trilogy', which consists of *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996), *Divine Intervention* (2002) and *The Time That Remains* (2009) has developed in parallel with the political situation in Palestine. (For a more detailed description and analysis of the films' content and narrative style see Haim Bresheeth 2002, 2006.) *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, filmed during the Oslo peace negotiations and composed of fragmented, disjointed and mostly absurd scenes, depicts Suleiman's (semi-)fictive visit from exile to Palestine to make a film about 'the peace'. The first part, set in Suleiman's hometown of Nazareth, revolves around congested horizons, repetitious quarrels and expressionless Palestinian individuals observed by the equally expressionless figure of Suleiman himself. Here, one can rarely see open landscapes or views from Suleiman's window, either due to the camera angle or because the view is blocked by something. Outside on the street, one is confronted either with inexplicable fights or passive, silent individuals. Suleiman's own parents lead a frail, limited life confined to their apartment where his father spends days smoking his water pipe (*shisha*) and playing in solitude a computerised version of backgammon (*tawla*), a popular Middle Eastern board game which is played in street cafés and which should normally symbolise the sociality of (male) communal life in Arabic culture.

In the second part of *Chronicle*, set in Jerusalem, Suleiman's character is accompanied by A'dan, a Palestinian woman looking for a place to live as a single woman. On a general level, the film appears to be lacking in direct references to the national struggle. Although there are a few points at which familiar representations of the Palestinian struggle are displayed, they are exposed as somewhat expired. This is the case, for instance, in the scene in which Suleiman sits under a Palestinian flag in an empty restaurant in Jericho, disturbed by the blinking fluorescent bulb to the point of having to leave the scene. Here, the irritating quality of visual and sonic noise emanating from the bulb stands in a direct relation to the diminished grandiosity and authority of the Palestinian flag and the singing voice of Umm Khaltoum in the background. Palestine it may be, but it does not quite work. Similarly, in another scene, we are invited to feel arousal and excitement at the sight of a hand grenade and a gun that lie on the table in A'dan's dark Jerusalem room, in a set which is coloured after the Palestinian flag and which emulates the designs and the atmosphere of the militant 1970s. However, a few scenes later, these items, and with them the representation of the militant Palestinian, are exposed as merely symbolic facades: the gun and the grenade that lie on her table are just cigarette lighters. Through a careful interplay of signs of danger and banality, Suleiman encourages the audience to read more resistance and militancy into the Palestinian subject than might actually be on offer.

Divine Intervention, filmed after the outbreak of the second intifada, follows a seemingly similar aesthetic in so far as this film is also composed of fragments and separate, absurd scenes. But, here scenes cumulate more readily into a recognisable storyline: a story about Elia Suleiman, his ill father, and Suleiman's own unfortunate love affair with a Palestinian woman from the West Bank. This film also starts off in Nazareth, where communal life is revealed to be rotten. Later on, the film moves to Jerusalem and to the al-Ram checkpoint at the outskirts of East Jerusalem, which is the only place where Suleiman can meet his West Bank girlfriend. During the film, the oppressive and ubiquitous nature of Israeli occupation becomes clearer as our gaze is focused, together with Suleiman's own silent gaze, on the madness of West Bank checkpoints and Israeli soldiers.

At the same time, the film also portrays several, very popular scenes in which Palestinians resist Israelis, such as the one in which Suleiman destroys, albeit unintentionally, an Israeli tank by throwing an apricot stone at it; or when his girlfriend defies the checkpoint by walking past the soldiers as if on a catwalk. Towards the end, this mixture of everyday pressure and everyday resistance explodes in a scene in which Suleiman's by then ex-girlfriend reappears as a victorious and divine Palestinian ninja fighter who emerges from behind the stereotyped, *keffiya*-wearing cardboard-Arab which is used as a training target by an Israeli shooting club, and miraculously defeats the Israeli military.

Now, how are these films positioned in relation to the Palestinian national struggle? A highly conventional interpretation is offered by Nurith Gertz and Michel Khleifi (2008), who discern in recent Palestinian cinema a tendency to bring forth the heterogeneity of Palestinian society while striving, at the same time, to construct and reaffirm national unity. This, they argue, is done through a

sustained interest in Palestinian everyday hardship that highlights the collectivity of Palestinian suffering and thereby 'unites the people, merging them into a single community with one story and one hope' (Gertz and Khleifi 2008: 144). Gertz and Khleifi do admit to several ambivalences within Suleiman's cinema, but they place also his work squarely within this trend. Despite a manifest oscillation between the modern and the postmodern, 'unity', they argue, 'has not disappeared in Suleiman's films, and neither has the homeland or the Palestinian story' (Gertz and Khleifi 2008: 186). Although the two films highlight Palestinian loss – 'the loss of voice, the loss of identity, the loss of home and land and the loss of the director' – in the end these losses are revealed 'to have been the result of Israeli action' and therefore locatable within 'a wider narrative of national unity' (Gertz and Khleifi 2008: 176).

This interpretation, however, might be more telling of the hegemony of nationalist interpretations in all things concerning Palestine, than of the actual character of Suleiman's work. For what I would argue is that instead of striving for national unity, Suleiman's films go to great lengths to emphasise precisely the opposite point, that is, that the struggle must exist and develop despite the *absence* of national unity and the *impossibility* of collective political articulation, because the conditions of possibility that once supported the articulation of political subjectivity in those terms are no longer there. One obvious problem here – the problem that I have already explored via Laclau and Mouffe – is that the simultaneity of suffering in the hands of the occupier is not enough, in itself, to constitute a central striving for national unity in real life or contemporary Palestinian cinema, or to transform underlying sociopolitical heterogeneity into a 'single community with one story and one hope' (Gertz and Khleifi 2008: 144). The commonality of a lived experience alone, even if it is recognised as *a common*, does not translate directly and on its own into an experience of national unity and mobilisation of a collective struggle. What is also needed is the construction or existence of a discursive and affective framework that is powerful enough to support the articulation of such a struggle and to provide it with the necessary hope and meaning.

At the same time as these films comment on the unrepresentability of Palestinian experiences and the impossibility of collective articulation, they contemplate also the relationship between the Palestinians' struggle and transnational politics. This is increasingly clear in *Divine Intervention.* Compared with the earlier film in which references to Palestinian nationalism were scarce, the second film is full of Palestinian symbols. However, on most occasions, these symbols are exposed as just that, in a manner that is similar to the idiom of the earlier film: as mere representations, signs that might have steered everyday experience at some point of the Palestinians struggle, but that do so no more. This is the case for instance at the point where Suleiman uses a red balloon sporting Arafat's face to escape the checkpoint. In this popular scene, Suleiman sends the balloon across the heads of IDF soldiers patrolling the al-Ram checkpoint, and uses the confusion caused by the balloon to smuggle his girlfriend from the West Bank to East Jerusalem. The balloon, too, flies far beyond the checkpoint, reaching the most symbolic sights

of the occupied Jerusalem, including the al-Aqsa mosque. This scene refers not simply to the legacy of Palestinian nationalism but more precisely to the legacy of the leftist, secular political tradition that used to support it. Arafat is a staunchly secular figure and given the Marxist-Leninist underpinnings of the militant 1970s with which his person is most gloriously identified, the red balloon that conquers Jerusalem carries not just a message of nationalism, but more specifically, those hopes and disappointments that the promise of secular anticolonial liberation once offered for the Palestinians.

Also the very title of the film comments upon the wider discursive climate that characterises our era, and the shrinking space of hopes in which the Palestinians' struggle is constituted. If the conditions of political articulation are defined currently by discourses of human rights and humanitarianism on the one hand, and discourses of Islamism and religious fundamentalism on the other, *Divine Intervention* reaches towards both of them simultaneously. Humanitarian intervention has been one of the key notions that defined the expansion of the liberal human rights ethos to the level of world politics and into a dominant discourse of global security and warfare during the 1990s. Subsequently, one of the most frequent demands by Palestinians and pro-Palestinian activists during the 1990s and 2000s has been the appeal for international intervention on humanitarian grounds so as to hold Israel accountable for its crimes. This notwithstanding, no such interventions have taken place to date, even though they have been employed in other locations, such as Kosovo and Rwanda, or Iraq and Kuwait during the first Gulf War and, more recently, Libya. In this sense, liberal humanitarianism has not filled the space of hope and promise that was left in Palestine after the demise of revolutionary and secular anticolonial movements.

In this context, the fact that the Palestinians increasingly place their hopes in the divine register and in the idea that salvation will come from above might not appear surprising. Indeed, this is what happens in the film, as ultimate salvation descends from heaven, in the form of a Palestinian ninja fighter who defeats the IDF with every possible narrative of Palestinian liberation as her armour: she fights as a crucified Jesus with an aura of deferred golden bullets around her head (Christianity); with a golden star and crescent that pierce the enemy's chest (Islam); with a golden map of Palestine which acts as a shield against the enemy's bullets (secular nationalism); with a golden hand grenade which blows the enemy away (the Palestinian guerrilla fighter), and with a slingshot that she wields perfectly (the children of the First Intifada). The invincible Palestinian ninja might thus appear as a celebration of Palestinian resistance and endurance in the face of the occupation. But beyond the immediate sensation of excitement and pride lies a message that is far less optimistic, perhaps even tragic, for does this scene not comment on the impossibility of the task expected from the Palestinians, than on the actuality of Palestinian resistance? The Palestinian ninja does not highlight the human, but the supernatural – indeed divine – nature of the powers that are required of Palestinian resistance if it is to defeat the enemy. It is almost as if Suleiman is admitting that there is no way the Palestinians can defeat Israel by themselves. And what makes this admission tragic is that from his secular

perspective, the prospects of either humanitarian or divine intervention for the sake of Palestine seem just as unlikely.

Beyond unity: the aesthetics of living against occupation

What, then, about Suleiman's politics? Are political pessimism and a sense of loss and evolving tragedy the only messages in his films? Not really. Equally important are banal scenes of everyday life in which Palestinians manoeuvre and defy the impact of the occupation through assertive tricks and gestures which affirm their right to life, land and joy. Such aesthetics of living against occupation is pronounced already in *Divine Intervention*, but the trilogy's last part, *The Time That Remains* (2009), which was filmed around the putative end of the second intifada, offers the most nuanced account. In this film, the stakes of the problem – how to sustain a struggle against military colonial occupation in the age of late modernity, which is characterised by the dissolution of collective subjectivities and teleological narratives of liberation – become increasingly clear.

Unlike the previous films, the third film clearly wants to tell *a* story, a history – but only so long as this history is tellable. It offers a narrative of the *Nakba* (the events of 1948) and of Palestinian dispossession and loss through the tale of Suleiman's own family and especially his father Fuad, who stayed in Nazareth in 1948 to resist Israel and to stick to his home. The first part depicts the family's gradual adaptation and assimilation to Israel until the early 1980s, when Elia has to leave the country in the aftermath of his own political awakening. The story follows a relatively clear chronological order and direct references to the struggle for Palestinian liberation are frequent, but actual resistance against Israel, if it takes place at all, is situated high up and mostly outside Palestine. By the end of the first part, Fuad has become an ageing, tired and politically resigned man. The locus of collective resistance is moving closer down, however, to the streets of Nazareth where Palestinian youths, including young Elia, riot against the Israeli police.

The second part starts off nearly three decades later, leaving behind the first intifada, the Oslo Interim Accords, and the second intifada. It depicts Elia Suleiman, now grey-haired himself, returning to Nazareth to say farewell to his aged mother, and making his silent ventures to the West Bank town of Ramallah. The time-lapse corresponds with a subtle change in style. The narrative and political confidence of the film's first part is gone: Nazareth in the late 2000s is portrayed in a manner that is just as absurd and nonsensical as it was in the two earlier films. This is manifest in the home of Suleiman's mother, where the traditional Palestinian family structure has been replaced by a postmodern constellation of displaced, de-territorialised individuals: the elderly, ill mother, her gentle Filipino housekeeper, and a helpful neighbour, a Palestinian policeman who serves the Israeli state while lending a hand in domestic chores wearing the police uniform, pink rubber gloves and a flowered kitchen towel. Here, assimilation to Israel seems nearly complete. Only the old woman carries distant, largely hidden traces of Palestinian history and of the events of the 1948 but the clock is ticking: she too will soon pass away.

Nazareth is not all Palestine, however, and the effects of a military occupation vary across space. Throughout its history, Israel has colonised the Palestinians through assimilation (the citizens of Israel), dissemination (the Diaspora), and incarceration and siege (the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza). This cartography is embodied in the trilogy: in each film, a journey across space tends to indicate a change in the political problematic. In search of resistance and political hope, *The Time That Remains* looks at the Occupied Palestinian Territories, at the besieged Ramallah where Suleiman travels in a tightly packed minibus via Jerusalem.

There, following a pattern similar to the earlier films, his character is soon joined by a strong female. This time it is a young *keffiya*-wearing Palestinian woman, who sits defiantly in the same crowded bus, bare-headed, surrounded by male passengers and a pornographic image attached to the driver's broken sunshield. This female figure, who stands in defiance of both the military occupation and the patriarchal orders of both Palestinian and Israeli society, is central to the trilogy as a whole. In *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, it is marked by A'dan, whose attempts to find a room is frustrated in East and West Jerusalem alike: first because she is a woman, and then because she is an Arab. In *Divine Intervention*, a similar figure is evoked in a scene in which Suleiman's girlfriend – who later turns out to be the ninja – breaks the Israeli blockade simply by walking past the checkpoint, looking stunning and totally unaffected by the grim surroundings and the sight and sound of machine guns.

The Time That Remains follows a similar ruse when a young mother insists upon *her* right to the land and brings to halt a noisy clash between Palestinian (male) demonstrators and the Israeli military simply by pushing her baby's buggy self-confidently past the soldiers and demonstrators, along the firing line. Both sides are brought to standstill. When a stunned Israeli soldier finally reacts, threatens her with a machine gun and orders her to go home, she pauses, takes off her sunglasses and replies boldly '*Me* go home? *You* go home!' – and carries on walking.

The scene is emotionally appealing, but its actual importance lies in the ability to raise intriguing and difficult questions on the ends and effects of Palestinian political action and resistance. As soon as the woman has passed, the men resume fighting. The Israeli soldiers hide behind army jeeps and fire rubber bullets at the demonstrators. The Palestinians chant and yell, wave the Palestinian flag, and throw stones. This is iconic Palestinian resistance as it is known through decades of media and news broadcasting, but compared with the uncompromising vigour of the mother affirming the Palestinian street successfully as *her* territory and *her* home, the demonstration is lacking in meaning. It appears as noise, as action that might have been important and effective in the past, for instance in Suleiman's own youth in Nazareth when his generation rose up against Israeli rule for the first time, but which is not able to turn the tables between the coloniser and the colonised anymore. Both are locked in their respective positions.

What scenes such as this one do is to deconstruct hegemonic, masculine articulations of Palestinian resistance and nationalism, not because these forms

of protest or national liberation as such would be a bad idea, but because they are no longer, in the particular socio-historical and discursive context that we share, able to challenge the order of the occupation nor to provide a meaningful and hopeful framework for collective political action. In their place, the trilogy suggests a different affective aesthetics which dwells beyond the oppositional logic of anticolonial nationalism and which centres on ideas of resilience. Suleiman, who observes the Palestinians in the West Bank from the perspective of an outsider, admires it at distance. Hiding behind a wall, he spies an Israeli tank on the street. Suddenly, a young, smartly dressed man steps suddenly out of his home to throw away some rubbish. The man crosses the street walking in a relaxed, light and exaggerated way, doings turns and twirls while talking on a mobile with a friend about the latest electronic music, DJs and an upcoming party at the 'Stones' restaurant in Ramallah. The barrel of the tank follows his every move closely at a few metres' distance, but the man seems totally unbothered. Suleiman, on the other hand, dives down as soon as the tank barrel points in his direction.

In the next scene, young women and men are dancing to trendy electronic music, immersed in a shared space of moving bodies, rhythm and desire. An Israeli Army jeep drives by the nightclub, announces a curfew by loudspeakers and orders everyone to go home, but to no avail. The dancers behind the club's large windows can't hear them, the music is too loud and they simply don't care. They are attached much more closely to contemporary global cultural and social circuits than to the territorialising regimes of military occupation imposed by Israel. These Palestinians do not bother to fight against the occupation: they simply bypass it, the best they can, but in so doing they also effectively reverse, or render meaningless, the economy of desire and representation that underpins colonialism. Suleiman's Palestinians appear as utterly seductive and belonging to our age. Israel, in contrast, is clumsy, ossified, heavy and stuck in the past. Even the soldiers in the jeep seem to agree. They keep repeating the call for curfew, but their eyes are fixed on the dancing collective, and their bodies move in the rhythm as if they too desired to be in the Palestinian party.

The political aesthetics that these films construct is thus feminine, affective, situational and tied to space. But is that all that can be aspired to under late modern colonialism, and is it enough? Suleiman's films do not offer real guidance on how to reconstitute the Palestinians' struggle in the present context of late modernity. The trilogy evokes easily Michel de Certeau's (1984) theorisations of everyday resistance, yet also problematises such reading, for it is really not clear whether these acts of resilience are able to obtain much, apart from small, separate tricks and victories. Such scenes of everyday resistance may look appealing and empowering on the screen, but even in these films, it is only the imaginary Palestinian ninja that has the keys to accomplishing real change.

Perhaps even more problematic is the fact that his aesthetics of living against occupation are essentially liberal in kind. Suleiman does not set just any kind of life and vigour against the occupation. His Palestinians shake the occupation off through the full embrace of, and subjection to, new biopolitical regimes of liberal desire. As such, these films do not offer a proper critique of contemporary power

relations, or tease out what might be done about the variety of challenges that liberal governance is posing to political and social movements at large. Moreover, although his films might reflect experiences of everyday resistance among certain social strata in Ramallah, which is a relatively affluent, cosmopolitan town with close ties to the Palestinian Diaspora in the US and Europe (Taraki 2008a, 2008b), they are not equally available nor attractive to all Palestinians. Indeed, there are no reasons why a film could not create an aesthetics of everyday resistance that is less tied to Western, liberal and consumerised cultural forms and sensibilities, had it been the objective.

Accordingly, the trilogy offers a political aesthetic that cannot pretend to represent all Palestine, and that offers no guarantees of success. This could seem overtly tragic and inadequate, was it not for the fact that those earlier narratives of liberation, which were supposed to apply for all the Palestinians and have those guarantees, did not succeed either. This is why the tension between history and becoming is ultimately so central to the politics of these films. *The Time that Remains* retells the history of Palestinian dispossession and struggle, because without knowledge of that history, the scope of injustice and violence that frame Palestinian experiences in the present is inarticulable and unrepresentable. At the same time, it brings forth the importance of letting the future form itself free from that history. Soon generations that have no personal attachment to the events of 1948 will be the only ones that exist. On what basis, in what idioms and through what kind of practices will the struggle for justice in Palestine then be articulated?

The politics of these films cannot, therefore, be apprehended through questions of what Palestinian resistance looks like, and how it should look, nor should it be reduced to a supposed affirmation of national unity against all odds. The relationship that the trilogy establishes between politics and representation is far more painstaking and concerns the very foundation on which a struggle against injustice can be based and articulated in the present time. Amidst the silence and passivity with which Suleiman observes the violence around him – violence which is impossible to put into words due to its absurd nature, and the lack of a narrative that would do justice to it – these depictions of minor resistances and active subjects do not constitute national unity or a narrative, nor does their political value depend on its continued existence. Amid the impossibility of collective articulation, amidst implosive communal and social relations and the loss of words and signs through which to articulate resistance, Suleiman's films recognise that a return to the old paradigms of resistance is not viable, and they try to identify space for new openings. In so doing, they create a late modern aesthetics of life against occupation which neither reduces Palestinians to passive victims nor accepts that the validity and importance of their demands should depend upon their ability – indeed, continued need – to construct a 'united national identity', 'coherent strategy' and 'clear goals'.

And, tactically speaking, this might be a wise move indeed, given that the conditions of possibility, which gave rise to the hegemonic unity of Palestinian nationalism during the 1970s and 1980s, might no longer exist. The relevance of the Palestinians' struggle cannot, at least for the time being, be based upon

expectations of a return to national unity and to the 'right' kind of resistance, for such expectations will most certainly be frustrated. This, and not just an ethical commitment to radical democracy or multitude of struggles is why the Palestinians' struggle must be set free from the modern aesthetics of popular politics in which collective unity is privileged as a precondition of political right.

In conclusion, the strong sense of unity and political purpose that characterised the Palestinian national movement in the past was conditioned by the existence of a transnational discursive field within which such articulations were possible and politically meaningful. However, during the past two or three decades, this discursive framework of political articulation has been steadily disintegrating. This process can be traced to sociopolitical and economic changes that are associated with the problematic of late modernity and with the so-called 'crisis of the Left', and as such it is indicative of the wider crisis of politics and political representation that characterises our era.

The importance of Elia Suleiman's work lies in the attempt to create new ways of understanding and representing the struggle for Palestine. The trilogy does not offer a profound critique of contemporary power relations or of a possibility of dissociating them, but it takes seriously the question of how to construct a transnational anticolonial struggle in the context of late modernity, which displays the disintegration of earlier narratives of liberation. The emergence, in the beginning of the present decades, of a multitude of political struggles associated with the Arab Spring has given this endeavour a new air of promise. As these struggles demonstrated, the construction of new political discourses of becoming that are fiercely persistent, yet not dependent on the existence of clear goals and a unified collective subject, is an endeavour in which the 'complex' and 'late modern' societies of the industrialised West have no privilege.

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Conclusion

The *differend* of the 'Palestinian spring'

The eruption of innovative, inclusive and confident popular uprisings and revolts against postcolonial authoritarian regimes throughout the Arab world in December 2010 and the spring of 2011 presented a remarkable break from the past, irrespective of whether they are regarded through the problematic of the postcolonial subject, or the politics of their representation. For many, these uprisings signalled nothing less than a genuine event, a paradigm-change that could, in many ways, be conceived as *more* than revolutionary. The demonstrators who gathered in Cairo's Tahrir Square were not only demanding the overthrow of specific postcolonial regimes and leaders, and the establishment of a new, more just social, political and economic order in the place of the old one. In addition, they were seen to epitomise the 'multitudes' who were creating and articulating qualitatively new forms of political subjectivity and agency proper to the postcolonial, late modern present.

For instance, against the perceived passivity and subjugation of postcolonial societies to both global and domestic structures of violence and inequality, the Arab Spring has been read as a founding moment of the postcolonial political subject whose 'claim to politics' and agency emerges out of the affirmation of a cosmopolitan and *worldly subjectivity* in the midst of, despite of, and through the matrixes of, distinctively late modern forms of power (Jabri 2013: 131). In Hardt and Negri's (2011) interpretation, the protesters in Tunis and Egypt appeared as 'democracy's new pioneers' who articulate democratic forms adequate to the 'expression and needs of the multitude', and whose example is thus inspiring and significant well beyond the region. Hamid Dabashi (2012) goes as far as to declare the Arab Spring as 'the end of postcoloniality'. Writing as the events in Tunisia and Egypt unfolded, he suggests that the *postcolonial era* was never able to overcome the colonial but rather exacerbated its ideological formations by negation; in contrast, the Arab Spring, which articulates a 'new geography of liberation', and a 'permanent revolutionary mood', has overcome them both. This new geography of liberation, Dabashi argues, is no longer driven by a desire to replicate the 'West' in the way that the earlier anticolonial and postcolonial strategies and ideologies of liberation, such as Islamist, nationalist and socialist grand narratives, sought to do. Instead, it is fundamentally post-ideological, and as such evocative of entirely new political metaphors and idioms.

What all these accounts thus share is the idea that the revolts associated with the Arab Spring were fascinating and inspiring not only because their ability to actually withstand and overthrow authoritarian regimes, but, above all, because they appeared as the founding moment of late modern political and revolutionary subjectification as such (Bayat 2013). Following the emergence of these revolutions, the eyes and expectations of political movements, activists, theorists and commentators the world over were suddenly fixed upon the Middle East, in ways that might recall the international prominence of Palestinian movements in the 1970s and during the first intifada, but which widely exceed the quality and level of attention received by the Palestinians back then. Almost overnight, the Middle East, which prior to the uprisings had been conceived almost solely as a space of authoritarian oppression and political stagnation, or as a breeding ground of what is seen as 'Islamic fundamentalism' and international terrorism, was transformed into a laboratory of political innovation and becoming to which progressive and revolutionary subjects and movements from Latin America to New York and Tel Aviv looked for inspiration and guidance.

This is the second aspect of the epistemological break or event produced by the 'Arab Spring', or the 'Arab Revolutions', as they are more commonly referred to among the Middle Easterners themselves. In addition to being constitutive of a new political subject, these uprisings seriously undermined those regimes of knowledge and representation that had hitherto dominated the Middle East and the Arab world. This point is made particularly well by Rashid Khalidi, who noted in March 2011, with a fair level of irony, that 'suddenly, to be an Arab has become a good thing'. Describing the discursive change within the US, he writes how 'Egypt is now thought of as an exciting and progressive place; its people's expressions of solidarity are welcomed by demonstrators in Madison, Wisconsin; and its bright young activists are seen as models for a new kind of twenty-first-century mobilization'. This new reality stands in a stark contrast with what prevailed before, when, if 'anything Muslim of Middle Eastern or Arab was reported on, it was almost always with a heavy negative connotation. Now, during this Arab spring, this has ceased to be the case' (Khalidi 2011).

While the new, positive interest in the Middle East is certainly warranted, Khalidi notes that the sudden sea change in general perceptions about Arabs and Muslims also demonstrates how superficial, selective and even false most Western media images and 'expert knowledge' on the region had been, prior to the uprisings. Particularly in the United States, scholars committed to propagating certain caricatures of the Arabs had affirmed ceaselessly, for decades, 'that terrorists and Islamists are the only thing to look for or see' in the Middle East. These experts, Khalidi argues,

> . . . systematically taught Americans not to see the real Arab world: the unions, those with a commitment to the rule of law, the tech-savvy young people, the feminists, artists and intellectuals, those with a reasonable knowledge of Western culture and values, the ordinary people who simply want decent opportunities and a voice in how they are governed. (Khalidi 2011)

Also Jabri (2013: 130) points at the politics and poverty of framing: at the same time as the dominant political discourses on the Middle East were focused almost solely on the ideas of an 'Islamic threat', anyone who actually visited the region in the recent past, Jabri asserts, could readily have witnessed a strong revival of collective desires for freedom, for a 'right to politics', and for 'new modes of political expression'. These desires were readily manifest not only on the streets, but also in the burgeoning and versatile Arab cultural life. Given these processes and background, the Arab Spring should not have been conceived as such a massive 'surprise': those energies, sensibilities and grievances that constituted these revolts and gave them their inclusionary and innovative form were openly manifest in Arab societies well before the events of 2010–11.

The empty space of politics proper

Although this book was researched and written, in most part, well before the 'Arab Spring' or the 'Arab Revolutions', many of the arguments that surfaced in the context of these uprisings coincide closely with the concerns that frame this study. Throughout this book, I have suggested that the second Palestinian intifada should not be understood simply as a crisis of the Palestinian national movement per se, but rather as a crisis of representation which has resulted from a growing gap between Palestinian political subjectivity and the dominant discourses of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and which is entangled with the much broader questions regarding the nature of politics and the political in the context of the postcolonial, late modern present. I have argued that the 'general distribution of the sensible' (Ranciére 1999) of Palestinian politics tends to focus attention upon imaginaries of war and conflict, or on the 'taken-for-granted' sites and forms of political organisation and articulation that are central to modern understandings of politics and political agency. Meanwhile, however, those social, political, economic and cultural forces that shape the conditions of possibility of Palestinian political subjectivity and agency have pushed the 'political' in Palestine increasingly towards spaces, sites and forms which fall beyond this framework of perception, which speak very different idioms, and which have therefore remained largely indiscernible and unrepresentable within the dominant discourses of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

This implies that what *has* secured representation in the context of the second intifada and thereafter are the extreme ends, plus a vacated, empty centre, which has become less and less relevant as far as Palestinian political subjectivities and popular politics are concerned. At the one extreme, representations of the second intifada have focused on the perceived militarisation and radicalisation of the Palestinian society and resistance, which find expression in the aesthetics of martyrdom and the spectacles of suicide bombing or armed resistance; and at the other extreme, upon Palestinian victimity and helplessness in the hands of a draconian military occupation. Somewhere in between these extremes lies the third field of visibility, the sphere of 'proper politics', which is epitomised largely by political parties, factions, organisations and institutions, and where Palestinian

national unity and collective action against the occupation is supposed to, and expected to, take place.

This conventional political sphere might have been able to bring together Palestinian desires and energies for national liberation satisfyingly at some other point of history, in the context of the revolutionary 1970s and prior to the Oslo Accords when the trust and confidence in collective action was stronger, and when this sphere had not yet been captured and seized upon by the nascent structures of a premature postcolonial state. However, as the studies in this book have demonstrated, it can hardly do so anymore, because this sphere of 'proper politics' has been all but vacated from popular content. On the one hand, I have argued that this de-popularisation has to do with the processes concerning postcoloniality and the postcolonial state. Despite their persistent subjection to a colonial military occupation, the Oslo Accords succeeded at installing new structures of institutionalised, hierarchic rule in the West Bank and Gaza. These structures, epitomised above all by the Palestinian pseudo-state – the Palestinian Authority – have added new layers of domination and oppression between the Palestinian society and the Israeli occupation, and implanted a formalised, privilege-driven political culture, which many Palestinians have come to regard as the very antithesis of Palestinian nationalism (Taraki 2008: Hilal 2014). In fact, many Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have come to regard the sphere of formal, institutionalised politics as so devoid of credibility, legitimacy and political and national morality that, as Allen (2013) points out, the very notion of 'politics' – in so far it is understood in reference to this sphere of formal, institutionalised politics – has, in itself, come to be seen as a dirty word. Today, 'politics' is something from which one must *detach* oneself, precisely in order to salvage even minimal ethical and moral commitment to Palestinian society and to the shared project of national liberation. Although such withdrawal from politics might be mostly private in nature, certain practices of 'dis-participation' in the Palestinian political system are now advocated also publicly and as a popular strategy, precisely in order to reinvigorate Palestinian popular politics and confidence in collective resistance (Eid 2013).

On the other hand, the ability of the Palestinians to organise and unite behind a shared goal of national liberation, either formally or on a grass-roots level, has been weakened by the gradual individualisation and consumerisation of the Palestinian society, which has resulted from the dissemination of neoliberal policies and ideologies throughout Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories since the 1990s. In addition to directing Palestinian energies towards personal advancement instead of collective emancipation, the rise of neoliberal regimes in the West Bank and Gaza has served to further divide the society into those who can join 'progress', as defined by late modern capitalism, and to those who cannot. Jamil Hilal (2014) notes that 'class and status distinctions based on wealth and position have never been as glaring as they are now, nor has the conspicuous consumption of expensive cars, villas, shops, restaurants, and five star hotels'. Whereas during the first intifada, such distinctions took place mainly between the occupier and the occupied, now they are blatant between different segments of the occupied population itself.

These developments might help us to understand why the second intifada failed to produce and articulate a coherent movement for national liberation, and why such a movement has not emerged thereafter, either. In addition, they highlight the fact that in order to understand the actual dynamics of the second intifada, and to gain a greater appreciation of Palestinian struggles in the present, one cannot stay within the dominant 'distribution of the sensible' of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict which is grounded on the dialectics of the occupation and on the battlegrounds and formal political institutions – the most obvious sites of the conflict. Instead, it is necessary to look for new analytical frameworks, for new perspectives and new idioms through which politics and the subject in Palestine might be examined and represented, in the present conjuncture of multiple, largely incommensurable paradigms of power and regimes of subjection. The absence of certain modes of political participation and action does not imply that radicalisation and victimity would be 'the only thing to look for or see' in Palestine. What it does imply, however, is that the political problem-space and the wider social context within which Palestinian political subjectivities and action are constituted has radically changed since the heydays of Palestinian nationalism in the 1970s and 1980s, when the Palestinians were able to organise themselves behind a shared goal of national liberation, and to articulate it coherently. To understand the nature of this change, and the implications that it has for Palestinian struggles in the future, one thus must reach beyond the national paradigm, follow traces of the subaltern, and rethink politics and the political in ways that might better appreciate the new conjuncture of struggles articulated by a distinctively *late modern* subject of colonial occupation.

I have attempted to trace this subject through different 'third spaces' and nodal points: for instance, on the beach in Gaza, around mobile phones, and at the nightclubs and checkpoints portrayed by Elia Suleiman. In so doing, my aim has been to remain as attentive as possible to *what is* in Palestine, instead of focusing on *what ought to be* (and on how the ideal could be revived). The micro-political struggles that the study has uncovered might well appear as irrelevant, marginal and even depoliticising, when compared to the innovative and concerted grassroots resistances that were devised and practiced by the Palestinians collectively during the first intifada. Despite this, they offer important insights into the shrinking space and complex map of power relations within which Palestinian political subjectivities and resistances have to be constituted and articulated today. The actions of the Palestinians who go camping on Gaza Beach might not aim at, nor amount to, strategic resistance aimed at the overthrow of the occupier. And yet, the people camping on the beach have had a central role in the dynamics of the second intifada, even if this role has been confined to the abject, the excluded, who so far have shaped Palestinian politics through absence and silence, rather than through active voice and participation. These are subaltern subjects and subject positions that *have not* secured representation in the context of the second intifada: subjects whose expectations, energies and hopes do not count in general representations of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, because they are articulated increasingly through spaces and forms that are unrecognisable within dominant discourses of politics

and the political. As long as this sphere of 'something else', something other than organised party politics, militancy and victimity, remains unaccounted for, suicidal violence and internal power struggles between Palestinian parties and factions are likely to remain the only visible facets of the Palestinians' long struggle for justice and dignity.

In summary, just as in Egypt, Tunis, or other postcolonial societies of the Middle East and North Africa, in Palestine the conditions of political subjectivity and agency have altered greatly since the heydays of anticolonial nationalism, affected as they are by the broad transformations associated with neoliberalism, postcolonialism, late modernity and the broken promises of collective emancipation and national liberation. As long as the lens through which the politics of these societies are examined is restricted to the national paradigm and to the taken-for-granted sites and expressions of politics and the political, their impact upon the political make-up and potential of these societies remains largely unrecognised. What the Arab Spring has so powerfully demonstrated, however, is that in some conjuncture, the desires, sensibilities and subjectivities that are constituted in the space beyond 'proper politics' might be transformed – even if momentarily – into a potent collective force, which is able to articulate a clear claim for postcolonial, late modern political agency.

A spring of redemption and romance

What, then, have been the effects of the Arab Revolutions upon Palestinian political subjectivity and the politics of its representation? Within the realm of international politics, there seem to be no reasons for jubilation, for despite enacting a powerful epistemic break as far as understandings of Middle Eastern politics are concerned, contributions to the Palestinians' struggle have been mostly controversial, if not outright negative. The early months of the uprisings were largely accompanied by an expectation that the downfall of the Middle East's authoritarian regimes – many of which were deeply compromised in their relationship to Israel – and their replacement with more democratic governments, would eventually strengthen the Palestinians' standing internationally. Given the strong levels of support that Middle Eastern populations have shown to the Palestinian cause historically, it would have seemed logical to think that the strengthening of 'people's rule' in the neighbouring states would result in higher international pressure for Israel to end the occupation (Katz 2013).

In practice, however, the Arab Revolutions have been accompanied by a conspicuous turn away from international politics and towards the internal affairs of the Arab states, at least for now (Awad 2012; Katz 2013). Katz notes that, for years, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict offered many Arab governments an opportunity to distract attention away from their own domestic and foreign policy shortcomings, and to direct criticism, frustration and anger toward the roles that Israel and the United States played in the region. This trend was challenged by the Arab Revolutions, which have directed criticism towards national governments themselves, and prioritised internal politics over international affairs.

Accordingly, in practice, these uprisings have resulted in a decrease, rather than increase, in pro-Palestinian rhetoric. 'This does not mean that the Arab Spring movements or governments do not care about the Palestinian cause or are more tolerant towards Israel', Katz writes. 'The principal agenda for the Arab Spring movements and governments, though, is domestic' (Katz 2013: 2).

Following this is that the incentive for the large external powers, including Europe, the United States and Russia, also to maintain this conflict as a foreign policy priority demanding urgent attention, or to place even minimal pressure on Israel, has clearly decreased. What does demand attention, however, is the increasing regional instability that has followed in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, particularly in Syria, where the hopeful popular uprising against Bashar Al-Assad's regime has deteriorated into a prolonged, bloody civil war involving large numbers of foreign fighters. At the same time as the war in Syria is causing immense suffering to civilians, not least to a large diaspora of Palestinian refugees, its entanglement with the overall situation in Iraq and the rise of the ISIS have secured that, for the moment, the question of Palestine is no longer regarded as the most urgent problem calling for international diplomacy and intervention.

Not surprisingly, Palestinian pessimism regarding the Arab Revolutions' impact upon the Palestinians' situation has risen sharply for the past years. For instance, according to an opinion poll published by AWRAD in September 2013 (quoted in Alijla 2014), a clear majority of 55–60 per cent of the Palestinian youth in the West Bank and Gaza believed that the Arab Revolutions and the regional changes that they have brought about have had a negative impact on Palestine and the Palestinians, while only 18 per cent trusted the impact to be positive.[1] Abdalhadi Alijal (2014) expresses the general mood by stating that eventually, the Arab Spring has brought to the Palestinians nothing but 'more pain, suffering and diaspora', as well as hatred towards them. Indeed, over the recent years there has been a peak in anti-Palestinian sentiments also within the neighbouring Arab societies. For instance in Egypt, anti-Islamist mobilisation, which successfully ousted the post-revolution government led by the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Mursi, has resulted in increasingly hard language towards the Palestinians in general and towards the people in Gaza in particular, with Gaza being depicted as an Islamist stronghold 'occupied by Hamas'. Attalah and Zalat (2014) record that anti-Muslim Brotherhood protests in the summer of 2013 included slogans such as 'Hamas = Israel' and 'death to Gaza', and that more recently, Egypt's mainstream media has served as a platform for anti-Palestinian agitation ranging from ideas as extreme as the demand that 'Egypt's Armed Forces attack Gaza to purge it from terrorism' to more covert analyses which hold that Gazans themselves are to blame for the Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2014. According to one activist interviewed by Attalah and Zalat at the time of the assault on Gaza, the propagation of hatred towards the Palestinians has never been as high in Egypt as it is now.

From the perspective of the Palestinians struggling against an increasingly brutal military occupation, or hoping to be able to return to Palestine some day in

future, these developments seem bleak indeed. However, if one looks at the internal life of Palestinian societies, the Arab Spring did have an impact that might well be considered a positive one. In 2011, a series of new independent political movements and expressions of political engagement emerged among Palestinian youth, not only in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but also among the Palestinians in Israel and the Diaspora. These movements cannot be regarded simply as a result of the Arab Revolutions, for the Palestinians possess a long tradition of grass-roots resistance, and the protests of 2011 were able to build on a number of pre-existing Palestinian direct action initiatives and solidarity campaigns that have appeared in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and particularly the West Bank since the mid-2000s, most importantly, the Palestinian movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS),[2] and the Stop the Wall coalition,[3] which has fought the planned route of the Israeli Separation Wall with varying success from as early as the 2002. However, as the timing, rhetoric and modes of action and organisation employed by these new movements indicates, they were strongly inspired and emboldened by the Arab Spring and by revolutionary events and moods that were taking over the region in the spring of 2011 (see Beinin 2012; Nabulsi 2014).

Immediately after the outbreak of the demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt, Palestinian youth organised a number of protests and pitched camps on the main squares of Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank and Gaza, to show solidarity with the Egyptian and Tunisian people – and faced harassment by plain-clothes security personnel of the Palestinian Authority, who were trying to sabotage these gatherings (Qumsiyeh 2011; Maira 2013: 112–19). Soon, movements supporting political agendas specific to the Palestinian situation also began to emerge. Already in late January 2011, Palestinian youth in the Diaspora began to organise behind reinvigorated demands for the reunification of the Palestinians' struggle, for instance in the form of a sit-in which was held in the Palestinian embassy in London, and which demanded the resuscitation of the Palestinian National Council as a political body that, unlike the Palestinian Authority, could bring together the views of all Palestinians, including the those of the Diaspora (Erakat 2011). Within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the clearest expression of a distinctively *Palestinian* articulation of the Arab Spring came a little later, in the form of the so-called 'March 15' youth movement, which was organised largely via social media, and which called for a day of demonstrations to reinforce Palestinian unity and to demand an end to the division between the two main political parties, Hamas and Fatah. The organisers' own feelings regarding the actual event are mixed, given the West Bank's and Gaza's Palestinian Authority governments' attempts to put the demonstrations down while also hijacking them for their own, factional benefit (Al-Ghoul 2013; Alsaafin 2012; Bailey 2012; Erakat 2011; Maira 2013: 112–19; Vick 2011), it was not entirely without success. In addition to mobilising people to attend marches and gatherings in public spaces in several locations over the West Bank and Gaza, the pressure generated by the March 15 demonstrations persuaded the two main parties to sign a formal reconciliation agreement in Cairo on 4 May 2011.

The 'March 15' youth movement was followed by other movements and new demonstrations, the most remarkable of which were probably the protests held in and around 15 May 2011, on the anniversary of the *Nakba*, which marks the 'catastrophe' of Palestinian dispersion at the establishment of Israel in 1948. Although *Nakba* demonstrations against the occupation have been a yearly event in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories for decades, what made the protests in 2011 unprecedented in both scale and tactic was the way in which they ignited Palestinians across borders and boundaries, in the Diaspora, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, to enact their Right of Return to Palestine jointly and in practice, via non-violent direct action. These demonstrations were called for and organised largely by West Bank popular committees and the organisers of the 'March 15'. Information about the 'May 15' movement was disseminated mainly via Facebook, where a page titled 'The Third Palestinian Intifada' calling for a day of action generated 250,000 fans in just two weeks, before it was closed down by Facebook administration as a result of strong pressure from Israel and pro-Israel lobbyists in the US (Farsakh 2012). As Mira Nabulsi observes, the closure of the 'May 15' Facebook page highlights the specific difficulties that Palestinian organisers face in their struggles: 'In contrast to the Palestinian case, youth movements in Tunisia and Egypt received support from Facebook' (Nabulsi 2014: 106–7). This notwithstanding, the call was disseminated widely and resulted in thousands of Palestinians from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories marching towards Israel's borders, in a simple, collectively orchestrated bid to physically pass through those borders.

Surprised by these actions, Israel's response was 'disorganized and brutal': 13 people were shot dead at the Syrian border, yet reportedly a number of individuals did succeed at crossing, one of them all the way up to Yaffa (Farsakh, 2012). In Egypt and Jordan, Palestinian demonstrators' attempts were less successful, as they were quelled even before the Palestinians managed to reach the border with Israel or Gaza, by Egyptian and Jordanian security forces. However, in so far as these protests really did succeed at generating a tangible sense of collectivity and cooperation between geographically dispersed Palestinians, the marches of May 15 presented a milestone for a new wave of Palestinian political mobilisation that soon became associated with the rise of the politically independent Palestinian youth and the so-called Palestinian 'youth movement'.

The nature of this movement – or better, coalition of movements – has been described perhaps most eloquently by Sunaina Maira (2013), whose ethnographic research in the West Bank between the years 2011 and 2013 examines the youth movement against broader transformations of Palestinian youth culture and especially against the emergence of a politically conscious Palestinian hip-hop scene. In addition to the protests and marches that I have already mentioned, the youth movement described by Maira has entailed several other campaigns and actions, such as street camps and hunger strikes in an expression of solidarity with the Palestinian prisoners who were hunger-striking in Israeli jails in 2012, and protests against the Palestinian Authority's neoliberal policies and the culture of political normalisation, for instance through campaigns against 'high prices'

and economic agreement with Israel. At the same time, Palestinian '1948' youth living within the borders of Israel have organised protests against Israeli state violence and different forms of discrimination committed against the Palestinians, and mobilised support for the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against Israeli companies and cultural and academic institutions (see Maira 2013: 111–54).

What has brought these diverse movements and actions together most clearly is their shared commitment for the reunification of Palestinian identity and cause across the fractured geography of dispersion and occupation in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and the Diaspora, as well as across political divisions embodied in the current stalemate between Hamas and Fatah. Given the Palestinian Authority's central role at dividing the Palestinians' cause by excluding the Diaspora and the Palestinian refugees' Right of Return from the official negotiating agenda, the Oslo framework and the PA are regarded as a central part of the problem, rather than a solution. Another distinctive aspect, as portrayed by Maira, is their attachment to horizontal forms of organisation and to politics and resistance outside the formal political framework, through direct action, artistic and cultural engagement, non-violence and grass-roots activity. Maira (2013: 110) is very clear about the latter point: in her assessment, the most distinctive quality of the young Palestinian activists associated with the youth movement 'in Israel and the West Bank was their 'intense conviction that it was time for an alternative politics and a refusal of party-based factionalism', and a desire to engage in protest politics that would 'publicly confront the PA and the framework of post-Oslo politics', and 'mobilize outside of the established parties and factions in the West Bank, Gaza, and in Israel'.

The tactics employed by the youth movement have included actions such as taking over public spaces through different ways of camping and squatting, as well as the creation of new forms of political expression via creative cultures, including poetry, visual arts and music. In practice, these actions have amounted to a consistent desire and effort to re-politicise Palestinian youths and youth culture. Here, Maira argues, the role of Palestinian hip hop has been particularly central. At the same time as many leading Palestinian hip-hop groups and artists have doubled as central figures in the organisation of the youth movement, hip hop has provided the movement a shared and compelling language of criticism, through which the young 'post-Oslo' generation, or '*jil Oslo*' to use the term coined by Maira, has been able to express the complex map of oppression and hope in contemporary Palestine.

Given their air of young energy and adherence to late modern political sensibilities and organisational forms, these diverse new political experiments that the Arab Spring has encouraged in the West Bank and Gaza have attracted plenty of excitement and attention among researchers, analysts and commentators who, quite rightly, identify them as part of the broader wave of democratic becomings associated with the Arab Spring (Klein 2011; Alsaafin 2012; Maira 2013). Especially during the first months, the Arab Revolution's contribution to postcolonial political subjectivities the world over seemed to lie in the restoration of popular confidence in the ability of collective action to bring about real change – the element

of hope and vision that, until then, had been largely absent from the political landscape and problem-space of postcolonial late modernity. The Palestinians might not have needed the Arab Spring to teach them about non-violent popular resistance practices – after all, as a Palestinian student in Ramallah quoted by Leila Farsakh (2012) quite rightly suggests, what the Arab youth [in Egypt and Tunisia] were doing actually echoed the non-violent strategies the Palestinians had developed in the first intifada. Its importance to the Palestinians' struggle lay, instead, in the alteration of popular perceptions of the 'horizon of the possible', and in the reinvigoration of hopes and trust in the power of popular resistance. If suddenly, to be an Arab had become a 'good thing' in the eyes of politically active people all over the world, the slogans, images and rhetoric present in Cairo's Tahrir Square seemed to contribute, with remarkable efficiency, to the construction of an entirely new pluralist, open-ended and revolutionary transnational imaginary that everyone – the Palestinians included – could easily follow and draw strength from, irrespective of location.

This profound sense of empowerment is expressed movingly by Mahmoud Yahya, a 23-year-old Gazan activist interviewed by another Gazan activist and journalist, Asmaa al-Ghoul (al-Ghoul 2013). Yahya remembers how the Arab Spring made him and his friends feel like 'giants, capable of anything'. Speaking with a few years' hindsight, he recalls, with a mix of affection and irony, that 'I cannot believe how convinced I was that I was Superman, and the same goes for how I saw all the other young people . . . The Arab revolutions had truly changed us. For the first time we felt like we had some agency.' The feeling was not long-lived, however. Yahya describes how the youth in Gaza 'broke through their collective fear' and were able to face harassment by the PA security forces undeterred, during a series of smaller protests that took place prior to March 15. On the day of the large demonstration, which Yahya describes as their 'own revolution', however, the collective confidence began to break down: their defining chant, 'The people want to end the division' (between Hamas and Fatah), was met by violence and harsh treatment from the security forces of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority who beat, slandered and smeared the activists, at the same time as the demonstration itself was taken over by Hamas's green flags and official political speeches. In the West Bank, similar scenes took place, albeit under the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority. 'From that moment on', Yahya states, 'sadness and frustration would silence us forever'. Speaking two years after the spring of 2011, he confesses that what most of his friends, himself included, are now talking about in Gaza are different plans to emigrate and to pursue their dreams of future elsewhere: 'We believe in our strength, but we were romantic. When I saw all of the March 15 activists emigrating and travelling away from Gaza, I knew that we had failed to bring about out Palestinian Spring, so I decided to travel as well.'

The Palestinian *differend*

Mahmoud Yahya's reflections on the tragic trajectory of the 'Palestinian spring', as presented by al-Ghoul, offer a narrative insight into the shrinking space of

Palestinian politics and resistance that this book has also sought to attend to. Given the simultaneous subjection of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to both a home-grown authoritarian state boosted by foreign funding and support, and a military occupation whose violence towards the Palestinians seems to escalate year by year (the seven-week military assault on the Gaza Strip in summer 2014 is a case in point), attempts to emulate the democratic rhetoric and tactics of the Arab Spring and to apply them in the specific context of Palestine collapse into contradictions that are very hard to address. Firstly, in Palestine the imperative of building national unity and a coherent movement for liberation has become increasingly difficult to accomplish, due to the multiplication of new divisions, hierarchies and antagonisms that have been introduced to Palestinian society via the establishment of a postcolonial pseudo-state, and through the rise of neoliberal regimes of subjection and control which have resulted in the individualisation and hybridisation of Palestinian subjectivities. At the same time as the 'premature postcolonisation' of Palestinian politics has worked to dissolve and dislocate any common basis on which effective anti-colonial resistance against Israel might be built and articulated, it has also boosted a general air of political alienation and normalisation within the Palestinian society, resulting in the withdrawal of large parts of the population from the realm of national(ist) politics altogether.

Secondly, tapping onto the political discourses of the 'Arab Spring' and articulating Palestinian demands for democracy, justice and liberty in opposition to domestic power structures that also need addressing is highly problematic, not least because as long as the West Bank and Gaza are subjected to Israeli military occupation, the pseudo-state governed by the Palestinian Authority cannot really deliver the latter – justice and liberty – to the Palestinian people it is supposed to represent, irrespective of the government in charge. For the same reason, an extensive uprising against the Palestinian Authority is not necessarily something that the Palestinians at large might stand for, despite widely shared resentment towards the PA's failures, corruption and lack of commitment to the interests and views of the Palestinian people it is supposed to serve. As Yahya Moussa, a representative of Hamas in the Legislative Council, puts it:

> It is difficult to talk about the logic of the Arab Spring while still under occupation. In both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip there is a powerless authority with its hands tied. If we were to blame the authority that we established under occupation, then this would not fix anything because overthrowing it would not make the occupation leave. If the masses did overthrow the authority, the alternative is direct occupation. It would be as if we did the enemy's bidding, thus ours is an ambiguous spring. (Moussa, in al-Ghoul 2013)

Thirdly, building a grass-roots movement that could address both the occupation and domestic power structures effectively is complicated by the fact that since the establishment of indirect occupation through the division of historic Palestine into those areas governed by Israel and those governed by the Palestinian Authority, the actual points of contact between the occupier and the occupied

have diminished and become highly depersonalised, especially in Gaza, where the geographic separation and isolation of the Palestinians is very deep. Instead of soldiers patrolling Palestinian streets, now Israel governs Gaza and the West Bank through border control, a heavy military arsenal and technologies of surveillance and destruction that are operated via remote control. Accordingly, the ordinary Palestinians' ability to actually articulate themselves politically and to confront the occupation through means other than armed resistance has been radically reduced.

Paradoxically, physical separation has not been paralleled by an increase in the Palestinians' ability to detach and separate themselves from Israel: quite the contrary. At the same time as the Oslo Accords allowed Israel to detach from the Palestinians geographically, it formalised Palestinian entanglement with, and subservience to, Israeli economic system through a strict framework of rules and regulations governed by the so-called Paris Protocol.[4] The young Palestinian artist and filmmaker Amer Shomali highlights this point by drawing attention to the flood of Israeli produce that currently dominates the Palestinian market. Shomali's film debut, *The Wanted 18* (2015), humorously describes Palestinian efforts during the first intifada to detach from the Israeli system of occupation through the boycott of Israeli produce and through nutritional self-sustainability. In a conversation with Noura Erakat, Shomali stresses that, back then, the idea behind the boycott was not to punish Israel, but rather, to 'move toward independence and self-sustainability' (Shomali, in Status Audio Journal Hosts, 2015). Now, a boycott of Israeli products and companies is gaining ground internationally, but the potential for such actions within the Occupied Palestinian Territories has been all but undermined, because the legal framework that regulates the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Authority has made the Palestinians' own desires to pursue self-sustainability and separation from the Israeli economic system impossible in practice.

Shomali's argument is built on the ways in which the Paris Protocol formalised asymmetric economic relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, allowing Israel supreme control of all exports and imports to and from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, hence ensuring that the Occupied Palestinian Territories would remain a lucrative market for Israeli products in the future. While this has advanced the occupation's profitability for Israel, Palestinian economic elites are also able to strike import and export deals with Israeli officials and businesspeople have profited. As a result, Shomali notes that today any attempt to talk about boycott in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is met with healthy dose of scepticism. Not only are most people in Gaza and the West Bank all too aware of the fact that the only alternative to buying Israeli products it to buy products made or imported by someone who is in a commercial relationship with the Israelis. In addition, there is a wide understanding among the Palestinians that this condition has come as a result of the actions of their own national leadership, which aborted the first intifada and, by signing the Oslo Accords, willingly exchanged it for indirect occupation administered by a complacent Palestinian elite able to benefit from the current system.

Amidst this complex political situation, the 'Arab Spring' injected Palestinian youths with a burst of confidence in their ability to stand up and shape their own collective futures. In so doing, it also forced the young activists to confront, in practice, the dilemmas and *differends* that have characterised Palestinian politics since the establishment of the framework of the Oslo Accords. What, given these circumstances, is the concrete space left for the construction and articulation of an emancipatory and democratic political movement? How might the Palestinians articulate a struggle for democracy and justice in the context of incommensurable regimes of power, and amidst the paradoxes of their own condition as distinctively postcolonial subjects subjugated by an ultra-territorial, militarised colonial occupation?

The youth movement's immediate response to these questions was to translate the Arab Spring's universal call – 'people want the overthrow of the regime' – into a customised, yet no less ambitious slogan: 'people want to end the division'; their aim being to end the hostility between Hamas and Fatah that was paralysing the national struggle as a whole. That this, rather than something else, became the stated objective of the demonstrations of the 'March 15' was not unequivocal, however. Ahmed Balousha, another youth activist interviewed by Asmaa al-Ghoul, puts the record straight by stating that what she and her fellow activists really wanted to do in Gaza was 'to raise banners which read, "Down with the regimes of the West Bank and Gaza", and "The two governments are competing to achieve their own interests" and "Suppression of freedoms".' However, instead of seeking a total overthrow of a corrupt political system, Balousha says that they settled for a reformist agenda, in order to prevent anyone from accusing them of airing thoughts 'which reflect the objectives of the occupation' (Balousha, in al-Ghoul 2013). Another activist, Murad Jadallah, describes the campaign as essentially shallow, not least because a simple demand for an 'end to the division' was not able to address what had *caused* the division: the absence of a unified national resistance strategy. Having said that, Jadallah sees that in the lack of a better one, the call to end the division did nevertheless offer the movement 'a unifying slogan' whose benefit was that it was 'easy for people to repeat' (Jadallah, in Alsaafin 2012).

Despite the effort to articulate a political agenda that would be applicable and convincing in the Palestinian context, the 'March 15' movement began to dissolve soon after the reconciliation agreement was signed. Its activists bemoan how both in the West Bank and Gaza, demonstrations calling for unity were largely co-opted by the two competing Palestinian Authorities, which brought in their own flags, speeches and agendas. This widely contradicted the organisers' ambition to create a space for political engagement *outside* the formal political framework and entrenched institutional power, and to create political expressions that could address the situation adequately in the way the youth experienced it. For many, disappointment with the course taken by the demonstrations in March 15 marked the beginning of their personal disillusionment with the potential of a 'Palestinian Spring' (see Al-ghoul 2011; Alsaafin 2012; Bailey 2012; Erakat 2011; Maira 2013: 112–19; Vick 2011). Moreover, also the loose organisational

structure and open-ended strategy that so many early appraisals of the Arab Spring have celebrated, and which has been distinctive also of the Palestinian youth movement at large, has proved problematic in its own right, in Palestine as well as in the other parts of the region (see, for instance Bayat 2013). Youth activists interviewed by Linah Alsaafin (2012) admit to poor and fragmented coordination and to the 'tyranny of totally horizontal groups' resulting from the lack of clear processes of decision making, and to the absence of well-defined principles and values, which contributed to increasing suspicion and competition among the different groups which made up the youth movement itself. Others point out that the reason why the established Palestinian political factions succeeded in 'hijacking the momentum of our resistance' so easily relates to the young generation's 'lack of political experience' and 'susceptibility to splitting into factions like the rest of the Palestinians' (Aba, in al-Ghoul, 2013).

Accordingly, many commentators reporting on the youth movement a few years after its inception seem to agree that political normalisation and withdrawal, rather than political fervour and mobilisation, has returned to be the prevailing mood among the youth in the West Bank and Gaza (al-Ghoul 2013; Bailey 2012; Farsakh 2012). Given the increasing regional chaos that has followed in the aftermath of the Arab Revolutions, deepening repression by what many consider as a Palestinian police-state,[5] and the overall waning of the spirit of the 'Arab Spring', this might not be surprising at all. If the hopes of collective liberation and emancipation become, again, to be perceived as unrealistic and unattainable, it is within the realm of private occupations and dreams that people may seek to improve their own lives and those belonging to their close family. Especially in the context of endemic poverty and lack of horizons, finding time and energy to struggle for collective and political freedoms instead of personal survival, by securing a place to study, competing for work, getting married, or emigrating, is a challenge in its own right.

On the other hand, it has also been noted that for some activists, disappointment with the initial experiments of the 'Arab Spring' has not implied political apathy and indifference per se, but rather, a turning away from marches, camps and demonstrations associated with March 15 and May 15, and towards more individual expressions of political agency, such as small-scale, tailored actions and artistic and cultural expressions aiming to draw attention to the Palestinians' cause, or to improve the Palestinians' own understanding of, and respect to, their historical and cultural heritage (see, for instance Bailey 2012). Also Sunaina Maira notes that despite disappointment and fatigue reflective of the hopelessness and despair prevalent within Palestinian society at large, many of the young people she returned to interview in 2013 were engaged in 'thinking deeply about their role in a larger political field mired in scepticism and political paralysis, and caught between authoritarian repression and colonial oppression' (Maira 2013: 185):

> While many of these young activists and artists hearkened back to the mass-based organizing of the first intifada, in particular, and deeply desired a revival of collective resistance, they understood that the post-Oslo, post-second

> intifada era was a different political and historical moment. They were critical of state-building, and particularly of the Oslo framework of the two-state solution, and they were also generally not focused on the state as the horizon of liberation or central paradigm of resistance. (Maira 2013: 190)

Subsequently, what all these young people seemed to be wrestling with was the challenge of 'how to rethink political resistance "in a deeper way", including in music and cultural production', in a context permeated by collective exhaustion with existing political frameworks, and in order to create 'new discourses and demands of freedom' which could 'make the contradiction of living under twenty-first century settler coloniality visible and audible' (Maira 2013: 184, 191). Accordingly, Maira locates Palestinian youth's political agency in its current attempts to expand and stretch the 'boundaries of political subjecthood' and to force new ways in which experience political unity and collectivity, without giving up one's personal and individual sense of the self. While this desire has been most visible in the rise of Palestinian hip-hop culture, Maira recognises that these aspirations and new forms of political expression are not unequivocally accepted nor appreciated among the young Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, nor are they seen to represent all layers of the youth. For instance, despite its clearly articulated opposition to neoliberal policies and the occupation, especially Palestinian hip hop has been highly vulnerable to criticisms of being Westernising, 'a form of American colonization', and hence corruptive of Palestinian national identity and cause (Maira 2013: 77–82). Similarly, for many, the computer-savvy, trendy activists of the youth movement who are fluent in English appear, above all, as representatives of the 'Ramallah-bubble' and of the Palestinian elites and middle classes, rather than of the Palestinian population at large.

Maira's analysis of the political problematic in occupied Palestine, as articulated by the youth movement between the years 2011 and 2013, offers a fruitful companion to, and extension of, the analysis that this book has sought to offer. However, whereas Maira focuses on the struggles and expressions that have taken place in Palestine under the influence of the Arab Spring, and at many points seems to suggest an epistemological break between this era and the era of the 'mass movements and intense mobilization of the first and the second intifadas' (Maira 2013: 40), what I have argued is that the dissolution and rejection of established political frameworks – which has become increasingly clear and visible in the present – was already formative of the second intifada, and that it has contributed greatly to the politics of its representation. Throughout this study, my aim has been to bring attention to the ways in which the problematic of the *differend* shows itself in Palestine: to the existence of multiple, mutually incommensurable paradigms of power and subjectivity that coexist and clash in contemporary Palestine, as well as to the problematic of representation that follows from this dislocation. On the one hand, the societies in the West Bank and Gaza presently remain subjects to a highly territorial, violent and expansive colonial occupation, and therefore the articulation of a coherent, collective movement for Palestinian liberation is high on the Palestinian political agenda – and something that

commentators who examine the struggle from the outside, also expect the Palestinians to do. On the other hand, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are also subjected to a variety of social and political processes and transformations that are usually associated with late modern and postcolonial societies and situations, and which tend to run counter to the formation and articulation of national unity, dissolving any basis on which such unity could be articulated and built. Dislocated between colonial, late modern and postcolonial paradigms, the Palestinians' struggles have become largely unrepresentable and unintelligible within the terms of any of them.

. . . After politics and representation: justice

In response to this problematic, the aim of this book has been to ask, what is the discursive and physical space left for the articulation and expression of Palestinian politics and resistance? How might academic research attend to the complexity of political struggles and subjectivities in contemporary Palestine, and to create space for their meaningful articulation and representation? One answer that I have suggested is to build analytical approaches that seek, in the words of Stuart Hall, to attend violently to 'what is', rather than 'what ought to be', and to contribute to the construction and articulation of alternative political struggles and strategies on the basis of this deeper appreciation of the complexity of social forces that currently constitute the subject in Palestine. To this end, this book has engaged in several studies of 'late modern subjects of colonial occupation', that is, studies which take the subject, rather than power, as their starting point, and in doing so, seek to broaden understandings of the variety of different forces, discursive spaces and power relations within which political subjectivities and action in Palestine are currently constituted and negotiated.

Another action that I have suggested is to turn attention upon Palestinian subalternity, to expand understandings of the political in Palestine and to emphasise the importance of Palestinian everyday resistance or *sumud*, both of which are understood here in the most elementary sense, as acts of daily resilience through which the Palestinian affirm their right to life, land and joy. This perspective was particularly central for Chapters 2 and 5 of this book, both of which have highlighted the importance of Palestinian everyday life as an art of *living against occupation*, amidst the siege and against the overall dehumanisation and degradation of Palestinian lives and dignity. Although these acts of resistance and resilience do not amount to the overthrow of the occupation, I argue that in the context of the shrinking space of political enunciation and of potential for concerted action, that these subaltern, largely non-teleological and non-strategic expressions of resilience have been turned into central and meaningful aspect of Palestinian politics and resistance.

While it is my hope that these strategies might contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and of the political promise and potential that is concealed in the present, I acknowledge that for the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, the value of strategies aimed

at recovering and strengthening Palestinian political agency through a shift in discourse and framing, rather than through concrete mobilisation, might eventually be rather limited. Understandably, from their perspective, the *differend* in Palestine demands, above all, strategies, actions and decisions that take place on the level of concrete everyday life. Although Palestinian youths' current experiments with 'new politics' and 'new idioms of political expression' have not succeeded at overcoming Palestinian dispersion or at mobilising a new, mass-based movement for Palestinian liberation, they do, however, give some indication of a creative spirit that could, potentially, articulate itself someday as a consistent political force and practice. This, however, is something that only the Palestinians themselves can address: it is not the business of benevolent outsiders claiming to 'know' what the Palestinians 'should do'.

In this regard, a lengthy quote from the filmmaker Amer Shomali is particularly revealing. In response to his own question – 'Are we willing to go through a third intifada that looks like the second intifada?' – Shomali argues for a need to bring the first intifada back on the table, not as a model of organisation and action but as an example of genuinely creative way of thinking:

> [We] should take the spirit of the first intifada and think what we can do nowadays with the new layers [of power and oppression] that we have, which is the businessman/politicians, and the occupation, and the bank system . . . It is how fast they [the activists of the first intifada] were creating something new. So whenever they did something, Israel would start to think how to react to that, they would start something new. And Israel was always a step or two behind the Palestinians. We were so creative in the way of resisting and thinking out of the box. Nowadays, we are stuck. Even when we think we want to do an intifada, we think our two options are the first intifada or the second intifada. That was not the case with the first intifada. People had no model. Every town or city or small village created its own special ways, depending on weaknesses, strengths, and the possibilities they had in their community. So basically, when you say, 'what is the spirit of the first intifada?' I would not say boycott or throwing of stones or whatever. I would not say something that specific. I would say it is the creative way of thinking regarding creative resistance. (Shomali, in Status Audio Journal Hosts 2015)

Shomali's call for locally based political creativity able to appreciate and address the complex present is, in many ways, universal. For eventually, is this not precisely the challenge that social and political movements all over the world are grappling with, the challenge presented to us by modernity's crises and the 'crisis of the political', enmeshed as we are in the uncertain, vulnerable, complex, paradoxical and, as Scott (2004) argues, 'tragic' problem-space of postcolonial late-modernity? Whether the Palestinians will be able to articulate new political idioms and spirits adequate to these crises, in an attempt to address their own condition, which is highly specific, yet intimately entangled with the global and the transnational, remains to be seen. Whether, in doing so,

the Palestinians' struggle can once again enlighten the way also for the rest of us, also remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, what those of us who observe this struggle from a more comfortable distance should be very clear about is the fact that eventually, the rightness and urgency of Palestinian demands for elementary justice, dignity and freedom should have nothing to do with the question of whether the Palestinians are 'able' to articulate 'right' forms of resistance that are pleasing to our own political, ethical and moral sensibilities and sensitivities – whether it is a coherent, non-violent and collective national movement that we are looking for, or a leaderless, decentralised network of a 'creative multitudes' that corresponds with postmodern desires and aesthetic preferences. To put it straight, the Palestinians' cause, I argue, will continue to occupy the 'moral high ground' (Said 2000) of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, not by the virtue of the Palestinians' capacity to conform to shifting expectations of what popular resistance should look like in order to appear legitimate in the eyes of the international community, but by the virtue of the immense, accumulating injustice that the Palestinians have now struggled against for more than sixty years. Unless this injustice is addressed, whether through the establishment of a bi-national state comprising of both Israeli and Palestinians, or through some other political solution that could be politically and ethically acceptable, what the rest of us should be doing is to give our unconditional support for Palestinian aspirations for dignity and self-determination – irrespective of the paths that a people under a military colonial occupation end up taking.

Notes

1 http://www.miftah.org/Doc/Polls/PollAWRAD110913.pdf.
2 http://www.bdsmovement.net.
3 http://www.stopthewall.org/about-us.
4 The Paris Protocol is accessible at: http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/services/cds/agreements/pdf/is23.pdf. For critical analysis of the Protocol, see for instance Daud (2011).
5 While there are plenty of reports on the diminishing space for dissent in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, Lori Allen notes that in the West Bank, the repressive apparatus of the Palestinian quasi-state has been bolstered heavily by massive foreign funding that has been poured into the Palestinian Authority's security forces, in order to support the Fatah-dominated West Bank PA in 'counterterrorism' that is, in the fight against Hamas (see Allen 2013: 147–14).

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