

Under Occupation

– Citizens of the West Bank and their experiences of
Democracy and Freedom in Palestine

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Summary

This thesis handles the subjects of freedom and democracy on the West Bank, Palestine. The analysis builds on discourse theory with focuses on the informants' reality and experiences. In order to highlight the difficulties they face in their daily lives under occupation and oppression this thesis focuses on how they express themselves in regards to freedom and democracy. The study has been carried out through fieldwork and qualitative interviews undertaken to ascertain the people's opinions and views on subjects of democracy and freedom. The analysis handles subjects of inequalities, how fellow citizens get divided geographically and based on opinions held, the reasons behind it; as well as the role played by the occupation of the Palestinian territories in the fight for democracy and freedom for the informants.

Key Words

Palestinian Authority

Occupation

Democracy

Freedom

Foreword

This bachelor's thesis is the final test for me during my three years at the programme of Social and Cultural Analysis at Linköping University. It has been a process in which I have felt happiness, anger, disappointment, where I have been anxious but also proud. I think it is of the utmost importance that the stories of the people I have interviewed get out there, into some kind of sphere where people will try to understand the complexity of this situation while wanting to learn more.

Before you read my work I would like to thank the organization and people I spent four weeks with in Palestine, making this study possible for me to carry out. I want to thank you for the time you dedicated to this study, for making this possible. You have my utmost respect and gratitude. You know who you are.

I also want to thank my supervisor Peo Hansen for his great ideas and support during the whole process of this thesis.

I hope you will have learnt something after finishing these pages, I most definitely have.

Thank you.

Carl Hassellöf, Norrköping, May 2016

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Introduction

During four weeks at the beginning of 2016 I got the opportunity to travel to Palestine for an internship with a Palestinian organization, active in a refugee camp on the West Bank. An opportunity I could not resist and wanted to make the most of while there. Fairly quickly in my process of decision-making I decided to write my Bachelor's thesis on the subject of Palestine, the only question was: where to begin? In the early stages of the work, my aim was to analyse the political situation in Palestine focusing on the ways the people I interviewed looked upon the concept of freedom and possibilities for democracy in Palestine. During the first interview and after a couple of days on the West Bank, I realized that it was impossible to talk about the notions of democracy and freedom within the Palestinian territories without looking at the role of the occupiers of the Palestinian territories.

Palestine, with borders to Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan, is located in an area of unrest with the immense presence of war and oppression. Over the years and decades that have passed since the establishment of the state of Israel, the various attempted solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have all seemingly fallen through. Armed attacks from both sides of the separation wall, set up by the Israelis to "protect" themselves from the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza strip, continue to leave victims in their wake. However, these tragic deaths are only one of the effects of this conflict: another is the increasing isolation and detachment of the Palestinians, on an interpersonal level, and from their government. The occupying state of Israel as well as the Palestinian Authority, established in the 1990's, create a reality for the informants living on the West Bank in which they might find themselves restricted in terms of free speech and movement. The state of Israel has continued its military presence within the West Bank and also seized more land than allowed according to international law, thus leaving the Palestinians of the West Bank with less than they have been promised. What kind of power does the occupation leave for the Palestinian Authority that ought to work as a government for the Palestinian people?

This thesis examines the different obstacles that the Palestinian people face daily, both physical and psychological. What happens to the prospects for Palestinian democracy while under occupation? The Palestinian peoples fight for freedom and democracy within a fractured society creates problems but also makes the weaknesses with the society perhaps more visible.

Purpose and Questions

The overarching purpose of this thesis is to analyse the contemporary political situation in Palestine with theories of democracy and freedom. This as well as how different actors come to affect each other and what role these actors play in the current situation for the informants. The notions of positive and negative freedom will be central together with theories regarding the nation, the state and democracy and how these different categories affect each other in Palestine today. Positive freedom refers to a freedom where one's freedom only is dependant on one's own decisions and that you are the master of your own life and decisions. Negative freedom, on the other hand means that ones freedom is dependent on that someone gives you permission to do something that you otherwise would not be able to.¹

Questions:

- How do the informants' express their thoughts about the Palestinian Authority's role under the Israeli occupation?
- How do the informants talk about freedom?
- How does the occupation affect the informants' perception of freedom and their fight for democracy?

Background and Previous Research

In 1994, during the Oslo accords, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) took place. It was, at the time, meant to present "a milestone" for the Palestinian "struggle for national liberation" and was created by the West and Israel.² This establishment was long seen as an attempt from the West and Israel to solve the conflict and thus move closer to the sought for two-state-solution that would mean one Palestinian state and Israel. The West Bank and Gaza strip are the two Palestinian territories that were supposed to be governed by the Palestinian Authority.

Currently, the Palestinian people have been waiting for over ten years for new elections within the territories to elect a new president; meanwhile the Israelis have been establishing settlements all over the occupied West Bank.³ The occupation has led to

¹ Isaiah Berlin. *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, London: Pimlico, 1998

² Perry Anderson. The House of Zion, *New Left Review* 96, (2015): p. 5

³ Anderson. The House of Zion, p. 10 f.

numerous demonstrations and two major uprisings called ‘intifadas’. The first intifada started in the late 1980’s and ended with the signing of the aforementioned Oslo accords. The beginning of the first intifada marked a new kind of resistance with the youth of Palestine taking up arms in the quest of ending the occupation. By this time the indifferences and inequalities in the fight between the Palestinian people and the Israeli military have become visible, with the Palestinian fighting with rocks, knives and sticks against rifles and machine guns. However, the first intifada signalled a new, more organized resistance along with a national consciousness within the Palestinian territories.⁴ Although the Oslo accords received “unanimous applause”⁵ from the world’s leaders; the settlements continued to grow in number, the roads built on Palestinian land started to isolate the Palestinian societies from each other, and the “per capita income of the Palestinian population fell by one quarter in the first five years after the Accords.”⁶ This betrays the injustice in the new agreement, and indicates that Israel’s continued building of settlements is a violation of international law.⁷

While the Jewish settlements being built within the Palestinian territories of the West Bank are illegal according to international law, the separation wall (in this thesis referred to as “the wall”) is being built as a way to “protect” the Jewish settlers and citizens of Israel from the Palestinian Arabs.⁸ It also serves the purpose of protection when the Palestinians of the West Bank rise up against the occupation, as during the intifadas.⁹ As mentioned briefly before, the wall and the new roads only available to the settlers to travel isolate Palestinian cities and villages from each other, creating a fractured society divided and displaced all over the West Bank.¹⁰ With the wall stretching, both on the West Bank-Israel border and within the West Bank itself in order to “protect and incorporate the settlements” over 690 km, the project of separation is vast and has become devastating for the Palestinian population.¹¹

Saree Makdisi’s work *Palestine Inside Out* describes the day-to-day life of the Palestinian people on the West Bank, their struggles and their fight for certain rights and the freedom of movement. The checkpoints, together with the building of roads connecting the settlements with each other while disrupting the infrastructure of the Palestinian

⁴ Perry Anderson. Scurrying Towards Bethlehem in *New Left Review* 10, (2001): p. 17

⁵ Anderson, Scurrying Towards Bethlehem, p. 5

⁶ Anderson, Scurrying Towards Bethlehem, p. 18

⁷ Anderson. Scurrying Towards Bethlehem, p. 18

⁸ Wendy Brown. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, New York: Zone Books, 2010, p. 28 ff.

⁹ Brown. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, p. 29

¹⁰ Brown. *Walled State, Waning Sovereignty*, p. 29

¹¹ Saree Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An everyday Occupation*, New York: Norton, 2008, p. 23

population and the aforementioned wall are all examples of means with which the Israeli occupational power controls the Palestinian peoples movement within the occupied territories.¹²

The struggle for statehood and sovereignty for Palestine has continued, despite what the Oslo accords offered and this has led to a lack of trust towards the Palestinian Authority (PA) as well as towards the general political and democratic situation in Palestine. Before the Oslo accords, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) functioned as an umbrella organization for the different political parties and fractions within the Palestinian society. After the Oslo accords the PLO fell into bankruptcy and decline, in favour of the organization they helped establish, the Palestinian Authority.¹³ During the 1990's the national movement for the freedom of Palestine started to alter as Hamas came about as a contender to the PLO, with its will to establish an Islamic state in Palestine.¹⁴ The division between the political parties of Palestine, especially the one between Hamas and Fatah creates divided opinions of what the Palestinian cause is.¹⁵

The struggles for the Palestinian people stem from a situation where a lot of the problems in their lives are directly related to the occupational power of Israel. The mentioned divisions and displacement within the Palestinian society and community creates problems and the fact that the various challenges posed upon the people of Palestine comes from the situation between the political parties, trying to represent the people. The displaced people in the West Bank all have their own, sometimes separate, struggle. The cities of the West Bank have been cut off from each other, thus creating distinct goals, and the political parties of Palestine fail to agree upon which path the struggle for freedom should continue.

Perry Anderson and Nadja Naser-Najjab shed light on the problems that the political parties of Palestine face in the claimed fight to free the Palestinian people. The political elite of Palestine has not been changed for more than a decade and no elections have been held for over 10 years, creating distrust towards the government, as previously mentioned. On the other side of the struggle are the people living in refugee camps on the West Bank, living as internal refugees since they have not been allowed to return to their villages since the war in 1948, when the state of Israel first was established.¹⁶

¹² Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*. p. 32

¹³ As'ad Ghanem. *Palestinian Politics After Arafat: A Failed National Movement*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, p. 12

¹⁴ Ghanem, *Palestinian Politics After Arafat: A Failed National Movement*. p. 18

¹⁵ Nadia Naser-Najjab. Between Myth and Reality: The Palestinian Political Elite and the Two-State-Solution, in *Holy Land Studies* 13 no. 2 (2014) p. 142

¹⁶ Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*. p. 254 f.

“The House of Zion” by Perry Anderson discusses the long procedure of conflicts, negotiations and intifadas as well as the role played by the current leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Palestinian Authority (PA) and one of the biggest parties in Palestine, al-Fatah, Mahmoud Abbas. The insight of Anderson lays bare the trust the people have in the leader of the three biggest Palestinian organisations.¹⁷ Safety is something that ought to be provided by the government within a state. The problems the PA face in terms of settlements and the violence, from both sides, comes with the continued growth of the Jewish state of Israel. If Israel wants to create a Jewish state within its’ borders, free of Palestinian Arabs, they know that they are demographically undermined but still have the power of weapons, economy and that is something that keeps this conflict alive and still far away from being solved, in any way.¹⁸ Anderson’s insight in the people’s trust of the Palestinian leaders and the system itself is valuable for this thesis.¹⁹

To broaden the perspective of different solutions to the conflict, what has been done, and what remains to be done, Rashid Khalidi²⁰ and Jamil Hilal²¹ describe the contemporary situation in Palestine drawing on reflections of the past. Khalidi and Hilal together with the authors of the anthology *Failure of the Two-State-Solution: Prospects of One State in the Israel-Palestine conflict* gives different interpretations of this complex situation.²² These authors, just like Anderson, Naser-Najjab and Makdisi problematize the real role of the PA and the true nature of their power. Formally, this government ought to control the Palestinian territories, providing democracy and protection for its citizens. However, under occupation this has become a different reality than what was first the intention of the Oslo accords first intended. As mentioned before, the occupational regime of Israel creates a situation for the Palestinian people where they should turn to their authorities but in reality, what can their government do while being under occupation? What, then, happens to the peoples trust towards a united cause and the hopes for freedom and a system of democratic values in Palestine?

¹⁷ Naser-Najjab. *Between Myth and Reality: The Palestinian Political Elite and the Two-State-Solution*, p. 139-158

¹⁸ Tony Judt. Israel: The Alternative, in *The New York Review of Books*, (2003) (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2003/10/23/israel-the-alternative/?printpage=true>) Retrieved 2015-02-30

¹⁹ Anderson. *The House of Zion*. p. 5-37

²⁰ Rashid Khalidi. *The Iron Cage: the Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*. 1. ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006

²¹ Jamil Hilal. *Where Now for Palestine?: the Demise of the Two-State-Solution*, London: Zed, 2007

²² Hani Faris (red.). *The Failure of the Two-State-Solution: the Prospects of One State in the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2013

Method

This study builds on the ideas of qualitative ethnographic fieldwork where the material has been collected from the model of qualitative research and interviews. For inspiration and knowledge of how to conduct fieldwork I have used theories of Lars Kaijser and Magnus Öhlander and their book *Etnologiskt fältarbete*. The authors of this book give a good understanding as to why fieldwork is a good way of collecting data, and demonstrate a couple of steps to think about when carrying out fieldwork of qualitative methods. I used the steps of preparation and orientation of the field since there is a lot of academic research and ideas available in this field of study.²³ This period of the fieldwork ought to be seen as a period where the researcher can have the chance to decide what kind of material he wants to collect.

The method of collecting data has been semi-structured interviews. This method of collecting data aims to let the informants speak as freely as possible and also for the interviewer to get an in-depth knowledge of certain areas, as the ones of freedom and democracy for this thesis. What is appealing with the method of semi-structured interviews is that while analysing the material critically it also gives specific stories of the informant's lives in certain areas and certain questions. It is a living way of collecting data that aims to allow the informants tell their thoughts to the interviewer.²⁴ This led to discussions and long answers where the aim was to let the interviewee feel as free as possible in terms of expression and opinions regarding the situation in which they live.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork took place in Palestine, on the West Bank in a medium-sized city during a four-week period of internship with a Palestinian youth organization. During this time, I came in contact with people from the area, which led me to getting in contact with more people to book meetings and interviews with. The organization where the internship took place had a great network of contacts that could be used to schedule the interviews needed for this study. Three of the interviews were meetings that I scheduled myself, with people I met during some of the meetings I attended during the period of the internship.

Seven interviews were carried out with people engaged in the Palestinian community on different levels and with different backgrounds, both in terms of living situation and in terms of work and political activity. The interviewees are both men and women with differing ages. I did not ask any of the informants of their age because that would not be relevant for this study but they are all above 25 years old. I met with some of the

²³ Kaijser, Lars & Öhlander, Magnus (red.). *Etnologiskt fältarbete*, 2, Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2011 p. 43 f.

²⁴ Kaijser & Öhlander. *Etnologiskt Fältarbete*. p. 96 f.

interviewees before the scheduled interview and this was the time and place where I asked them if they would want to participate in this study.

Some of the informants are citizens of a refugee camp situated on the West Bank some of them are not. This means that some of the quotes in this study are related to the life within a refugee camp while some of the stories do not.

Before getting into the process of creating an interview guide I prepared by orientating myself within the chosen field by reading previous research, trying to create a picture of the field.²⁵ The questionnaire was created in a way where the interviews started with some background on the person and his or her working and living situation. This worked as a conversation starter where my aim was to make the informants feel comfortable in the role as interviewee and with my role as interviewer. The order of the questions went from being questions, as mentioned, about the living situation, the interviewees view of their society, its strengths and weaknesses, to later get more direct in terms of opinions on the political situation in Palestine and what freedom means to them. I never intended to ask questions that would directly relate to the informants gender or sex since that would not be relevant for this study as I chose to design it. But since the situation might be different out of a women's perspective the answers differ when talking about the subjects of freedom and democracy because of the interviewee's gender. To read how I formed the interview guide see Appendix 1.

On one occasion the situation required a translator, something that the organization contributed. A friend of the person that was interviewed worked as a translator. The role of this translator was the role of someone who helped the interview and made sure that I was able to carry it out.²⁶ I found it a bit difficult to know how to handle a situation such as this; Kvale and Brinkmann discuss the problems with having a friend as a translator since the friend might have an agenda of their own, trying to interrupt with the conversation with his or her own view on specific subjects.²⁷ This happened during the mentioned interview, the friend of the interviewee acted as a translator and they started talking at one point in the interview. Their conversation was in Arabic and not possible to understand for me. The consideration of the problem with a friend as a translator should not be neglected but at the moment of the interview it was not possible to have someone else so the decision to go with the friend as a translator was made.

Since I did spend four weeks on the West Bank I got opportunities to conduct interviews I otherwise would not have got. However I did not feel as if it was just because I was there that the interviewees spoke to me. All of them were, when asked, more than willing to be

²⁵ Kaijser & Öhlander. *Etnologiskt Fältarbete*. p. 44

²⁶ Steinar Kvale & Svend Brinkmann. *Den Kvalitative Forskningsintervjun*, 3. [rev.]Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2014 p. 185

²⁷ Kvale & Brinkmann. *Den Kvalitative Forskningsintervjun*. p. 185

interviewed on the subjects of freedom and democracy. I wanted be respectful to them and their culture in order to be able to “earn” the possibility to interview these people. I got the feeling that when doing the interviews the informants were eager to tell me about their thoughts on these subjects and we the interviews were successful because of this fact.

None of the names used for this thesis are the real name of the informants. The fictive names chosen for the interviewees is Salah, Dima, Zahira, Muhannad, Nabil, Ghazi and Nadia. All of these names are used in the Palestinian community and have connections to Palestinian culture. I chose the names after reading previous research of the field in which the authors use these names when speaking about or referring to Palestinians on different levels within the community, as in this study.

Method of analysis

When analysing the material collected through the interviews I have used thematic analysis strengthened by discourse analysis. Thematic analysis allows me to choose themes I want to study within the chosen field. Thematic discourse analysis allows me to build on the theories of discourse analysis in the sense that it can be a method that “reports experiences, meanings and the reality” of the informants of this study.²⁸ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke explain the strengths of thematic analysis as it aims to work as a method where the individuals make the meaning of their reality. They argue that the social context and how it “impinges” on the meanings of the informants’ allow the analysis to retain focus on the reality of the informants. Thematic analysis aims to be a method that “reflects the reality” of the informants’ as well as “to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’”.²⁹ As already mentioned, this method allows me to combine the theory of thematic analysis with the discourse theory.

The discourse side of the analysis builds on the work *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* by Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips. The book handles different types of discourse analysis and but I will focus on their discussion regarding the role Michel Foucault and his analysis of power and knowledge has on the discourse theory. Foucault’s ideas about discourse analysis and that the struggle of power forms the discourse and the field of the discourse will be central in my analysis. Jørgensen and Phillips discuss how Foucault uses the concept of ‘power’ and say that “power should not be understood as exclusively productive; power constitutes discourse, knowledge, bodies and

²⁸ Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke Using thematic analysis in psychology in *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3:2, (2006), 77-101, p. 81

²⁹ Braun & Clarke. Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology, p. 81

subjectivities”.³⁰ The analysis will build on this assertion of the language as something that forms the reality of the informants. Jørgensen and Phillips refer to Foucault and his way of looking at knowledge as something that is created discursively. The authors say that the “truth is a discursive construction”,³¹ meaning that the truth of one is created by the way one uses the language to create truths and ones reality. Discourse theory will be used to understand the reality of the informants with the support of the previous research and with the chosen theories. In what ways do language and the use of it create different views of, for example, freedom and democracy? The method of discourse analysis allows the study to focus on the language and the way the informants express themselves within the subjects and in regard to the subjects chosen for this study. Winther Jørgensen and Phillips summarize the strength of a discourse analytical approach by saying that “our access to reality is always through language.”³²

When working with the material collected through the interviews I decided which themes I wanted the study to build on before I started analysing the material.³³ This allow me to choose what themes I wanted to focus on in the interviews with the informants as well as how they talked about certain themes in relation to the reality in which they live.

Before I started to analyse the empiricism I transcribed the parts of the recorded interviews that I thought would be relevant to the early questions posed to the material. The questions were similar to the ones this study aims to answer, involving theories of positive and negative freedom and how the informants speak about the democratic system. After the transcribing period I coded the material three times in order to get to know the material I later wanted to use. At the beginning I had five different themes, *strengths and weaknesses*, *the concept of freedom* and *politics and democracy*. These themes lay ground for the analysis and what quotes from the informants I wanted to analyse using the theories and previous research chosen. During the period of transcribing I got an understanding of the informants view on their situation in regards to the questions asked and this understanding led to the themes the analysis builds on; two overarching themes of *Politics, Democracy and the Palestinian Authority* and *The Palestinian People and the Question of Freedom*. In these, larger, themes of the analysis more specific subtitles was created, *The Palestinian Authority and the Occupation*, *The Will of Change, Safety and Freedom* and *A Divided and Displaced People*.

Since the analysis will be a thematic analysis that takes ground in discourse theory it allows me to see how the informant’s spoke of the themes I chose. This combination allowed me

³⁰ Marianne Jørgensen & Louise Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London: Sage, 2002, p. 13 f.

³¹ Jørgensen & Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. p. 13

³² Jørgensen & Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* p. 8

³³ Braun & Clarke. *Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology*, p. 87

to choose empiricism and use discourse theory to see how the interviewees spoke about and expressed themselves in regards to the themes of freedom and democracy, as were the two main themes and theories of this thesis.

Ethical considerations

The Swedish Research Council's guidelines for research combined with the work of Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann's *Den Kvalitative Forskningsintervjun* were central when conducting the letter of information as well as anonymize the informants during the work with this thesis.

When conducting interviews there are certain ethical rules that work as a protection for the interviewed person that the researcher needs to think about. When conducting a study of this kind you need to collect the consent of the person being interviewed, informing that, for example, he or she can end the interview whenever and that he or she does not need to answer all the questions.³⁴ In this study this was carried out through an information letter where the interviewees were informed about the aim of the thesis. When writing this letter it is important not to be too revealing about the study in itself but keep it rather open in terms of the subject of study. In the information letter there should also be information about the confidentiality of the person and that the study aims to anonymize the interviewee to the furthest extent possible.³⁵ For the full information letter, see Appendix 2.

Another important rule while doing a fieldwork is the rule of confidentiality. This rule implies that I am, as a researcher, solely responsible for the recorded interviews. It is also important to think about that the informants can never be fully un-identified and that the risk of someone being identified is always present. Thus, I need to be careful with the information and the interviews while working in the field and that is why the informants have been given fictive names. The collected data ought not to be spread to others than what the information letter purports.³⁶

Since this study was carried out in Palestine, in a city on the West Bank, I encountered people living in a reality very far from life in Sweden. The qualitative interview as a method of collecting data might sometimes be seen as a technique or a way of bringing certain ways of looking upon the society from a subjective point of view.³⁷ Which, bearing in mind

³⁴ Kvale & Brinkmann, *Den kvalitative forskningsintervjun*, p. 107

³⁵ Kvale & Brinkmann, *Den kvalitative forskningsintervjun*, p. 109

³⁶ The Swedish Research Council, *Forskningsetiska principer*, p. 12 f.

³⁷ Kvale & Brinkmann, *Den kvalitative forskningsintervjun*, p. 123

the situation these people live in, is the most fitting method, giving the informants space to tell their stories and answer the questions as freely as possible.

The aim of this thesis and the fieldwork that I carried out is to shed new light on a complicated situation, with the focus on previous research and statements from the informants of this study. My role as a researcher is not to tell absolute truths about a situation as a whole but rather tell the story and the reality of the people I interviewed. This thesis, as mentioned, will be my interpretation of the situation built on the information I gathered during the fieldwork, through being in Palestine for four weeks and the research used.

When creating the questionnaire I used the knowledge I had gained by reading literature, trying to orientate within the chosen field. Kaijser and Öhlander discuss the importance of self-examination by looking at the, for example, aforementioned questions regarding your role. To examine yourself means that you reflect of your relations to the field and how it might affect the result in the end.³⁸ Through the fieldwork I got the opportunity to gain experiences and build an understanding of the situation on the West Bank. Through the many conversations with people connected to my internship I became aware of difficulties the Palestinian people face in their daily lives and that will be highlighted in the analysis of this thesis.

Since the fieldwork was carried out during an internship period in Palestine and I had already come in contact with some of the informants before the interviews. Important to think about when carrying out a research of this form is how the potential gains ought to overcome the eventual damage the study could cause.³⁹ With the complicated political situation, the occupation and the limited freedom of speech in Palestine today this was something important to bear in mind, hence the importance of concealing the identities of the respondents in this study. Therefore, I see it as very important to anonymize the interviewees in order to protect them from getting into trouble.

Theory

While discussing, dissecting and analysing the material from the interviews this thesis will use theories of various theoretical authors and thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Peter Singer and their theories regarding the nation and the protection of one's "own". Their theories about what a nation really is and in what different ways one could look at the nation will be applied in this thesis. How should Palestine be viewed? Some countries such as Sweden have recognized Palestine as a sovereign state while most other countries have

³⁸ Kaijser & Öhlander, *Etnologiskt fältarbete*, p. 65

³⁹ The Swedish Research Council, *Forskningsetiska principer*, p. 5

not. Mill's theories used for this thesis reflect the role that nationality has when it comes to creating a nation.⁴⁰ Singer's work orientates the thesis towards the closeness of communities, what role the different communities within the society might play in terms of nation building, and the obligations citizens might feel towards the government, or to a certain cause. Both Singer and Iris Marion Young discuss the possibilities of a system within the society, and Singer also discusses the theories of Benedict Anderson and the "imagined community" which refers to a theory of us as citizens feeling special obligations towards our nation and to other citizens of this nation. We see ourselves as part of a community that does not, in reality, have to exist or consist of the values we imagine that it does, only those we think that it consists of.⁴¹ Finally, Young examines theories regarding civil society and how this could work as a complement to the state in terms of protection and solidarity,⁴² the theory of the imagined community and civil society complement the fact that the Palestinian society has been divided through different means of control, both from their own government and the occupational state of Israel, but still feel a sense of obligation to each other and to the "Palestinian cause". Furthermore, Singer discusses the role of affinity to "one's own race" and how one might argue when protecting one's kin and fellow citizens rather than the "other". This also refers to the sentiments of citizens of a nation towards their nation, or someone not included in the civil society.⁴³

To connect the theories of the nation and democracy I will use the work of Robert Dahl and his descriptions of different criteria for democratic processes in a nation where he uses examples of democratic systems to make his point.⁴⁴ To complement the work of Dahl, Joseph Schumpeter will be used to further reflect on the theory of democracy and his discussion on two concepts of democracy. While Dahl makes a good basis of the theories of why and what democracy might mean, Schumpeter presents a clearer view that one could attribute to Palestinian democracy today. The two different democratic systems are what he calls "The Common Good and the Will of the People" and "Competition for Political Leadership". While the former system describes a classical definition of democracy, Schumpeter theorises that latter system could be compared to the business world since the competition for power is what drives the democratic system; and that it is almost

⁴⁰ John Stuart Mill. *Considerations on Representative Government*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1862, chapter: 16 (https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john_stuart/m645r/chapter16.html (retrieved 2016-02-30))

⁴¹ Peter Singer, *One World*, London: Yale University Press, 2004, p. 170

⁴² Iris Marion Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 155 ff.

⁴³ Singer, *One World*, p. 168

⁴⁴ Robert A. Dahl. *On Democracy*, London: Yale University Press, 1998, p. 150-175

impossible to determine something that works as common good for everyone within society.⁴⁵

The theories of Dahl and Schumpeter will be used together with the work of Young when analysing the democratic system of Palestine today. This wide range of ideas gives a good understanding, both in terms of the concept of democracy itself but also in terms of what democracy might mean in Palestine today. Furthermore, Young dissects and analyses both the conflict and also the right to sovereignty of “your” own territory. Since Palestine is under occupation from Israel, the discussion about whether the assumed nation of Palestine can really work in a democratic way is questionable. These authors complement each other and to get a further understanding of the discussions regarding democracy and political sovereignty for the Palestinian people.

In terms of freedom, one part of the analysis sets out from the work of Isaiah Berlin and his theories about negative and positive freedom. The idea is that both sets of freedoms are depending on something; negative liberty ought to explain the kind of liberty where someone has his or her freedom negated by someone, a state for example, or something. An obstruction in your way of achieving the freedom you might think you have got the right to. Positive freedom on the other hand means that you are in a position where you decide your liberty yourself, autonomously. Another way of explaining is that negative freedom is freedom ‘from’⁴⁶ something while positive freedom is freedom ‘to’ something.⁴⁷ For example, freedom ‘from’ seeks to describe that you as an individual are free from the power that someone exercises over you: free from harassment, free from checkpoints and so on.

A new light is shed on the concept of positive and negative freedom when speaking about a wall obstructing people in moving across the country but “freely” within it. With a wall obstructing and hindering people in terms of freedom what then happens to their hope for democracy and their view on the chances for a democratic system?

⁴⁵ Joseph Schumpeter. Two Concepts of Democracy, in Anthony Quinton, *Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 153-188

⁴⁶ Berlin. *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, p. 194 f.

⁴⁷ Berlin. *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays* p. 203 f.

Analysis

In the first part of the analysis I discuss the informants' views on the contemporary political situation on the West Bank and the political changes the informants want. The second part will deal with the informants' views on the subject of freedom more generally, as in the issue of Palestinian freedom, but also relates to the informants' more individual, day-to-day experiences of freedom.

Politics, Democracy and the Palestinian Authority

The political situation in Palestine today, since the establishment of the PA is a result of factors of inequality. This section of the analysis discusses the informants' feelings towards the PA, what they feel that they should receive from their government economically and in terms of protection. This section also examines what power one might say that the PA has over the Palestinian territory of the West Bank. The informants also talk about the changes they want but that there seems to always be an obstacle blocking them from achieving this.

The Palestinian Authority and the Occupation

When talking about the discourse of occupation and the power the occupation has over the informants, Nabil and Salah discusses a kind of control from Israel that they have to endure multiple times each week and how the occupation comes into expression for them.

Nabil

The physical occupation. Maybe we have passed the cultural occupation but the physical occupation, sometimes they attack you in the camp twice or three times a week.

Salah

The main thing, if I want to trust my government I need safety. They should protect me. But how come each night the Israeli soldiers come and arrest and kill and do whatever they want and the Palestinian Authority go to their offices and close their doors.

Both Nabil and Salah talks about the occupation as an expression of power and how Israel reproduces the power they have over them. Both Salah and Ghazi are internal refugees, living in a refugee camp on the West Bank, and they talk about situations where the Israeli soldiers come in the night, attacking the refugee camps with weapons and bombs. They both speak of the attacks that they have to endure several times each week from the Israeli soldiers without the PA stopping the soldiers. Salah talks about the protection that he should be granted from the PA, as a citizen of Palestine, for him to trust the government.

Salah expresses his distrust towards the government since they cannot protect him from the occupation in his home. To question the role that the PA can play while under occupation and what they want to achieve under occupational rule are two different things. Naser-Najjab questions whether the PA can meet the injustices and really address these issues while Israel dominates the borders of the Palestinian territories and controls what is allowed over the borders and what is not.⁴⁸ In the quote from Nabil he mentions the “physical occupation” as something affecting the people in the refugee camps on the West Bank: when this happens the Israeli military comes with tear gas, weapons and bombs. Such raids as the Israeli military carries out in refugee camps across the West Bank could be seen as a way to express their military presence, reducing the safety of the Palestinians in these areas.⁴⁹ The attacks described by the interviewees talk about happen within what ought to be seen as the Palestinian territories of the West Bank. What happens in these Palestinian communities when the government cannot protect its own citizens? If the citizens cannot feel the bond towards their government or the rest of the members of the nation they might create imaginary communities to which they oblige, rather than to the whole community.⁵⁰ In this case, the people living in refugee camps have to endure the physical occupation directly when their homes get destroyed or when the soldiers come in the night time, with tear gas and weapons, which can happen several times each week. The way that Israel still controls the Palestinian territories lessens the power of the PA. Whilst the people fight and demonstrate for the right of return to their villages of origin the PA has gone from fighting the same cause as the Palestinian people to just negotiate about, what ought to be seen as, Palestinian territory.⁵¹

The occupational discourse gets into, as Salah and Ghazi speak of, a physical occupation and the need for protection o speak about another side of the occupation, the economic. Here power is exercised over the interviewees both in terms of physical abuse as well as tough economic circumstances. Below, Dima and Ghazi talk about the economic situation for the people of Palestine under the current rule of the PA.

Dima

If you don't end the occupation, the Palestinian Authority will always need donations from the outside. But why don't the donor countries help in ending the occupation rather than give them money for keeping the occupation? It is like a bucket with a hole, you cannot keep it... You can put as much water in it as you want but if there is a hole, and you don't solve the problem, which is our political

⁴⁸ Young. *Globala Utmaningar – Krig, Självbestämmande och Global Rättvisa*, p. 88

⁴⁹ Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, pp. 178 f.

⁵⁰ Singer. *One World*, p. 170

⁵¹ Ghanem. *Palestinian Politics After Arafat: A Failed National Movement*, p. 18 f.

problem, the water will still go and the people will continue to put water in the bucket.

Ghazi

Our political system depends on funds from outside and every country or agency that wants to fund you it will fund you according to their own ideas and not your needs. The fund should come upon your need, I need fund for building a school, not for making a street or a new building for living. I think they are somehow thieves.

According to Dima, the only way for the PA to become self-supporting is for the occupation to end. She also questions the way that the countries funding the PA does not want to end the occupation but rather keep it as it is. She talks about the PA metaphorically as a bucket; with the water streaming through referring to the money from the West and Israel.

Ghazi continues on the same subject as Dima when talking about the PA's need for funding from the outside. He describes these funds as something that becomes vital for the PA but at the same time, a smokescreen for these funding nations to protect themselves for not wanting to achieve real change in Palestine. Continuously he describes the distrust towards his government, calling the PA thieves for failing to take care of the peoples' needs but instead building houses and streets.

Both Dima and Ghazi talks about the economic situation for the PA as well as the one for the people the PA govern. Ghazi talks about basic needs, such as schools, that are supposed to be funded by the external funds taken by the PA from outside, but these subsidies do not reach the people. Dima's metaphor of the "bucket", where the international funders put in water but the funds still disappears, is upheld by Ghazi's views. He talks about the control of the agenda from these funders, an agenda that does not seem to include the fundamental change that the informants speak of.

The bucket that Dima talks about, the PA, has upon its establishment, "lacked any autonomous means of subsistence".⁵² They received up to 80 per cent of its revenue from "Western subsidies and Israeli transfers."⁵³ According to Perry Anderson this has made the PA a "parasitic miniature of a rentier state, detached from a population."⁵⁴ While the PA is the only formal authority of power for Palestinian people on the West Bank, as previously mentioned, the government's dependency on external funds reflects the same reality for

⁵² Anderson. House of Zion, p. 6

⁵³ Anderson, House of Zion, p. 6

⁵⁴ Anderson. House of Zion, p. 6

the people of the Palestinian territories. Many Palestinians are for their survival, like their government, dependent on funds from international organizations.⁵⁵ The people do not get to taste the benefits of the funds pumped in by the Israeli occupiers and the states of the West, such as the U.S. supporting the Fatah led regime. This situation creates a situation where the democratic discourse gets into how the interviewees seek grants and protection from others than the authority itself. The power is partially moved from the authority to smaller entities of the Palestinian society. Young's theories in regards to the civil society refer to societies that have their strengths in people's co-ordination and co-operation when the state fails to protect them, as in this example, economically and from the violence of the occupation. Combined with the theories about the imagined community the people of the West Bank create solidarity among themselves, within a smaller group rather than the whole of Palestine.⁵⁶

The interviewees talk about their need to feel protected by from their government in order to feel trust towards it. Without the safety granted, physical and economic, the PA fail to deliver some of the most important things that the people want from the PA.

Muhannad speaks of the "family law" within his community.

We call it the family law; it is not written, it is mainly in your mind. As soon as your freedom is finished, the freedom of other starts, as soon as you got your rights, the rights for others start. There are no people in the street asking for money because when you go to eat, some people pay extra money in order to buy some sandwiches for the poor.

Above Muhannad talks about situations when someone within the community has got the freedom he or she wants then you should help the others within this community to achieve the same. The family law that he mentions also connects the people within the community to each other in an economic sense. When some people do not have the money to buy food they do not need to go hungry because someone else within this society pay for your food. This shows the communally supportive attitude of the society.

Below, Salah gets into the same subject as Muhannad talking about each city creating their own resistance.

Each city developed it's own culture of resistance and they are dealing with different kinds of suffering. So people in Jerusalem are isolated from everyone else and they have different types of suffering than people who live in refugee camps. Also if you're speaking about Palestinians living in 1948-land within Israeli property they are also living different kinds of experiences. So all these kind of, this is a weakness we still have not fixed and dealt with to be united.

⁵⁵ Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, p. 7

⁵⁶ Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 159

Salah talks about the systematic division and isolation of cities from each other as a weakness for the Palestinian society and cause today. The people across the West Bank are being divided from each other, the people cannot get together and meet whenever they feel like doing so.

Both these quotations from Muhannad and Salah speak of civil societies in which every community creates their own laws and resistance against the occupation. Young discusses the civil society as an alternative system to the state, one that provides the people living within it with basic things that the state does not.⁵⁷ Instead of waiting for the government to grant the population safety and security, the civil society, as referred to, takes care of such things, helping each other out with daily life. When speaking about the strengths of the Palestinian society, not directly connected to the PA but still a product of its failures, Muhannad talks about how his neighbourhood work together, trying to improve each other's lives, creating this "family law." The refugee camps, as an example, create communities in which the people can feel trust and belong to when there is no government support.

Safety and living conditions is something that the informants all talk about. They speak of the importance of it but express themselves in different ways, creating different ways to look at the discourse of protection. The power of the PA and Israel constitutes different ways of looking at it, creating different realities for the interviewee's. In the case of the PA and the occupation this also creates knowledge of what the PA's role is under occupation. The PA is in a situation where Israel denies the "basic conditions necessary for a viable and sovereign Palestinian state."⁵⁸ Simultaneously, it controls the Palestinian economy by providing economical support to the occupied territories, and controlling its borders.⁵⁹ The occupational rule of Israel has become so vast and major in terms of control that it is to be seen as a colonial state, controlling all aspects of life for the occupied people, the Palestinian people.⁶⁰

As the discourse and the reality of the interviewees shows in the previous quotes, the PA repeatedly fail to protect them from the Israeli occupation and the violence included with it. Israel's control of borders and natural resources, including water for Palestinians has created a situation in which the PA cannot grant the informants certain basic needs for living in the Palestinian territories. The informants then talk about communities acting on their own, apart from their government, pursuing some kind of safety in which they can live. They talk about the incapability of the PA ensuring the people can access economic subsistence, as well as the physical protection from the occupation, leading to distrust

⁵⁷ Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 166

⁵⁸ Hilal. *Where Now For Palestine?: The Demise of the Two-State-Solution*, p. 11

⁵⁹ Hilal. *Where Now for Palestine?: The Demise of the Two-State-Solution*, p. 11

⁶⁰ Judt. *Israel: The Alternative*

towards the PA. Although the informants talk about their communities and the divided society, in the elections the people came together to vote against the Fatah regime, rather than for Hamas.⁶¹

Through the complete control that the Israeli occupation has over the Palestinian people with everything from the border control to being able to issue identity cards for the Palestinian population of the West Bank,⁶² the people, as the informants speak of, create their own laws and communities in which they feel obligations and trust, they form their own discourse in terms of power. The informants and the people turn to the civil society and not the state for help.⁶³ The people have created civil societies but are still able to come together when they stand before major questions about the future of the whole of Palestine. When the people of the West Bank are let down by the leadership they want to turn to, with the political and economical corruption and the continuous losses of Palestinian land, to whom should they turn? The external funds of the U.S. and Israel are fonder in the regime led by the head of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas, than the idea of a total occupation opposition they have got in Hamas. The funding of the Palestinian territories seem to, as the informants talk about, control the agenda for the funded.⁶⁴

The Will for Change

One of the informants, Salah, stated that the political parties along with the PA do not fully represent the Palestinian people and that he sees this division between the territory's government and its people as a weakness with the Palestinian society today.

[...] we don't have a general assembly to gather all the Palestinian people under one umbrella. We had the PLO, before, Palestinian Liberation Organization, and they were the umbrella where it had these main titles that we are with right of return, against the Israeli occupation. All these big things that everyone would not disagree on, now Fatah and the Palestinian Authority destroyed, or eaten, just like a big fish eat the smaller fish, where the Palestinian Authority is the big fish, ate the PLO. So now the president of the PLO is the president of one of the biggest parties in Palestine, Fatah, and also the Palestinian Authority. Which should be three different departments that would advance our rights, asking for our rights, the Palestinian authority played a very major role in the separating the Palestinian people and distracting Palestinians from achieving the same goal.

⁶¹ Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, p. 271

⁶² Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, p. 84

⁶³ Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 164 ff.

⁶⁴ Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, p. 265

Salah talks about the importance of an “umbrella” organization that works for the will of the Palestinian people and talks about the PLO as such an organization. Since the PLO lost the power of the Palestinian territories to the PA, the fractures between the political parties have grown. Salah describes Mahmoud Abbas as the leader for the biggest party (Fatah) the PA and the PLO, here he wants to see changes because he does not see it appropriate that there is only one man ruling these three organizations but he wants it to be three leaders, one for each organization. He also talks about the PA as a force of division, acting in a way that makes the Palestinian people forget about their goals and instead wanting different things.

This kind of distrust that Salah talks about has created a gap between the PA and the Palestinian people. It has brought disunity among the Palestinians, making the fight against the occupation and oppression from the state of Israel lose force. What was supposed to work as a unifying symbol has become the opposite.⁶⁵

Salah discusses the role that the prime minister and his party, Fatah, has in Palestine today and that it has created a situation where the people cannot find representation or feel trust towards the political situation as a whole. Muhannad alleges that the PA are waiting for something to happen instead of leading the change themselves.

I don't support the Palestinian politics. Or the Palestinian politicians, because this system was built not on what people dreamt of, there is a kind of shift in our politics. [...] it is a kind of fake system that slowly starts to corporatize and start to... they are lost. They are waiting for a solution from others rather than themselves.

In the quotation above, Muhannad describes a political system that was not built on the wishes or aspirations of the people. He talks about his distrust towards the political situation in Palestine today because the leaders do not try to achieve a solution; they just wait for something to happen.

Both Salah and Muhannad speaks of a distrust towards their government due to a suspicion that they do not want to fight for what the people want them to fight for. What happens to the possibilities for democracy when the government does not have the trust of its citizens that elect them? Salah and Muhannad lays bare the effects the PA's actions or inactions has over their trust towards the authority. When theorizing democracy, Dahl talks about the different criteria for democracy and one of the highlighted is “effective participation” where the author claims that in order for a policy to be accepted or adopted, “all the members must have equal and effective opportunities” to make their voices heard and their opinions known “to the other members as to what the policy should be”.⁶⁶ This is

⁶⁵ Nasser-Najjab. *Between Myth and Reality: The Palestinian Political Elite and the Two-State-Solution*, p. 143

⁶⁶ Dahl. *On Democracy*, p. 37

something that is hard to attain and to achieve in a democracy, that all the citizens should be able to discuss or affect the various policies. While there have not been democratic elections in Palestine for the past 10 years, this has created a situation where the government supposed to govern the Palestinian territories have lost the trust of the people living within these areas. What happens to the democratic discourse in Palestine when no elections are being held? Muhannad describes the political system as something detached from what the people want, and while the government are seemingly unwilling to change, the peoples' distrust is destined to grow. Salah talks about Fatah and that the party along with its leader, Abbas has lost legitimacy towards the people and that the people want something to happen within a system not willing to change. The failure of protection in terms of security for the Palestinian people as well as failure to "deliver proper governance" and "effective leadership" has weakened the PA, allowing the people to create their own communities, apart from what ought to be a Palestinian solidarity.⁶⁷

When discussing women's rights in Palestine and their chances of changing, below Nadia gets into the question of the women's day celebrations in Palestine.

We are like young Palestinian women who try to make new laws but we cannot because the Palestinian parliament does not exist in the ground. We are only relying on decisions from the President and every time he can change it, it is personal elections. For example, we have been fighting for a long time for the mothers day and the women's day to become holidays for women. On the 7th of March the prime minister cancelled it and said that all women should work, even on the women's day. This means that one person is calling all decisions and there is no law. To be supported by the law but there is no law and it changes all the time and we don't feel like we can have our rights.

In this quote, Nadia talks about the change they want to see and the obstacles that prevent them from achieving it. Nadia talks about the women and after sought holiday for Palestinian women on the international women's day. She talks about the women fighting for both the women's day and mother's day to become holiday's and that women groups of Palestine were supposed to have a meeting with Mahmoud Abbas regarding these issues but that he decided to cancel it, meaning that there would be no negotiations about these holidays and days without work for the women. She also says that there is only one person calling the shots for change and that is the prime minister. She feels that there should be a law supporting her, but that there is no such law in place.

Nadia speaks of a will to involve women more in the politics of Palestine and the importance of women getting a chance to be more equal in the society.

While the will to change lies with the people, the lack of elections undermines the democratic system and makes it harder for the citizens, especially disadvantaged groups, to

⁶⁷ Khalidi. *Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, p. 152 f.

achieve their goals. According to Mill, the democratic process within a state means that “the question of government ought to be decided by the governed.”⁶⁸ While the informants feel that there is no real chance for a change, it is hard to see the possibilities of a democracy, as we know it, being established in Palestine. Dahl argues that the “primary focus of democratic ideas has long been the state” and since the state of Palestine is yet to be recognized by the nations of the world, is there any hope for democracy?⁶⁹ In agreement with Dahl, Young discusses the importance of promoting a “greater inclusion of members of under-represented social groups”, such as women in Palestine today. According to the Nadia the authority governing the Palestinian territories should seek to design “political and associational institutions” for groups as these to grow bigger.⁷⁰ The informants all express their distrust towards a regime ruled by Mahmoud Abbas and they feel that they cannot achieve the change while, with the theories of Young and Dahl, the PA’s way of working with the people is not the way of democracy. The informants’ are sceptical towards the political situation where the government are unwilling to listen to the peoples’ will; both in terms of the population as a whole, and its’ vastly underrepresented groups such as women. As long as the will from the authority to engage the grand majority of the Palestinian people in the political debate, this is unlikely to happen. Even though Palestine is yet to be recognized as a nation, the will for a democratic system from those supposed to govern and ensure the people safety and possibilities of political change is currently lacking.

The Palestinian People and the Question of Freedom

The role the occupation plays in terms of the freedom of movement within what ought to be the Palestinian controlled West Bank is vast and takes different shapes. On the one hand there is the separation wall running through cities and along the West Bank-borders and on the other hand there is, as already mentioned, the Israeli military attacking refugee camps, exercising the power the state of Israel has got over the occupied territories with the PA not acting to protect the interviewees.

This part of the thesis will take the aforementioned problems with the occupational rule of Israel and put them into a context of positive and negative freedom. The Palestinian people have become victims of separated societies as well as being obstructed to move and speak freely within their communities, creating a situation where they seek to protect each other, creating, as mentioned, their own kinds of resistance and “family laws”.

⁶⁸ Mill. *Considerations on Representative Government*, chapter 16

⁶⁹ Dahl. *On Democracy*, p. 41

⁷⁰ Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 141

Safety and Freedom

If Israel was determined to create an authority for the Palestinian people but still not wanting to recognize them as a state, what does that do to the political situation in Palestine and processes of democracy in which the citizens make their voices heard, creating change in their society?

Below, Ghazi talks about what has happened since the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas as the head of the PA as well as what he needs to feel free.

This feeling of no safety increased after the authority and after Abbas came. Because they might arrest me for saying “Fuck Mahmoud Abbas” or if I don’t like what Abbas does. They can arrest me for saying this. So you don’t feel this safety. The Israeli army come whenever they want and there is the Palestinian authority and the police and whatever they do, they act like a mafia. For me when I see the police car I see this is the new mafia, I feel it.

Freedom for me is first of all to feel that I’m living safe in this place. Safe living gives you everything because when you feel safe, you can eat, you can learn, you can do everything.

In the first quote Ghazi explains the feelings that he has towards the feeling of safety that he has got within the Palestinian territories with references to what he feels that he is allowed to say and not say. He talks about an increased feeling of insecurity since Abbas gained control of the PA and that the occupation, once again, has a big role to play. Ghazi talks about the inability to protect the citizens from the attacks carried out by Israeli soldiers as well as his feeling towards the Palestinian police, an organization he describes as “mafia”. In the second quote he explains what the concept of freedom means to him. He says that he needs safety in order to feel free within the Palestinian territories. He says that safety facilitates and enables all simple human pleasures, such as eating and learning.

As discussed, safety is something important for the informants in order for them to trust their government. Here, Ghazi explains what safety means to him, firstly to feel the trust towards the government, and secondly for a basic feeling of freedom. Ghazi feels unsafe speaking his mind about certain things or criticizing the PA and Abbas in particular. The interpretation of “Fuck Mahmoud Abbas” is that he wants the opportunity to question the PA without facing eventual punishment for doing so.

Joseph Schumpeter declares that, freedom within a democracy is something that is as good as impossible to fully attain. He asserts that “no society tolerates absolute freedom even of conscience and of speech, no society reduces that sphere into zero” and that ultimately it all comes down to a “matter of degree” of freedom within the society.⁷¹ If in no society are

⁷¹ Schumpeter. *Two Concepts of Democracy*, p. 176

the citizens fully free, in terms of movement for example, this ought to be seen as something that the society as a whole joins in under the democratic system.

While one might argue that the informants answers before the PA, the reality, as shown earlier in this thesis, is different from the theory. While Israel, after the Oslo accords, gained further control over the Palestinian territories the PA “took over the duty of policing the Palestinian population”, thus the Palestinian people did not only have to answer to their occupiers but also to their government which in reality could be seen as a government under, more or less, full control from their occupiers.⁷² Ghazi talks about the fear of speaking his mind in the territories that should be governed by the PA at the same time the informants talk about the occupation as something affecting the power of the people in a negative way.

Here Salah talks more about the fear of speaking freely on the West Bank.

Salah

Everyone who has a very good and correct political view will be assassinated and killed and transferred from Palestine. So, it's a cemetery for any good position. Under the Palestinian Authority rule and under the Israeli rule, both of them are working with this.

Salah continues, just as I discussed earlier previously in this analysis, to feel the distrust towards the government that should protect him. In the quotation above he explains the fear that he feels of speaking his mind and that everyone with “good and correct” political views will be killed, creating a “cemetery” of good thoughts. He says that this is the work of both the PA and Israel.

The interviewees express themselves in different ways when it comes to the discourse of freedom. Ghazi speaks of the importance of safety within their society, a safety in which they can feel trust towards the PA and not being obstructed of the freedom from the state of Israel. This is a feeling shared among all but “the tiny clique” of the Palestinian people that benefit from the deals that the PA has with the U.S. and Israel. With PA soldiers raiding refugee camps on the West Bank in co-operation with Israel “looking for sources of resistance to the occupation”⁷³ the feeling of not being safe, as Ghazi mentions, creates distrust and a sense of not being free. As Salah talks about, as a citizen of the West Bank and living in one of the refugee camps on the West Bank, the co-operation of Israel and the PA are making it difficult for people to create a joint resistance for the Palestinian cause. While the people express their complaints towards the occupational rule and the PA through demonstrations, the PA responds with the banning of demonstrations, and new legislature creating further control for the government. One example of these bans is Nadia's example of proposition of the women's day and the right for women - prevented by

⁷² Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, p. 84

⁷³ Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, p. 311

the PA. The interviewee's way of expressing their thoughts on the discourse of freedom is different but what they have in common is the way that they are unable to get this freedom due to the continues oppression from the occupation and the PA.

These continued procedures of getting the people further away from the decision-making and chance to create progress the Palestinian society may lead to further gaps and further division within the West Bank, not only geographically but also in terms of their fight for their rights.⁷⁴ Dahl's theories of democracy and the criteria for democracy include the "control of the agenda" which means that each member of the society ought to have the "exclusive opportunity" to change and be able to affect the agenda and policies imposed upon them.⁷⁵ While it is clear that the Palestinian freedom of speech is one of the lowest in the world the regime have imposed hard controls on what the people can take part in, in terms of opinion and news.⁷⁶ The freedom to express their desire for change is limited both due to the banning of demonstrations as well as the control of opinion within Palestine.

Returning to the meaning of freedom to the informants, as previously discussed Ghazi talked about the feeling of safety, and below Salah and Zahira explain what they want in order to feel free.

Salah

To go to the sea. Simply, to go to the sea. Without anyone stopping me. Without getting permission, without being denied.

Zahira

Freedom means that I can move without any checkpoints, it means to talk about what I want to talk about, nobody will stop me or judge me.

If I want to pray in Jerusalem, to [go] my city, to my holy city, I cannot move. If the Israelis don't give me the permission to reach the holy city, Jerusalem, I cannot move.

Salah puts his conception of freedom in a simple way: he wants to go to the sea. When he is allowed to go there, not being denied to do so, he feels free. Similarly, Zahira continues on the same track as Salah, she wants to be able to go to pray in Jerusalem without being stopped in checkpoints where the soldiers control and judge her. She also refers to the need of feeling safe to speak her mind, talking about freedom of movement and of speech.

They express themselves in different ways but the way that power continuously is exercised over them creates the same goal that they want to achieve. The interviewees talk about the

⁷⁴ Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 54 f.

⁷⁵ Dahl. *On Democracy*, p. 38

⁷⁶ Anderson. *The House of Zion*, p. 24 f.

freedom to go wherever they want to go without being denied, to be free from checkpoints, to be free from the oppression and control as well as being free from asking for permission to go. The freedom for the Palestinian people is being systematically eroded and all the time it is a question of being free from, rather than choosing yourself what you wish to achieve or do.

The theories of Berlin regarding negative freedom comes, roughly put, down to the prevention from doing something as discussed above the informants freedom means that they are free from the various obstacles in their way. Berlin puts it as “if I am prevented by others by doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree”.⁷⁷ To get a picture of what it means to be free, he refers to Thomas Hobbes who described the free man as the one who can do what he wants without being hindered, which in itself refers to Berlins ideas regarding the positive freedom.⁷⁸ As stated, the informants’ freedom is continuously negated, through different methods of control and oppression. They do not feel free to speak their minds, and they are not allowed to demonstrate their frustration and the will to change. At the same time they are not allowed to move freely across the Palestinian territories of the West Bank without permission. The freedom of movement for the Palestinian people is dependent on the decision of others. With the Wall, the many checkpoints within the Palestinian territories, and the curfews set by the occupiers, freedom as experienced by Palestinians is always negative freedom, if any freedom at all, always subject to permissions.⁷⁹

As Berlin points out in his theorizing of the concept of negative freedom, the freedom of one might depend on the freedom of others. This seems to fit in with Israel’s reason to build the separation wall and establishing total control of the occupied areas and methods of controlling the speech and movement of the Palestinian people. The military control within the Palestinian territories is also a question of controversy, with the military forces of the PA and Israel working together in attempts to crush the resistance and gain full control over these areas.⁸⁰ While the Israeli forces “defend” themselves, opposing the demonstrations against settlements and around the separation wall in the cities, the Palestinian forces also use its power towards the Palestinian citizens with assaults and shootings, leading to unrest and feelings of insecurity among the people of Palestine.⁸¹ While the informants speak about the need of protection for them to feel trust towards their authority and also some kind of freedom, the PA works together with the occupation in order to crush resistance within the territories. As mentioned previously the attacks

⁷⁷ Berlin. *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, p. 194

⁷⁸ Berlin. *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, p. 195

⁷⁹ Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, p. 54 ff.

⁸⁰ Anderson. *The House of Zion*, p. 8 f.

⁸¹ Ghanem. *Palestinian Politics After Arafat: A Failed National Movement*, p. 84

carried out in refugee camps on the West Bank undermines the assumption that the PA want to protect its citizens.

While the physical side of the occupation comes into expression through these attacks and the wall, another part of it is the way that Hamas has emerged as the only option to the corrupt Fatah regime. Here Zahira talks about the fear of the Islamic movement in Palestine.

There are many obstacles in our way. The first is the occupation, the Israeli occupation. The second is the Islamic movement, of course, you know... why haven't the authority, until now, agreed about the human rights? Because they cannot, due to fear of the Islamic movement.

Zahira talks about the many obstacles in her way of achieving her personal freedom. She mentions the occupation as one obstacle; the other major obstacle that she sees is Hamas. The Islamic party wants to establish an Islamic state in Palestine, with potential drastic consequences for women's rights. She mentions the reason for the lack of change in terms of human rights as a result of fear of Hamas.

As discussed earlier in, the Fatah regime has benefitted economically since the Oslo accords were signed, leaving little of the external funds to the people, as the interviewees have spoken of. The victory of Hamas was not the victory of a popular party but rather the expression of distrust of the already ruling party of Fatah.⁸² One of the reasons to this result was because Hamas is a clearer opponent to the occupation, "a cleaner party and with better record of social care for the population".⁸³ Hamas has not taken control over all of the Palestinian territories - its main focus lies on the Gaza-strip, leaving the West Bank to the corrupt party of Fatah thus letting Mahmoud Abbas "control" over the West Bank.⁸⁴ While the informants want change in their political and democratic situation, they do see neither Hamas, nor Fatah and the PA as organizations fit to represent them. To get back to the imagined community, which refers to a situation where the people feel obligation to the nation, without really knowing what it is that they feel in regards to this nation. The fight for the Palestinian cause has become complicated with the people not really knowing where to turn for the continued resistance. While Zahira distrusts the Fatah ruled PA, neither does she trust Hamas to continue the resistance due to fear for the progression of human rights in Palestine. The problem for the Palestinian cause, if they do not see Hamas as the way to go, is that Hamas is the most clear-cut opponent to the occupation.

While the people and their freedom of speech is negated through the military control from both the PA and Israel and their strategies to crush the resistance within the communities

⁸² Khalidi. *Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, p. 204

⁸³ Anderson. *The House of Zion*, p. 8

⁸⁴ Anderson. *The House of Zion*, p. 8

and civil societies created on the West Bank, the informants find it difficult to be united under one cause.

The situation on the West Bank with the still governing Fatah has created a situation where the interviewees speak of distrust towards their government, with external funds not reaching them, but still have to stick to this “bucket” that is “losing water” because of the funding countries incapability to put pressure in order to help the people. A rather obvious problem is that one of these sources of funding is the occupier in control over all aspects of the Palestinian life. This failure has led to the informants being controlled by the PA in cooperation with the occupational power of Israel. The Israeli state continues their control and building of settlements, violating international law and at the same time making sure that the Islamic party of Hamas does not control the West Bank, leaving the Palestinian people with no chance to change the situation the informants speak about and at the same time creating a hostile political situation in which the informants are afraid to express their views, as Salah discussed.

The challenges the Palestinian population stand before with the occupation on the one hand and the seemingly powerless, but yet controlling, and corrupt PA on the other, the society becomes politically fractured and divided. All the while the Palestinian people are increasingly divided geographically through the control imposed on them by the Israeli government.

A Divided and Displaced People

Divisions within the Palestinian society have been created, as already discussed, through the occupation, the corruption of the PA and with Hamas as the only relevant option to Fatah. As touched upon, the isolation of cities and villages, thus dividing the people, has led to a fractured Palestinian society. When speaking about the importance of a united movement of resistance, Salah talks about the difficulties the Palestinian society is facing today in terms of resistance of the occupation.

So this creates a big fracture in the Palestinian community and you know with time maybe we need to go back to the original problem and to the roots of the problem, to look at what we were asking about before and what we are asking for now. So we would compare and do it, create this bridge that links us and make us discover that the Palestinian Authority's role in the community is a comprador that are trying to really dismantle the resistance and make us accept what we have.

Salah talks about the fractures in the resistance, how, with the time, the people have forgot about the roots of the problem. He reiterates the need to go back to what they had before in terms of unity against the occupation. The importance and the need for the people to really see what role the PA plays in the resistance and that it is the one of an organization trying

to dismantle the resistance. Salah also talks about the need for the people to look at how the resistance is shaped today compared to before the establishment of the PA.

The fractures created by the various problems with the current situation in Palestine make the struggle for statehood and freedom in Palestine difficult, as mentioned earlier. The informants' stories about "family law" and that the cities create their own resistance as a result of the failure of governmental protection as well as the division and displacement of people across the West Bank connects to the theories of Young and the civil society. The discourse of the democratic system in Palestine gets into the informants seeking protection and safety within a more alternative system. This system ought to make sure that the informants will have someone to turn to, if the government fail to bring the cause forward and protect the citizens. Young argues that civil society and that the rediscovery of the concept might mean that, within a society, "trust, choice and the virtues of democracy" become central. Thus making sure that even though the PA cannot uphold these "virtues of democracy" the civil societies help each other. The downside of this might mean that each civil society create their own kind of resistance, as discussed, something that could be seen as a tactic from the occupational power of Israel in order to dismantle the mentioned resistance. Instead of the authoritarian rule of the PA the people might come to create their own communities, with their own resistance.⁸⁵ Even though the people create these civil societies the resistance has been made more complicated due to the occupation and the co-operation between the PA and Israeli security forces.⁸⁶ The people create their own resistance because of division, displacement and isolation from each other as a product of the occupation. Just as Salah touches upon before the struggle has become more complicated and the resistance is, as previously mentioned, being suppressed by both Israel and the PA. Nadia discusses, the resistance for her focus on the occupation and the struggles it mean today.

We resist because we are against the Israeli project to settle here in Palestine and the Palestinian Authority allows it to happen, which is too complicated. If I want to compare it to the first intifada we were stronger, we went to the shops to protest against the Israeli project and also in the streets. Now it is illegal to do that because of the Palestinian Authority and they punish us for that.

Nadia feels that the Israeli project to settle in Palestine is wrong and she criticises the PA for allowing this to happen. She continues by saying that the resistance was stronger and more united during the first intifada and that actions such as demonstrations has been made illegal due to the new legislature from the PA, allowing the PA to punish the Palestinians for resisting.

⁸⁵ Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 155

⁸⁶ Anderson. *The House of Zion*, p. 8

Just as Salah speaks of before, Nadia problematizes the PA's role and what they want to achieve in order to listen to the informants' will to end the occupation. Nadia also agrees with Salah when talking about the resistance becoming weaker due to the PA's actions against the people, trying to shut down the resistance by making demonstrations illegal.

The geographical separation of the Palestinian territories, achieved through the building of infrastructure for the settlements for the Jewish population of the West Bank, reduces the possibility of making an impact through demonstrations within the Palestinian territories. Young discusses what ought to be the right of the people within a democracy, the freedom to get together and create groups to publicize their opinions. Though, she makes clear that the freedoms ought to be "limited by rules that enable a similar freedom for others and which prohibit activities that wrongfully harm others."⁸⁷ With the thoughts of Young in the context of these interviews, the freedom of speech is demonstrably negated in Palestine today. The PA prevents the population from demonstrating and making their discontent with the situation heard, and the Palestinian people answer to both the governmental law as well as the Israeli military law.⁸⁸ This continuing repression from the PA and Israel aims to shut down resistance in the civil societies to the injustices they face, and their government that is ill-equipped, and reticent, to protect them or represent their wishes. The people have become divided, from each other and from their government. When speaking about the weaknesses of the Palestinian society today, Muhannad and Salah discuss the separation of cities, the isolation and the occupation's affect on the community as a whole.

Muhannad

So we are geographically separated even though we are one nation we are treated in four or five different ways. [...] these weaknesses are largely a product of the reality imposed on us by the state of Israel.

Salah

You know, there are different dimensions into that. The geography itself, or the geopolitical system that we are living under, that is not allowing us physically to visit these places. And to share the same place or to be at the same place physically to discuss things. Which in course over the years create a huge gap or widens the gap between us.

Muhannad and Salah both speak of the reality of the Palestinian people with the systematic division of the people living on the West Bank and the weaknesses this impose on their fight against the occupation. Muhannad believes that the Palestinian population is treated in "four or five different ways" while Salah says that this systematic division of the West

⁸⁷ Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 147

⁸⁸ Makdisi. *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation*, p. 143

Bank has made it harder for the people to unite to talk about the situation they find themselves in, and alienates them from other areas of their nation.

When Muhannad talks about “the reality imposed” on them he talks about the many obstacles the Palestinians face as a result of the occupation. He says that these four or five ways of different treatment and this is something that could create different struggles and different kinds of resistance. Combined with what Salah says regarding the obstacles of being able to meet and discuss things this leaves the resistance disunited and hard to keep united. The people, once again, express the negative freedom that they possess, conditioned on the premises of permissions from the occupational power of Israel.

The wall is one way power is being exercised over the informants and is one part of the freedom discourse. The wall is one way of cutting people off from each other, as an aim of separation of Palestine.⁸⁹ Muhannad talks about the Palestinians as treated differently, thus making it possible for each of the previous mentioned civil societies to create different goals and needs for each community. Singer discusses the role of protection within societies and as mentioned in this analysis, this is a vital element for the Palestinians to feel trust towards the PA and freedom within the West Bank. Singer makes a point of that in general people tend to turn to protect their own fellow citizens rather than anyone else.⁹⁰ Muhannad talks about the people of Palestine being treated differently thus leaving room for everyone to create their own realities, apart from the whole of the West Bank. As Salah also states the need for permission to visit another city or state prevents an exchange of knowledge about how other areas resist and fight. While the people living in the refugee camps of the West Bank want the right to return to their original villages and endure attacks by the PA and the Israeli military, the struggle for the Palestinian people outside the refugee camps, in the cities and inside of Israel is of a different character. This creates different ways of speaking about freedom and democracy on the West Bank. The discourse of freedom and democracy comes into detachment and distrust that the informants talk about in regards to their government and takes different forms. Corruption and failing to provide basic safety to the interviewees is one. The imposition of permits to move across checkpoints and borders is another. While the people find it difficult to obtain these permits the officials of the PA have a much easier time trying to.⁹¹ This creates obvious inequalities in favour of the “tiny clique” that governs and prevents people from doing what they see as their right or privilege of being “elected”. It seems as if the PA knows what is best for the others rather than knowing what is best for the greater good of the people.⁹² What should be a united Palestinian cause has become a fragmented and beleaguered

⁸⁹ Brown. *Walled State, Waning Sovereignty*, p. 29

⁹⁰ Singer. *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*, p. 168

⁹¹ Khalidi. *Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, p. 201

⁹² Berlin. *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, p. 204

population campaigning for their own freedom and democracy, whilst being undermined by their own government's collaboration with external powers.

Conclusion

The distrust towards the Palestinian Authority has been growing during the years since its establishment. Corruption, continuing losses of Palestinian land, failure to guarantee citizens' safety, and repressing their demonstrations has created a hostile political situation in Palestine. This situation has become one where the informants, understandably, distrust both their government and the state of Israel. The statements from the informants of this study describe a reality in which they are unable to achieve change while not feeling safe or free.

When analysing the informants' stories about a united Palestine and all the obstacles in the people's way in order to achieve this, one sees that it has become almost impossible. With the occupation and the PA both working together in order to crush resistance and banning demonstrations, it has made the Palestinian cause harder to maintain. The view of what the united cause is has become increasingly complicated and clouded since the first intifada, and interestingly, the informants talk about that cause like Benedict Anderson theorize about the ideas of the imagined community. They feel obligations towards a cause, which they cannot identify as something that the whole of Palestine can agree upon. While some want the Fatah regime gone they still do not want Hamas to be the ones governing Palestine and the West Bank as in the informants' statements. Instead the informants talk about this fractured society in which communities create family laws that seeks to protect ones own. This stems from the failures of the government to protect the informants', as they tell, completely destroying people's trust in the governing authority. The PA work together with the occupation, making the safety of the informants ever more uncertain. The informants cannot move freely or speak out against the situation they live in. The reality of the informants has become one devoid of both safety and freedom. The freedom they can hope to have is always negated, always freedom from rather than freedom to. If any freedom at all it will be negative freedom, never positive.

The informants talk about a reality in which the united Palestinian community systematically becomes more fractured through the occupational methods of building roads, the separation wall and establishing more settlements all over the occupied territories, breaking international law with each settlement. This leads to displacement and division of the people, isolating villages and cities from each other while also making it impossible for the informants to visit the sea or the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem to pray. While the society becomes fractured and the civil societies create their own resistances this makes it even harder for the informants to know the struggle of other parts of the West Bank. While some live in refugee camps and some in cities on the West Bank they all create

their own struggle as a result of the reality imposed on them by the PA and the occupation. With the control over all aspects of the life in the Palestinian territories, leaving little room for a democracy to work, even if the PA would want to establish democracy within the West Bank, there is little hope for this to happen. What the PA can and want to do for the people might be two different things but while listening to the informants this is something closely intertwined. The checkpoints, the wall and the attacks against the refugee camps might be obvious to the eye but the obstacles most damaging to the informants, in terms of resistance and their freedom, is the systematic division and displacement of Palestinians all over the West Bank. The informants' freedom and democracy is always subject to the permission of Israel and the PA, creating a situation in which positive freedom becomes impossible for them to attain.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Introductory questions

What is your profession? / What do you work with?

What is your relation to the Palestinian society?

What is your view of the volunteers coming here?

What is your view/ your opinion of your work?

Palestine and the society

What strengths do you see with Palestine?

What weaknesses?

How would you describe your society? (Both with regard to Palestine and to Betlehem and the Deheisha camp?)

When and if you talk about the future with the youth of your society, in what ways do you express yourself?

Liberty

What do the concept of 'freedom' mean to you?

What hinders you from achieving the freedom you think you have got the right to?

When looking at the wall, what are your thoughts? What do you think?

When did the building of the wall affect you the first time?

In what way/ways do the wall affect you in your daily life?

Politics and democracy

What are your thoughts of the political system in Palestine?

How do you think about the future for the political system in Palestine?

What is your view of the different political parties in Palestine?

What would a independent, sovereign Palestine mean?

If equality and equity between you and your Israeli neighbours would mean a one-state-solution, what is your thoughts about such a nation/ solution?

How do you think a one-state-solution would work in terms of democracy for you Palestinians? Do you think that there is any chance of such a solution?

Appendix 2

Democracy and freedom in Palestine – a field study

This study will be carried out by me, Carl Hassellöf, as part of my studies at the bachelors program in Social and cultural analysis at Linköping University, Sweden. The purpose of this candidate thesis will be to analyse notions such as democracy, liberty, equality and

equity, nation and nation-state in the Palestinian context . The fieldwork will be conducted through interviews and observations. My focus is on those working in Palestine and those engaged in the community of the Palestinian society. The interviews will be conducted by me, under the supervision of Professor Peo Hansen. For contact information, see below.

The study follows the current ethical guidelines for social science, established by the Swedish Research Council. This means that I am, through this letter, informing you about what I am going to do and what my intentions with the study are. Your participation is voluntary and will be carried out only with your consent. You always have the right to interrupt and terminate the interview without any further motivation.

The study will be presented in the form of an bachelors thesis. In the thesis, I will anonymize you to the furthest extent possible. Your name won't be mentioned anywhere. The information that I gather from you as an informer will only be used in a purpose of education and be read first and foremost by students and teachers at Linköping University.

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