Paradoxical Economies: A Time for Palestinian Cinema

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ABSTRACT

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As scholarship on hegemonic media industries thrives in the Global North, how can we understand the emerging film economies in the South without perpetuating the discourse that they are simply "catching up"? This dissertation follows scholars of critical media industries studies, transnational cinema, and postcolonial studies to examine industry as a process in constant formation – grounded in cultural, socio-economic, and political history. In other words, industry constitutes an epistemic system that produces value, legitimacy, and modes of organization. This research analyzes a range of transnational funding streams, film festivals in Palestine, and Palestinian films produced since the Second Intifada onwards. It investigates the infrastructural and material conditions of possibility as well as the imaginaries that sustain the project of a transnational Palestinian film industry. Such a project takes root in the Palestinian civil society, in the paradoxical contexts of development under colonization in the proto-state of Palestine and the multicultural settler state of Israel. This dissertation uncovers the paradoxical present of cultural and political negotiations, attempts, and uncertainties involved in developing Palestinian film practices that are "not-yet" industries.

Each chapter investigates the temporalities that specific developmental economies produce and how Palestinian film practitioners respond to it. The emerging Palestinian film economy is enmeshed in the peace process' ideal of stability enforced through counterinsurgency (Chapter Two); the imperative of sustainability that drives human development economies (Chapter Three); the emergency that structures humanitarian economies (Chapter Four); and the promise of recognition by liberal and settler multiculturalism (Chapter Five). Palestinians adapt to these contexts by devising strategies that draw from global imaginaries, militant histories, regional human rights networks and international anticolonial struggles. By focusing on temporality to explain transnational, colonial, and postcolonial power relations, each chapter asks how political histories shape media economies, and how media economies forge political futures. This dissertation contributes to interdisciplinary conversations around media and development by bridging media industries studies, postcolonial studies, postdevelopment theory, and critical media infrastructure studies.

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This dissertation partakes in settler colonialism in Turtle Island at the very same time it describes colonial processes of dispossession in Palestine-Israel. I would like to begin by acknowledging that this thesis was written on the unceded lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, where I have lived as a settler for the past eight years.

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Introduction – A Time for Palestinian Cinema

First tableau: In 2003, Palestinian filmmaker Annemarie Jacir co-organized a Palestinian film festival at Columbia University in New York. Entitled *Dreams of a Nation*, the event gathered thirty-four films and a wide-ranging audience made of diasporic Palestinians, spectators in solidarity with Palestine, and curious cinephiles. Eventually a success, the festival faced many obstacles due to its focus. Jacir describes the slew of hate mail, personal attacks, and death threats destined to the curators as well as other forms of intimidation, including email hacking, spamming, violent voicemails, and administrative pressure. She reckoned:

> These responses seemed excessive and absurd. Who opposes *film festivals*? What is so threatening about such an event? Is it the filmmakers, the issues they deal with, or something much more fundamental: the symbols, images and representations they bring forth? Or is it simply the fact that for the first time Palestinians had represented their own experiences themselves without mediations and commentary? (Jacir 2006, 28, her emphasis).

Second tableau: A few months prior, at the height of the Second Intifada, the Israeli army invaded Ramallah and Nablus despite the 1994 Peace Accords which placed these cities under the full civilian and military control of the Palestinian Authority. The troops ransacked ministries, human rights organizations, medical institutions, as well as private radio and television stations and seized files, computers, and finances (Jacir 2006, 25). Such raids are not unique to the Second Intifada. Among other instances, in 2012, the Israeli forces snatched Watan TV's transmitters in Ramallah, confiscated the broadcasting equipment of the Institute of Modern Media's Al-Quds Educational TV in al-Bireh, and shut down the Jerusalem launch of the same Institute's Hona al-Quds online media network at the same time as they detained employees (Ma'an 2012).

Third tableau: In 2009, the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) included a "Cities" sidebar focusing on Tel Aviv, funded by the Israeli government's Brand Israel campaign. The program followed the recent release of the United Nations' Goldstone Report on the 2008 war on Gaza. The Fact-Finding Mission concluded that Israel had unlawfully and intentionally inflicted collective punishment on the people of the Strip (Goldstone 2009, 405). A coalition of Canadian intellectuals and artists interpreted the festival's sponsorship as a complicit promotion of Israel

intended to distract audiences from its crimes and called for a boycott of the event (Toronto Declaration 2009).

These three examples locate Palestinian films and media infrastructures in a vast array of power relations, economic and solidarity networks, geographies, and temporalities. Palestinian cinema, the main focus of this dissertation, exists at the confluence of overlapping, sometimes conflicting, politics of recognition. These develop in transnational academic and solidarity circles; economies of prestige such as film festivals and awards ceremonies; developmental economies; and humanitarian financial networks. Palestinian cinema offers a forum for sharing the plight and struggle of a people; provides a platform for self-representation and self-definition; introduces modes of representation compelling to international audiences, which may eventually attract foreign funding in the arts or humanitarian donations; and helps normalize Palestinian culture on the international diplomatic scene. Cultural and political recognition contribute to ensuring the financial and political persistence of Palestinian culture and constitute a strategy that might bring forth Palestinian rights and self-determination.

At the same time, Palestinians' visibility and narratives, which cinema helps advance, constantly face colonial forces of negation and destruction channeled through military action, cultural diplomacy, counter-programming efforts, and smear campaigns. Such attempts at overdetermining Palestinians from the outside target technological infrastructures and means of Palestinian production, as the regular Israeli raids on television and radio offices indicate. In parallel, other types of attack mine systems of meaning-making by using cultural prestige as a smoke screen for war crimes, which facilitates further modalities of physical and representational unrecognition. The coevalness of recognition and unrecognition situates Palestinian film production, distribution, and exhibition as a "crucial locus of political engagement." Such sites take shape through the fluid articulation and negotiation of "broader social forces, political processes, and modalities of difference" (Stein and Swedenburg 2005, 9). The opposing dynamics of recognition and unrecognition doubles the contradictory present of colonization and development. The two sets of paradoxes delineate a terrain for Palestinian action, modes of cultural production understood broadly, and fields of possibility.

This dissertation is less concerned with identifying forms of resistance in Palestinian cinema than grounding it in the sphere of cultural politics and political economy. Moreover, Palestinian cinema functions as a hermeneutic tool that yields new areas of scholarly investigation

in contemporary media studies. In 2011, David Archibald and Mitchell Miller rightfully contextualized the aforementioned TIFF boycott in contrast with the "notion of the apolitical festival…with unlimited freedom of choice and freedom of expression…which ignores the commercial and cultural factors that shape programming" (Archibald and Miller 2011, 279). As a result, studying Palestinian cinema through the contested economic and discursive networks in which it circulates, is produced, and denied, also necessarily points to the limits of politics of recognition. To put it schematically, the liberal assumption is that the free circulation of goods and ideas, as well as increased visibility, can bring about better human rights practices the world over (Fukuyama 1992). The example of TIFF demonstrates how visibility is tied to economic interests and regimes of governance.[1] In adopting a skeptical stance vis-à-vis the emancipatory logics of the market, this research fully participates in the contemporary endeavor to critically examine the discursive, epistemological, and material foundations of media industries. At the same time, questioning the production of knowledge around film economies intersects with the decolonial project of introducing new epistemes through which to understand global power relations. This dissertation demonstrates that film economies crisscross broader financial and discursive networks in multiple ways. More particularly, it argues that Palestinian cinema emerges from the convergence between, on the one hand, developmental economies and discourses focused on growth, human capacity, human rights, and humanitarian relief; and on the other, continuing Palestinian histories of struggle, a present of industrial organizing, and open futures.

This dissertation investigates the temporal and physical infrastructures, materiality, histories, and imaginaries that sustain the project of a transnational Palestinian film industry. These dynamics unfold in the paradoxical context of colonization and development which follows the so-called Peace Accords in 1994. More particularly, this study analyzes a range of transnational funding streams and film festivals in Palestine, as well as Palestinian films produced in Palestine-Israel since the Second Intifada onwards. It reviews transnational and trans-economic contexts across global, European, and transregional networks of art cinema, human rights, humanitarianism, and various strands of development. The space of Palestine-Israel dwells at the center of its inquiry. This geography is not normative or fixed. Instead, it recognizes the foundational reality of settler-

[1] To get a better sense of the debates around politics of recognition, see Fraser and Honneth 2003; Brown 2006; Povinelli 2011; Ciccariello-Maher 2017. Ragan Rhyne articulates these issues beautifully in the context of US gay and lesbian film festivals (Rhyne 2007). Chapter Five of this dissertation examines those issues at length.

colonialism which arbitrarily fragments historic Palestinian lands. Such mapping also fits closely with the project of a Palestinian film industry which Palestinian cultural workers are in the process of defining. Finally, this cartography identifies a point of departure for imagining political futures and reformulating Palestinian existence alongside Jewish Israelis.

While this dissertation does not seek to explore means of co-resistance, it investigates the epistemological value of the present as well as open-ended, paradoxical temporalities. These may co-constitute new regimes of Palestinian and Jewish Israeli rights.[2] Yet, temporality also provides an entry point into forms of governance that inflect Palestinians' horizons of possibility. Economic systems produce arrangements of time akin to what Sarah Sharma calls "temporal infrastructures" or "architectures of time maintenance" which sustain the tempo of some to the detriment of others (Sharma 2014, 30 and 44). Attached to unfolding processes, the focus on temporality finally supports the examination of Palestinian practitioners' agency, their discursive and organizational strategies, and their responses to both structural contingency and temporal infrastructures.

This dissertation asks four main questions: *How can we study Palestinian cinema today? How can we understand film industries' interactions with other economies? What do we gain by focusing on temporality in addition to spatiality when we study media industries? What do we gain by focusing on temporality to understand power?* This research adds to the fields of Palestinian and transnational film studies, postcolonial and decolonial studies, critical media industries studies, critical media infrastructure studies, and post-development theory. Chapter One will establish my contributions in relation to their respective theoretical contexts and debates. In what follows, I briefly describe two ways in which this dissertation engages with issues of temporality.

Time, Governance, and Economies

This dissertation's temporal focus uncovers time-based structures of governance that supplement spatial inquiries of transnational flows. The aim is to analyze how the political economies in which the Palestinian film industrial project is embedded produce temporalities that partially determine horizons of possibility. Time functions as a resource to be exploited and manipulated. Political economies do not simply arrange spatial configurations. They also organize the temporalities of

[2] Amal Jamal formulates the concept of "transformative temporariness" as part of a true process of reconciliation and conflict resolution. This concept constitutes "a form of accommodating historical oppression, deconstructing past injustices and addressing existential threats" (Jamal 2016, 365).

daily lives as well as distribute, circumscribe, and inflect temporal structures of possible actions, in which discourses and materiality are closely entwined. As a result, “temporality” is that which articulates and makes manifest “power relations as they play out in time” (Sharma 2014, 4). In Palestine, the “impossible political fiction” of statehood and independence (Abourahme 2016, 131) frames polities through civil society and institutional power. In other words, the political economy of occupation and development funnels imaginaries of as well as possibilities for political futures and actions. This economic arrangement tends to replace the struggle for self-determination with recourse to supranational organizations and foreign aid. At the same time, the Zionist colonial project narrativizes (with the hope of materializing) Palestinians as a disappearing object located in a distant fantasy. Palestinians are constantly constrained to re-assert the legitimacy of their past presence and their present tense through aporetic politics of recognition. These may become manifest through an engagement with economies of prestige, as they usually do in cinema. In the quotidian, checkpoints and forms of territorial control also discipline Palestinian management of time. As a result, Palestinian agency takes shape in direct confrontation with colonial and economic infrastructures of spatial *and* temporal control.

Located at the crossroads of geopolitics and micropolitics, this dissertation takes film economies and their intersecting networks as the locus where contradicting, relational, and confrontational temporalities are made visible. As Helga Tawil-Souri reminds us after Michel Foucault, “time is a site of *material* struggle, creating social differences and inequalities structured in specific political and economic contexts” (Tawil-Souri 2017, 392, my emphasis). Moreover, temporality is not only lived, it is constructed through colonial, revolutionary, and institutional historiographies. Palestinian film economies form a node where past and future industrial and political imaginaries as well as material economies of colonization, neoliberal recognition, development, and humanitarianism meet. As such, the temporal analysis of Palestinian film economies helps us identify the complex articulations of Palestinian cultural politics and specific fields of Palestinian action. In what follows, I demonstrate how a temporal focus can also productively deconstruct film economies, media industries, and their study.

Media Industries Studies and Temporality: The “Not-Yet”

The Palestinian industrial project takes shape around a variety of temporalities. Concepts of suspension, flexibility, instability, sustainability, or the aspiration to recognition figure multiple

industrial modes of temporal existence and forms of economic duration. By bridging the gap between media industries studies, post-development theory, and critical media infrastructure studies, the goal is to provide a framework for analyzing processes of industrial formation and industries that are "not-yet." These unfold carried by festivals and film initiatives that remain mostly unrecognized by strict industrial hierarchies of temporal worth and which bend as well as redefine categories of global success. The "not yet" of film economies cannot be restricted to an occluding form of "protracted temporariness," which has come to define Palestinians' relationship to a political future of self-determination that never comes. Instead, I propose to examine the thickness of the present and how it combines a multiplicity of time formations such as sequences, serial movements, duration, and the triad of the past, present and future. I call this contradictory present of uncertainties and negotiations "paradoxical." This approach supplies us with theoretical tools to understand industrial formations and how these coincide with political imaginaries.

The *industrial* present of the not-yet complicates the uni-directionality of "clock-time." This modern division of time into sequential units is typically seen to dictate relations of production and industrial work as well as social normative structures of being on time. Contingency rules in the occupied territories and constantly disrupts clock-time. In the West Bank, checkpoints not only delay workers by slowing down crossings into zones of labor and back, they also unpredictably shut down or, as the case of "flying checkpoints," suddenly appear on a road that was heretofore deemed a convenient route. In Gaza, the continuous destruction of basic infrastructures means that electricity and water are available only sparsely and at changing times of the day or night, which precludes the comfort of routine as well as forms of "productive" labor. In Israel, racial discrimination blocks social advancement. Acknowledging the reorganization of temporalities provides a productive entry point into the challenges and strategies that cultural workers mobilize in the pursuit of an organized Palestinian film economy.

Finally, the rejection of dichotomist analyses of what does or does not constitute industry and agency delinks the epistemological foundations of media industries studies from positivist definitions that sustain hegemonic norms – these being often articulated by colonial powers. Albeit modest, this dissertation's theoretical move partially adheres to the spirit of decolonial intervention. Privileging the "not completely legible," the temporality of not-yet recoils from a certain "epistemic privilege" (Mignolo 2009, 8). It illuminates power relations as well as responses to coloniality. To a certain extent, the hope is that this knowledge gets repurposed at the service of

Palestinian cultural practices and *anti*colonial epistemology at least as much as it contributes to the field of media industries studies.[3]

Chapter Breakdown

Each chapter investigates the temporalities that specific developmental and intersecting economies produce, and how Palestinian film practitioners respond to these. Their strategies articulate distinct modes of convergence and divergence with development-as-growth, human development, humanitarian economies, and economies of recognition. By focusing on temporality to explain transnational, colonial, and postcolonial power relations, each chapter asks how political histories shape media economies, and how media economies forge political futures.

The first chapter, "Paradoxical Economies," explains the concept that gives its name to this dissertation's title. I start by situating this research in the small yet rich field of Palestinian film studies. I argue for an epistemological, theoretical, and methodological shift away from trauma and identity towards the conceptualization of Palestinian cinema as an economic practice. This practice is constituted through Palestinian confrontation with colonial and developmental environments and financial networks. Such a change in focus also operates a geographical re-centering on the temporal space of Palestine-Israel, which establishes itself through the "pessoptimistic"[4] and paradoxical hope for self-determination as well as its repeated impossibility. I then turn to what I call "paradoxical economies," which I devise as both a methodology to study industrial formation in the contradictory present, and an acknowledgment of the competing forces invested in shaping Palestinian futures. I coin the concept by relying on theories of transnational and postcolonial cinema, media industries studies, post-development theory, and critical media infrastructure studies. The temporality of Palestinian workers' strategizing finally crystallizes these paradoxes, and emerges as one focal point for this research.

The second chapter, "Suspended Time: Cinephilia and the Politics of Stability," delves into the contradictions of Oslo's economy of development under colonization and occupation, in the

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[3] Mignolo places academic disciplines in stark opposition to decolonial epistemology. A true decolonial practice "advances the [decolonial] cause *rather than* the discipline" (Mignolo 2009, 14, my emphasis). It seems however artificial to argue that this doctoral research evolves outside the discipline in which it intervenes.

[4] The term is taken from Emile Habiby's famous novel *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist* (1974). Chapter One elaborates on the significance of the term for this research.

West Bank. Stemming from an anthology of short films of the same name, "suspended time" describes how stability functions as a leading ideal for the Palestinian Authority's colonial and developmental program of counter-insurgency in a climate of great political and economic instability. At the same time, stability nurtures the imaginary of Palestinian cultural workers who seek to start building film institutions despite the absence of a fully-fledged Palestinian state. Here I rely on the concept of cinephilia, an economic engagement with the love of cinema shaped through and around global film festivals. Cinephilia accommodates suspended time by supplying models of flexible and adaptable cinema infrastructures such as film festivals, and an ideal of stability through the fantasy of a safe theatrical space. Such convergence of developmental, cinephiliac, and local film economies react against the dominant visual regime of the instability-driven news. I build this argument through the study of the Palestine Days of Cinema, whose second edition I attended in October 2015. This chapter introduces a post-Oslo history for the emergence of *art* film festivals in the West Bank and provides an initial conceptualization of film festivals as unstable institutions.

Chapter Three, "Sustainability and the Politics of Cinema Outreach," examines the interaction between development-as-growth, human development, and grassroots engagement with human rights through the *conceptual* convergence around sustainability. The ambivalent temporality of sustainability connects ideals of Palestinian agency across times and economies, and materializes around initiatives of cinema outreach. Human rights discourse and economies are mobilized differently in cinephiliac and self-described grassroots initiatives; yet, ultimately, both strands intend to revive Palestinian militant cinema as the first model of Palestinian film institutionalization. Here I shift from a focus on art cinema towards conceptions of filmmaking embedded in models of "capacity-building" and "empowerment." Maybe provocatively, I take the Women's Shashat Film Festival as an epitome of sustainability's ambivalence and a converging site for the negotiation of past militant practices with contemporary human rights economies.

The fourth chapter, "Emergency: Humanitarianism and the Life of Cinema," is set in Gaza's humanitarian crisis. It critically examines the epistemological roots of emergency and how this construct serves the establishment of regimes of humanitarian governance in the midst of continued Israeli assaults on Palestinian life and dignity. I argue that politics of mere life can be supplemented with politics of "more life" (Honig 2014) which consider the Palestinian film community as well as the Hamas government's distinct endeavors to build a Gazan film industry.

These variegated, at times conflicting, initiatives engage with the humanitarian discourse of life to integrate the networks that can materially support the *reviving* of Palestinian film infrastructures and communities. Simultaneously, these efforts justify their own oddity in the context of a lack of basic needs by framing cinema and cinema infrastructures as, themselves, basic human rights. Situated in the larger context of Gaza's humanitarian visual regime as well as governmental and civilian actions, the Red Carpet Human Rights Film Festival provides a key example of what "bringing cinema back to life" can look like in the Strip.

The fifth and final chapter, "Recognition Beyond the End of History," examines the *conditions* of Palestinian appearance in transnational and domestic markets mediated by Israel's diplomatic and governmental power. I investigate ways to theorize the relationship between Palestinian citizens and the colonial state through funding by using conceptualizations formulated by the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. At the same time, I review the actual and practical debates concerning Palestinian interaction with colonial institutions which hold different consequences and meanings for Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories. To that end, I explore how the transnational management of culture articulates around the diplomatic discourse of "dialogue," possibilities for working together, as well as forms of co-optation, appropriation, and redistribution. Stemming from the paradox that Palestinian filmmakers' international recognition, often propelled by Israeli funding, doubles their unrecognition in Israel itself, this chapter identifies several attempts to decolonize modes of film production.

Methodology

This dissertation identifies central elements around which the project of a Palestinian film industry crystallizes. I perform a discursive analysis of Palestine's film festivals, their material and symbolic networks of exchange, transnational funding streams, and Palestinian films after the Second Intifada. To be sure, film festivals constitute a major focus of this research only insofar as they point to the specific mechanisms of a mutating Palestinian film economy. Furthermore, all these sites of analysis taken together are further extrapolated from built infrastructures such as film theatres, urbanism, and colonial architecture. I examine how Palestine's film festivals, proto- film institutions, and Palestinian films result from negotiations between Palestinian cultural workers and their environment. At the same time, these initiatives uncover and aggregate debates about possible futures. Such a polymorph and transient object of study demands a multi-faceted

methodology that accounts for the convergence of film, developmental, human rights, and humanitarian economies.[5] The goal is to evaluate overlapping imaginaries and *immediate* interests as well as financial exchanges, which contribute to shaping developing industrial projects in material and discursive terms, and across geopolitics and economies.

Researching Palestine proves challenging due to its contested meaning as a political and social space as well as the legal and security repercussions of this indeterminacy. In particular, investigating the not-yet Palestinian film economy means engaging with institutions that are still in the process of being built. Media industries studies typically relies heavily on policy papers; official budgets; transnational economic, financial, and tax agreements; contracts and statutory regulations; box office data; national polls; and audience reports. More particularly, methods grounded in the field of media economics produce and elaborate on market analyses to review audience formations (Napoli 2009), while the political economy of media (here not as a general framework but a specific tendency within the study of media industries) draws from ratings as well as commercial and audience measurements in order to critique ownership structures and its impact on the masses (Meehan and Wasko 2013). However, a policy framework for cultural productions continues to be quasi-absent in Palestine. In Israel, official reports in English do not mention how funds, labor, and cinematic representations are distributed across ethnicities.

As a result, research into Palestinian film economies can only sparsely follow the traditional paths trodden by the political economy of media (understood broadly). The projected industry unfolds in the few reports produced by the development economy, which gradually takes interest in cinema. For example, the European Union is a unique documenter of the audio-visual sector because it is currently expanding its partnership with both Palestine and Israel. Yet, as is symptomatic of not-yet practices that are often illegible, even EU official reports cite some untrustworthy information that their Commission admits they could not verify (Euromed Audiovisual 2013). Additional policy reports on cinema and culture are published by regional Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Mawred al-Thaqafy and supra-national institutions like the UNESCO. More broadly, this material places cinema and culture within its institutional and economic context of development and colonization, alongside publications I

[5] For example, Lindiwe Dovey, Joshua McNamara and Federico Olivieri's ethnographic study of the Slum Film Festival in Kenya place the emphasis on "the negotiation of culture, power, identity, and a certain kind of development…operating at the crossroads of [the local] media and development industries" (Dovey et al. 2013).

consulted by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), The United Nations High Committee for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (UNWCED), as well as local NGOs such as Adalah (the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel), ACRI (Association for Civil Rights in Israel), B'Tselem, Gisha, and others.

This research focuses instead on the industrial *imaginaries* that sustain the project of a structured Palestinian film economy and their relationship with the material networks I have begun to highlight. News stories on Palestinian cinema are slowly migrating from *The Guardian*'s cultural pages and to feature in trade journals such as *Variety* and *Screen International.* An active funder of Palestinian art, the British Council promoted a Ramallah-based industry event at the Days of Cinema in 2017 with the headline: "Palestine's Dynamic Film Industry Comes Out for Days of Cinema" (British Council 2017). Celebrating new market opportunities, the bulletin mentions a list of European and Australian financial partners that came to network with Palestinian filmmakers. It also announces the creation of grants and awards supporting local film production. Acknowledging that the organizers' efforts aim at building a film industry, the article concludes: "if this fourth edition of Days of Cinema is anything to go by, they are succeeding!" (British Council 2017) As Palestine emerges as a terrain for cinema investment, it also becomes a repository for narratives of success and recognition by both the international film industry and Palestinian cultural workers who seek to integrate those economic networks. This dissertation partly follows John T. Caldwell's insight that "film and television today reflect obsessively back upon themselves and invest considerable energy in over-producing and distributing [their] self-analysis to the public" (Caldwell 2008, 1). In addition to global discourses on the Palestinian film economy, I thus stem from practitioners' representations of the industries they shape.

Such discussions circulate in the trade journals aforementioned as well as Anglophone, Francophone, and Arabic press reviews covering festival news and film production, policies, infrastructures, and controversial reception.[6] Throughout my study, I collected and examined films and festivals' promotional material such as festival catalogues, flyers, posters, schedules, and

[6] I look at Francophone sources because France is very much involved in co-producing Palestinian cinema and has a strong presence in financing cultural initiatives in Palestine. Moreover, these sources were particularly accessible due to my native knowledge of French.

distributors' press material. Facebook has proven a useful site where organizations can self-promote and cultural workers debate, comment, or simply show appreciation and share news relevant to the field. These various materials altogether provide crucial information regarding films' producers; festivals' funders across the years; events' hosting venues and how these, combined with allocated time-slots, uncover imagined audiences; and the names of organizers, technicians, and guests. All these elements help us draft networks of solidarity and influence. The study of entwined discourses and materiality points to distribution routes which are not only transnational and transregional, but also internal to Palestine-Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Chapter Three in particular examines circuits of outreach within the West Bank.

The partial focus on distribution allows comparative approaches that challenge universal definitions of media or industries (Perren 2013, 169). The same way that Amanda Lotz examines the changing meaning of television with the advent of new platforms (Lotz 2007), Palestinian cultural workers interrogate what constitutes a film festival in Palestine when they are faced with models of a global reach, as I explore in Chapter Two. Shifting away from traditional audience studies which typically determines the effect of media on the masses, distribution studies instead explores issues of access and agency (Perren 2013, 168; Lobato 2011). Such concerns, central to my research, call for a bottom-up approach that benefits from ethnographic research. A form of distribution study, the field of film festivals studies has also emphasized methodologies from anthropology, as I will develop hereafter. A whole strand of media industries studies similarly mobilizes ethnographic strategies in order to analyze how circles of cultural production emerge as cultural entities organized around conventions, codes, and systems of meaning-making (Caldwell 2008, Ganti 2014, Mayer et al. 2009, and Curtin and Sanson 2016).

This dissertation modestly borrows isolated tools from ethnographic research in order to access some of the discourses that cultural workers produce as a way of "stabilizing an industry in flux" (Havens et al. 2009, 250). I conducted twenty interviews of Palestinian film festival organizers, filmmakers, producers, workshop participants, and cinema officials. These interviews took place in Ramallah, al-Bireh, Beit Sahour, East Jerusalem, Paris, and the border town of London, Ontario, as well as on Skype. I conducted another eleven interviews during the diasporic film festivals of Chicago and London (UK), which I do not include in this dissertation. Over the six years of my PhD, I travelled to Palestine twice and for a total duration of five months. During my first trip in the Summer 2013, I familiarized myself with the local context, took Arabic classes

at Birzeit, and conducted a study of the Franco-Arab Film Festival which became an article published in *Transnational Cinemas* (2014). This case study did not make its way to the dissertation. My second trip took place in the Fall 2015, during which I enrolled in Birzeit again, attended the Days of Cinema (the object of Chapter Two), and conducted research on the Shashat Women's Film Festival (examined in Chapter Three).

My fieldwork was, however, limited in time. Although I did travel around the West Bank's largest cities; the smaller towns of Qalqilya, Tulkarem, Sebastia, Salfit; the villages of Nabi Saleh, Kufr Malik, Ein Qiniya; and the refugee camps of Al-Jalazun, Al-Amari, Dheisheh, Aida, and more, like most foreigners I remained based in Ramallah. In other words, I am aware that this study represents an instance of what Marwan Kraidy and Patrick Murphy label "a quasi-ethnography" and "a textual and rhetorical usage of ethnography" (Murphy and Kraidy 2003, 3). A recurring concern for scholars of Palestine who are privileged enough to visit is whether they will be able to come back in when they renew their three-months tourist visa. Some anthropologists obtain a year-long multiple-entry visa because they choose to affiliate to Israeli universities – an option I did not consider. Others have successfully tried their luck, crossed out and come back in, but this speculative game makes it difficult to remain open to ethnographic "spontaneous encounters." I am unfortunately unable to go back because of travelling restrictions, which cut short any long-term and deep ethnographic endeavor. In what follows, I examine how film festival studies has placed the emphasis on field work. In contrast, I could only attend one festival among my case studies. I analyze what this means for this dissertation.

Film festival studies allocates great value to attending the events under study. The sub-field materialized around the practice of cinephilia, film criticism, and film festival "tourism." This is evident in some of the early books that shaped the following scholarly debates, such as Kenneth Turan's *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made* (2002), Marijke de Valck's *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (2007) or Richard Porton's edited collection *Dekalog: On Film Festivals* (2009). Moreover, film festivals constitute live events and their prestige stems from audiences' desire to take part in them. For researchers, the impetus proves double, and the glamour of *being there* adds to the epistemological value of participant observation. In his 1988 book *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, renowned anthropologist Clifford Geertz lingers on the fact that:

> the ability of anthropologists to get us to take what they say seriously has less to do with factual look or an air of conceptual elegance than it has with their capacity to convince us that what they say is a result of their having penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly "been there" (Geertz 1988, 4).

Critical scholarship, especially when it succumbs to the lure of glamour, can suffer from too close a rapprochement with its object of study. While a sustained engagement with industrial actors may strengthen the field (Holt 2013), media industries studies scholars have also warned us against the risk of becoming an extension of industries' interests where we end up promoting them (Wasko and Meehan 2013, 150). Caldwell reflects on the temptation "to go to the industry to 'get it right.'" He writes: "even as I acknowledge the importance of valuing indigenous theorizing…, I resist deferring entirely to the local categories and aesthetic paradigms of producers, at least as final guarantors of authenticity or meaning" (Caldwell 2008, 14). Caldwell's point is crucial to this study. It is almost cliché to reiterate such a worn-out point; yet, what proved most challenging during the fieldwork and beyond was to strike the right balance between respecting Palestinians' narratives and finding a place for my own critical voice without recolonizing the discourse through interpretation. Indirectly, this study seeks to find paths of solidarity through academic research, at the same time as these bonds must be strengthened outside the university.

One of the few scholars of film festivals to be trained as an anthropologist, Toby Lee reminds us of the methodological implications of using ethnography to study film festivals. She introduces this approach "on the ground and in real time" (Lee 2016, 122) as a counterpoint to dominant research that situates festivals in the realm of the global. In her own words, as an "exercise of the unexpected" (Behar, cited in Lee 2016, 126), "ethnographic research allows a real-time understanding of how festivals themselves shift in response to changing contexts" (Lee 2016, 125). This point proves particularly relevant to the context of the military occupation of Palestine, the siege of Gaza, and the continued discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel. "Being there" provides the advantage of inhabiting the contested geographies of Palestine at various levels: the temporality of travel across the territories, scattered with checkpoints and forbidden roads, and viewing infrastructures themselves. What does "watching a film in a cinema" mean in Palestine? Where *and when* does watching films happen? Brian Larkin poses similar questions in his investigation of the social spaces of theatres in Northern Nigeria after the introduction of Islamic law. What sparked his interest was "not the cinema theatre itself but the aura that hung

over it, not the just [sic] built space or the bright images shown there but the assemblage of these into a social event" (Larkin 2008, 2). The second edition of the Days of Cinema (now Palestine Cinema Days) took place during the so-called "Third Intifada" or "Knife Intifada" in October 2015. *Being there* allowed me to examine the discrepancy between what was planned – the written material produced by the festival – and what actually happened – the event. I mapped out potentialities and failures – not what *should* have happened, but the active production of new temporalities of possibility.

More generally, unpredictability organized much of my research. I had planned this second field trip around the Shashat Women's Film Festival and did not know the existence of Days of Cinema. On the very morning I crossed the border from the Jordanian city of Aqaba to the Israeli resort town of Eilat, I was informed that the festival was cancelled. I would learn later that a major donor backed out. Although I could not attend the festival, I kept Shashat as a case study. The festival is predominantly funded by international organizations and must produce evidence of its success and good functioning. The festival director, Dr. Alia Arasoughly was extremely helpful and provided me with all the editions' catalogues, promotional material, press reviews, pictures of the event, and audience studies. She granted me access to Shashat's personal library and the seventy-seven films that the organization produced during its training workshops. Finally, she facilitated my communication with filmmakers involved in the various stages of the festival's training workshops, either as participants, supervisors, or organizers. From a study of lived temporalities, my research shifted to reconstructing the timeline of the festival and its different waves of partnerships and donors. How does an economy embedded in the shifting geographies of aid promise sustainability to precarious structures like Palestinian film festivals over time? Simultaneously, I conducted interviews of filmmakers formerly involved in the festival, who were now committed to developing the Days of Cinema. That is how I started investigating this other event, whose second edition occurred during my stay. The debates emerging from this web of interviews suggested diverging networks of affinity that represent distinct visions of what a film festival in Palestine should be. "Being there" at the festival became secondary to attending to what Toby Lee calls "the peripheries" of the festival, where "the festival interacts with other institutions and businesses" (Lee 2016, 124) – where different economies converge.

I also remained in the peripheries of the Karama Red Carpet Human Rights Film Festival in Gaza, my third case study. Very few people can access the Strip. Visitors are subjected to the

triple approval of the PA, Hamas, and Israel, who mostly restrict all but humanitarian workers. I heard about this event on Facebook, after a massive PR campaign that followed the 2014 Israeli attack on Gaza. The entangled issues of humanitarianism, access, and cinema formed the center of this research. I interviewed the festival director, Khalil Mozian, after he migrated to Canada, and relied on Arabic and Anglophone press reviews of the festival as well as promotional videos and photos posted on the festival's Facebook page. Until late October 2018 upon the inauguration of the fourth edition, the festival did not have a functioning web platform other than social media. Pointing to how little academic literature exists on cinema in Gaza is an understatement. The press coverage of speeches and agreements made by Hamas officials around cinema and a film industry in Gaza, as well as the filmmakers' stance towards Hamas over the years, became a major source of information. Significantly, Gaza always already lives in the news more than it does as an object of academic reflection. Concluding that access shapes knowledge is a truism. Surely, however, research methodologies also grapple with colonial temporalities, which reorganize possibilities for fieldwork, encounters, and "being there."

A Note on Terminology

The colonial fragmentation of space emerges from and perpetuates multiple typologies and epistemological frameworks of reference designed to understand the geography of Palestine-Israel. The West Bank and Gaza are traditionally referred to as being part of the same entity of the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), Palestinian territories, the proto-state of Palestine, or Palestine – despite the existence of two governments in conflict respectively based in the West Bank and Gaza. As for Israel, I refer to it as such when I examine its structure as a settler state with juridical, administrative, and legal consequences. I also use the appellation "historic Palestine" or "48," which re-assert the history that precedes the creation of the state instead of normalizing its constitution. Finally, I often resort to the hyphenated Palestine-Israel to think beyond the arbitrary division into two states. Palestine-Israel also leaves open the possibility for a future geography in which the colonial structures have given way to a fair arrangement for both Jewish Israeli citizens and Palestinians.

Chapter One – Paradoxical Economies

> Take me, for example. I don't differentiate between optimism and pessimism and am quite at loss as to which of the two characterizes me. When I awake each morning, I thank the Lord he did not take my soul during the night. If harm befalls me during the day, I thank Him it was no worse. So, which am I, a pessimist or an optimist?
> Emile Habiby, *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist,* 1974.

Renouncing the choice between optimism and pessimism, Emile Habiby's famous character Saeed the Pessoptimist settles for the paradoxical combination of the two. Saeed acclimates to life as a Palestinian in the newly established state of Israel after the *Nakba* – the catastrophe of the 1948 war, the destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages, and the mass exodus that ensued. The reader follows him until 1967, the date when Saeed sends the letters that compose the bulk of the novel to Habiby himself, who is charged with the task of sharing them with us readers. As the book's title suggests, Saeed, whose name ironically means "happy," carries many secrets. He spends a lifetime devising tricks necessary to conceal the misery of existing under a settler colonial regime that humiliates, dispossesses, and erases Palestinians, demanding their loyalty and submission in return. In the face of this daily tragedy, Palestinians in Israel resort to their "Oriental imagination," which humorously brings Saeed to meet his extra-terrestrial friends in outer space. "And had it not been for their 'Oriental imagination,'" Saeed asks his fictional reader Habiby, "would those Arabs of yours […] have been able to live one single day in this country?" (Habiby 1974, 100)

Oriental imagination appears to be a quality of Saeed's as much as his creator's. Habiby's satiric style, which contrasts with contemporary Palestinian resistance poetry like Mahmud Darwish's, constitutes one example of his ingenuity. The role Habiby managed to play in Israel's political scene despite being Palestinian – which until 1967 meant subjection to martial law – insured the wide reception of his seminal tale. A member of the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) after 1948, Habiby helped found Israel's communist parties Maki in 1948 and Rakah in 1965.[7] He first published *Saeed the Pessoptimist* in a serialized form between 1972 and 1974 in the

[7] The Rakah party emerged in 1965 out of the schism with Maki, an Israeli communist party that aligned with Zionist views. Rakah was formed as an anti-Zionist and largely Arab faction, and the Soviet Union recognized it as the official Israeli communist party. After 1989, Maki was dissolved, and Rakah adopted the name of the former party, Maki.

communist journal he also contributed to establishing, *al-Ittihad* (The Union). The publishing format inscribed the fiction in its own contemporary history. Saeed's paradoxical pessoptimism largely inspired the ironic storytelling and allowed Habiby to render the complexity of Palestinian attitudes, which he observed as he was writing.

Two sides of the same coin, Oriental imagination and pessoptimism apprehend the absurdity of colonization. Attending to their paradoxical mechanisms proves useful on two distinct levels for this dissertation: First, these two notions help us uncover how Palestinian cultural practices articulate Palestinian agency in the face of Israel's constant threats of erasure. Palestinian artists and organizers employ pessoptimism and Oriental imagination to navigate colonization's contradictory temporalities of permanent subjection and hope for a better future. Second, paradox functions as a narrative device and a methodology to write in the present about contemporary cultural practices enmeshed in colonial times. Paradox keeps the contradictions of the contemporary alive, whereas inquiries into the past are expected to be shaped as full blown and coherent narratives. Exploring colonization's paradoxical temporalities provides some introductory historical context for this dissertation's study of Palestinian cinema.

Arabic translator and poet Salma K. Jayyusi starts unearthing the paradoxical temporalities of colonization as she explains the term "pessoptimism." With this oxymoron, Habiby "present[s] a refreshing formula for the reestablishment of faith in the possibility of freedom and liberty at the same time that he exposes the nature of the dilemma at whose core the tragedy of the Palestinians lie" (Jayyusi 2003, xvi). The contemporaneity of hope and despair resonates with the transitional times in which Habiby was writing. 1967 marks the beginning of the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after the Six-Day War, which led to the second mass exodus of Palestinians after 1948. Commemorated as the *Naksa* ("setback" in Arabic), the Israeli army and its allies' victory over Arab troops deeply affected the regional sense of Pan-Arab identity and consciousness, which was declared in crisis. This led to the reassessment of Arab liberation movements, which had failed to achieve their goals (Kassab 2010). Concurrently, 1967 saw the re-organization and the strengthening of the Palestinian resistance, newly located in the diaspora successively in Jordan and Lebanon.

Palestinian cultural practices are entangled with the unfolding of paradoxical times. Scholars Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi's widely used chronology establishes a history of Palestinian cinema that starts with the documenting of Arab and Palestinian institutional powers

in Mandatory Palestine before 1948,[8] disappears after the *Nakba*, re-emerges in force around the Palestinian resistance in exile after 1967, and continues with the return of the filmmakers who had studied abroad to present-day Israel in the 1980s (Gertz and Khleifi 2008). For Hamid Dabashi, this history determines "a sense of continuity that outlives the current political predicament of Palestinians and the disrupted course of their nationhood" (Dabashi 2006, 9). Liberation overcomes the paradoxical temporalities of colonization and constitutes its logical conclusion. In contrast, Gertz and Khleifi embed such a linear description in the circular, traumatic movement of Palestinians' recurring dispossession. The "chronicle," as they emphatically name this historical account, hints at Palestinian cinema's inscription in a conflicting temporality. Here, the materiality and ideals of liberation prove in constant contradiction with the experience of exile and the persistence of colonization.

This dissertation starts when this tension arguably reaches new heights with the so-called peace process, put in motion during the 1991 Madrid conference and legally framed through the 1994 Oslo Accords (hereafter Oslo). The Accords established a Palestinian interim self-government; yet the rise of unemployment and poverty that followed demonstrate Oslo's failure to bring the promised economic and political stability to the West Bank and Gaza. The Second Intifada broke six years later. The policy framework that instituted the proto-state of Palestine emerged in actuality as the renunciation of the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) political emancipation project since 1967. To many, the Accords also represented a complicit agreement between the newly appointed Palestinian Authority (PA) and the occupying power. Among the fiercest critics of Oslo at the time the Accords were signed, the prominent Palestinian American thinker Edward Said wrote in *The Nation*: "No other liberation movement in the twentieth century got so little – roughly five percent of its territory. And no other leaders of a liberation movement accepted what in effect is permanent subordination of their people" (Said 1995, 418). Twenty years later, political scientist Adam Hanieh confirmed: "The Oslo Accords weren't a failure for Israel – they served as a fig leaf to consolidate and deepen its control over Palestinian life" (Hanieh 2013). The implementation of the peace process paradoxically made it impossible to imagine a future for Palestinian self-determination and a sustainable Palestinian economy.

[8] Mandatory Palestine refers to the time period between 1920 and 1948, when Palestine was under British colonial administration.

The Accords naturalized the fragmentation of both the Palestinian people and the Palestinian land. They agreed to marginalize the discussion around the potential return of Palestinian refugees (the families of those exiled in 1948 and 1967), the rapid growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza (which started after 1967), and the status of East Jerusalem (which Israel illegally annexed in 1980). The Accords promised that further negotiations on a permanent status of statehood would be held, but these never took place (Declaration of Principles 1993, Article V. 3). Furthermore, the Accords effectively restricted Palestinians' freedom of movement and divided the territories into various zones of governance that transferred (partial and full) control over a total of 82% of the West Bank to Israel (Turner 2016, 34-35).[9] At the same time, the 1993 Declaration of Principles and the 1994 Protocol for Economic Relations (PER) – all constitutive of the final Accords – defined the exchanges between the PA and the Israeli government as "cooperation." In Israel, Palestinian citizens, branded as "Israeli Arabs," did not gain better access to basic rights, jobs, or housing.

In economic terms, Oslo allowed Israel to retain control over key Palestinian state-building resources including trade and fiscal revenue, while imposing a tariff structure that greatly limited Palestinian exports but encouraged Israeli imports in the territories (Turner 2016, 35). International donors, the UN, and other multilateral agencies filled in for Palestinians' lack of control over their own financial resources. This turned the territories into a marketplace for local and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian organizations. The PA entirely relies on external aid to this day, with an estimated US$15 billion budget according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2013 (Turner 2016, 36). More than twenty years after Oslo, the "prolonged decay" of the Palestinian National Movement, as Tariq Dana describes it, is widely acknowledged (Dana 2017). The future of the proto-state of Palestine – what remains of the Palestinian dream of liberation – is now modeled around ever-stagnating developmental projects spearheaded by the World Bank and the IMF.

Dubbed "economic peace," Oslo marked an opportunity for Israel to normalize the relationship with its Arab neighbors, gradually expand its market in the Arab world, and facilitate

[9] The Oslo Accords institutionalized the division of the West Bank into a Zone A (under the full civilian and security control of the Palestinian Authority), a Zone B (under the security control of Israel and civilian control of the PA) and a zone C (under the full civilian and security control of Israel). The City of Hebron is also divided into two zones: H1 (under the full control of the PA) and H2 (under the full control of Israel). Gaza is divided into white and yellow areas of control.

its integration in the global economy. The Accords propelled a series of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Economic Summits that the IMF and the World Economic Forum chaperoned between 1994 and 1998. These fostered trade and investment between Israel and the Arab world. In 2003, the US government shared its strategic vision of a Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) running across the region and anchored in Israeli and Gulf capitals (Hanieh 2010, 89). The siege of Gaza after 2007 as well as the segregation wall and the permit system drastically limited the mobility of Palestinian workers from the occupied territories and increased their economic marginalization. At the same time, the privatizing efforts of Oslo strengthened the transnational Palestinian economic elite (Hanieh 2010). In his book *Neoliberal Apartheid* (2017), Andy Clarno foregrounds how Israel's neoliberalism, racist economic policies, and settler-colonial practices are intertwined. Israel partially outsourced the occupation to the PA, which enforces counter-insurgency strategies on behalf of the occupier. In the wake of the Second Intifada, the PA further cut its public spending in order to support plans of securitization that both reinforced racial segregation and attracted foreign investors. This budget redistribution also means, in the context of this dissertation, that Palestinian civil society and local and international NGOs now have to assume the responsibility of building cultural institutions, not considered a priority in security or economic terms.

The paradox and dead end of Oslo materialized in the daily experience, especially since the Second Intifada (2000-2005). Significantly, the Palestinian films produced during the uprisings do not simply document the confrontations with the Israeli army that so often shape our imaginary of that period. These productions also reflect the constant interruption of Palestinian time instituted by checkpoints, roadblocks, and route changes. Gertz and Khleifi describe such a fragmented landscape as "arrested time and obstructed space" (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 155), concluding that many of the films of this period seek to overcome the disintegration of space by advocating for "national unity and restoration of the past" (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 147). In contrast, Kay Dickinson dwells on the everyday-ness of life under occupation that these productions convey. Against a vision of Palestinian time dictated by trauma, she examines how Palestinian filmmakers strategized around and responded to the unpredictability and surrealism of the occupation (Dickinson 2010). Both crossing the territories and filming under the occupation require tricks and, might I add, a certain dose of Oriental imagination, which expand our definition of resistance to a wider spectrum.

Similarly interested in Palestinian savviness, this dissertation is concerned with the practical and economic strategies that allow the formation of a Palestinian film economy after Oslo. More particularly, my investigation starts with the Second Intifada, during which the number of film productions and screening initiatives dramatically increased. As Saeed's pessoptimism and Oriental imagination suggest, responses to the context of occupation do not always align with practices of outright resistance. Despite the sympathy he inspires in the reader, Saeed often survives by surrendering to the Israeli authorities. Resistance, Habiby seems to tell us, is better understood as a non-linear spectrum. Jayyusi clarifies this when she defines pessoptimism as a way "to uncover the various contradictions that crowd the distance between the extreme poles of Zionist colonialism and Palestinian resistance" (Jayyusi 2003, xiii). This complexity should also inform our observation of Palestinians' cultural practices. Resistance may at times become a rigid concept which foreign researchers like me, who consider that they write in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, excessively mobilize and romanticize. Self-determination remains an open category, subjected to much pressure from an environment defined not only by the occupation, but also by the overarching logic of apartheid and aggressive neoliberal politics (including of aid) established by the Oslo Accords and encouraged by Israel.

Paradoxical times frame Palestinian cultural productions through what Reema Salha Fadda calls a "culture of violence" after anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (Abu-Lughod 2010; Fadda 2014). Israeli militarism has established an "infrastructure of unjust distribution" (Weizman 2007 cited in Fadda 2014) which pre-determines im/possibilities for the production, circulation, and exhibition of Palestinian works locally and globally. Fadda argues that binaries of resistance and collaboration no longer make sense in this context:

> The notion that Palestinian works of art must act within the (ambiguously defined) political comfort zone of an art industry, or risk losing financial and developmental opportunities narrows Palestinian culture into a binary of rage (against the rules set by the occupation) and cooperation (within the rules set by the occupation) (Fadda 2014).

We cannot divorce the study of Palestinian art (and film) economies from colonial and capitalist (neoliberal) structures of oppression. Taking cultures of violence as a point of departure to understand media industries bears at least three implications for this dissertation. First, we need to examine the multiple forms that Palestinian agency takes as a result. Second, attending to the conditions of possibility for a contemporary Palestinian economy and industry challenges

normative models of inquiry that take media industries for granted. Legitimacy, infrastructural development, and conditions of financial inclusion constitute primary axes of interest to this research project. Third, media industrial networks expand beyond cultural spheres and intersect with various political economies. This dissertation especially investigates the relationship between cinema, human rights, and humanitarian imaginaries as well as their financial and aesthetic circuits. These economies and the various developmental futures they advocate impact Palestinian lived temporalities. They generate conceptions of historical value that contribute to distributing power and agency. Rather than an isolated case, the Palestinian context sheds light on the formation of film economies in the Global South and minority media economies in the Global North at large.

This chapter begins by situating my dissertation project within the small field of Palestinian cinema studies. It asks what it means to talk about national cinemas as economic projects rather than identity-binding forms of representations. Oriented towards supporting a variety of Palestinian futures, the emerging Palestinian film economy proves as much a spatial object as a temporal one. The second part of this chapter coins the concept of "paradoxical economies" in order to analyze how Palestinian film practitioners negotiate the contradictory futures and imaginaries that colonial, developmental, human rights, and humanitarian economies shape. I inscribe this study in the fields of transnational cinemas and postcolonial studies, critical media industries studies, post-development theory, and critical media infrastructure studies.

1. After National Cinema

The convergence of the terms "Palestinian" and "cinema" often strikes foreigners, Palestinian audiences, and Palestinian film practitioners and scholars alike as an aberration. The absence of a fully-fledged Palestinian state and the dispersion of the Palestinian people across continents challenges traditional understandings of national cinema as the congruence of national identity – one that is changing and multiple – and state formation (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Hayward 1993; Crofts 1993). Palestinian actor-director Mohamed Bakri declared to *The Guardian* in 2006: "Let me tell you about the Palestinian film industry. Very simply, we do not have one" (cited in Brooks 2006). George Khleifi reiterated that statement almost ten years later (interview with the author 2015). Yet, the appellation "Palestinian cinema" persists and has been the object of a growing scholarship since the mid-2000s, a moment that has figured a shift in

Palestinian filmmaking practices as a result of the changing economies of the Second Intifada. The conversations around the definition of Palestinian cinema and national cinema have thus contributed to shaping a small but lively field of Palestinian film studies. My own research is located "after national cinema" because it acknowledges the rich input but also the limitations of the term as it has been used to theorize Palestinian cinema. The epistemological complexity of Palestine as a space in a constant process of definition allows a reconceptualization of national cinema; however, I do not intend to reform that particular field of study. Instead, I stem from its restrictions to propose a different framework of analysis predicated on film economies. The shift I initiate from national identity to practice rests on a contextual analysis. For that reason, I articulate a review of scholarly debates on Palestinian cinema as national cinema at the same time as I provide a brief historical sketch of Palestinian productions.

The first section of this chapter builds on three paradoxes to deconstruct the concept of national cinema. The first paradox, crucial to existing scholarly debates, questions the possibility of a national cinema in the absence of a nation-state. In this context, Palestinian cinema's definition revolves around a Palestinian national identity based on the trauma of the 1948 Nakba. The second paradox asks how Palestinian cinema, deemed stateless and without a film industry, can be internationally successful. Here I propose a deviation from the focus on a deterritorialized identity that has dominated the field, thinking instead of Palestinian cinema as an economic practice of global networks. The third paradox introduces a geographical shift by re-grounding Palestinian cinema in the space of Palestine-Israel. In this context, I understand Palestinian cinema as an economic project not tied to a demarcated territory, but attached to a paradoxical future of Palestine as a space to-be-defined and predicated upon the simultaneous possibility and impossibility of Palestinian self-determination. This last paradox most closely informs my understanding of "paradoxical economies," which the second part of this chapter elaborates.

1.1. From Trauma to Practice

Many scholars have described Palestinian cinema as a paradoxical national cinema. In his introduction to the reference book *Dreams of a Nation* (2006), Dabashi writes:

> The proposition [of Palestinian cinema as a promising national cinema] is paradoxical and it is through this paradox that it needs to be articulated and theorized: how exactly is it that

> a stateless nation generates a national cinema – and once it does, what kind of national cinema is it? (Dabashi 2006, 7)

Livia Alexander provides additional context to this paradox. Writing slightly before Dabashi in 2005, Alexander casts doubt on the adequacy of the framework of "national cinema" to articulate the tension between state and nation so central to her post-Oslo focus. Facing the burden of defining an object then little studied, she successively asks over the course of the chapter: "Is there a Palestinian cinema?", "Is it possible to speak of a 'Palestinian cinema' at all?", and "What is Palestinian cinema?" (Alexander 2005) Instead of taking these questions at face value, Alexander places national discourses in perspective via the highly transnational reality of Palestinian productions and addresses postcolonial concerns, at the same time opening up the category of the national. On the one hand, she acknowledges that the dispersion of the Palestinian people within and outside Palestine has generated a multiplicity of national narratives of liberation. On the other, she writes, the absence of a state and the lack of interest of the growing Palestinian private sector in investing in cinema implies that the funding supporting Palestinian films mainly originates from a variety of European and American TV agencies, foreign national funds for global South film productions, and, more recently I shall add, tailored international festival grants.

Both Alexander and Dabashi grapple with stateless Palestinian cinema's position in a theoretical context where the nation-state is assumed to primarily control the making of cinema. Their respective investigations echo debates formulated throughout the former decade around "the limiting imagination of national cinema," to quote Andrew Higson's seminal 2000 article. The category of national cinema started to be placed under scrutiny in the wake of the increased permeability of borders and the intensification of global trade, information, and demographic flows in the 1990s. Among the first in film studies, Higson highlights the inadequacy of Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined community," which ties the idea of a shared sense of national belonging to a state's defined territory. Higson argues that a transnational approach more appropriately explains processes of film production, distribution, and reception because these involve exchanges of financial resources, technical experience, and cultural values between various countries. Yet, the need for new theorizations that account for the transnational elasticity

of space does not completely invalidate the role played by eroding nation-states. Instead, Higson advocates for a refined focus on the state and re-asserts its role in policy-making (Higson 2000).[10]

Higson's outline of the transnational only partially meets the conceptual needs of a Palestinian cinema described as stateless. Contemporary studies grounded in postcolonial theory have more suitably diverted their attention from state structures in order to both deconstruct the representations of racial minorities by dominant groups and provide tools to analyze the representations of minorities by themselves. This approach ultimately unveils the power relations at work in constructing identities and upsets fixed cultural and national configurations. In the intellectual tradition of Edward Said's seminal book *Orientalism* (1978), Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994) examines the Eurocentric cinematic representations of race and non-European cultures that have served to establish and perpetuate hierarchies inherited from globalized histories of colonization. Shohat and Stam propose moving beyond the East/West binary and exploring interrelated and multicultural dynamics that complicate unidimensional understandings of cultural specificities. Mirroring this work of unmaking representations, Hamid Naficy coins the concept of "accented cinema" to address the cinematic formations that emerge from within the condition of exile and diaspora (Naficy 2001). Split between homeland and host country, exilic and diasporic films always already inscribe themselves in simultaneous but distinct local and global spaces, hence locating filmmaking in "the interstices of social formations and cinema practices" (Naficy 2001, 4). Postcolonial studies' reconceptualization of the national around the complexities of identity formation has therefore allowed scholars of Palestinian cinema to avoid what Helga Tawil-Souri calls the "territorial trap" after John Agnew (Agnew 1994), the confusion of the nation with the territorial boundaries of the nation-state (Tawil-Souri 2014).

Evading the territorial trap often resulted in defining the Palestinian nation through its geographic fragmentation and demographic dispersion. This distances issues of Palestinianness from the economic constraints Alexander timidly introduced. Typically, Dabashi's paradox considers that there is no Palestinian state and this very absence signifies the deeper traumatic event of the *Nakba* in 1948 – the political and material dispossession of the Palestinians. The loss of the land and the historical trauma come to the fore as modes of organizing Palestinian identities,

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[10] This article likely influenced Dabashi and Alexander's understanding of national cinema. They both write at the very moment when studies in transnational cinemas start to further de-centralize mechanisms of transnational cultural production from state structures. See Rowden and Ezra, 2006; Ďurovičová and Newman, 2010.

geographies, and film styles. Dabashi argues that trauma dictates contemporary Palestinian aesthetic representations by way of a "traumatic realist" style that translates Palestinians' "repressed anger." He adds, "the central trauma of Palestine, the Nakba, is the defining moment of Palestinian cinema" (Dabashi 2006, 11). Joseph Massad similarly identifies the un-representability of the Nakba as the episteme that structures the visual experiments of Palestinian cinema (Massad 2006, 43). The architecture of Gertz and Khleifi's seminal book *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, Memory* (2008) is built around the permanence of trauma as it is interlocked with memory and landscape. Haim Bresheeth in turn describes Palestinian cinema as the process of turning the melancholia of loss into a work of mourning through the cinematic reconstruction of the Palestinian identity and memory (Bresheeth 2007). Trauma presides over definitions of the Palestinian nation because it is that which separates Palestinians from having a state. As a theoretical move, acknowledging trauma serves to counter the territorial trap. Furthermore, trauma functions as a unifying factor that connects all Palestinians, and sediments them as *a people* – as a nation. Trauma acts not only as a defining moment of Palestinian cinema but, to paraphrase Dabashi, it is a defining moment of Palestinian cinema *as a national cinema*.

Gertz and Khleifi insist that films made by Palestinians existed in Mandatory Palestine – before 1948. These were produced by various local companies, such as Ibrahim Hassan Sirhan's Studio Palestine, and later the Arab Film Company, established by Sirhan with Ahmad Hilmi al-Kilani who studied film in Cairo. However, cinema did not manage to achieve popularity in Palestinian communities at that period because of financial and infrastructural constraints. British colonial laws were also put into place to prevent the rise of a local film industry that would potentially perpetuate images contradicting Western representations (Euromed Audiovisual 2013, 95). Contrary to theatre, cinema could not be appropriated from the bottom upwards. It only became central to constructing a Palestinian discourse of resistance against Zionism around Arab nationalism in the late 1960s (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 16). Representations of Palestinians produced by European and American travelers dominated the early twentieth century. After 1948, humanitarian organizations such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) were responsible for shaping the image of Palestinians as refugees and victims that endures today. Gertz and Khleifi situate the birth of Palestinian cinema *as a national cinema* during its militant period after 1967, when units of Palestinian filmmakers in exile were integrated in the effort of the armed revolution and received the financial support of various political parties. For the first time,

Palestinians could represent themselves and claim the power to narrate. Militant films attempted to formulate a coherent national narrative and a shared sense of belonging – an "imagined community" *sans* state. This proved necessary in order to counter allegations that Palestinians did not exist as a people, as developed early on by Zionist discourses.

Many decades after the first theorizations of the Zionist doctrine, in 1969, then-Israeli prime minister Golda Meir infamously stated in London's *Sunday Times*: "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people...It is not as if we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn't exist" (Meir 1969). Her attack specifically targeted the supposed absence of a Palestinian consciousness, assumption that she derived from the lack of a so-called "modern" political structure recognizable by Western standards such as the nation-state. Many historians have refuted Meir's claim and supplied evidence substantiating that a Palestinian national identity developed long before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and even before Zionism (Muslih 1988; Kimmerling and Migdal 1993; Khalidi 1997). The consolidation of a Palestinian state project, initiated as early as 1967 (Gresh 1988), strived to derail the Zionist narrative of colonial legitimation. Meir's negation of the political formation of a Palestinian people worked closely with Israel's prolonged campaign to eliminate the traces of a Palestinian culture and presence. Using a definition of "ethnic cleansing" grounded in international law, Israeli historian Ilan Pappe meticulously chronicles pre-state Zionists and Israel's intent to "render an ethnically mixed country homogeneous by expelling a particular group of people and turning them into refugees while demolishing the homes they were driven out from" (Pappe 2006, 3).

Ethnic cleansing includes the eradication of a region's history (Pappe 2006, 2). Meir's 1969 quote operated as a self-fulfilling prophecy and carried crucial implications for the cinematic representation of Palestinians. Films like *Bi-l Rawh Wal-Damm*/*With Soul, With Blood* (Palestine Film Unit, 1971) and *Lays Lahm Wujud*/*They Do Not Exist* (Mustapha 'Abu Ali, 1974) responded to Meir's negation of Palestinian existence by documenting life in the refugee camps. These images expressed the "Palestinian national character, its historical and cultural identity as well as its fighting identity," to transpose the words of PLO representative Ezzedine Kalak in the 1970s (Kalak 1977, 14, my translation from French). The formulation of a style suitable to convey the "Palestinian question" was integral to the broader internationalist goals of anti-imperialist and cultural liberation. The early works of the Palestine Film Unit, from 1968 to 1974 in Jordan and Lebanon, typically experimented around ways to render the political discourse of their patron

organization, Fateh (Denes 2014). As Guinean anti-colonialist Amilcar Cabral put it: "If imperialist domination is the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (cited in Massad 2006, 31). By establishing visual evidence of the existence of a Palestinian nation and subordinating aesthetics to the goal of anti-colonial liberation, Palestinian militant cinema instituted itself as national.

Present-day Palestinian artists and communities continue to face the systematic erasure of their culture and history. The Palestinian nation remains predominantly defined through trauma and dispossession. Such focus importantly recognizes the plurality of the expressions and lived realities of trauma across a range of historical and contemporary displacements, either internal to Palestine-Israel or located in the diaspora in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait, and beyond. Fragmentation lies at the heart of Palestinian history and geography, prompting us to adjust our theoretical tools. Edward Said commented on the inherent instability and elusiveness of Palestinianness in his introduction to the deliberately composite opus *After the Last Sky* (1986):

> Since the main features of our present existence are dispossession, dispersion and yet also a kind of power incommensurate with our stateless exile, I believe that essentially unconventional, hybrid, and fragmentary forms of expression should be used to represent us (Said 1986, 6).

In addition to advocating for a new language to speak Palestine, Said operates a reversal whereby trauma and loss do not mark victimhood but signify "a kind of power," the possibility of inner strength. Dickinson similarly reflects on the potentialities which the Palestinian condition paradoxically offers to filmmakers during the Second Intifada: "Few people would wish for the lack of a state to call their own, but could this ever work to revolutionary or at least artistic advantage?" (Dickinson 2010, 143) This shift proves crucial to this dissertation because it allows us to think of Palestinian cinema in the active mode, as a way of engaging oppressive contexts; as an open, necessarily multifarious, and undefined way of *doing*, rather than *being*. This requires a new definition of the Palestinian identity that transcends the potential passivity of trauma and loss, two terms that can de-responsibilize the perpetrators of dispossession by placing the emphasis on the victims.

In his work on the utopian dimension of Palestinian film and media, Greg Burris takes on Alexander's goading question "what is Palestinian cinema?" and argues that understanding

Palestinian identity through nationalist parameters risks essentializing it. He proposes to conceive of Palestinianness as "both an inherently contradictory and radically open enterprise" (Burris 2015, 18). To that end, he formulates an anti-identitarian position – as opposed to being anti-identity – in which *Palestinians do not exist.* This is a provocative statement, which he immediately opposes to Golda Meir's famous quote delegitimizing Palestinian claims. Burris highlights Zionism's ambiguous position towards Palestinians: on the one hand, Palestinians have been denied existence; on the other, they have been turned into scapegoats to justify an ideology based on racial hierarchies. Building on Freud's anti-Nazi stand on non-identitarian Jewishness, Burris contends:

> There is no ontological foundation to Palestinian identity, and therefore, for the Palestinians, *nothing is impossible*. If the Zionist negation of Palestinian being aims to shut down possibilities, the affirmation of Palestinian nonexistence opens them up (Burris 2015, 95, his emphasis).

This radical non-definition of Palestinianness casts Palestine as a heuristic device that de-constructs and de-stabilizes fixed relationships of inequality.

Contrary to Burris, Anna Ball and Tawil-Souri rescue the idea of a Palestinian ontology, only to sustain the tension at the core of its very instability and liminality. Both examine Palestinian cinema after the revolutionary years in exile. The new, art-focused Palestinian cinema is now often (but not only) produced within the land of Palestine-Israel and conveys the general distrust in the idea of Palestinian nationhood that followed the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982 and the weakening of the PLO displaced to Tunisia. The Oslo Accords in the 1990s and the Second Intifada in the 2000s, with their host of checkpoints, administrative restrictions, and military deployment, shattered the unity of a Palestinian nation whose fragmentation visually crystallized in the landscape division. For Ball, this destabilization of identity also disturbs the traditional distribution of gender roles, which Palestinian films explore as a symbol of the transitioning nation (Ball 2008). Tawil-Souri calls for "a more elastic, transgressive and encompassing understanding of Palestine and Palestinians" (Tawil-Souri 2014, 169) which takes into account the changing geographies and the trans-historical experience of Palestinianness: "[Palestinian films] *collectively* communicate that Palestine is the disappeared past/places, *and* the shrinking reality of the Territories, *and* the pan-territorialized experience of exile, *and* an uncertain future, *and* more" (Tawil-Souri 2014, 172, her emphasis). In other words, Palestinianness can be described as a "structure of feeling" after

Raymond Williams, and a "collective ontology" (Tawil-Souri 2014, 172). Williams' concept posits a mode of social formation, an emerging "practical consciousness" based on lived experience (Williams 1977, 131). Palestinianness encompasses the constant negotiation of the tensions between mobility and immobility in the context of Palestinians' global restrictions of movement.

Like Burris, I am wary of reducing Palestinianness to an ontology, as fragmented and dynamic as this one might be. Completely rejecting Palestinian identity as a category proves inadequate, considering that Palestinian productions circulate as such in industrial networks. Burris characterizes such a view as "crudely materialistic" (Burris 2015, 79), yet it is central to this dissertation that infrastructural constraints do operate in tandem and in tension with Palestinian imaginaries and possible futures. Tawil-Souri's approach suggests the scope for shifting our focus from a potentially reified lived experience taken to represent a collective, to "a mode of social formation," to repeat Williams' words. This dissertation thus considers Palestinianness – and by extension Palestinian cinema – as the *practice* and *negotiation* of multi-faceted environments in which Palestine holds a variety of meanings. In many ways, this practice brings us back to Emile Habiby's Oriental imagination and his chronicling of the tricks Palestinians devise in order to survive and navigate the ever-present Israeli colonization in its global ramifications. In this context, in Naficy's words, Palestinian cinema is a *mode of production*. It comprises "the totality of th[e] rhizomatic organism that produces and facilitates the conception of [Palestinian] films" (Naficy 2001, 44), which includes filmmakers, funders, exhibitors, technologies, and more largely the economies in which Palestinian cinema emerges. Establishing what Palestinianness means to this research constitutes a necessary step to situate Palestinian cinema within a paradox that exceeds reflections on spatial fragmentations and historical traumas.

As a mode of social formation – a phrase on which I will dwell in the second part of this chapter – and a mode of production, Palestinian cinema unfolds at the intersection of settler colonialism and a series of broader global processes. John Collins coined this confluence "Global Palestine …a Palestine that is globalized and a globe that is becoming Palestinized" (Collins 2011, x). Palestine is both symptomatic of a global history of colonization and an active component of the global extension of permanent war across the globe. For example, the Israeli military regularly provides training to the same American police forces responsible for disciplining and oppressing Black populations and other racialized minorities in the US (Ho 2013; Speri 2017). Palestine has

become a laboratory for Israel to test out methods of securitization, military weapons, and strategies of spatial control destined to be exported (Collins 2011). A focus on the political economy of Palestine expands the stakes and range of Palestinianness, from an isolated experience of national catastrophe towards a practice of the deep structures of global and racial capitalism.[11] By opting for such a reading, this dissertation argues that Palestinian cinema is intertwined with various global economies outside culture, which have often remained unacknowledged. The following section starts examining what Palestinianness as a practice and negotiation might look like by once again deconstructing national cinema, but this time from the perspective of contemporary global film economies.

1.2. Palestinian Cinema as the Negotiation of Global Economic Networks

During the Second Intifada, Palestinian filmmaker Rashid Masharawi boasted: "we have the best international cinema in the world because we don't have an industry" (Dickinson 2010, 143). This remark bolsters the paradox that Dabashi has identified. Not only does Palestinian cinema develop without a state or an industry, but this very fact guarantees its artists a global success. In 2009, the contemporary art biennale of Venice invited a Palestinian contingent for the first time. In her coverage of the event, Adila Laïdi-Hanieh celebrates the "contemporary Palestinian cultural paradox" (Laïdi-Hanieh 2008), following which Palestinian art earns international recognition against all odds. Oslo's re-structuration of the West Bank and Gaza's economy around international aid opened a market for foreign and mostly European investment, including in the arts and culture. Europe's partial recognition of the proto-state prompted an increase in financial support for cinema, which facilitated Palestinian productions' circulation the world over. From the 1990s on, Palestinian filmmakers hailing from the diaspora, present-day Israel, or the occupied territories have gained visibility and received many prizes. Among these artists, we may find: Elia Suleiman, Hany Abu Assad, Rashid Masharawi, Sobhi al-Zobaidi, Annemarie Jacir, Najwa Najjar, Tawfiq Abu Wa'el, Larissa Sansour, Muayad Alayyan, Sameh Zoabi, Kamal Aljafari, Suha Arraf,

[11] Cedric Robinson theorizes racial capitalism as soon as 1983 in his book *Black Marxism: The Making of The Black Radical Tradition*. For him, racial capitalism extends the feudal system into the modern era, in which racialized minorities take the place of the antique "Barbarians" (Robinson 1983, 10). For more information on the articulation of racial capitalism and Palestine, see Andy Clarno's comparison of contemporary Palestine and South Africa in *Neoliberal Apartheid* (Clarno 2017).

Cherien Dabis, Mahdi Fleifel, Jumana Manna, and Mai Masri. Every year sees a new crop of Palestinian talents in international film festivals.

Yet, Palestinian cinema still exists in "the interstices of social formations and cinema practices," to repeat Naficy's phrase (Naficy 2001, 4). Rather than constituting an "alternative" and a "marginal" mode of production, interstitial diasporic, exilic, and stateless practices are interwoven into dominant film industries. These economic formations "operate both within and astride the cracks of the system, benefiting from its contradictions, anomalies and heterogeneity" (Naficy 2001, 46). As minor cinemas organized around minorities' use of the major language (Deleuze et al. 1983, 16), interstitial economies destabilize fixed understandings of industrial models of production, circulation and consumption and concepts of national cinema (Naficy 2001, 45). The history of Palestinian films' trajectory at the Oscars illustrates this point well.

Palestinian diasporic economic networks played a decisive part in Palestinian films' successful navigation of the Oscars' ambiguous regulations. An institution first meant to promote Hollywood and the American film industry at large, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) introduced the Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film in 1956. Any film produced outside the United States and featuring a predominantly non-English dialogue track could apply in this category. Often shortened to "Best Foreign Film," the award maintains an ambiguous relationship with the framework of the nation-state. In addition to language constraints, competing films must follow rules regarding the country they represent. Submitted by a national committee (in Palestine, this includes officials in the Ministry of Culture), the contending production must have been released in its country of origin for seven consecutive days within a specific time period preceding the ceremony. According to AMPAS' regulations, the submitting country "must certify that creative control of the motion picture was largely in the hands of citizens or residents of that country" (Oscars 2017). As a result, despite emphasizing the necessity for a state structure, the eligibility rules leave the nature and level of national involvement – in terms of technicians, equipment, funding, writing, acting, or location – largely undetermined and non-quantifiable. By including residents alongside citizens, the regulations also open a breach for interstitial subjects, a significant opportunity for West Bank and Gaza residents who do not benefit from citizenship.[12] As of 2006, submissions for Best Foreign Language films are not

[12] No mention is made of refugee status.

required to display the official language of the country they represent, which similarly favors interstitial practices.

Palestinian cinema's first entry in the Best Foreign Language Film competition was Elia Suleiman's *Yadon Ilaheyyah/Divine Intervention* (2002), right after it earned the Palme d'Or at Cannes. AMPAS, however, deemed the film ineligible because of Palestine's lack of UN recognition. Protests arose when it was pointed out that many other countries which the United Nations did not recognize had been represented at the Oscars in the past, such as Taiwan, Wales, and Hong Kong (Doherty and Abunimah 2002). James Longley, the American director of the documentary *Gaza Strip* (2001), threatened to return the Student Academy Award he had received in 1994. Pressed to reconsider its decision, AMPAS finally allowed *Divine Intervention* to be submitted as Palestine's first Oscar contender the next year. This set a precedent for Hany Abu Assad's *Paradise Now* (2005) to compete for the same category in 2006. Despite its European funding, the film could meet the requirements due to its predominantly Palestinian cast and its shooting location in the West Bank. Yet, after the film won the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film as a representative of "Palestine," Israeli officials, including Consul General Ehud Danoch and Consul for Media and Public Affairs Gilad Millo (Eichner 2002), pressured AMPAS to replace "Palestine," already announced on the Oscars' website, with "Palestinian Authority." Abu Assad contested that label, and the film was finally categorized under "Palestinian Territories." These repeated negotiations permitted Hany Abu Assad's following feature *Omar* (2013) to be submitted as the representative of Palestine in 2014.

Officially, the Academy justified their decision to approve the category "Palestine" based on the proto-state's new status as a non-member observer state at the United Nations in 2012. However, AMPAS' first move to accept *Paradise Now* as a representative of Palestine in 2006 suggests otherwise. The persistence and efforts of the Palestinian film community and its allies partook in pushing AMPAS to acknowledge the existence of Palestinian national cinema *on its own terms*. Moreover, *Omar*'s production was largely made possible by the transnational economic solidarity of diasporic Palestinians beyond the involvement of residents of the proto-state. In press interviews, Abu Assad refers to Palestine not as a country or a state, but "a nation fighting for equality and freedom and justice," a political project (Associated Press 2014). The first Palestinian film almost entirely funded by Palestinian money (none of it coming from the PA), *Omar* benefited largely from the support of rich investors from the diaspora. This included loans

from the family of Palestinian American actor Waleed Zuaiter, one of the leads in *Omar* and the producer of the film. The community provided 95 per cent of the necessary budget for the film while Enjaaz, the Dubai Film Festival's post-production fund, supplied the remaining 5 per cent. Zuaiter managed to raise money from private Palestinian individuals by arguing that the film was structured for profit. The producer explained:

> The pitch was basically: This is something we can make Palestinians very proud of and make the investors equally proud of. If we can make their money back this will have a galvanizing effect. Our dream is to create a Palestinian film fund and a Palestinian film commission. Investing in film is very risky, but I showed them that the product could be something that would be great for everybody (Gachman 2014).

The level of diasporic economic involvement in *Omar* is still an isolated case that does not permit us to draw fast conclusions about an operative transnational Palestinian film industry entirely based on diasporic solidarity – far from it. It suggests, however, that a nation can exist *economically* without a formal state, and that a national film economy can develop through interstitial forms of institutional legitimization. These interstitial forms are complex as they mobilize discourses of solidarity, family and community, and the materiality of private funds; and yet are not limited to an informal model of self-sufficiency. In fact, they are clearly directed at creating profit and future investments, but also formal industrial infrastructures in Palestine. In a 2008 op-ed published in the Ramallah-based monthly journal *This Week in Palestine*, British-Palestinian filmmaker and philanthropist Omar al-Qattan reminded us of the historical importance of the bond between Palestinians inside Palestine-Israel and those in exile. He stated the necessity of reviving those connections in economic terms:

> As after 1948, exile Palestinian economies continue to make significant contributions to the prosperity of Jordan, Lebanon, and the Gulf countries. How can these relatively vibrant economies serve the struggling economy at home? The answer is not through profit-driven speculation but through long-term, employment-generating and capacity-building investment (al-Qattan 2008).

As I explain later, al-Qattan's vision will be central to the argument and the geographic scope of this dissertation. For now, the example of Palestine at the Oscars, and *Omar* more particularly,

uncovers the inadequacy of the nation-state framework to accurately account for the deployment of a Palestinian practice of global film economic networks.

At present, I examine how national cinema constitutes an industrial construct by investigating the many economic negotiations required to produce national narratives. While I just emphasized Palestinian cinema's agile navigation of international networks, in what follows I focus on the challenges Palestinian filmmakers face. Marijke de Valck provides us with the context to deconstruct mechanisms of film funding and their impact on cinema making. She reminds us that leading A-list European international film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, and Venice started facilitating the economic and aesthetic integration of world cinema (non-European national cinemas) in the late 1960s. This happened simultaneous to the re-structuration of these institutions. International festivals offered third world film productions great visibility in the European market, which proved more lucrative than distribution in third world networks (de Valck 2007, 94). In turn, from the 1980s onwards, film festivals systematically promoted third world film productions, the "discovery of new talents," and national "new waves" in order to enhance their own prestige and distinguish themselves from other events, a process that was backed by the economy of prizes and awards (Chan 2011, 253). This new focus led some festivals and foreign organizations to become actively involved at the pre-production, production, and post-production level of what came to be renamed films from the Global South (Ross 2011). Festival funds,[13] supranational organizations such as the European Union's MEDIA, special funds supplied by national institutions like the French Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC), and public-service television like the German ZDF assisted the formation of these new waves of art cinema. World cinema helped revive European film economies and consolidated a new transnational market.

Palestinian cinema's high dependence on foreign funding means that its productions organically penetrated such networks early on. Gertz and Khleifi situate the emergence of Palestinian art cinema in the 1980s, after the militant period, with the symptomatic return of self-exiled filmmaker and citizen of Israel Michel Khleifi to historic Palestine. Khleifi shot his first film in the West Bank. *Al Dhakira al Khasba/Fertile Memory* (1980) is an intimate documentary about two Palestinian women of different generations and their struggle with both the occupation

[13] Among the most famous European film funds: the Hubert Bals Fund at the International Film Festival of Rotterdam (IFFR) since 1988; the Bertha Fund at the International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA) since 1998; and the World Cinema Fund at the Berlinale since 2004.

and their place in Palestinian society. The film's focus on individuals contrasts with the collective representations of the Palestinian nation that revolution cinema exacerbated. Gertz and Khleifi's periodization coincides with the rise of co-produced world cinema in the A-list festival circuit. Significantly, *Fertile Memory* was financed with the help of the Belgian Ministry of the French-Speaking Community as well as the aforementioned German ZDF and French CNC. Khleifi's next film, *Urs al-jalil/Wedding in Galilee* (1987), received similar financial support and was awarded the International Critics Prize in Cannes in 1987. The film describes a *mukhtar*'s (head of the village) attempt at celebrating his son's wedding despite the Israeli military curfew and how the father diffuses the tension by inviting the Israeli military governor to join the feast. Not all Arab audiences were sympathetic to that plot resolution. The film received the prestigious Golden Tanit prize at the Carthage Festival but some critics claimed that the storyline normalized unconditional coexistence with the occupier (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 38-39). Others reacted to the eloquent portrayal of gendered bodies (Ball 2008, 4). It is possible that the film's relatable treatment of the Israelis, in addition to the exploration of both femininity and masculinity, precisely made it attractive for Western viewers. Such considerations, we will see, are necessary to understand the production and circulation of Palestinian films.

As Waleed Zuaiter made clear when pitching *Omar* to potential funders, international awards such as those which promoted Khleifi's work insure a good return on investment for financiers. Awards tend to determine the type of financial support a filmmaker can expect for future projects. The "auteur" label and the festival circuit's demand for the brand "Palestinian cinema" also condition the sustainability of Palestinian filmmaking. Palestinian films typically respond to Randall Halle's description of "quasi-national films." The national narrative of these productions is legible to the global audiences of international film festivals but their transnational funding is kept unclear. The quasi-national film is symptomatic of Orientalist marketing strategies that rely on a film's national branding to attain public success. The ultimate goal, however, is to establish transnational networks of influence around the film's (generally European) coproducing countries (Halle 2010, 309). For example, the aforementioned Oscar-nominated *Paradise Now* (2005) represented the Palestinian Territories at the Academy Awards but constitutes a Dutch/German/French/Italian coproduction (Halle 2010, 309). The film provides a provocative and unusually humanist account of Palestinian suicide-bombers-to-be during the Second Intifada. Simultaneously, its representations play with stereotypes that situate Palestine within familiar

depictions perpetuated by the media. Palestinian cinema's specific challenge precisely consists in responding to requirements of authenticity, yet without submitting to representations that would negate the legitimacy of a nationalist struggle castigated by the international community. Palestinian filmmakers with an Israeli citizenship, who can access Israeli funding, must particularly negotiate such muddy waters, as I explore in Chapter Five.

A similar branding logic supports "festival films," funded by and for film festivals – as is the case for many contemporary Palestinian films. Festival funds facilitate access to production but their regulations also impose constraints, restrictions, and obligations that influence depictions of national discourses. Tamara Falicov proposes a list of the various formal and informal pre-requisites filmmakers and producers from the Global South should take into consideration before applying to these funds. Such provisions include eligibility in terms of national identity, the filmmaker's track record, pre-existing arrangements with a co-producer, the language of application and production, the potential need for the donor's approbation on the final stages, and the negotiation of distribution rights (Falicov 2016, 221). Following this, the Palestinian brand can either attract world cinema funds or impede the production of Palestinian films. For instance, while the Palestinian Authority has recently struck two co-production deals with countries that do not recognize Palestine as a state – with the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in 2010 (UK Government 2010) and France in 2013 (Legifrance 2014) – the uncertainty around the legal existence of Palestine impacts the possibilities for international cooperation.

The case of Palestinian animator Amer Shomali's hybrid documentary *The Wanted 18* (2014) is typical of national branding's consequences on film funding. The film is a satirical account of the Palestinian boycott of Israeli products in the West Bank during the First Intifada, told through the eyes of eighteen anthropomorphized cows. Internationally acclaimed, *The Wanted 18* circulated widely in human rights film festivals, museums of fine arts, cinematheques, Palestine film festivals in the West, festivals and universities in Palestine, and prestigious international film festivals such as the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and Abu Dhabi, where it won Best Documentary from the Arab World Award before being Palestine's pick for the 2015 Oscars. Despite the guise of success, financing the film was a "headache," in Shomali's own words (Sakr and Seikaly 2015). Among many setbacks, the French CNC pulled their support two years into the production process and a few months before the shooting upon realizing that Palestine was not recognized as a state by the United Nations. France's contribution represented 30% of the film's

total cost. The CNC then offered to replace Shomali with a French director as a prerequisite to keeping the funding, unaware that this suggestion was reproducing settler-colonial mechanisms of erasure. Ironically, the UN General Assembly recognized Palestine as a non-member observer state shortly after Shomali's producer turned down the proposition in 2012. Eventually, the Canadian National Film Board (NFB) became involved in the production and documentary filmmaker Paul Cowan co-directed the film.

Special national and festival funds are tailored to such politically unstable markets. When cooperation does happen, a great pressure is imposed, either directly or indirectly, through the funding selection process itself. Contenders are expected to formulate acceptable national narratives conforming with global audiences' expectations. Securing funding can prove all the more challenging as donors' various (and sometimes conflicting) requests risk inflecting not only the project's national discourse, but also the film's style and storytelling techniques. To turn once again to our example, *The Wanted 18* recounts the victorious years of the Palestinian resistance during the First Intifada but ends with a reminder of the pitfalls of Oslo after the uprisings. The contrast between the two historical moments and the distinct propositions for a Palestinian future illuminates the peace process' failure to prompt liberation. Shomali received generous funding offers in Palestine[14] but these stipulated that the film should omit reference to Oslo and end after the triumph of the resistance (Sakr and Seikaly 2015). These offers were rejected.

By no means less intrusive, the cooperation with the Canadian team supplied recommendations of a different sort. The film project was first meant to rely entirely on animation and focus exclusively on Palestinian anecdotes. However, independent Canadian producer Ina Fichman insisted that the Israeli side be included because she was, in her own words, "obsessed with getting [the] perspectives [of the military officials]" (Hays 2014). The documentary shifted from animation to "hybrid" (a word that also well describes the film's funding strategy) by integrating real life talking-head interviews. The need for a "balanced" narrative when it comes to reporting the Palestinian struggle is a well-known feature of collaborating with Western cultural organizations. As Noura Erakat suggests in an interview with Shomali, stakeholders often require the Israeli perspective in order to enhance credibility, an opportunity that is frequently not granted to Palestinians even when they tell their own story (Erakat 2015).

[14] Shomali does not specify who specifically offered funding in Palestine.

Palestinian cinema's circulation *as a national cinema* within global economic networks demands endurance and constant strategizing. After recounting his experience around *The Wanted 18*, Shomali concluded that he would privilege modes of story-telling other than film: "If each story takes [me] five or six years to tell, I don't think I'm going to live that long. I don't have the energy to go all over the world to finance a film" (Sakr and Seikaly 2015). In the past decade, the category of national cinema has gradually lost dominance in the discourses of Palestinian filmmakers. Many of them are willing to circulate Palestinian stories but they no longer wish to claim the Palestinian brand which, they feel, can also affect their work's circulation and commercial success in international networks because of political and representational bias. Moreover, international audiences and funders often place on Palestinian films and filmmakers the burden of being representatives and ambassadors of Palestine.[15] Palestinian filmmakers do not negate their national identity but they articulate it with cosmopolitan understandings of their profession as artists and cultural makers. The identification with Palestinian cinema thus occurs on a case by case basis, depending on the festival or the award. More often than not, the Palestinian identity is also subsumed under the category of Arab cinema following the growing presence and success of the regional industry. Nick Denes has reflected on paralleling dynamics from his own perspective as the co-organizer of the London Palestine Film Festival. Many audience members and funders have mistakenly attributed the label of "*Palestinian* film festival" to the event, thus extending the logic of national cinema and reducing the project of political engagement to the endeavor of redressing pejorative representations of Palestinians (Denes 2014). In the wake of Palestinian filmmakers' gradual reconfiguration of their positionality, what emerges is a vision where Palestine becomes the locus (as a brand but also geographically as we will see) for a professional and competitive film economy, rather than a place whose representation is always already articulated by a traumatic binary of victimhood and resistance.

1.3. Palestinian Cinema as an Economic Project

Palestinian American producer Waleed Zuaiter's aforementioned suggestion to establish a Palestinian film fund and a film commission may at first seem insignificant. Around the same time in 2014, Palestinian citizen of Israel filmmaker and writer Suha Arraf also highlighted the necessity to create a film fund for Palestinian artists (Strickland 2014). These renewed efforts and calls for

[15] For a summary of debates around the burden of representation, see Branston 2000.

film institutionalization after the decline of militant cinema take root in the hopes and opportunities generated by the Oslo Accords. In 1993, British-Palestinian philanthropist Ahmed Mohsin Qattan registered a non-profit organization in his own name, which developed into a quasi-substitute for the proto-state's Ministry of Culture. With 157 publications, 32 co-funding partners, and 97 implementing partners in 2018, the A.M. Qattan Foundation (AMQF) inaugurated educational and development programs, a child center in Gaza, a culture and arts program, and exhibition spaces in the UK and Palestine (AMQF 2018). Two decades before Hany Abu Assad's *Omar*, famous Egyptian critic Samir Farid described Rashid Masharawi's *Hatta Ishaar Akhar*/*Curfew* (1993) as "the first truly Palestinian film" because it received the support of a Palestine-based production company (Gertz 2004, 24). In 1995, Masharawi founded the Cinema Production Center (CPC) and the Mobile Cinema for refugee camps. The CPC proposed workshops facilitated by internationally renowned Palestinian filmmakers living abroad. The center also fostered film culture by providing a screening space while the Mobile Cinema traveled from one refugee camp to another with a 35mm projector and hosted a yearly festival dedicated to children.

Such initiatives paved the way for more intensified organizing during the Second Intifada, where this research commences its investigation. From the mid-2000s on, individuals and groups of filmmakers started to found their own production companies in the occupied territories, such as Wejhat Nazar Productions, Black and White Film Productions (in Gaza), Idioms Film, Collage Productions, Odeh Films, Philistine Films, or Pal Cine productions (in the West Bank). As I examine in Chapter Two, these were interested in promoting art films contrasting with the news-inspired documentaries that prevailed in the visual imaginary of Palestine locally and abroad. The First Intifada attracted a host of international news agencies in the late 1980s. As the confrontations with the Israeli armed forces grew more violent, foreign journalists began training Palestinian crews to film on their behalf. This contributed to forming local technicians but it also restricted the visual language of Palestinian productions. The international news economy, later followed by the PA's vested interest in developing and facilitating a national broadcasting system, propelled the institution of local film training centers. The independent Institute of Modern Media at Al-Quds University, created in 1996, yielded the introduction of audio-visual training in the department of media-journalism in the prestigious Birzeit University in the West Bank in 2002, the opening of a TV and journalism department at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza in 2003, the inauguration of Dar-El-Kalima's film production program in Bethlehem in 2006, the establishment

of the Media Center at An-Najah University in Nablus (n/d), and the launch of a government-supported film major at Gaza University in 2017. Until today, these educational spaces tend to be subordinated to the field of journalism while also fomenting a film culture in Palestine.

In contrast, as this dissertation argues, from 2004 on, state-independent film festivals based in the West Bank and Gaza – often registered as NGOs, non-profit organizations, or associations – served as a catalyst for conceiving the possibility of a Palestinian art film economy. Palestine festivals' varied interests have spanned from art cinema, human rights and women's rights, to Franco-Arab relations and young filmmakers. In addition to film screenings, most festivals have included training workshops (scriptwriting, filming, editing, sound), roundtables, talks, and Q&As. At various levels and in many different ways, they have provided a platform for the meeting of local and international film communities, as well as a forum of exchange for the various actors of the film industry – film distributors, TV buyers, foreign cultural institution representatives, producers, filmmakers, actors, and critics. Festivals have built partnerships with other foreign events and local universities and provided a space for cinema under the occupation. The Israeli army forcibly closed most film theatres in the wake of the First and Second Intifada, leaving the territories with few venues to screen international and local films. Some commercial theatres, integrated into malls, have opened since the mid-2000s in the West Bank, but they tend to privilege mainstream American cinema – alongside, on rare but existing occasions, some Palestinian films as well. For instance, over the 95 films shown at the six-screen Palestine Tower Cinemas between August 2016 and August 2017 in Ramallah, only one was Palestinian and it played for one week.[16] Festivals have worked to systematize the circulation of Palestinian and international art cinema in the major cities of the West Bank and Gaza. Simultaneously, they attempted to reach out to remote audiences in the territories as well as in historic Palestine. As a result, these festivals have contributed to bridging the various communities necessary for the building of a film industry.

A new geography thus materializes, which apparently brackets Palestine within the borders of a proto-state that cannot adequately represent all Palestinians. Does engaging with this focus mean falling into the territorial trap? Can this nuance the de-territorialization that has dominated the study of Palestinian cinema without imposing further spatial confinement on its artists? This dissertation contends that the emphasis placed on statelessness has overlooked an important element for contextualizing contemporary Palestinian cinema. We should consider the proto-state

[16] I base this data on the Palestine Tower Cinema programs advertised on the theatre's Facebook page.

of Palestine in its territorial, economic, infrastructural, and political materiality, as well as in its failed promises. In addressing the disjuncture between state and nation, studies of Palestinian national cinema have mostly asserted that the state was *missing* as opposed to non-sovereign and *dysfunctional* in its administrative structure, deliberately *relinquishing* its welfare responsibilities. The state-building process takes shape at the confluence of "external pressures exerted on the PA to prove its governing capabilities, while at the same time internal pressures by local groups demand open public space" (Jamal 2000, 45).

In effect, the neoliberal policies of Oslo and the occupation combined have left the Palestinian civil society without strong state institutions to support cultural production. The ministries lack coherence due to numerous changes in personnel. They also suffer from poor coordination (within the government and with local governing entities and NGOs as well), which bears consequences for their ability to formulate and enforce long-term cultural policies (Farhat 2010). While the Ramallah-based Palestinian government spends most of its budget on security, the Ministry of Culture disperses very little funds to back Palestinian films and events. In 2013, the money allocated to the cultural sector as a whole constituted 0.003% of the general budget (Med Culture Country Overview 2013). Head of the Cinema department Lina Bokhary in the West Bank estimated in 2015 that the Ministry's resources for film oscillated between 100,000 and 500,000 dollars, an amount that barely covers the pre-production, production or post-production costs of one single low-budget feature film. The Palestinian Ministry of Culture in the West Bank mainly works to facilitate the global movement for films, foreign guests, and Palestinian filmmakers, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and through diplomatic agreements (interview with the author 2015). After the 2006 elections that saw the territories divided between a Hamas-led Gaza and a Fateh-ruled West Bank, it seems nonetheless difficult to conceptualize the proto-state's relationship to cinema through the unique lens of its sheer absence. In Gaza since 2006, for instance, the Hamas government expressed the importance of cinema for the liberation struggle at the heart of the movement's rhetoric (as opposed to the discourse held by Fateh in the West Bank). As developed in Chapter Four, the Gazan government has supported a variety of initiatives – albeit limited in scope and inflected by their own politics – such as film festivals, film infrastructures, and a couple of film productions.

The West Bank PA's lack of interest in supporting cinema proves significant in itself rather than a reason to ignore the proto-state altogether. For Tawil-Souri, the government holds very little

desire to leave space for art and oppositional cultural forms (Tawil-Souri 2005, 116). In contrast, Yasser Arafat demonstrated eagerness to develop a government-backed broadcasting network right after the Oslo Accords and despite Israeli pressure restricting such an initiative. The creation of the centralized system of the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) in 1994 served to control a population that Arafat's government, composed of elites from the diaspora, had little familiarity with (Jamal 2000; Tawil-Souri 2007, 5). Arafat's dismissal of cinema as a useful tool for nation-building diverges from the PLO's previous utilization of cinema as mass media for mobilizing Palestinians during the 1970s' revolutionary period. In negotiations with Israel over the PBC, the PA prioritized the symbolic power that cultural institutions could procure over the conditions for their material implementation (Tawil-Souri 2007, 8).

Similar dynamics can be observed in the domain of cinema. The West Bank Ministry of Culture's limited influence only extends to film and filmmakers' circulation in international networks of recognition. Culture appears divorced from its economic potential despite Oslo's profit-oriented agenda. The state's financial responsibilities are entirely directed at its interaction with highly privatized structures of foreign investment and its interconnection with the Israeli economy. In sum, we could interpret the PA's disinterest in cinema as the desire to limit Palestinian artistic (and potentially critical) production, and the instrumentalization of cinema for symbolic legitimacy only. Moreover, the government undermines cinema's potential contribution to engage with the masses for its own advantage and to stimulate an economy in an environment hindered by the conditions of occupation. As a result, contemporary film workers maintain an ambiguous relationship with a proto-state deemed dubious and authoritarian. Yet independent practitioners also engage with past and present forms of film institutionalization. Such ambivalence takes strength in the wider interdependence between the PA and NGOs after Oslo. While the PA has been relying on various kinds of associations in order to link to its constituencies and gain external credibility, Palestinian organizations have in turn depended on the PA for support, licensing, recognition, and legal protection (Brown 2003, 139). Addressing Palestinian cinema as an economic project means looking at civil society's negotiation with the multifaceted forces of the Palestinian proto-state and global neoliberal economies, in addition to the more direct mechanisms of ongoing colonization.

The initial focus on the occupied territories highlights the paradoxes of Oslo as exposed in the introduction to this chapter. Such contradictions manifest themselves in the persistence of the

ideology of liberation and the seeming impossibility of its implementation; the erection of a postcolonial proto-state within growing colonization; and the thriving neoliberal politics of development concurrent to the active dismantling of Palestinian political and economic structures. This dissertation takes these paradoxes as foundational to the formation of a Palestinian film economy. In other words, I am concerned with the im/possibilities of building a Palestinian film economy within a context where ideas of futurity appear to be always already compromised by the continuous and protracted failure of Oslo. Yet, despite its institutional and infrastructural prevalence, Oslo does not constitute the only scenario for a future of Palestinian self-determination. The unceasing debate between the one-state solution and the two-state solution seemingly opens up the territorial trap by projecting Palestine as a future space rather than one fixed in the geographical present. On the one hand, local and foreign proponents of a pragmatic two-state solution advocate that Oslo can be saved. Although many internationals in this camp agree on the necessity of ending the occupation of the West Bank and the siege of Gaza, Oslo's predominant merit in this case is often to protect the demographic integrity of the Jewish state. On the other hand, the one-state solution encompasses distinct visions. The ultra-Zionist view defines the West Bank as the Biblical lands of Judea and Samaria, and Gaza similarly forms part of *Eretz* Israel. Others propose a bi-national state gathering two collective identities organized in one polity following federal-inspired models; or they consider the possibility of Palestine-Israel as a democratic state founded on the principle of equality in civil, political, social and cultural rights for all citizens.

However, framing Palestinian futures as "solutions" proves problematic for two reasons. First, this repeats the rhetoric according to which the war waged on Palestinians is nothing but a "problem" and a deviance in a history that legitimizes settler-colonialism as a method of state-building. Second, the term "solution" suggests an unequivocal and pre-determined ending to a process that is everything but predictable and certain. A coalition of Palestinian organizations has since the early 2000s proposed to reverse this chronological path to liberation. Instead of setting the geographical shape Palestinian self-determination should take, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign has focused on the strategic terms of Palestinian liberation, narrowing them down to three demands that address Palestinians' rights across the world map: ending the occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall; recognizing Palestinian citizens of Israel's fundamental rights to full equality; and respecting, protecting, and promoting

the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194 (BDS 2018). By expressing Palestinianness as a regime of rights, BDS also proposes a dynamic and transnational cartography of self-determination that maintains various understandings of Palestine-Israel at its center.

The geographical scope of this dissertation is not confined to the proto-state of Palestine. Rather, it also includes the state of Israel where Palestinian citizens live, which Chapter Five examines in detail. Thinking of Palestine primarily in temporal terms, as a multiplicity of contradictory historical processes with open futures, maps out what one could call a "pessoptimist geography." Unlike Edward Said's "imaginative geography," the point is not to understand the construction of difference and the power of representations. Nor is it to analyze how space "acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here" (Said 1978, 76). The goal is to conceive a future political landscape produced through the paradoxical temporalities of Palestine's im/possible liberation. Such cartography proves "elastic" (Weizman 2007, 6) because Israel has never officially declared its borders, keeping open the possibility of further colonial expansion. On the other hand, the flexibility of territorial delimitations also allows for a reformulation of Palestine-Israel. This geography preserves the fluidity of meaning that scholars of Palestinian cinema have established as crucial to the Palestinian experience.

Although seemingly limited to a restricted understanding of where Palestinians live, this research's focus on the space of Palestine-Israel is also inscribed in a variety of transnational logics that acknowledge the elasticity of the Palestinian geography. Palestinian film workers' strategies of production and exhibition unfold in diverse networks of Israeli governance. Moreover, both the Palestinian and Israeli state economies are entangled with various supranational institutions (predominantly the World Bank and the IMF) as well as European programs like the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Euromed Audiovisual Project. Large foreign organizations such as the Ford Foundation manage the allocation of aid within these supranational frameworks. The distribution of transnational funding has further fragmented the geography of Palestine-Israel into zones of preferred investment that concentrate all donor wealth. These zones often parallel the colonial division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, which determine the level of Israeli control over the territory and the population.

Palestinian films greatly depend on European financial support in particular. Randall Halle's example of the quasi-national film, whereby a production's national identity is played up against its funding's origins, reveals the implications of aid politics as well as their historical structures. With a focus on Algeria, Halle reminds us that European influence in the region emanates from the free trade agreements the Union forced upon Mediterranean countries in collaboration with the World Bank and the IMF in the late 1980s. The implementation of devastating economic policies led to the collapse of national film industries in those very countries that European co-production treaties now seek to subsidize (Halle 2010, 311). The irony is not lost on Halle, who concludes: "The [Algerian] film industry, [which] once offered the world some of the most potent views into the process of decolonization and postcoloniality, now is forced to make co-productions with French partners" (Halle 2010, 311). Oslo constitutes one of the many ripples of the 1980s free trade agreements. Placing the Palestinian film economy in perspective with Algeria's unsustainable decolonization in this particular instance proves all the more significant as Algeria's struggle for independence largely influenced the PLO's approach to liberation back in the 1960s. In many ways, Algeria's fate prefigures the challenges which ongoing national liberation projects face in a neoliberal economy of dependence to the former/persisting colonizer and neo-colonizing countries.

The transnational space of Palestine-Israel is also structured around the returns – metaphorical, potential, or temporary – of diasporic Palestinian people and capital after Oslo. The right of return (*'awda*) figures prominently in projects of self-determination and, amongst all Palestinian demands, certainly appears as the most contested one because it challenges the ethnic integrity of the Zionist project. This is not to say that all Palestinian exiles long to *live in* Palestine. For example, Diana Allan's exploration of everyday life in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut convincingly challenges common assumptions about Palestinian refugees' nationalist politics. Allan demonstrates that "return" holds various meanings for different generations of refugees. Immediate survival and the bettering of living conditions importantly drive the hopes of the community (Allan 2013). However, she makes clear, return should be a *possible choice*. Oslo did not settle on the status of Palestinian refugees, still barred from their ancestral land. Yet exiled Palestinians in possession of a foreign passport sometimes manage to visit Palestine on a temporary visa, although that right can also be revoked in times of increased confrontations on the ground. Palestinian filmmakers educated in the diaspora, and not only those with an Israeli

passport who had left the country, have come to shoot their films in Palestine-Israel in order to build local crews, technicians, talents, and film communities. For example, Annemarie Jacir co-organized the film festival "Dreams of a Nation" with Hamid Dabashi at Columbia University in New York in 2003 and brought the event to Palestine the next year (Dreams of a Nation webpage). Jacir also insisted on producing her film *Lamma Shoftak/When I Saw You* (2012) with a Palestinian crew, despite the fact that they had little experience (Jacir 2008, 16). Upon returning to the West Bank to renew her visa, however, she was denied entry and had to finish shooting in Jordan.

One thing Oslo did allow with certainty was the return of Palestinian *capital*, especially those accumulated by what Adam Hanieh identifies as the Palestinian capitalist class in the Gulf countries. The Palestinian holdings active in the West Bank and Gaza are interlocked with international investments by conglomerates based in the Gulf region, which control the large companies that compose the Palestinian local economy (Hanieh 2010, 96). The return of Palestinian capital was instrumental to the consolidation of the state-building project as a mechanism of mediating capital accumulation. This contributed to the larger normalization of Israeli colonization through trade, investment and development advocated by the MENA economic summits evoked earlier. Such contexts resonate with al-Qattan's aforementioned call for wealthy diasporic Palestinians to be in economic solidarity with the West Bank and Gaza. He enjoined them to bring there the same prosperity they had created in their host countries. Al-Qattan highlights the necessity to transform the management of this diasporic capital from a profit-driven economy to one of capacity-building that would allow the establishment of a film industry in Palestine. Himself a wealthy British-Palestinian, Omar al-Qattan is the son of Abdel Mohsin al-Qattan, founder of the aforementioned million-dollar-endowed philanthropy A.M. Qattan Foundation. The pessoptimist geography of Palestinian cinema does not built *on* fantasy or self-representations alone, but *by way of* very material and transnational economies.

What of the Palestinians in the diaspora, who are establishing their own platforms for Palestinian cinema in North America or Europe? Does this geography ignore them? Since the late 1990s, a multiplicity of Palestine Film Festivals (PFF) have independently emerged from distinct solidarity groups. These were sometimes rooted in university campuses, including the London PFF in 1999, the Chicago PFF in 2001, Dreams of a Nation in 2003, the Toronto PFF in 2008, Ann Arbor PFF in 2008; or in the arts community, like the Boston PFF and the Houston PFF, both founded in 2007. Symptomatic of the militant spirit that animated the creation of most of these

festivals, Danya Qato, co-founder of the Chicago PFF, declared to the online journal *The Electronic Intifada* in 2011: "[The film festivals] are the starting point; the ending point is liberating Palestine" (The Electronic Intifada 2011). Over the years, most of these festivals have shifted identities, left campuses (sometimes forcefully so, as it was the case in Chicago), and taken up residence in artistic venues in their own right, like the Gene Siskel Center in Chicago, the TIFF Bell Lightbox in Toronto, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. They have aimed to offer an alternative image of Palestinians in response to the stereotypes the media have constructed of them in these countries. They have provided a space for diasporic communities to gather and celebrate their identities with initiatives such as mentorship programs and the support of merchandising inspired by traditional arts. The London Palestine Film Festival has adopted a more political stance predicated on solidarity, including with its exhibition around Palestine Revolution Cinema in 2014. In turn, the Festival Ciné-Palestine in Paris inaugurated its first "Industry Days" in 2018, further enhancing the role diaspora and transnational platforms can play in the development of a Palestinian film economy (FCP Industry Days 2018). The PFFs have contributed to making Palestinian cinema "mainstream"[17] alongside Palestinian films' circulation in international festivals and award economies. From an economic standpoint, they partake in broad philanthropy networks at home, with a state-independent funding model resembling initiatives that have emerged in the Arab world and supported Palestinian cinema locally, like the Arab Fund for Art and Culture (AFAC).

This dissertation does not devote to these diasporic festivals the time they deserve. Schedule and financial imperatives have constrained the scope of my research, although I did visit four of these festivals (London, Chicago, Toronto, and Paris). Apart from the Festival Ciné-Palestine, PFFs also tend to operate as exhibition platforms separated from the process of production. These festivals' emphasis on diasporic identity as well as the specific communities they target would have necessitated mobilizing different tools and engaging with a whole new set of contexts. This exceeded my focus on economic networks and a pessoptimist geography. Framing Palestinian cinema as an economic project does not claim to provide an exhaustive representation of Palestinian film initiatives. Nor does it signify that all Palestinian filmmakers from the occupied territories, historic Palestine, and the diaspora express the ambition to form a

[17] For a detailed study of the Boston Palestine Film Festival and the politics of the becoming mainstream of Palestinian cinema, see Cable 2016.

Palestinian film industry. Chapter Three will provide an example of how the model of a film industry based on transnational networks of *art cinema* can be contested. Similarly, Chapter Five examines the stakes of developing Palestinian cinema within Israel not necessarily as an independent industry, but as a negotiation of the cultural political economy of dialogue under apartheid and the re-appropriation of existing industrial colonial structures. This dissertation proposes to take seriously the project of building a Palestinian film industry that many filmmakers, producers, and festival organizers (who oftentimes wear the three hats) explicitly encourage, including in the West Bank and Gaza. This shared and multifaceted project provides us with a lens through which to examine the strategies of existence of Palestinian film productions and organizations in general in Palestine-Israel, and how they envision a future for Palestinian filmmaking.

2. The Emergence of a Palestinian Film Economy

This section explains my concept of paradoxical economy, which drives the dissertation as a whole. As a temporal concept, paradox informs my methodological approach to the present formation of a film economy; my theoretical interest in the capacity of contingency and processes to challenge fixed categories; and how I understand the very practices of Palestinian film workers at the center of my study. To that end, I situate this research in several inter-related fields of inquiry: transnational and postcolonial cinemas; media industries studies; post-development theory; and media infrastructure studies.

2.1. Transnational and Postcolonial Cinemas

Contemporary film and cultural historians and theorists have inscribed processes of economic and cultural formation in distinct temporalities. In what follows, I identify two theoretical propositions and how these differentially feed into this dissertation. The first temporality, comparative, places situated changes within a broader (both normative and plural) movement of history. The second one, dialectical, articulates separate interests at play in a given moment. In his 2014 eponymous book, Malte Hagener identifies the "emergence of film culture" as a set of processes of film institutionalization in the interwar period in Europe. He examines the temporality of cultural formation through a diffracted historiography following the tradition of *histoire croisée.* This approach privileges the multiplication of perspectives in order to make visible "the non-

synchronicity of culture" as films circulate transnationally, and accounts for concomitant, sometimes delayed, and contradictory meanings of shared practices across the world map (Hagener 2014, 4). In his historicization of world cinema, Dudley Andrew posits a similar "*décalage*" and "time-lag" both at the level of ontology (film as a medium built around the discrepancy between image production and image viewing), and at the level of the norms established in transnational exchanges. Andrew cites the example of Italians bemoaning their cinema in the 1930s for being "behind the times," in contrast with Hollywood's technological experimentations (Andrew 2010, 66).

The histories of film and modernity have evolved in parallel, following the development of cinema's technology in an increasingly industrialized world. As a consequence, the advancement of a given film culture risks being assessed in relation to its historical and geographical proximity to the primal scene of the invention of cinema. In his study of the epistemological construct of time in the discipline of anthropology, Johannes Fabian reminds us that the framework supporting ideas of progress and development was built on nineteenth-century social theories of evolution (Fabian 1983). This doctrine spatialized time and conversely conceptualized travel as a temporalizing practice, describing cultures that unfold in the periphery of the supposed center as primitive. Such discourses may also inform understandings of one's own positionality in the world, as Andrew's example suggests. Both processes of spatialization of time and temporalizing of space have underpinned ethnographic studies and more generally what Walter Mignolo has called, after Aníbal Quijano, "the colonial matrix of power" (Mignolo 2011). In this modern epistemology, "there is no knowledge of the Other which is not also temporal, historical, a political act" (Fabian 1983, 1).

Theories of "alternative modernities" grounded in postcolonial studies have responded to the problem identified by Fabian. In his introduction to a 1999 special issue in *Public Culture*, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar opposes social modernization, driven by capitalism and positivism, to cultural modernity, described as a geographically situated attitude towards the present. As a result, modernity is always already multiple, even in the West where it emerged (Gaonkar 1999). Comparative frameworks such as Hagener's and Andrew's, inspired by transnational and postcolonial studies, have thus continuously located the formation of film cultures in modernities whose conceptions are *vernacular*, multiple, and potentially in friction with one another. In contrast, for Mignolo, and following Arturo Escobar, alternative modernities continue to take the

colonial matrix of power as their centers. Instead, Mignolo suggests looking for "decolonial options" that are alternatives *to* modernities by delinking knowledge production from Western epistemology (Mignolo 2011, xviii).

The focus on alternative modernities, however, undergirds much of the work on transnational and world cinema. This provides a partially useful framework for thinking of the specificities of Palestine's emerging film economy as well as film practitioners' own understanding of it. The indeterminacy of Palestinian cinema has translated into various attempts at labelling its economic, temporal, and geographic existence throughout the years, which Gertz and Khleifi catalogue as follows: "'Independent Cinema,' 'Palestinian Cinema from the Occupied Lands' (Farid no date; Mdanat 1990), 'Post-Revolution Cinema,' or 'Individualistic Cinema' (Shafik, 2001)" (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 33). More recently in 2008, filmmaker and scholar Sobhi al-Zobaidi settled for the term "independent cinema." He further explains: "independent from the authorities of state, religion and commerce, […] which is best understood as individual cinema" (al-Zobaidi 2008). In turn, Berlinale's World Cinema Fund, an important backer of contemporary Palestinian cinema, supports films whose directors hail from "countries with a weak production infrastructure" (WCF 2016).

These diverse appellations sketch a reality attuned to the neoliberal, occupied, and elusive present of Palestine, wherein the absence of state supervision and thus control seemingly provides filmmakers with the freedom to operate without compromising their views. On the other hand, there is little legal, economic, and built infrastructure to support production and collaboration. Each cultural worker is individually competing for foreign funding, technical resources, and visibility. The apparent independence from the state implies further dependence on foreign funders, with the risk of diluting artists' national and political agendas. The responsibility of filling in for, and/or building proto-institutions is additionally transferred onto both local and international NGOs and civil society, the latter being more vulnerable to the occupation's policies and contingencies. Although the descriptions listed above exclude mention of Israel, Palestinian filmmakers who hold citizenship have also engaged with Israeli institutions. Highly discriminatory towards Arab minorities (both Palestinians and Jewish Mizrahim), the Israeli establishment has instrumentalized the distribution of its funding and national recognition as a tool for furthering cultural dispossession, often co-opting Palestinian films as Israeli. These co-dependent contexts uncover the indeterminate nature of Palestinian cinema and its infrastructures.

Taking stock of the various contexts of institutional absence in the Middle East and North Africa, especially in the aftermaths of the Arab uprisings, Anthony Downey asks in his introduction to the edited collection *Future Imperfect: Contemporary Art Practices and Cultural Institutions in the Middle East* (2016): "How […] will we ever be able to understand the institutional failings and crises we are now witnessing in any sense other than of reified loss, abandonment, and non-existence?" (Downey 2016, 33-34) In the context of this research, how can we understand the Palestinian present of cultural formations when institutionalization is defined by the driving force of state modernity? Theories of alternative modernities permit us to frame Palestine's institutional predicament as a challenge to dominant understandings of film industries beyond characterizations of "weak infrastructures" or statelessness. World cinema theorists Dina Iordonova, David Martin-Jones and Belén Vidal's edited volume on *Cinema at the Periphery* (2010) for example draws from postcolonial re-centerings of the margins and the deconstruction of Eurocentric norms (Shohat and Stam 1994, Chakrabarty 2000). The collection's first impulse to fairly account for the shifting geographies of globalization is accompanied by an exploration of "the peripheral as a mode of practice, as a textual strategy, as a production infrastructure, and as a narrative encoded on the margins of the dominant modes of production, distribution, and consumption" (Iordanova et al. 2010, 9). This broader description of the peripheral encompasses the "cinema of small nations," which Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie mobilize in their investigation of the various subnational, national, international, transnational, and regional formations that complicate flat depictions of global flows. Set as a comparative framework, small nations are recognized to have an ecology of their own, defined by specific constraints and opportunities (Hjort and Petrie 2008).[18] Yet, the peripheral shouldn't introduce a counter-example or a claim for authenticity. World cinema is often defined in opposition to, rather than in positive terms (Nagib 2007). As Iordanova et al. argue, the peripheral should lead us to think of the formation of localized film economies with respect to fluctuant relationships between center and periphery. In the Palestinian case, these include interstitial practices with dominant industries not only in the diaspora, but also in Palestine-Israel.

The comparative and relational framework of alternative modernities compels us to examine situated attitudes towards *the present* in peripheral contexts. Gaonkar draws his definition of the present from Baudelaire's conception of modernity, which opens "the paradoxical

[18] The term however continues to conflate nation and state.

possibility of going beyond the flow of history through the consciousness of historicity in its most concrete immediacy, in its presentness" (Calinescu cited in Gaonkar 1999, 6). The modernist present breaks "out of the continuum of history [and] is caught in an unceasing process of internal ruptures and fragmentations" (Gaonkar 1999, 6). Rather than an inherent characteristic of the modern however, a focus on presentness reveals the dialectics of history at work, rejects the discursive resolution of persisting power struggles, and suspends history in the continuous fight between unequal powers. George Ciccariello-Maher's proposition to decolonize Hegel's dialectics precisely advocates for saving the "dynamic movement of conflicting oppositions" from exclusive modernist narratives (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 2). Instead of revering "false universals that portray the present as complete," foregrounding the theoretical present of rupture resists "all teleology, determinism, linearity, refuse[s] all comforting promises of inherent progress, and defer[s] all premature declarations that history has indeed reached its conclusion. [The] horizon remains a horizon" (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 7).

This dissertation investigates the emergence of Palestinian film culture by locating it in the paradoxical present where the horizon remains a horizon. Rather than identifying a transitional moment that leads to a supposed fully-fledged film industry, I study how the Palestinian cultural and economic formation reveals the tensions within the neoliberal politics of development under the occupation in the West Bank, the siege in Gaza, and ongoing ethnic cleansing in Israel. The goal is not to immobilize the changing Palestinian project of a film industry as it unfolds. The concept of "paradoxical economy" both constitutes a methodology to examine the present of formation, and analyzes the conditions of possibility for a Palestinian film economy in a contemporary history widely perceived as one of "permanent transition" (Miller 2014), as Chapter Two details. The term "paradoxical economy" describes the indecisive moment that sees the arrangement of multiple independent groups and enterprises, and the underlying aims of such groups to eventually consolidate a film industry, whose future shape is still to be determined. The paradoxical present constitutes a thick temporality akin to Barbara Adam's "timescape." It combines time-frames (or "time-units"); temporalities as processes of change; tempos (or pace of a process); timing as synchronization; time points of the now; time patterns that define periodic cycles; time sequences and serial movements; time extensions as duration; and the triad of the past, present and future, which organizes temporal horizons (Martineau 2015, 45). While these distinct time formations coexist, they always follow some hierarchy. For Jonathan Martineau, timescapes

represent "'struggling entities' in which different and often contradictory times are organized according to a logic of power, and take contested politico-institutional forms in social time regimes" (Martineau 2015, 46). Strategies, negotiations, uncertainties and failures all play significant roles in this open process.

The Palestinian film economy emerges from within competing social orders, which compose the "mode of social formation." Cultural theorist and one of the founding figures of cultural studies Raymond Williams developed that phrase in his protracted study of cultural changes, some of them spanning over centuries as in *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961) and others located in a "time of radical change" as in *Marxism and Literature* (Williams 1977, 1). In the latter, Williams advocates for studying the interlocking of present social experiences and formal institutions. This entwining produces a practical consciousness historically situated but always already emerging. Williams' elucidation of such "structures of feeling" could just as well apply to the formation of a film economy in Palestine. The economic project unfolds at the very same time as many cautious or skeptical practitioners reduce the industrial enterprise to a vague individualism. Williams writes:

> [W]e are […] defining a social experience which is still in process, often indeed *not yet recognized as social* but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis, has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed specific hierarchies (Williams 1977, 132, my emphasis).

The process of emergence and the hierarchies it solidifies result from a negotiation with previous and co-existing social orders. Emergence arranges residual structures and persisting relations between cultural producers, markets, and institutions.

Williams' project of a "sociology of culture," later developed in his book *Culture* (1981), articulates the inquiry of cultural change through the study of two interdependent relationships: between cultural producers with "recognizable social institutions," and cultural producers' internal organization in *formations* (Williams 1981, 35). The distinction between the two, admittedly a working hypothesis, opens up a space for identifying forms of cultural organization that are not institutional, thus refuting a determinism relying on achieved official recognition. In the British historical artistic sphere, these formations include guilds, academies, professional societies, and movements, and attend to the complexities of a social history that is constructed around informal groupings, associations, and tendencies. When studying these formations in relation to the

individuals that compose it on the one hand and general history on the other, the challenge is to avoid a metaphysical understanding of emergent cultural practices as well as a subjectivist one. Additionally, examining the emergence of a film economy must account for the lesser institutionalized formations, which also hold a central place in the formulation of new social experiences and structures of feeling. The focus on paradoxical economies requires a flexible understanding of organized modes of production and distribution that are not systematic ("not-yet recognized as social"). The paradoxical framework challenges formal definitions of institutions but acknowledges the prevalence of industry as a structuring discourse ordering hierarchies. In what follows, I examine how various strands of media industries studies may support my study of the emerging Palestinian film economy.

2.2. Media Industries Studies

Over the past twenty years, scholars of media industries have proposed approaches that combine political economy and cultural studies. The goal is to balance out "macro-level structural issues of regulatory regimes, concentration of media ownership, historical change, and their larger connection to capital interests," with "micro-level practices" which pay attention to human agency (Havens et al., 2009, 234). These engagements range from critical political economy (Garnham 1995; Wasko et al. 2011; Wasko and Meehan 2013, Wasko 2014); to critical media industries studies (Havens et al., 2009); to media anthropology as the study of the socio-cultural significance of media in our everyday lives (Ginsburg et al. 2002; Larkin 2008); and to production culture as the discourses and shared practices that organize workers' relationships to media and between themselves, behind-the-scene (Caldwell 2008, Mayer et al. 2009, Ganti 2012 and 2014, Curtin and Sanson 2016). Despite a relatively recent surge of interdisciplinary scholarship on the topic, notably around the term "media industries studies," the conversation about the relationship between political economy and cultural studies was already lively – or worn out, even – back in 1995. In an issue of *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Lawrence Grossberg tellingly signed a piece entitled "Cultural Studies vs. Political Economy: Is Anybody Else Bored with This Debate?" (Grossberg 1995) Behind this provocative phrase, Grossberg was responding to Nicholas Garnham's article in the same issue: "Political Economy and Cultural Studies: Reconciliation or Divorce?" (Garnham 1995).

These two contributions encapsulate one of the main points of contention in the field, which developed around cultural studies' emphasis on popular culture as a resistance to capitalist structures. For Garnham, cultural studies' alleged dissociation from (Marxist) political economy made it unsustainable as a political enterprise because it denied the determining power of economies and the foundational context set by the capitalist mode of production. As a result, cultural studies were said to undermine cultural production and issues of labor to the overwhelming benefit of consumption and "cultural practices of leisure" (Garnham 1995, 65). Garnham asked: "Where in the contemporary cultural studies literature or research program are examinations of the cultural producers and of the organizational sites and practices they inhabit and through which they exercise their power?" (Garnham 1995, 65) In turn, Grossberg reacted against Garnham's conception of culture industries inspired by the Frankfurt School, wherein the commodification of culture is complete and human agency is dissolved. To Grossberg, cultural studies did not forsake political economy, nor did it ignore popular subordination to capitalism. Rather, it complicated the clear-cut boundary between consumption and production which Garnham allegedly drew: "Cultural studies emphasizes the complexity and contradictions, not only within culture, but in the relations between people, culture, and power" (Grossberg 1995, 76). Contemporary reformulations of media industries studies take seriously both arguments by examining the sites where culture is produced while acknowledging that these sites are themselves constructed.

Various approaches differentially inform this dissertation, whose two primary concerns are to recognize the economic forces at work in the shaping of everyday lives, and cultural workers' simultaneous cunning navigation of those networks. The spectrum of economic reductionism drives aforementioned interventions in the field. Garnham and Grossberg both warned us against it. In the lineage of the former, Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa distinguish the project of a critical political economy of communication from "media economics." Best epitomized by Douglas Gomery and Benjamin Compaine's *Who Owns the Media?* (Gomery and Compaine 2000, 3rd edition), media economics "represents the application of neoclassical economics to media" and accepts the status quo (Wasko et al. 2011, 3). Taking stock of the rise of creative industries as a model to understand new structures of labor and modes of production, critical political economy always "starts from the prevailing distribution of power and inequality" (Wasko et al. 2011, 5). Social justice also importantly frames studies by David Hesmondalgh, who advocates that "media industries research requires *a politics of cultural production informed by*

social theory and by empirical work" (Hesmondalgh 2009, 246, his emphasis). In other words, the "critical" political economy of communications and culture investigates power relations, inequality, and injustice. "Grounded in an analysis of transformations, shifts, and contradictions that unfold over long loops of time" (Wasko et al. 2011, 2), critical political economy of media is useful to this dissertation because of its emphasis on the intertwining structures of power and media economies.

This approach, predominantly emanating from communications studies, has often privileged the study of mass media, including news conglomerates and television. This is also the case for studies of media industries in the Arab world (Zayani 2005 and 2007; Jamal 2000 and 2005; Lynch 2006; Tawil-Souri 2007; Sakr 2007; Khalil and Kraidy 2009; Sakr et al. 2015). Janet Wasko and Eileen R. Meehan argue that the field also touched upon film, video games, digital media, and the music industry (Wasko and Meehan 2013, 152). Yet, the works they cite suggest a continued focus on hegemonic industries inspired from residual culture industries studies, following which legitimate objects of research are implicitly determined by the reach of their media effect. Consequently, in this view, policy-making becomes an important locus for political activism and praxis, not only as an extension of academic work, but also as an object of study (Hesmondalgh 2009, Freedman 2014). The precarious and emerging nature of Palestine's film economy quite drastically differs from these contexts. As explained in the introduction, the methodological and theoretical focus on policy might not be the most productive here, even in spite of Palestinian attempts at consolidating a legal framework for cultural production in the proto-state of Palestine, the pressure placed on film industries in Israel, and policy-making at the transnational level of co-production agreements. Moreover, policy-making delegates the responsibility of shaping political futures to state power and regulation frameworks. In his critique of development discourse in Lesotho, anthropologist James Ferguson explains that development agencies frame social and political histories so as to enable their own intervention. For example, they insist on contexts of national governmentality: "Because development agencies operate on a national basis and because they work through existing governments and not against them, they prize representations which exaggerate the power of national policy instruments" (Ferguson 1994, 72). In the Global South, where state sovereignty is particularly subordinated to external political and economic powers, a focus on textual policy-making may implicitly rely on and promote the status quo of developmental economies and could potentially annihilate aforementioned critical

intentions. Yet, scholars have devised ethnographic methodologies (Freedman 2014) and renewed their engagement with cultural studies (Sabry 2012) in anticipation of such critique.

Approaches inspired by anthropology situate themselves on the other side of the debate roughly (and arguably, reductively) sketched as political economy vs. cultural studies. In her contribution to the first issue of the new *Media Industries Journal* (initiated by proponents of "critical media industries studies"), anthropologist Tejaswini Ganti positions ethnography in opposition to studies of large media industries and the focus on mass media. She identifies three goals to her methodology, which all speak to this present research:

> to diversify the study of media industries; to take into account contestations over status and other forms of cultural and symbolic capital that characterize the "field" of media production; and to be able to critically examine discourses and quantitative data generated by media industries (Ganti 2014).

Ganti reveals structures of power through a study of workers' subjectivity by fully engaging with human agency and the norms and expectations that constitute labor relations. "Production studies" (Mayer et al. 2009) or "production culture" (Caldwell 2008) delineate the field of study which takes cultural production as an environment that is itself culturally produced. In his decade-long ethnography of Hollywood film workers, John T. Caldwell evaluates the industry's mode of "self-representation, self-critique, and self-reflection" (Caldwell 2008, 5), which he coins as "critical industrial practices." Attending to meaning-making practices destabilizes the monolithic appellation "industry" and complicates its forms, appearances, and futures. Particularly, it is important to remember that

> film/TV production communities themselves are cultural expressions and entities involving all of the symbolic processes and collective practices that other culture use: to gain and reinforce identity, to forge consensus and order, [and] to perpetuate themselves and their interests (Caldwell 2008, 2).

In their proposition for a critical media industries studies approach, Timothy Havens, Amanda Lotz, and Serra Tinic similarly advocate for an analysis of "the ways in which institutional discourses are internalized and acted upon by cultural workers" (Havens et al. 2009, 247). This argument crucially shapes the narrative of my dissertation as a whole. In Chapter Two, I examine how some Palestinian film workers and scholars assist in perpetuating the epistemological binary

of industry/no industry. They conceive the project of a film economy in accordance with the norms of global film festivals established in Europe – where the funding originates. The cultural value assigned to festivals constitutes one of the reasons why this industrial model predominates in the West Bank, Gaza, and the claims by Palestinian citizens of Israel. This dissertation thus retains the importance of considering industry as an epistemological system, but does not place as much emphasis on individual subjects and their critical industrial practices. Part of the reason is my own limited interactions with those workers in the long-term, as explained in the introduction. Moreover, maybe ambitiously, the endpoint of my investigation is not only the improved comprehension of labor conditions and organizations, but also more broadly the kind of political futures the multiple projects of a Palestinian film economy aim to produce.

In a move that resonates with Walter Mignolo's aforementioned call for a decolonial epistemology of culture and economies (Mignolo 2011), I take inspiration from studies that examine the relationship between practices of meaning-making and material economies, which are oftentimes – and tellingly so – located in the Global South. Echoing Ganti's proposition (Ganti 2014), Nitin Govil contends that the term "industry" itself needs to be problematized beyond its emphasis on the structural and the regular; it should be understood as a construct (Govil 2013). He argues that the Mumbai film industry was not recognized by the Indian state as such before 1998 although it had capacity for production and distribution as well as a division of cultural labor. The state recognition of an industry status to Bollywood operated a shift from informal transactions and unregulated structures to a rationalization of its financial operation and an official measurement of its capacity. The term "industry" thus becomes charged with more than a descriptive function and should be studied as an epistemic system that produces value, legitimacy, and modes of organization. Concomitant to this conclusion, Govil advocates for introducing indeterminacy to the study of media industries, so they are considered "not as a pre-existing structure of calculation but as a way of figuring things out" (Govil 2013, 176).

Such an attention to contingency, discourse, and practitioners' tactics also drives approaches to informal economies that take inspiration from media anthropology. Ramon Lobato's seminal book *The Shadow Economies of Cinema* (2011) and the co-written *The Informal Media Economy* (Lobato and Julian 2015) account for the growing field of informal media studies. Stemming from the assessment that the international pirate economy exceeds the legal film industry in size, scale, and reach, Lobato's 2011 book examines how practices that fall outside the

scope of the legal and the formal both challenge our assumptions about cultural value and reveal highly organized modes of production that adhere to fluctuant and *ad hoc* codes. Informal economies also maintain ambivalent relationships with regulated industries. The Nigeria-based film economy, for instance, grew out of piracy networks but is now increasingly pressured by copyright campaigns to embrace a more formal structure (Miller 2016, 93). The fact that practices can move in and out of industry status like in these two examples necessitates both taking seriously unrecognized economic processes and questioning the forces at play in their becoming legitimate and regulated. Finally, studies of media infrastructures, also emerging from media anthropology, evaluate how the construction of buildings, the training of personnel, or the elaboration of juridico-legal frameworks organize *the conditions of possibility* for media formations and economies (Larkin 2004, 289). I will return to this crucial term in the following sub-section.

Palestinian cinema acts as a challenge to fixed epistemes. Production culture, media anthropology, and maybe more broadly, critical media industries studies differentially provide theoretical and methodological tools to question this economic formation. Critical media industries studies, for instance, describes itself as "integral to analyzing an industry in flux and the struggles among competing social actors and institutions to stabilize new discourses to their own specific interests and advantages" (Havens et al. 2009, 250). Seemingly in a state of arrested development like the proto-state of Palestine and the mirage of self-determination, the Palestinian film economy sticks to a status of "not-yet-industry," to repeat Govil's words, and continues as an often contested, unachieved, and only maybe recognized, project. The lack of Palestinian national policies is substituted by international regulations, while these in turn reinforce the discourse of an absence of national structures. In parallel, the official Israeli rhetoric erases and swallows the Palestinian presence within its own industrial development, in a double logic of inclusive exclusion that facilitates the state's claims of ownership over Palestinians' success. The process of economic and social formation is thus inevitably intertwined with politics of recognition, which underlie material relations of production and distribution. This dissertation explores the ambiguous relationship between recognition as a form of meaning-making and economic formation through the awards economy, funding streams, and film festivals. These sites articulate civil society's practices in Palestine-Israel, economic formations, and transnational networks. This chapter has already highlighted the stakes of studying funding streams and awards. I now turn to the industrial model of the film festival, which each one of my case studies takes as a major focus.

This dissertation argues that film festivals epitomize the articulation of legitimacy and materiality at play in the not-yet-industry in Palestine. In Chapter Two, I explain in detail how film festivals display an organizational flexibility that resonates with Govil's "way of figuring things out." Festivals present an adequate industrial model for navigating the waters of neoliberal economies that govern the proto-state of Palestine, the colonial regime of Israel, and the competitive networks of international film festivals. They constitute privileged sites for the growth of a local film economy because they attract external funding aligned with politics of urban regeneration, and ultimately function as proto-institutions that mirror the indeterminacy of the state-building project. Film festivals have been historically tied to the growth of nation-states' legitimacy and power. Europe is often considered to be the "cradle of film festivals" (de Valck 2007, 14), an appellation imbued with Eurocentric undertones that reflects the stakes of asserting national power in the fascist-ridden 1930s. The Venice Film Festival, inaugurated in 1932 by Mussolini, paved the way for further national iterations: the American-backed Cannes Film Festival in 1946 (the 1939 opening was interrupted by the beginning of the Second World War), the Czech Karlovy Vary the same year, the Berlinale in 1951, and the Moscow International Film Festival in 1959. The formation of film festivals became rapidly entangled with the Cold War efforts to enhance areas of ideological dominance (Moine 2014).

Most relevant to our discussion, the emergence of film festivals in Latin America, North and sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East in the 1960s supported the third world's struggle for decolonization and the creation of indigenous national and regional cultural institutions. The *Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage* (JCC), instituted in 1966 in Tunisia, and the FESPACO, instigated in 1969 in Upper Volta (now Burkina-Faso), aimed to foster Pan-African networks of film distribution. The goal was to consolidate national film industries inscribed in tight regional networks and relieve these countries from the imperialist economic influence of the former colonizers.[19] Until then, foreign films overwhelmingly dominated national screens. Tahar Cheriaa, JCC's initiator, defended the widespread idea that independence should come with the decolonization of culture in order to be fully effective. As early as 1949 – even before Tunisia's independence in 1956 – Cheriaa started the Tunisian Federation of Cine-Clubs (FTCC), which served as a springboard for the creation of the Cinema Office at the Tunisian Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1962. The JCC furthered these initial institutionalization efforts and supported the wider

[19] I provided some context for these festivals elsewhere (Saglier 2015).

distribution of Tunisian cinema locally. Similarly, the FESPACO primarily aimed to bring African cinema to African audiences as an integral part of the decolonization project. Three years after its creation, in 1972, a governmental decree formally recognized the festival as an institution. This testified to its centrality in national politics in addition to its regional influence (Dupré 2012).

Third world film festivals teach us a lot about paradoxical Palestinian film economies. This history first points to film festivals' role in solidifying nascent cultural institutions in contexts of decolonization and state-building. Palestine's film festivals have not limited their mission to exhibiting Palestinian films. As discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, they contribute to training future generations of film technicians and screenwriters; they mobilize expertise to draft cultural policies for cinema production and distribution in collaboration with municipalities and various bodies of governance; they organize panels between Western funders and Arab distributors to strengthen transregional networks; and they function as a repository for the contemporary history of Palestinian cinema. In short, they have been "figuring things out" and followed the institutional needs of Palestinian cinema. The Burkinabé filmmaker Gaston Kaboré described the FESPACO in comparable terms: "Fespaco [sic] is a living organism at the service of African cinema. It acts and reacts in accordance with cinema on the continent" (Dupré 2012, 15).[20]

Moreover, third world festivals highlight the primacy of outreach within the project of an independent and decolonized film industry. Palestine's film festivals respond to the increased fragmentation of the territories after Oslo by distributing their screenings over the major cities in the West Bank and Gaza as well as refugee camps at the peripheries of these urban centers. Such a multi-sitedness and these festivals' modest size propose a re-organization of the circuits of contemporary film festivals, often conflated with exchanges between global cities (Stringer 2011). By contrast, the strategy of outreach lies in decentralizing cultural capital and challenging the concentration of the economic resources allocated to its growth. Chapter Three more particularly examines how engaging with outreach poses broader questions about the shape a Palestinian film economy should take in negotiation with donors' politics of development.

Despite major points of comparison between Palestine's film festivals and third world initiatives, the two contexts remain in tension. Contrary to African countries in the 1960s, Palestine has not achieved full independence and state-building continues in the midst of ongoing

[20] "Le Fespaco est un corps vivant au service du cinéma africain. Il agit et réagit en fonction du cinéma sur le continent." My translation from French.

colonization. For Tariq Dana, the statehood project started to be implemented *before* the decolonization process because "the Palestinian Liberation Organization's obsession with the very idea of statehood […] gradually eclipsed the struggle for liberation" (Dana 2017, 2). As a consequence, the proto-state becomes forged by the contradictions of the simultaneous interactions between colonialism, neo-colonialism, post-conflict state-building, and indirect colonial rule. At the same time, while Pan-Arabism and Pan-Africanism underwrote the economic and political enterprise of third world film festivals, Palestine's contemporary politics of regional integration follow the map of European donors while also increasingly joining growing attempts at building parallel Arab capitalist networks. Contrary to third world film festivals, the emphasis of Palestine's film festivals is not systematically placed on alternative or anti-imperialist cinemas and local films. The aesthetic communities that festivals shape, inspired by European and global art cinema or human rights networks, reflect the involvement of their economic partners. In turn, financial backers inflect the meanings of outreach. The choice between networks of art cinema or human rights sits within discourses of power that may perpetuate uneven relationships at the expense of Palestinians. Contemporary Palestinian cinema and its proto-institutions thus always already emerge from a material struggle with the conditions of possibility set by a project of liberation recuperated by development economies.

2.3. Post-Development Theory, Human Agency, and Infrastructure Studies

The paradoxical economies of Palestinian cinema unfold in a temporality of development under colonization. To repeat the words of the director of Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung (RLS)'s Palestinian regional office, Katja Hermann, "Is development possible under occupation? … Do the development and aid industries contradict the Palestinian struggle for liberation and sovereignty?" (Hermann 2015, 8) This section examines how Palestine-Israel's specific present of social and economic formation produces political futures and imaginaries. Palestinian cinema is enmeshed within economic networks that exceed arts and cultural circuits. These include supra-national and international development agencies, as well as humanitarian agencies and human rights NGOs, all of which are ostensibly dedicated to bringing peace and financial growth while occupation and colonialism continue. These institutions contribute to structuring expectations about local political practices as well as modes and "standards of living" – an expression much in vogue in developmental talk. My research adds to the field of post-development theory, which has been

theorizing development as “an interpretive grid” (Ferguson 1994, xiii) for the past twenty-five years. Arturo Escobar, who would later join the ranks of decolonial thinkers next to Mignolo, describes development as a Eurocentric apparatus that produces knowledge about, and exercises power over, the third world (Escobar 1995, 9). In sum, discourse has material consequences. After World War Two and as the Cold War was settling in, the Truman doctrine aimed at gaining the ideological support of poorer countries in exchange for the United States’ economic input in local development. This ushered in a total restructuring of the so-called “under-developed” societies. Instead of helping economic growth in the third world, developmental strategies provided the conditions for massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, as well as exploitation and oppression. Discursive associations of economic development with civilizational progress, inspired by the Enlightenment, achieved the marginalization of third world populations from a historical point of view as well as in their own national narratives.

Often deemed a failure – a term I have myself used earlier in this chapter – developmental politics could be better understood as an “authorless strategy that turns out to have a kind of political intelligibility” (Ferguson 1994, 20). In other words, the inaccuracies in developmental reports and politics do not uncover mistakes; rather, they serve their own logic and epitomize how capitalist forces of development constantly produce the conditions of possibility for their own reproduction and mutations. Echoing Adam Hanieh about Oslo as a success for Israeli policy, political economist Mandy Turner recognizes that the so-called failure of Palestine’s development actually constitutes an expression of successful politics of counter-insurgency, which I further explain in Chapter Two (Turner 2015). Development under occupation appears less as a paradox in the logical sense of the term than a productive contradiction for capitalist economies and the colonial project. On the one hand, settler colonialism physically erases polities; on the other, development acts as an “anti-politics machine, depoliticizing everything it touches, whisking political realities out of sight all the while performing, almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state power” (Ferguson 1994, xv). The two systems of subordination reinforce each other. Inspired by the field of post-development theory, Palestine scholars and analysts Linda Tabar and Omar Jabar Salamanca argue that “development aid was used to conceal the absence of a real political process; and as such, development not only became complicit in the Israeli colonial project, it subsidized the occupation, sustained and reproduced

settler colonial structures of power and oppression" (Tabar and Salamanca 2015, 14-15). In this view, development constitutes colonization by other means.

Paralleling Mignolo's call for alternatives to modernity, Arturo Escobar and other post-development scholars have advocated for alternatives *to* development as opposed to considering the multiplicity of forms that development can take (Rist 1990; Sachs 1992; Escobar 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997). For Jan Nederveen Pieterse, who defends a developmental pluralism, post-development approaches vary between a rejection of development (or *anti-development*), a vision of future directions beyond development (*au-delà du développement*), and a Foucauldian analysis of power, which risks homogenizing development (Pieterse 2000, 178). In spite of diverging views within the field, many scholars tend to equate development with westernization (Latouche 2005 [1989]; Escobar 1995), thus furthering older debates against modernization theory from the 1950s. Following critics, post-development theory could result in celebrating the myth of the "noble savage" and the romanticization of poverty. Such relative culturalism, at times sliding into claims of cultural imperialism (Petras 1997 [1994]), ends up promoting the dualist essentialisms between local (good) and foreign (bad) against which post-development theory rose in the first place (Kiely 1999, 43). Pieterse identifies another internal contradiction to post-development theory by uncovering similarities with neoliberal discourses. He argues that both parties reject aid and the reliance on strong states, albeit for opposing reasons, and this puts into question post-development's commitment to redistributive justice (Pieterse 2000, 184). Armed with the theoretical tools of psychoanalysis, Ilan Kapoor pursues this provocative line of thinking and contends that the rejection of development signifies a libidinal engagement with it (Kapoor 2017). Aram Ziai goes as far as describing the most inflexible fringe of post-development thinkers such as Majid Rahmena and Gustavo Esteva as models of "reactionary populism" (Ziai 2004, 1055). Yet by doing so, Ziai simultaneously saves the other half of the field which exercises skepticism vis-à-vis essentializing the local and non-Western cultures. Then, he acknowledges post-development's emancipatory potential for a project of radical democracy (Ziai 2004, 1056). Some of these arguments prove arguably very reductive or even flawed – surely, there are anti-capitalist scenarios that do not include states as an organizing principle without promoting neoliberalism? However, the ambivalence they put into light importantly reveals lines of convergence between post-developmental and neoliberal theories that are opposed ideologically, but may offer overlapping structural scenarios and practical engagements.

This dissertation builds on moments of convergence and divergence precisely in order to explore such unwitting and/or intended affinities. Post-development theory importantly insists on the decentralization of power by introducing a critique of systems of political representation. The reformulation of distributive power matches the need for an epistemological decentralization which challenges universalisms (Ziai 2004, 1056-7, Mignolo and Escobar 2016). My own investigation analyzes how industrial standards impact Palestinian film economic practices and attempts to decentralize through outreach. This also means that local actions reinterpret foreign interventions, against post-development binaries. As Pietersen rightfully points out, “the South also owns development” (Pieterse 2000, 178) – and not only the elites. Upon writing the preface to the 2010 re-edition of his staple 1992 *Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (2010), Wolfgang Sachs accepts Pietersen’s counter-argument:

> [Development] certainly was an invention of the West…but not just an imposition on the rest. On the contrary, as the desire for recognition and equity is framed in terms of the civilizational model of the powerful nations, the South has emerged as the staunchest defender of development. [Countries]…long to achieve industrial modernity (Sachs 2010, viii-xix).

Here it becomes necessary to distinguish my theoretical engagement with post-development; the prescriptive and critical engagement of Palestinian theoreticians like Tabar, Salamanca, and Tariq Dana cited earlier; and the reality on the terrain. Among cultural workers, a common view of Palestinian political future combines an approach of instrumental development (not alternative to development) and a reference to the ideals of the past Palestinian struggle for liberation. As a result, this dissertation analyzes *strategies of engagement with* economies of development. This is not limited to the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. Israel is subject to a similar ideology of development due to its Eurocentric politics (which oppose a supposedly democratic Israel to a so-called chaotic Middle East) and its integration in the European and global frameworks of exchange that encourage “dialogue” with Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The ambivalence of Palestinian cultural workers’ attitude vis-à-vis development guides this study. The simultaneous subscription to specific standards of industrial progress, which structure the project of the Palestinian film economy, and the reliance on the Revolution’s history of liberation, contributes to validating the human rights framework. As Ziai reminds us in the 2017 special issue of the *Third World Quarterly* dedicated to post-development theory, the discourse of

development could also be read as a discourse of rights (Ziai 2017, 2550). The human rights discourse, as the dominant political ideology of capitalist democracies since the fall of Communism, has picked up where development left off, in the historical view that sees the discourse of development wither away after the end of the Cold War (Moyn 2010, Meister 2011). At the same moment, the human rights discourse also replaces the decolonial struggle for liberation with a potentially depoliticizing and moralizing vision which sometimes supports, and often accommodates, the NGO-ization of Palestine. Palestinian anthropologist Khalil Nakhleh expresses his own ambivalence in the preface to his sharp critique of development, *Globalized Palestine: The National Sell-Out of a Homeland* (Nakhleh 2012). His commitment to proving that "development doesn't work" emerged after years working for the European Commission and the Palestinian philanthropy and humanitarian organization Welfare Association. In contrast, Nakhleh promotes a "People-Centered Liberationist Development" (PLCD), which conjugates the desire for radical alternatives to development with the subscription to the human rights discourse (Nakhleh 2012, xviii). Informed by terms such as "empowerment," "resilience," and "sustainability," the view resonates with both the decolonial option and the neoliberal ideology of human development. As Asef Bayat puts it when dissecting the *Arab Human Development Report*, it often happens that "radical tones are merged into neoliberal imagery of economy, polity, elites, and change" (Bayat 2010, 33). I further examine the extreme intimacy and ambiguous convergence of human rights, human development, and the liberation struggle in Chapter Three.

In this context, Palestinian agency is often framed through the action of the "civil society." This dissertation also uses that term, to a certain extent and with caution. In other words, I move away from debates that remain located in the space of the Habermasian public sphere, which tend to normalize liberal democracy. "Civil society" here encapsulates the various economic and political forces that provide the context for fragmented and unequal Palestinian actions: the market economy, development-as-growth, human development, the neoliberal NGO-ization of the Palestinian economy, and more generally, politics of recognition and the human rights discourse as a framework for Palestinian claims to self-determination. Amr Hamzawy describes how the term gained prominence in the 1980s in the Arab world due to multiple factors: the generalized rise of neoliberalism and the changing role of nation-states worldwide; Arab states' increased distance from democratic discourses and the necessity for other political spheres of action; and the rise of political Islam in its moderate and radical forms (Hamzawy 2003). Arab thinkers have

debated the utility of the term "civil society" for the region. While some see the possibility of translating this formation from Western history into the Arab world because of the universality of oppression, others recognize the ideological implications of the term. For example, Egyptian lawyer and politician Hussam ʻIsa contends that civil society "is an instrumental construct of modern, Western, liberal thought that, together with the classical categories individualism, political freedom, democracy, human rights, public welfare, and market economy serves *as a legitimating paradigm for the capitalist system*" (Hamzawy 2003, 21, my emphasis). Importantly, the term has been mobilized by Islamic formations such as Hamas (Roy 2011), as I demonstrate in Chapter Four. Hamzawy isolates two fundamental questions from these historical debates: First, what is the place of religious organizations and movements in the model of civil society? Second, is civil society always external to the state or can it *aspire* to political power? (Hamzawy 2003, 32) The latter observation, in particular, crystallizes many threads in this dissertation. For example, festival projects in the West Bank and Gaza, but also some of the propositions formulated by Palestinian citizens of Israel, hold an institutionalizing function despite being organized by independent individuals.

This dissertation describes the project of a Palestinian film economy as *a strategy of engagement* with developmental and neoliberal economies. These strategies resonate with Abourahme's inquiry into Palestinian subjectivity in the political disjuncture between colonization and the normalizing political imaginary of the state process. He asks: "How do we interpret the colonial subject that is neither in revolt, nor in open crisis? ...What kind of time is this curious present?" (Abourahme 2011, 455) Abourahme relocates the political in quotidian practices that are not always legible (Abourahme 2011, 459), echoing Lori Allen's suggestion that this present is one of tactical habits – of getting by (Allen 2008). My definition of "strategy" sits at the crossroads of the distinction that Michel de Certeau makes between strategy and tactics. On the one hand, just like de Certeau's tactics, Palestinian strategies function as "making do" and react to opportunities. They

> play on and with a terrain imposed on [them] and organized by the law of a foreign power. [They] do not have the means to keep to [themselves], at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection: [they are] maneuver[s] 'within the enemy's field of vision'" (de Certeau 1984, 37).

Unlike de Certeau's strategy, the mode of action I analyze does not "master time through the foundation of an autonomous place" (de Certeau 1984, 36). In fact, my understanding of strategy represents the very process and effort of using opportunities and instrumentalizing surroundings in order to reach institutionalization and industrialization. Strategy is oriented yet not teleological; it is located in the paradoxical present but emerges at the juncture of politics of recognition and hopes for decolonization. Strategy is a temporal concept, one that reflects the open possibilities of the Palestinian political and industrial project and the lived experience of practitioners and audiences. The term maintains the ambiguity and paradox between radical politics and neoliberal futures. Its semantic field extends from the "strategic goals" identified by development agencies' planning, to the activist movement of BDS, which takes its strength from representing a means rather than an end. Akin to "endurance," the mode of political engagement of the unrecognized indigenous populations in Australia's neoliberal settler-colonialism, strategy is grounded in the "temporality of continuance" and persistence (Povinelli 2011, 32). In sum, strategy forms the temporality of Palestinian workers' agency as they devise the industrial project in-becoming.

Finally, this research examines relationship between materiality and imaginaries, and how conditions of possibility are enacted through strategy. For that reason, infrastructure studies bridges my study of a not-yet film industry with concerns of development, lived temporalities, and political imaginaries. The field of (critical) media infrastructure studies emerged about fifteen years ago at the juncture of anthropology, media studies, architecture, geography, and science and technology studies (STS). In their introduction to the edited volume *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructure* (2015), Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski define infrastructures as both "material forms and discursive constructions" which are used to "reorganize territories and temporal relations" (2015, 5). For Shannon Mattern, they constitute a "structure that undergirds communication and communion" (Mattern 2015, 95). Brian Larkin also points to the articulation of materiality, affect, and discourse: "as physical forms they shape the nature of a network, the speed and direction of its movement, its temporalities, and its vulnerability to breakdown" (Larkin 2013, 328). Similarly, Eyal Weizman's study of the architecture of Israeli occupation identifies built spaces "as a conceptual way of understanding political issues as constructed realities" (Weizman 2007, 6). An underlying organizing principle which is conducive to imaginaries and politics, infrastructures "generate the ambient environment of everyday life" (Larkin 2013, 328).

Infrastructures thus emerge as structuring modes of sociality and power through physical spaces and affective relationalities (Parks and Starosielski 2015, 9).

This dissertation considers film festivals through the lens of critical media infrastructure studies and examines how they emerge from changing, *contingent*, and constructed environments. In other words, I do not identify film festivals *with* infrastructures. I argue that, as symptoms of the project of a Palestinian film economy, festivals result from and mediate an engagement of industrial imaginaries with the possibilities set by built spaces, financial networks, and political structures under occupation, colonization, and the humanitarian regime. It is significant that precisely those built spaces, networks and structures are major targets for Israeli control over Palestinian cultural production. Film festivals partake in the material construction of lived temporalities and future imaginaries in a context where the impossibility of hope is always already re-asserted. In her book *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics* (2014), Sara Sharma argues that the study of lived temporalities has been undermined to the benefit of universalist speed theories,[21] which emphasize issues of time-space compression with the advent of real-time communications technologies. As a result, scant attention has been paid to multiple, differential, and uneven lived temporalities, wherein "experience of time depends on where [subjects] are positioned within a larger economy of temporal worth" determined by global capitalism (Sharma 2014, 8). As ephemeral and flexible structures, film festivals form temporal experiments in materializing film industry in the interstices and at the margins of global economic and political networks. Equally concerned with the uneven implementation of infrastructures across industrialized and developed regions, Parks and Starosielski emphasize the need to provincialize the study of cultural engagements with built spaces (Parks and Starosielski 2015, 11). Infrastructure as a concept first emerged in the Enlightenment idea of progress, since it was that which allowed industrial development. As a political address, they "come to represent the possibility of being modern, of having a future, or the foreclosing of that possibility and a resulting experience of abjection" (Larkin 2013, 333). Infrastructures thus crystallize fantasies of development. Critical media infrastructure studies, post-development theory, and the concept of

[21] She cites Paul Virilio, 24/7 capitalism (Jonathan Crary), the chronoscopic society (Robert Hassan), fast capital (Ben Agger), the new temporalities of biopolitical production (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri), the culture of acceleration (John Tomlinson), chronodystopia (John Armitage and Joanne Roberts), hypermodern times (Gilles Lipovetsky), and liquid times (Zygmunt Bauman).

strategy allow me to start conceptualizing the making of a Palestinian film economy as it is embedded in transnational networks of cinema, developmental, and human rights economies.

Conclusion

This chapter situates my investigation of Palestinian cinema after national cinema, in a theoretical landscape that privileges affective relations and strategic negotiations with global economies over dynamics of identity-formation. The point is not to deny the rallying force of cinema for Palestinians and solidarity groups around the world, but to shift the focus from representational practices and narratives of trauma towards the complexity of the present and formulations of political and economic futures. Doing so points to im/possible geographies of liberation, which I call "pessoptimistic." Similarly paradoxical, the not-yet Palestinian film industry represents an open field of practice entangled with pre-determining colonial, developmental, and humanitarian economies. Film festivals, which are pivotal to circulating Palestinian films in Palestine and globally, play a crucial role in the formation of this economy. The next chapter examines how festivals act as unstable institutions and may become the vehicles for imaginaries of peaceful and stable political futures. As such, they mirror the state-building process and its paradoxical engagement with institutionalization and development, at the same time as the structures of colonization restrict the promotion of cultural production.

Chapter Two – Suspended Time: Cinephilia and the Politics of Stability

> Under siege,
> time is a place
> put in its place.
> Under siege,
> place is a time
> out of time.
> Mahmoud Darwish, *A State of Siege*, 2002.

In 2014, the Ramallah-based film production company Idioms Film released an anthology of nine shorts to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Oslo Accords (hereafter Oslo). Entitled *Zaman Muaalaq/Suspended Time*, the collection both assesses the promises of the peace process and lingers on its failure to engineer a sustainable peace and economy in Palestine. In Ayman Azraq's contribution *Oslo Syndrome*, Oslo stands for the exponentially fragmented, militarized, and constricting geography of Palestine following the Accords. Oslo also represents the physical and legal space of Norway where Palestinians are still officially considered stateless despite the negotiations that the country's capital hosted. The title's reference to Stockholm syndrome ultimately points to Palestinians' unwarranted – and now withering – attachment to a peace process that has denied them a decent future. The film visualizes the paradox of the stalled peace process by showcasing blurred images of Palestinian streets, travelling shots figuring impossible travels, and an editing that alternates between the spaces where Palestinian movement is restricted, Palestine and the city of Oslo. In this chapter, I borrow the term "suspended time" to signify the contradictory Palestinian future of continued occupation after the peace process, that is to say, a future that promises the political stability of statehood, and yet perpetually re-affirms the instability of statelessness.

Suspended time generates its own aesthetics. In Mahdi Fleifel's *Twenty Handshakes for Peace*, another short in the anthology, the Accords similarly produce nothing but the re-assertion of an empty promise: the TV footage of the famous handshake between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat, which marked the official beginning of the so-called peace process, is repeated in a loop – twenty times, for the twenty years that have passed since the signing of the Accords. In this video art piece, the reiteration of the news images undoes the liveness of TV and reveals the discrepancy between

information and experience, and between promises and actualization of political agendas. Remediation, or “the representation of one medium in another” (Bolter and Grusin 2000, 45), here accentuates the discontinuities between TV and art video and their respective modes of production and exhibition. The suspended time of post-Oslo Palestine denies the evolution from conflict to peace, from political and economic instability to stability, and this sense of indeterminate deferral also translates into media forms and economies.

What is at stake in this chapter is the creation of a Palestinian economy of images that can adjust to both the development economy ushered in by the Peace Accords and the ongoing military colonization of the Palestinian territories. In other words, how can we imagine a *stable* economy of images in a context of “de-development” that threatens Palestinian futures? Another term for “suspended time,” de-development, for Sara Roy, occurs

> when normal economic relations are impaired or abandoned, preventing any logical or rational arrangement of the economy and its constituent parts, diminishing productive capacity and precluding sustainable growth. […] Over time, de-development represents nothing less than the denial of economic potential (Roy 2014, x).[22]

The economy and political structure of state-building are stagnant but not stable. The Oslo Accords established an interim self-government body, the Palestinian Authority (PA), valid for five years. Presently and well past this period, the pursuit of a stable legal framework remains suspended and no further negotiations have been conducted to formalize a sovereign power. Managed by the occupying Israeli Civil Administration before Oslo, the Palestinian economy has similarly since the Accords remained “stuck in a period of indefinite transition” (Taghdisi-Rad 2014, 28). Under the cover of planning economic growth, the Paris Protocol of Economic Regulations (PER), the economic pendant to Oslo, institutionalized the subordination of the Palestinian Territories’ clearance revenues and exports to Israeli policies, rules, and regulations, while tethering the Palestinian national budget to foreign aid. On the other hand, the PA’s poor management of its funding has forced a focus on immediate emergencies, which prevents robust long-term development priorities and planning. Palestinian and international NGOs and human rights organizations, privileged recipients of foreign investments, have consequently replaced the quasi-non-existing national institutions, conforming to “the expectation that institutions of assistance

[22] The concept was initially coined in relation to Gaza in 1995, but Sara Roy acknowledges in this more recent chapter that it can apply to Palestine as a whole.

will be situated in civil society rather than governments" typical to the broader neoliberal logic around developmental and colonial economies (Yúdice 2004, 6). Finally, the local economy has been obstructed by the increased fragmentation of the Palestinian territory, with the neo-colonial division of the West Bank in three areas of control since the Oslo Accords; the construction of the Separation Wall isolating the city of Jerusalem and the holy site of the Dome of the Rock since 2002; the multiplication of checkpoints during the Second Intifada; and the blockade of Gaza after 2007, which cut off the Strip from the West Bank and historic Palestine.

Within the *unstable* context of de-development and colonization, thinking of a *stable* economy of images summons a complex entanglement of narratives. Stability forms a key discourse that underlies international donors' policies of "war-to-peace" transition. The concept of stability drives the developmental efforts to support the reconstruction of Palestinian infrastructures and the building of institutions (Brynen 2000, 7). Yet, economic development at the service of "post-conflict" Palestinian sovereignty is bound to fail if the occupation, and thus the "conflict," persists. In this confusing chain of events, stability becomes both the necessary condition for, and the desired result of, peacebuilding, thus pointing to a contradicting causality that denies the possibility for peace. For Mandy Turner, promoting the stability of Palestinian governance structures at the same time as that discourse is embedded in the framework of colonial practices proves paradoxical only in appearance. The impossibility to achieve stability and peace does not constitute a failure of the development economy. Rather, it should be conceived as a successful form of counterinsurgency in the interest of the leading Western donors and their strategic cooperation with Israel. At the same time, this cements the hegemony of the PA, bound by the Oslo Accords to guarantee the security of Israel. In Turner's own words, "there is a deep structural symbiosis in the philosophy and methods of counterinsurgency and peacebuilding that lies in securing population against unrest through the implementation of governance, development and security strategies that instill acquiescence and ensure control" (Turner 2015, 97). More precisely, as Turner puts it, the international community's processes of stabilization intend to "manage and suppress the instability that results from manifestations of inequality and repression, to control it and not resolve it – because to do so would require a reconfiguration of global power to allow local populations to decide their own developmental and political futures" (Turner 2015, 74-75). If stability implies population control through a domestication of instability by way of the development economy, how can we figure the population's own grasp on their unstable

environment? What can stability mean for the future of Palestinian media economies, cultural workers, and their attempts at building cultural proto-institutions?

This chapter examines the implementation of different forms of economic and political stability through media economies in post-Oslo Palestine. In particular, it analyzes the convergence between, on the one hand, the emergence of a film industry based on cinephilia and devised by local film practitioners; and on the other, the consolidation of the news' mode of production of images in Palestine pushed by international agencies, starting during the Second Intifada (2000-2005). I understand cinephilia as a normative discourse on spectatorship and love for cinema, which is supplemented by a specific technological apparatus and an industrial mode of production, distribution, and exhibition established by major film festivals such as Cannes or Venice. What of cinephilia's convergence with the news? Lisa Parks defines convergence as a discursive, economic, and institutional interdependence between technologies, which informs their respective processes of emergence. She writes that "a genealogy of convergence does not celebrate the newness of combined technological forms so much as it emphasizes the paths of contradiction and ambivalence elicited by their mutual interactions" (Parks 2005, 77). In the Palestinian context, the news and cinephilia reflect and manufacture conflicting media environments that articulate various geopolitical interests, technological apparati, epistemological relations to time, and broader economies of images. The news and cinephilia put forward two discourses of stability which translate into lived temporalities and understandings of present time. As the aforementioned example of Mahdi Fleifel's *Twenty Handshakes for Peace* suggests, the "nowness" of the news seems to restrict Palestinian futures to an ineluctable and recurring crisis, while cinephilia's ideology of film appreciation and its material demands for theatrical live screenings offer the potentiality for duration and reflexivity. By proposing competing experiences of present time embedded in differential material conditions, the news and cinephilia shape two forms of stability and control over the viewing environment carried by their own respective institutions.

Many film theatres were shut down in the wake of the First Intifada in the late 1980s, leaving the West Bank and Gaza with limited access to Palestinian and international cinematic images. The arrival of international news crews and agencies during the First Intifada started to reconfigure the local economy of images, and the subsequent uprisings in the 2000s solidified the agencies' presence. Yet concomitantly during the Second Intifada, film festivals started to emerge in Palestine. Some of them effectively proposed an alternative to news coverage via international

art cinema and initiated a discourse of film institutionalization and industrialization through cinephilia that did not exist in this form prior to that period. The notion of suspended time thus does not intend to seal the fate of Palestine and its potentially nascent film institutions, but rather describes how a future is being imagined from within development, *despite* instability, *despite* the dysfunctional proto-state, and *despite* the occupation.[23] Nowadays, cinema in the West Bank is mainly mediated through cable TV (and mostly through big Arab channels like the Dubai-based MBC), legal and illegal streaming websites, and a small number of commercial theatres, all of which mostly run American and Egyptian blockbusters. Video stores sell pirated DVDs of Palestinian films, but these are not advertised and do not find their audience easily. Film festivals in Palestine can consequently help promote Palestinian films and global art cinema, rehabilitate spaces where films can be watched, and fashion the possibility of film spectatorship in the midst of the emergency of conflict and news watching.

Cinephilia functions as a strategy to implement political and economic stability which Palestinian film practitioners devise as an alternative to news production. Cinephilia is crucial to the fragmented and contested project of a Palestinian film industry that has focused on art cinema in the West Bank from the Second Intifada (2000-2005) until today. I argue that this projected stability paradoxically relies on the *unstable* institution of the film festival. The history of Palestinian film institutionalization can be traced back to several decades before the Second Intifada, in the 1960s, as explored in Chapter Three. The end of the revolution and the PLO's forced departure from Lebanon in 1982 then marked a rupture in Palestinian governance. This historical break is reflected in the shift in Palestinian films' mode of production and the place of cinema within the Palestinian imaginary and social formation. Following this rupture, new forms of transnational film institutionalization have emerged, embedded in global art film festivals and economies of cinephilia. Michel Khleifi's emblematic art cinema in the 1980s and 1990s anticipates Palestinian cinema's wider integration into the international circuits of world cinema and global cinephilia, while national productions are still rarely shown in the territories. The dominant standards of global cinephilia stand in stark contrast to the limited or nonexistent infrastructures available in Palestine. This paradox, typical of discussions on world cinema, has

[23] Similarly, Julien Salingue proposes the term "despite" (*malgré*) to articulate the strategies of resistance based on perpetual negotiations after Oslo, as opposed to direct actions taken against the occupation before (Salingue 2015, 19).

cemented a monolithic vision in which there can be no economic formation of Palestinian cinema because there is no working state and no established industry. As we will see, film festivals provide an institutional and industrial model that adapts to minimal infrastructures and partially accommodates a stable viewing experience required for film appreciation.

Often short-lived, sometimes interrupted for a few years, festivals have nonetheless contributed to shaping a local film community, and some have openly suggested the possibility of a future film industry in Palestine. The projects are diverse but have been consistently dedicated to connecting international filmmakers and films to Palestine, while advertising Palestinian productions abroad by developing partnerships with foreign festivals and film institutions. Their names are often a testament to this global reach: Ramallah International Film Festival (2004); the Jericho International Film Festival (2005); the Shashat Women's Film Festival (2005-today, interrupted in 2014 and 2015); the Al-Kasaba International Film Festival (2006-2010); the Palestine Human Rights Film Festivals (2010); the International Young Filmmakers Festival (2011-today); the Franco-Arab Film Festival (2011-today); and the Days of Cinema (2014-today). Also embedded in local communities, festivals have coordinated with Palestinian universities and reached out to remote audiences in refugee camps and villages, thus prolonging the isolated work of a few mobile cinema initiatives and audiovisual programs in development. Particular emphasis has been placed on training workshops (scriptwriting, filming, editing, sound), round tables and Q&As. Pedagogy, industry, and human rights have differentially organized these initiatives.

This chapter concentrates on a constellation of festivals that have engaged with global art cinema as an enduring and stable framework for future Palestinian film industrial structures. In effect, what does it mean for cinephilia to be conceived as a dominant imaginary, a suitable economy and aesthetic, and a necessary infrastructure for the project of a film industry in unstable post-Oslo Palestine? What temporality does cinephilia produce to address this instability? Within this constellation, the Days of Cinema, which I attended in the Fall 2015, stands out as an exemplary effort of capacity-building. However, a broader attention to the Ramallah International Film Festival, the Al-Kasaba International Film Festival, and the revival project of the Jericho International Film Festival further reveals how the media environment of cinephilia negotiates politics and economics of development as well as the event structure of the news temporality in order to create stable spaces of spectatorship. I start by establishing how the news' expression of present time (which I refer to as "real-time") threatens the stable development of other media

environments. The news' real-time produces a status quo of crisis, soon to be challenged by Palestinian cinema experiments during the Second Intifada. The transnational and regional economies of global art cinema assist in furthering these cinematic visual experiments and support the emergence of film festivals that act as proto-institutions for cinema. I then question festivals' establishment of their own real-time, which is envisioned to sustain and stabilize a film culture in the long term through the media environment and the mode of spectatorship they foster.

News Time Versus Film Time

The convergence of news and cinephiliac economies reveals the formation of conflicting temporalities of experience and political futures of stability. In what follows, I introduce the news' mode of production and the tension between what I call news time and film time. In the wake of the Oslo peace process in 1994, the international conversation on Palestine revolved around issues of democratization. With the advent of the Second Intifada, then followed by the US' "war on terror" which placed additional suspicion on Arab populations world-wide, Palestine returned to its status of "conflict zone" earned during the First Intifada and was increasingly framed as a "cradle of terrorism." This identified political crisis (which by contrast denied the ongoing crisis of the occupation) made Palestine a news item again. Media coverage became "routine" and the temporality of the news pervaded daily life (Bishara 2013, 210). Importantly, permanent broadcasting contributed to managing the discourse of political instability through the status quo of crisis. The production of news coverage organized labor and media practices, structured around the anticipation of catastrophes. As Peter Golding and Philip Elliot state, "if news is about the unpredictable, its production is about prediction" (Golding and Eliott 1999, 113). The demands of global news work mediated relationships between the proto-state, its people and audiences, and the logic of anticipation was sometimes used to control Palestinian populations. As anthropologist Amahl Bishara reported during Yasser Arafat's funeral in 2004, PA officials invoked Palestine's international image and the global television coverage of the event to keep order at home. This translated into disciplining the sizeable crowd populating all accessible high points over the *Muqata'a* (the presidential palace) where Arafat was to be buried (Bishara 2013, 215). The Palestinian "masses" were doubly marshalled by the news media and their geopolitical positioning in its global networks.

The management of unpredictability that sustains media events, as well as the endless repetition of the 24 hour-news cycle, materializes in the news' expression of the present as "real-time." Communications scholars coined the concept of real-time with respect to the time-space compression resulting from the acceleration of the circulation of capital, information, and ever-faster technologies of communication (Harvey 1989). Real-time refers to the ways in which the new technologies embedded in economies of globalization have fashioned new standards of instantaneity and simultaneity. In other words, real-time signifies the disappearance of time as a process (Leccardi 2007, 30; Hope 2016, 7). For Lisa Parks, news coverage does not only encompass the content of the news program but also stands for "a particular kind of televisual practice, one that structures the way viewers see and know the world from a distance" (Parks 2005, 88). The televisual epistemology of real-time however does not affect the remote viewers alone. We should also consider how it is embedded in the environment in which the televisual is materially produced. In the case that concerns us here, what Parks calls the discursive "fantasy of liveness" of the televisual (Parks 2005, 38) both emerges from the material conditions of the continuous military operations in occupied Palestine that perpetually produce live content about political instability, and informs Palestinian audiences' fixed and stereotyped representations of themselves and their future. In other words, the news produces two distinct global discourses on the present: on the one hand, real-time results from new technologies' augmented capacity to share the news in the context of global viewership; on the other, the very economies that allow high-speed communications profit from, structure, and sustain grounded epistemologies of stagnation, immobility, and repetition in post-Oslo Palestine.

At the time of the Second Intifada, the quotidian in crisis constantly provided material for news coverage and disrupted the temporalities of other forms of media. During "Operation Defensive Shield," which resulted in the Israeli invasion of Ramallah and other municipalities of the West Bank in March-April 2002, the drones that hovered over the city interrupted TV signals, thus disturbing the airing of *musalsalat*, TV serials scheduled during Ramadan (Bishara 2013, 209). The lived reality of the occupation functioned similarly to the news. For Mary Ann Doane, television organizes its time around various modes of apprehending the event, including catastrophe – a variant of information. If, as she contends, "the measure of catastrophe [is] the extent to which it interrupts television's regular daily programming, disrupting normal expectations about what can be seen and heard at a particular time," then the event of the Israeli

drone literally acted as breaking news (Doane 2006, 258). The material logic of "breaking" news extended to other aspects of the invasion and other forms of media. The Israeli troops conducted lootings and numerous arrests, but also ransacked the offices of cultural organizations such as the Sakakini Center and the Institute of Modern Media at Al-Quds University. Earlier in December 2000, the Israeli military (IDF) bombed the Palestine Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) headquarters and transmission tower in Ramallah, in the interest of "Israeli national security" (Tawil-Souri 2007), pitting one news time against the other. Filmmaking practices were also affected. The shooting of Hany Abu-Assad's award-winning *Paradise Now* (2005) was first set for Nablus, but had to be moved to Nazareth after the location manager was kidnapped by a suspicious Palestinian group and a land mine exploded near the shooting location (Garcia 2005). Media shutdowns could also originate from the Palestinian Authority itself in double attempts to circumscribe political opposition and secure the satisfaction and generosity of foreign donors. In 1998, eight private television stations were sanctioned to cover pro-Iraqi demonstrations that could potentially offend American donors, a censoring practice which Matt Sienkiewicz argues continued well into the years of the Intifada (Sienkiewicz 2013, 23).

As John Fiske and Lisa Parks have argued, in the information society where the news is broadcast, it has become difficult to separate events from their mediation as media events (Fiske 1996, 1; Parks 2005, 88). On the other hand, there is an even higher risk of everyday life coalescing with the media event in locations where the news is produced. The Al-Jazeera documentary *The Gaza Fixer: A Chronicle of Survival* (George Azar, 2007), makes this claim evident as the journalist's camera drifts away from the daily news to redirect its focus on daily lives. The war reporter's fixer, Raed, becomes the topic of the film. Working as a fixer allows Raed to feed his family, and the family in return develops into news material when many of its members are killed by an Israeli shelling. Caught in a cycle of violence, Raed remarks that "there is no future for this life," while showing the extent of the destruction around him. "The drama of the instantaneous" (Doane 2006, 251) interrupted the continuity of life, and the attempt at making a film fell back into making news. According to the catalogue of the Days of Cinema's 2015 edition, the confusion between life and media event establishes Palestinians as "the victims, the stateless, and the broken" (Days of Cinema catalogue 2015, 1). Days of Cinema artistic director and filmmaker Hanna Atallah laments that these categories have also influenced Palestinian artists and led to the "predictability of the art work." He continues: "there is an urgent need to develop the language or

artistic discourse and technical elements in order to build specialties in local art production" (catalogue 2015, 1). Golding and Elliot's phrase cited earlier takes on a new meaning: the newsmakers' labor of "producing the prediction" in anticipation of the unpredictable becomes facilitated by the pre-constructed category of the victim. Producing the prediction also means, in that context, a repetition of the same. In other words, the news' political discourse of instability both constructs and feeds off of the stability of crisis.

The coverage of the Second Intifada thus produced its own temporality of real-time and the stability of crisis, one in compliance with a regime of images fashioned by the "global now" of the international news economy and its satellite developments (Parks 2005). International news agencies like the American Associated Press (AP), the British Reuters and the French Agence France-Presse (AFP) among others sent journalists and crews to document the uprisings. The news sphere in Palestine in the early 2000s was also composed of fifty Palestinian TV and radio stations, private and government-owned (Allen 2009, 170). These included the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), established as a preferential, highly centralized, and supervised news outlet by Yasser Arafat right after Oslo. The PA, whose legitimacy was threatened during the uprisings due to its occasional coordinated efforts to repress Palestinian demonstrations, could also profit from a management of the discourse of instability. In the early 2000s, in a generally fragmented mediascape mirroring the land partitions of the West Bank and Gaza, small and localized stations like the Bethlehem-based Ma'an News started to emerge as producers of counter-discourses. These soon benefited from Danish, Dutch, British and American financial support. International investments converted these modest stations into providers working under Western standards of professionalism (Sienkiewicz 2011, 11). Further professionalization of Palestinian journalists occurred with the intensification of the uprisings that led international news agencies to increasingly rely on locals. Palestinians became central to the production of international news because of their "embodied" knowledge of the society and political context, as well as their human connections and the fact that they spoke Arabic (Bishara 2013). As camera operators, Palestinians were sent to places deemed too dangerous for foreign reporters. Moreover, their contracts were cheaper for the agencies, who could avoid flying in more crew members.

Due to the limited amount of film schools at the time, film production training was largely acquired through news coverage. The news' mode of production conditioned the emergence of the Palestinian film economy locally, and the very understanding of cinema became subordinated to

standards developed for TV. By the end of the Second Intifada, news had shaped both the Palestinians' relation to representations *of* themselves, and the production of these representations *by* themselves (Arasoughly 2013). Institutions like Al Quds University's Institute of Modern Media (1996) and Birzeit University (2002) have also perpetuated this logic by including audio-visual training within departments of media-journalism. As a result,

> what these young filmmakers learnt was news; that is, shooting for news stories. Having apprenticed in the manner just described, the first generation of post-Oslo filmmakers began making documentaries in a documentary style consistent with typical news stories (Arasoughly 2013, 106).

Anticipating Atallah's call to heighten Palestinian creativity and oppose the victimization of Palestinians ten years later, Palestinian filmmakers experimented with the medium of cinema to create different representations during the Second Intifada. Films by Rashid Masharawi (*Ticket to Jerusalem*, 2002; *Attente/Waiting*, 2005), Hany Abu-Assad (*Al-Quds fi Yaoum Akhar/Rana's Wedding*, 2002; *Ford Transit*, 2003; *Paradise Now*, 2005) or Annemarie Jacir (*Ka'inana 'Ashrun Mustakheel/Like Twenty Impossibles*, 2003) all reflect on what it means to make films during the Intifada. Turning news against itself, these "road (block) movies" explored the fragmentation of the Palestinian nation (Gertz and Khleifi, 2008) and the daily strategies of existence for Palestinians (Dickinson, 2010) at a time of increased roadblocks, checkpoints, and military presence.

Some films have directly questioned the relationships between news and film modes of production. In her self-reflexive documentary *Zaman Al-Akhbar/News Time* (2002), Azza El-Hassan oscillates between her initial project to record private life and the necessity to represent the collective experience of the struggle against the occupation. Pondering the very possibility of making cinema during the Intifada, she laments the difficulty of gathering a crew in a context where all technicians are busy working with news agencies. She concludes: "This is not the time to be doing films. This is news time." By opposing film time and news time, El-Hassan points to systems of representation as well as modes of production. Her film itself playfully articulates the two and subverts the genre of reportage in order to negotiate images of disaster produced by news time. For instance, the TV footage of a martyr's funeral procession is juxtaposed with an interview of four children who have lost their friends in confrontations with the Israeli army. For Nadia Yaqub, by "refusing to show images of atrocity," El-Hassan "choos[es] instead to photograph the

eyes that have witnessed atrocity" (Yaqub 2012, 155). Yet the figure of the eyewitness forms another trope of war reportage that highlights the on-site presence of the journalist and the immediacy of communication with the viewers (Doane 2006, 258). El-Hassan finally attempts to escape news time by befriending her interviewees, thus altering the social relations governing the film's mode of production. The four children move out of their status of news informants and (literally) poster children for the conflict – pictures of martyrs are made into posters and pasted all over cities as reminders of the dead. They become full members of El-Hassan's film crew, carrying around the filmmaking equipment. This improbable team faces yet another army, that of international journalists whose presence is felt everywhere. El-Hassan ironically states: "They say we make good news." The film's sarcastic tone becomes a strategy to enter film time.

A mise-en-abyme, Sobhi al-Zobaidi's *Hawal*/*Looking Awry* (2001)[24] similarly illustrates the struggle of making a film during the "static, stagnant time" of the Intifada (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 144), yet from a mirroring perspective. Having received funding from American producers to complete a documentary on peace, love, and harmony in Jerusalem after Oslo, Sobhi al-Zobaidi (playing himself) embarks on a mission to picture the city's diversity (and potential conflicts) within one frame. The "one frame policy," a demand from the producers, aims to materialize the end of the conflict and the supposed unity of the Israeli and Palestinian people, in the city that ironically most epitomizes opposing land claims. The film becomes a succession of shot/reverse shots despite itself, as each element comprising the image points to the reality of the occupation the sponsors so desperately wanted out of the picture. On the one hand, a shot zooming in on the Old City's Damascus Gate reveals the presence of IDF soldiers surveilling the entrance, which calls for the reverse shot of a soldier shooting at Palestinian kids, unveiling the military nature of the camera's viewfinder (Fig. 1). On the other, a friend of the director who dreamed of acting in the documentary ends up literally framed as a martyr in a poster in the streets. The Intifada offered him the glory he hoped to obtain from cinema. Oslo's suspended time of development under occupation thus crystallizes in the reversal of genres that the film operates. Commissioned for a documentary, the director is forbidden by donors to show what constitutes the lived reality of Jerusalem and is reduced to making what he understands as a (science) fiction. Contrary to El-Hassan, Zobaidi yearns to engage with news time, but the ambiguity of the documentary, which

[24] A second version of the film, renamed *Looking Awry (Again),* was made in 2005. It features one additional scene.

negotiates the representation of the real in cinema rather than in the news, is constantly re-asserted. Ultimately, the character of Zobaidi abandons the production to make his own film, arguably resulting in *Looking Awry*. Like in *News Time*, self-reflexivity and fiction contravene the temporality of the news by a work of remediation of news images into cinema.

Figure 1: Shot and reverse short in *Looking Awry (Again)* (screenshots).

The materiality of, and the discourses shaped by, news production during the Second Intifada have allowed the colonial and neocolonial control of political instability through the narrative of the status quo of crisis. This grounded narrative consolidates Palestinians' status as victims and terrorists and disrupts the possibility for other media productions. In this context, the internalization of news narratives and modes of making by Palestinian practitioners risks functioning as a form of counterinsurgency. Conversely, the filmmaking experiments of the Second Intifada have fueled a conversation around film genres and their capacity to shape alternative visual regimes and economies that continues today. For collectives like Idioms Film, founded during the Second Intifada and now an established production and distribution company, it has become necessary to create distance from the news aesthetic in order to experiment with film forms. At its foundation, Idioms Film refused to be funded by news agencies and raised money for creative film productions by producing promotional videos for institutions and businesses. Over the years, this has allowed them to support experimental cinema (Mohanad Yaqubi's *Exit*, 2009 and *No Exit*, 2014; Omar Robert Hamilton's *Though I Know the River is Dry*, 2013; Basma Alsharif's *Ourobouros*, 2017); parodies of the news genre (Ihab Jadallah's *El-Takheekh*/*The Shooter*, 2007); and short action films (Rami Hazboun's *El-Rasasa El-Wardia*/*Pink Bullet*, 2014). More generally, genre experimentations have renewed opportunities for film production and

expanded the networks of circulation for Palestinian films, including in global art cinema festival circuits. Cinephilia offers a distinct discourse of stability which somehow overlaps with that of counterinsurgency because of its investment in state and peace-building as a practical consideration. In the sections that follow, I will discuss how the global networks of art cinema and cinephilia have allowed Palestinian practitioners to engage with an understanding of stability which could serve as the basis for attempts at institutionalizing cinema in Palestine.

Unstable Film Institutions

What kind of film institution can be established in post-Oslo Palestine? The occupation has left an institutional void that the promises of Oslo have not filled. The Palestinian Authority's unilateral support of a news broadcasting network in 1994 and its lack of interest in funding cinema has proven consistent with the proto-state's economic dependence on international and humanitarian aid. News agencies relay information gathered by human rights organization reports and the pool of international and Palestinian NGOs that have come to replace the dysfunctional ministries in various economic and social sectors. In turn, for Lori Allen, hobbled political parties have ceded dominance to a "news-mediated public sphere" (Allen 2009, 162) further enforced by the news' pervasive real-time. The politics of privatization and de-regulation in Palestine after Oslo allowed the flourishing of the Information Technology (IT) industry but did not extend to cinema. The private sector – including major sponsors like the telecommunications companies Jawwal and Wataniya – and the national television channels have shown very limited interest in investing in local film productions. The government's disengagement from Palestinian cultural life is even reflected in more recent budgets. For example, in 2014, expenses related to security were estimated at between 28 and 35 percent of the total yearly budget both in the West Bank and Gaza (Abu Amer 2015). By contrast, the funds allocated to culture in 2013 represented 0.003% of the total budget (Euromed Audiovisual).[25] From 2011 to 2016, the government's bi-annual strategic plan for the cultural and heritage sectors did not realistically account for the lack of cultural funding and could not be implemented. Consequently, as Sabreen Abdulrahman puts it, "the Palestinian cultural policy model can be described as an unorganized model that tends mainly to replace the official authority with the nonprofit sector" (Abdulrahman 2015, 3). Not unified by a national legal

[25] The researchers who established the report could however not verify the validity of the figures provided by the Ministry of Culture.

and strategic framework, the cultural sector is fragmented into civil, official and semi-official cultural institutions as well as individual initiatives that maintain their own separate missions and identities. It is no surprise, then, that a few years after making a film about the ordeal of international funding and his refusal to abide by it in *Looking Awry*, Sobhi al-Zobaidi described Palestinian cinema's mode of production as "independent from the authorities of state, religion and commerce." He further continues:

> Independent filmmaking in Palestine is better understood as individual filmmaking because of the absence of the institutional base such as foundations, film collectives, film schools, groups, and most important censorship. In fact, Palestinian filmmakers act competitively, most often incompatible with each other (al-Zobaidi 2008).

Al-Zobaidi provides a good sense of the non-centralized, non-institutionalized and fragmented film community in Palestine's suspended time. However, this period of the late 2000s also saw the creation of various film production companies, film collectives, film festivals, film courses and diplomas within universities, and an increased visibility of Palestinian films internationally, which suggests that a transnational film community was organizing despite the absence of state policy strategies. As early as 2004, festivals with global reach and established by Palestinians started to emerge in the West Bank and Gaza. Most of them adopted a multi-sited model that covered the largest cities in Palestine and in the 1948 area now known as Israel (especially Haifa and Nazareth, which host large Palestinian populations) as well as adjacent refugee camps, and many also explicitly promoted art cinema. Primarily invested in film exhibition, these festivals have gradually come to complement the film training offered by the developing university audiovisual programs and have built networking opportunities with international filmmakers, TV buyers and festival directors. The Ramallah International Film Festival, the first initiative of the type, was established in 2004 – for one year. Faten Farhat, its co-director, explains that the festival ambitioned "to develop the Palestinian audiovisual sector, to give the opportunities to Palestinian directors, to allow them to develop and to become known to the guests of the festival" (cited in Dickinson 2005, 268). Over the years, festival organizers have elevated the role of film festivals to incubators of a film industry. In his introductory letter to the fourth edition of the Al-Kasaba International Film Festival in 2009, Al-Kasaba theatre director George Ibrahim stated that the festival's "aim[…] [was to] contribute to the development of [a] cinema industry besides it being a space for knowledge sharing and entertainment" (Ibrahim 2009).

This translated, for example, into inviting Cannes Film Festival director Thierry Frémeaux, who offered advice to emerging Palestinian filmmakers. More recently in 2014, the organization FilmLab: Palestine launched the program "Days of Cinema" as part of its plan to "effectively promote film art and film culture in Palestine with the greater aspiration of creating a productive and dynamic film industry" (catalogue 2015, 3). Finally, film producer and director May Odeh and her team have worked to revive the Jericho International Film Festival. Last held in 2005 as an attempt to relocate the ephemeral Ramallah International Film Festival, the project did not endure. The new international platform was tentatively scheduled for March 2017.[26]

Several factors have contributed to the expansion of global art cinema festivals in Palestine in the early 2000s, which directly converge with the developmental logic of foreign investment as a means of infrastructure- and institution-building in post-conflict areas. First and foremost, the festival circuits of art cinema constitute the privileged networks where Palestinian cinema, until then produced mainly in the diaspora, has circulated since the 1980s. Palestinian filmmakers such as Michel Khleifi, Elia Suleiman, Hany Abu-Assad or Annemarie Jacir have received many awards and built their fame through this economy, thus opening a market for future investors that bank on the Palestine "brand." Since the 1980s, the development of co-productions between Palestinian filmmakers and European TV networks (mainly French and German) have been increasingly mediated by global festival markets and industry meetings featuring pitching sessions, including at the International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA) and the Berlinale. On the other hand, international film festivals, foreign institutions, and supranational organizations like Euromed Audiovisual have intensified investments in countries of the Global South through various means: the development of film grants tailored for "countries with a weak infrastructure" (the Berlinale's World Cinema Fund, 2016), specialized training workshops, exchange and scholarships, consultation about film funding or festival organizing, or direct financial support for festivals themselves. As Tamara Falicov reminds us, most European film funds were historically established "as a former colonial power's legacy to dispense development aid through the form of cultural funding to the developing world," from the 1920s on, and through the Cold War era until today (Falicov 2016, 215). These funds are now often funneled through Ministries of Foreign Affairs and take part in governments' international policies. Finally, festivals follow an economic model familiar to the NGO-ization of the Palestinian economy and the government's neoliberal

[26] As of November 2018, there is no indication that the festival has yet been established.

policies of social disengagement. Like NGOs, festivals are initiated by Palestinian civil society, and their organization is contingent upon the support of foreign institutions, international foundations, and European programs.

For Palestinian organizers, film festivals have represented a *practical* option for accessing available funding, but also one anchored in a discourse of futurity that appealed to their vision of cinema. Despite the ephemerality of many of these events in Palestine, being connected to global art cinema festivals abroad has grown to be a priority in Palestine and in the Arab world as a whole. Not only do festivals offer the potential for industrial development, but they also build communities dedicated to a type of film appreciation. For the regional NGO Network of Arab Alternative Screens (NAAS), with which some Palestinian organizations such as FilmLab: Palestine (FLP) collaborate, a "vibrant and sustainable cinema culture" can be achieved through the establishment of non-governmental cinema spaces "with the aim of developing audiences engaging with films" (NAAS Facebook page). FLP equally contends that "Cinema [sic] culture can remarkably contribute to set the foundation for long-term cultural change" (website 2017). Finally, the project of the Jericho International Film Festival hinges on the notion that the integration of viewing infrastructures in a film economy is central to its steady growth and places the rehabilitation of the Bauhaus-style Rivoli cinema at the center of the festival's re-opening. The combination of industry and film appreciation is seen to provide a sustainable future for cinema and society in these contexts, in ways that comply with development's articulation of foreign investment, institution-building, and cultural strengthening as a factor for peace and stability.

This specific form of cinephilia attached to film festivals acts as more than a mere mode of film reception fixating on an ontological form of the medium of cinema for aesthetic purposes and exceeds discourses around the impact of new technologies on spectatorial practices (De Valck and Hagener 2005). Instead, cinephilia in Palestine expresses an industrial imaginary as a whole, where the theatre holds an economic dimension, as well as an affective one. Contrary to canonical narratives on the emergence of cinephilia, the Palestinian phenomenon did not rise from a matrix of film criticism, journals and active ciné-clubs – apart from a few exceptional mobile cinemas – primarily dedicated to elevating cinema to the status of art. Rather, it materialized almost right away with the establishment of film festivals pertaining to an economy of development and prestige that gives the "cinema space" a particular meaning, as I will argue later on in the chapter. Cinephilia and discourses of regeneration, the latter having often contextualized post-war film

festivals, must be thought together here. The initiation of the Berlinale, for example, was heavily supervised and supported by the American forces stationed in West Germany during the Cold War, under the cover of re-building a German industry in crisis (de Valck 2007, 50). This becomes all the more significant as the imaginary of the reconstruction of post-War Europe has largely informed developmental involvement in the third world as well (Escobar 1994, 56). Long term cultural change, here advocated by Palestinian festival organizers, is also inscribed in economic understandings of development that encompass the economy of tourism and the service industry (Harbord 2002, 60). It is revealing that the Ramallah Municipality has for example been particularly involved in the Days of Cinema, the Head of the Department of Culture leading the Lab's policy Cultural Observatory. The event's catalogue also includes a list of cafés and restaurants, partners of the festival, that movie-goers are encouraged to visit. More broadly, the industry of (war) tourism has spiked after the Second Intifada, with some infamous examples such as the graffiti tours of the Apartheid Wall in Bethlehem, or the most recent "Walled Off Hotel" opened by Banksy.

The instability of film festivals' status in Palestine first lies in the role they are understood to play in the Palestinian filmmaking community. In effect, not everyone recognizes the central position of film festivals in the building of a film industry in Palestine – this goal being itself quite distant. The prominent Palestinian cinema scholar and producer George Khleifi acknowledges that festivals are key to the exhibition of Palestinian films but suggests film schools are more likely to instigate structural change (interview with the author 2015). Similarly prudent, the former director of the now discontinued Al-Kasaba International Film Festival Khaled Alayyan modestly conceives of his own project as a mediation between artists and films (interview with the author 2015) – as opposed to the theatre director's emphasis on a film industry. Finally, filmmaker and initiator of the production company Collage Film Dima Abu Ghoush identifies the support of local television stations, presently reluctant to invest in Palestinian cinema, as a great priority (interview with the author 2015). In these perspectives, festivals cannot alone fulfill the needs of a nascent industry. The uneven articulation of the cinephiliac and the industrial, common to most discourses on film festivals, thus sketches the possibility for various complementary considerations of the futures carried by Palestine's cultural events. Concurrently, May Odeh's confident claim that "Palestinian cinema has managed to create a Palestinian state where politicians have failed" (Berlinale Talent 2015) refers to the diplomatic strength of an art cinema that has circulated the

name of Palestine in prestigious film festivals worldwide. In her view, the industrial ambitions of her own project of the Jericho International Film Festival (JIFF) relay and supplement this political success. Alayyan assesses the limitations of the proto-state as well but suggests we could think of film festivals as institutions, rather than industrial structures, foundational to the building of the future state: "When we talk about Palestine, for me it's not the ministers, it is the institutions. The film institutions started before the state: the institutions make the state, not the state makes the institutions" (interview with the author 2015). The Kasaba theatre (also called Cinémathèque) fulfilled this function for instance by acting as an intermediary between European institutions in search of Palestinian films and the artists. These exchanges between Kasaba and the international network of movie theatres Europa Cinemas prompted the Al Kasaba European Film weeks before the festival itself was instituted.

Film festivals constitute a paradoxical institution, one that is epistemologically and logistically unstable and easy to disrupt. Cancellation, postponement, make-up screenings, change of location, volunteering are only a few of many characteristics that make film festivals both precarious and flexible events par excellence. Due to this structural precariousness, they are in turn particularly adapted to the hostile environment of the occupation in Palestine, where checkpoints, curfews, interruptions of screenings, confiscation of film material, and denial of guests' entry, among other things, destabilize pre-set programs and constantly threaten events with their impermanence. They can be described, in the way Reema Salha Fadda frames the context of contemporary art in Palestine, as "institutional sites of impermanence that temporarily disrupt the spatial order." Festivals thus participate in "the cultural turn towards 'biennalization' and 'eventicization' that has emerged in Palestine over the past decade or so, [which] insist[s] on institutionalizing cultural continuity in a sociopolitical context that is constantly in flux" (Fadda 2016, 156). The contradiction embedded in the festival's perennial temporariness, as well as its simultaneous engagement with the synchronicity of real-time screening events and the diachronicity of its yearly implementation, translate into the capacity to "transform structures into events" (Harbord 2016, 70), and vice versa. This ambiguity of festivals' institutional status explains why so many, among which we may count Khleifi, question their actual impact. The film festivals under review engage with economic and discursive dynamics of post-conflict reconstruction and institution-building dear to peace-building's rhetoric of stability, through the promotion of cinephilia. Festivals' instability both stems from their adaptation to the environment

of suspended time, which they mimic; and their incapacity to fit in the dominant conceptions of a film industry. Much of the imaginary around film institutions and film industries emerges from ideals of stability that do not reflect Palestine's conditions of possibility. The next section thus elaborates on Palestine's film festivals' unstable nature by examining how the Days of Cinema imagines itself in comparison to the "models" of European art cinema festivals, whose material stability is further enforced ideologically by the cultural norms cinephilia reproduces.

Negotiating the Global Imaginary of Stable Film Festivals

We must now further attend to what "film festival" entails in the Palestinian environment. The term was first defined with respect to specific dominant European practices, and is now embedded in an academic enterprise to essentialize its industrial features based on the historical assumption of European primacy. For Christel Taillibert and John Wäfler, the denomination "film festival" only acquired stability in the late 1940s, following a gradual cultural incorporation of such events in European society of the time. After a series of cinephiliac events inspired by the ciné-club model in 1930s France, the term then crystallized around the now canonical model of annual international events organized around a film competition (Taillibert and Wäfler 2016, 17). Because of the worldwide reproduction of the festival model, the term has come to be normalized, and its study divorced from a critical apparatus that could appreciate the instability of festivals' structure and epistemology both historically and geographically. Film festivals are now included into a teleological narrative of success retrospectively justified by historical inquiries. One of the founders of the emerging field of film festival studies, Marijke de Valck explains the emergence and continuity of the film festival network in opposition to the "failure" of the cinematic avant-garde in those terms:

> If one wants to explain the contemporary "*success*" of film festivals it is imperative that we include a historical perspective. History will help us to understand why film festivals *succeeded* in developing into a *successful* network whereas the cinematic avant-garde, which originated during roughly the same period and was subjected to the same field of antagonistic forces, *failed* to do so (de Valck 2007, 19, my emphases).

This view places contemporary film festivals outside of time, not in the way orientalist representations of "under-development" and colonized people would be, but rather as the

successful endpoint of a teleological journey. Significantly, a leading theoretician in the field, Dina Iordanova recently defined the stakes of film festival studies as follows:

> What is important today is to ensure that the film festival is studied as a phenomenon complete in itself, emptied of *specific* content (the films remain intrinsic, but they can be any films), independent of particular national cinema frameworks (though admitting of their and other cultural concerns), and separate from film industry considerations (as industry is just one of a festival's many stakeholders) (Iordanova 2016, xii, her emphasis).

The film festival (singular) becomes an unquestionable and abstract product of European modernity, and "complete in itself." Such fixed definitions generate cultural norms and economic standards that organize the global map of festivals according to their conceptual proximity to the *ur*-film festival. This is further encouraged by festivals' canonical function of instituting cultural value to films and distributing prestige as an aspect of their institutionalization of cinephilia. Fixed definitions similarly guide discourses of development – which can be compared to, and extend, colonial discourses – as they foster forms of subjectivities through which people come to recognize themselves, by contrast, as under-developed (Escobar 1995, 10).

Considering this epistemological dominance, added to the fact of Palestinian cinema gaining strength through those very influential networks, it is unsurprising that the global imaginary of film festivals and cinephilia provides the blueprint for the Days of Cinema (hereafter DoC). This imaginary must simultaneously be negotiated according to the specific institutional context of Palestinian filmmaking. Created in 2014, the DoC was initiated by the local non-profit organization FilmLab: Palestine (FLP) started in 2011. The event engages with the five areas of action identified by FLP as follows: "elevating film as an art form in Palestine," "strengthening the creative-cultural industry," "facilitating dialogue among the film industry," "creating a hub for filmmaking in Palestine," and "enhancing capacities and creating jobs for youth" (website 2015). FilmLab and DoC have concomitantly worked to expand their international network and re-centralize the dispersed local community. FLP plans to further develop training workshops (dedicated to scriptwriting, storytelling, videography, production, and sound mixing), residencies, and co-productions meant to both send Palestinians abroad and bring foreigners to Palestine. The Days of Cinema 2015 pursued these goals by formalizing partnerships with foreign cultural institutes and Ramallah Doc's pitching sessions, which introduce Palestinian film projects to international TV buyers. In the vein of Ramallah Doc, the Palestine Film Meetings (PFM) were

launched as a "cutting-edge industry networking platform for local and international film professionals" at the 2017 edition (website 2017). In 2016, the DoC introduced the Sunbird Award for feature-length documentaries and narrative shorts about or taking place in Palestine, delivered by an international jury. The same year, the Sunbird Production Award was also instituted in order to support the shooting, post-production, and distribution of one Palestinian short film project in cooperation with the Danish Aarhus Film Workshop and MAD Solutions, a Cairo and Abu Dhabi-based Pan-Arab studio providing marketing and creative consultancy for "the Arab film and Entertainment Industry" (website MAD Solutions 2017).

The integration of the DoC in this matrix of initiatives mirrors the expansion of global film festivals' prerogatives and their increased institutional role the world over, from providing film grants (Falicov 2016) to playing the role of brokers (Dickinson 2016) by helping directors secure pre-buy deals as well as post-production grants. The broadening of festivals' areas of intervention particularly meets the needs of Palestine's under-institutionalized context. More generally, FLP's partnerships reveal a double engagement with European economies of development and various actors, self-described as "independent," in the rising creative industries in the region. The models of global film festivals and the creative industry also translate into the visual identity of the Days of Cinema, from the iconic photocall set at the exit of the opening and closing films in the imposing hall of the Ramallah Cultural Palace, to the event's trailer, playing before the screenings, which during the 2015 edition featured glossy images of the team at work in their offices.

On the other hand, FilmLab also acts as an institution by centralizing the information necessary to develop labor and legal infrastructures. In association with the Department of Culture at the Ramallah Municipality in 2015, the FLP unit of the "Palestinian Cultural Observatory Project" gathered data about Palestinian institutions and current policies in order to assess new modes of operation within the possibilities set by the limited framework of Palestinian law. In 2016, the FilmLab website inaugurated a database of the Palestinian labor force in the film industry ranging from filmmakers, film researchers and critics to the wardrobe and the transportation departments. Although describing itself as a relatively small event, the DoC expanded considerably from one year to the next. In 2014, it featured 17 short films, 8 feature films, and 5 master classes and workshops. In 2015, with 14 shorts, 23 features, 18 documentaries, 7 children's films, and 5 panels, the event diversified its pool of productions and brought in more than double the number of films, which were carefully selected and screened over seven different cities

(Bethlehem, Gaza, Haifa, Jenin, Jerusalem, Nazareth and Ramallah). Although unevenly attended, the event introduced more international art films than all of Palestine's theatres combined show in their regular programming in one year. The 2017 edition included an even greater number of shorts (48 across sections), ballooning the total number of films to 77, including 15 that listed Palestine as a country of production. This edition's emphasis on short films, a consequence of FLP's development of various programs of co-production and awards dedicated to that format, is also manifest in the debates set to animate the industry meetings that year. Featuring discussions around "filmmaking without infrastructure," finding an audience for short films, and distribution strategies for low-budget film production (catalogue 2017), the DoC tailored the edition for the specific needs of local producers and the possibilities for them to shine and learn, while investigating what place Palestinian productions could carve in the global market on their own terms.

Similar negotiations with the global imaginary of film festivals can be observed in the selection of the 2015 edition. Among the 62 films, 12 were Palestinian, including the opening and closing films (Tarzan and Arab Nasser's *Dégradé*, 2015; and Muayad Alayyan's *Al-Hob wa al-Sariqa wa Masahkel Ukhra*/*Love, Theft and Other Entanglements*, 2015). A majority hailed from the Arab world, including Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunis, Syria, and Yemen, with special programs dedicated to shorts from Iraq and the Gulf. Other countries from the Global South were also represented such as Argentina, Iran, Uganda, and Uzbekistan. The themes of these non-Palestinian films ranged from the struggle for national independence (Damien Ounouri, *Fidai*, 2012; Dania Al Kury, *Peshmerga,* 2014) and the return to the homeland (Nadine Naous, *Home Sweet Home*, 2011, Mohamed Al-Daradji, *In the Sands of Babylon*, 2013) to the place of women in society (Zeina Daccache, *Yawmiyat Scheherazade*/*Scheherazade's Diary*, 2013; Khadija al Salami, *Ana Nujoom, Bent al-Asherah wa Motalagah*/*I am Nujoom, 10, and Divorced*, 2014; Saodat Ismailova, *Chilla*, 2014; Kaouther Ben Hania, *Challat Tunes/Le Challat de Tunis*, 2013), which all hit a familiar nerve in Palestine. The project to build a Palestinian film industry and the formation of a broader cosmopolitan film culture cannot be separated. Yet, by underrepresenting productions from the Global North, DoC proposes its own interpretation of what art cinema means and who its main actors are. Moreover, many of these films, produced two to four years before DoC's 2015 edition, had already completed their round in the international festival circuit. No longer qualifying as "discoveries," they had already been released in regular arthouse cinema networks worldwide. By including them in its selection, DoC both re-asserts its interest in marginal

productions, and functions as a replacement for limited local distribution networks. The programming ultimately reflects an attempt to extend global networks to Palestine and further in a gesture of South-South solidarity that has been imperiled by the conditions of possibility set by the occupation, as I will explain later.

Much like the event itself, the mother organization FilmLab constitutes a site of impermanence specific not only to the contexts of development and occupation but also to the deregulated economies of global creative industries. Inspired by the model of the Aarhus film workshop in Denmark, the FilmLab received financial support from a number of Danish institutions established in Palestine such as the Danish House in Palestine (DHiP) and the Danish Ministry of Affairs' Center for Culture and Development (CKU), both an expression of the country's active interest in developing its presence in the Middle East through pedagogical and economic means (Hjort 2013). In return, DoC featured a presentation on the Aarhus film workshop in 2014 as well as a Danish film program in 2015. The collaboration with Danish institutions went beyond mere funding. The three-year-plan that launched FLP in 2011 was crafted in consultation with the Danish Film Institute (DFI), whose representative Charlotte Giese provided similar advisory work in other sites such as Uganda. Atallah explains: "She goes to countries like us where there is no film industry, and she knows how we can begin" (interview with the author 2015). The Film Lab functions here as a "format" that can be repackaged from North to South – albeit always with Northern funding. In the context of television, Sharon Shahaf defines format as a "concept rather than finished text [that] opens up new opportunities for players from previously hopelessly marginalized markets, which can now compete on the home turf of the world's most influential industry" (Shahaf 2012). In this conception, the FilmLab's structure, with its major reliance on year-long training workshops that require minimal infrastructure, is presumably applicable to all places, as an "easily relocatable 'generating formula[…],' into which local cultural content gets infused as afterthought" (Shahaf 2012). The lab accommodates both the flexibility of global neoliberal economies and unstable contexts of political unrest, while homogenizing the systems of film production via grant systems that secure further dependence on established film economies. Yet, the Sunbird Production Award cited earlier, instituted in 2017, highlights both the dependence on Danish infrastructures where Palestinian filmmakers are sent for post-production, and the attempt at reconfiguring the geography of world cinema's typical distribution in European networks of arthouse cinemas, by including a Pan-Arab distribution partnership.

The myth of the global format, also applied to the festival model, has forged a standard by which Palestinian events are expected to be measured. The Palestinian festival's non-conformity to the global definition has effectively placed doubt on the local iteration's contribution rather than unveiling the epistemological instability of the term "film festival." The Palestinian event is consequently suspended in a status of "not-yet" festival. In 2015, before the Sunbird awards and the industry meetings were implemented, Atallah stated that the DoC could not qualify as a festival. According to his definition,

> filmmakers, distributors, and producers apply to […] festival[s]. A festival has a jury; a festival has awards. A festival has the capacity to screen in always good situations. A festival allows you to welcome people whose films you chose. In Palestine […] we are not ready for it (interview with the author 2015).

This understanding permeates the Palestinian filmmakers' community beyond the organizers of Palestine's film festivals alone, informed as it is by examples of "successful" Palestinian directors "who have made it" to the international (European) circuits. In this context, Palestine becomes one of many sites where "Cinema" cannot be carried through, according to unchallenged norms of stable exhibition and spectatorship. The practices of cinephilia standardized by European global art cinema festivals are thus here articulated with the material possibilities for proper film infrastructures. Invited to introduce his latest film *The Mountain between Us* at the opening of the 2017 Cairo International Film Festival, the renowned Palestinian filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad interrupted and cancelled the screening because of the "low" quality of the projection and after spectators left the theater in the middle of the film to head out to the buffet (Egyptian Streets 2017). The Egyptian filmmaker Mohamed Diab sympathized with Abu-Assad in a public Facebook post in which he fustigates the lack of professionalism not only of the festival, but of the Egyptian industry as a whole, for not supporting its own Arab filmmakers (Diab 2017).[27] The interruption and the outrage on display reveal more than a prejudice; rather, they suggest that a given festival film is produced with a specific environment and spectatorship in mind, without which it cannot be shown. In this discourse, the film becomes inseparable from, and inherent to, the very infrastructures of viewership. This begs the question of which films are left to be shown in spaces that do not fit the needs of conventional European cinephilia. Furthermore, in this view, how can

[27] Translated with the help of Farah Atoui.

a film made within the framework of Northern infrastructures be transferred to the context of the South?

The Days of Cinema emerges from within politics of development, enmeshed in possibilities set by the occupation, which mediate the event's possible stability. During the 2015 edition, the discrepancy between the imagined event – informed both by the requirements of global cinephilia and the project of a regional network – and its actual realization amid the contingencies of the uprisings, was locked down in the printed material. The catalogue presents an ideal and stabilized version of an event and functions as a record of a time that has not happened yet. Oftentimes – and not only in Palestine – it is in fact inaccurate. In 2015, echoing Atallah's claim that the Days of Cinema could not be considered a festival, many panels and screenings announced in the catalogue had to be cancelled because films could not get through, or guests were denied entry at the Israeli border. These guests and films hailed from the surrounding Arab countries as well as Turkey and Iran, and the panels that could in fact take place reflected a global geography of the cultural discourses that are authorized by the occupier, and those that are not. By contrast, the guests' absence drew a map of potential and unrealized regional alliances and solidarities.

The panels' topics revolved around the present and future of the potential film industry in Palestine, and their cancellation or reconfiguration uncovered the options left to Palestinian imaginations. For example, the panel dedicated to "the status of independent cinema in Palestine" was cancelled altogether because four out of five speakers – from Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Sudan – were stopped at the border controlled by Israel. Scheduled to discuss "What are the main obstacles preventing the development of a strong independent cinema sector in Palestine?," the panel's very impossibility spoke for itself. In a second panel on "the value of cinematic critique in the development of cinema culture and industry," Berlinale project manager Vincenzo Bugno conducted the discussion alone because Turkish film critic and producer Alin Tasciyan had been denied entry. Instead of addressing film criticism in Palestine – a sector much in need of support – the conversation shifted towards Bugno's expertise as an advisor for the Berlinale's grant provider World Cinema Fund (WCF), and the strategies Palestinian artists could mobilize to obtain subsidies. Structural questions about the possibility of a film industry were replaced by individual concerns that highlighted the competition between cultural workers. Forced to limit the discussions to interlocutors whose presence was approved by Israel, these panels could only reinforce the status quo of crisis rather than open up the possibility for collaborations with new international actors.

In the light of these disruptions typical of news time, what stability can festivals actually provide? In what follows, I will reflect on the real-time produced by festivals in suspended Palestine, and the infrastructures and economies of cinephilia that support it.

Festivals' Real-Time

In her report on the Ramallah International Film Festival (RIFF, 2004), Kay Dickinson points to the incongruity of holding an international film event in Ramallah in the midst of the Second Intifada. The destination hardly fits the common imaginary of a touristic site, and local as well as international audiences had to cross checkpoints and take diverted routes in order to access the screenings. For Palestinians, she adds, watching the local news at home would have seemed a more sensible option under these circumstances. TV occupied a central position during those times, and the repetition of the news also served to build a sense of solidarity and support in a context of fragmentation. Yet Dickinson remarks,

> Lengthy, supportive articles in *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *Le Monde* appeared, and, by the end of the festival, there was a web presence that ran into hundreds of references. The common thread joining all these reports seemed to be their objective of restoring esteem to Ramallah's vibrant art scene within foreign opinion, and deflecting attention, if only momentarily, from the constant reports about suicide bombers, and so on, elsewhere in these newspapers. There is also a distinct possibility that the festival's multicultural guest list (including members of the press) may have provided a protective umbrella over Ramallah for this very brief time (Dickinson 2005, 270).

The RIFF, both discursively through its coverage and by crushing the habit of watching the news at home (for the Palestinians who attended), trumped news time for a short duration. In that instance, the festival itself worked as a moment of disruption, marginalizing the effect of the occupation to a consistent murmur.

Media and cultural theorists of festivals have pushed such carefully contextualized observation to a point of definition, supporting the view that festivals produce their own separate temporality. In the following theorizations, largely European-based, both festivals and cinephilia reflect ideals of stability by securing the space and time of screening and spectatorship away from the context external to the theater. Contrary to the example exposed above, these conceptualizations also tend to evacuate the political context. In 1987, structuralist anthropologist Alessandro Falassi introduced the edited volume *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, by

pointing to folk festivals' modification of the daily functions and meanings of time and space through its four imperatives of reversal, intensification, trespassing, and abstinence. Ger Zielinski prolongs the carnivalesque exceptionality of the film festival's time and space with Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Here he seeks to capture the heterogeneity of time, space, and norms at play in the cultural formation of queer, gay and lesbian film festivals, which by his own account also apply to festivals more generally. Festivals form spaces of difference, but also rely on "a break in traditional time" (Zielinski 2012, 2). Finally, Janet Harbord extends the shaping of a privileged social space to economic considerations. "Traditional time" in that context refers to the economy of late capitalism. Festivals' synchronic creation of "real-time," she argues, runs counter to the deregulated environment that dominates the era of globalization (Harbord 2016, 69). Harbord's argument, partly drawing from Mary Ann Doane's reflection on early cinema's role as a distraction for the masses, opposes the spectacle of film to the temporality of daily work. She elaborates:

> the festival model has built into its form a managed contingency whose function it is to produce a moment of real time, a time that cannot be harnessed for productive-labor, nor for the ethos of a deregulated time of deferral and displacement, but can only be an affective and emphatic 'now' (Harbord 2016, 72).

These accounts echo very closely Marijke de Valck's and Malte Hagener's (also festival scholars) description of the experience of cinephilia with respect to history: "On a temporal level, past, present, and future, are fused into a media time that is increasingly disconnected from the traditional historical time" (De Valck and Hagener 2005, 15). While the discourse of news time's real-time emerged from, and re-organized, historical and political contexts, on the contrary film festivals and cinephilia as the mode of spectatorship most commonly associated with these events *distance* themselves from the context in order to focus on the nostalgia produced by cinema's medium specificity. The "global now" of news time makes space for the labor-less "affective and emphatic now" of film festivals. In this conception, film festival can become "one of the last refuges for the cinephile" (Czach 2010, 140).

In film festival studies, the live space of the festival materializes the creation of real-time. For Dina Iordanova building on Benedict Anderson, the act of watching films together in the live space of the festival "practically suspend[s] the 'imagined' element of […] communit[ies] by substituting it to a very real one" (Iordanova 2010, 13). At first sight, Palestinian practitioners and

festival organizers make similar remarks. The catalogue of the 2015 edition of the DoC opens with a welcoming word by its artistic director Hanna Atallah. There, he emphasizes the importance of cinema as a *space* of "control" to develop "our personal story," one of "freedom," for the audience to reflect "on their personal experiences in response to what they feel from observing a film" (catalogue 2015, 1). Such a statement may not stand out as particularly original. However, if we extend the "space of cinema" from its metaphorical meaning to the materiality of the theatre, Atallah's introduction importantly sets the stakes for cinema during suspended time, and more generally in a context where all levels of cultural productions are conditioned to some level by the occupation.

A space favored by cinephiles (a "refuge"!), theatres prove integral to film festivals, which sell not only films but a total experience. In her famous *New York Times* article on "The Decay of Cinema" held to mark the revival of a discussion around cinephilia in the 1990s (De Valck 2010, 33), Susan Sontag mourned the death of cinephilia and the ritual of "going to the movies," picking the right seat, and "being kidnapped by the movie" (Sontag 1996). The attachment Palestinian festival organizers express for cinema as an art form – tangible in Atallah's words cited above and in the FLP's project as a whole – also derives from giving films "the respect they are due," in the spirit of Sontag. Filmmaker, producer and festival organizer May Odeh similarly laments that the new screening venues established after the Second Intifada, located in malls, are not conducive to film appreciation (Cattenoz 2016). Yet achieving the "perfect conditions" for film viewing has much greater implications in Palestine's context of occupation. Sontag's kidnapping metaphor proves most unfortunate in an environment where Israeli soldiers regularly raid private homes and arbitrarily arrest Palestinians. The stakes of cinephilia in Palestine exceed the quasi-religious experience of enjoying art. In Palestine, fully engaging with cinephilia means, purely *materially*, not being interrupted, not being captured, and keeping control over the viewing space. It thus implicitly falls under film festivals' responsibility to create a *safe space* outside of the militarization of daily life. In other words, what is at stake is festivals' capacity to produce a film time. Film time can thus be defined as an environment organized around the possibility to watch films in "perfect conditions," which hinge on contexts of viewership pre-defined by the films' global economies.

Film theatres and their discursive capacity to create a real-time that would protect or divert its audience from the context of military occupation supply an implicit ideological basis for the

economic project of a festival-centered Palestinian film industry, which aligns with developmental discourses of peacebuilding and human security. Film festivals' cinephilia cannot be limited to a global imaginary that produces legitimacy and artistic value. In the context of Palestine, cinephilia's promise of relative financial and experiential stability justifies and encourages an economic strategy based on the film theatre, which proves compatible with the logics of the developmental structures that organize lives and futures in the proto-state. Visible infrastructures such as roads and buildings rank first as recipients of international aid because they can be easily advertised as tangible proofs of assistance, and they figure highly in peacebuilding's discourses of post-conflict reconstruction. Similarly, a look at the venues used by the different film festivals over the years hints at the deep entanglements between screening spaces and aid economy. Many foreign cultural institutes (like the French Institute in Ramallah and Nablus, and the Danish House in Ramallah) have hosted screenings as partners of the events; but on other occasions, the centers were involved because they were among the few to provide the necessary infrastructure, such as the Korean center in Hebron. In Jenin, the arthouse theatre Cinema Jenin, one of the largest in Palestine when it was established in 1958 before closing during the First Intifada, has often partnered with festivals since it re-opened in 2010, after implementing renovations initiated by German filmmaker Marcus Vitter and funded by the German Foreign Ministry. Dubbed "Cinema for Peace," the theatre was promoted in German newspapers as a way to resolve the "conflict" by overcoming the supposed terrorist inclinations of the inhabitants of Jenin, a center of Palestinian resistance to the occupation (Neidhardt 2015). Similarly, Vitter's film *Heart of Jenin* (2008), meant to publicized the theatre by depicting the generosity of a Palestinian father who donated his dead son's organs to an Israeli child, conceives of peacebuilding through a symbolic reconciliation that fails to challenge the structures of continuous colonization. The promotional campaign succeeded in bringing on board a number of German officials and became a national model for German involvement in peacebuilding in Palestine (Neidhardt 2015).

Film festival screenings have also been held at prestigious locations entirely funded by foreign aid to the point of becoming emblematic of Palestine's post-Oslo economy. Among these, the Ramallah Cultural Palace, a privileged venue for the opening and closing ceremonies of Palestine's film festivals, was erected by the end of the Second Intifada, at the same time film events started to multiply. Funded with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Japanese government, the Cultural Palace's status as a product of Oslo's politics

of dependency is clearly reflected in its interior design (Fig. 2). The hall opens onto a fresco of Jerusalem oriented to overlap with the real location of the city, the type of representation of the symbolic capital of Palestine that can be found everywhere in Ramallah and other Palestinian cities and villages. However, the upper right corner of the mosaic displays the logos of the palace's international funders as a reminder of the subordination of the national liberation struggle to state politics inflected by global interests. Similarly, the palace's wooden walls point to the import of a material present only sparsely in Palestine and deemed too precious to be used as an architectonic device at a time when olive trees are regularly uprooted by the Israeli army.

Figure 2: The lobby of the Ramallah Cultural Palace (photo by the author).

Despite its ornaments, the RCP is however not completely adapted for film time, lacking for example a Digital Cinema Package (DCP) projector, the predominant format for global art films and a guarantee of optimal screening conditions. In 2015, the DoC crew had to borrow one of the two only DCP projectors in Palestine, both funded by the German Foreign Ministry and assigned to the Cinema Jenin (which has also been gifted one 35mm and one 3D projector). That Jenin, deemed to be quite conservative and maybe more reticent than other cities to encourage film culture, be better endowed than Ramallah, can be surprising. The cartography of aid however produces its own paradoxical logic, which speaks to the uneven distribution of resources and donors' situated goals, including those, as described before, motivated by bigoted understandings of Palestinian resistance as terrorism. In 2016, the Cinema Jenin closed permanently after losing their main financial support, the Protestant church in Frankfurt. Neither the Palestinian Authority

nor the German Representative Office in Ramallah made an offer to buy the cinema, and the theatre was sold to an urban developer planning a new shopping mall (Cinema Jenin website 2017).

Film festivals' real-time thus proves endangered by unstable developmental economies. The shopping centers compete with film festivals and their theatres for space in the center of cities, but also in the creation of an immersive real-time. As commercial venues, they benefit from a greater stability than spaces relying on aid. Theatres integrated into malls, such as Cinema City, established in Nablus in 2009, and the six-screen Palestine Tower Cinema, which opened in Ramallah in 2014, have been steadily screening American blockbusters. Palestine Tower Cinema promoted the venue as favorable to featuring Palestinian and Arabic productions during the opening ceremony. They invited Rashid Masharawi to present his latest film *Falasteen Stereo/Palestine Stereo* (2013), whose storyline by contrast reflects informal practices of organizing events in the streets (Wattan News Agency video 2014). Despite the promise of better inclusion of Palestinian productions, only a handful of Palestinian films have been screened in the Palestine Tower cinema since the opening, and for a couple of weeks at the most.

What does it mean, then, economically, to think about cinephilia's love for the theatre as a basis for a Palestinian film industry? Cinema Jenin conceived its own space as "setting the seed for a local film industry" by emulating a sense of community around cinema. In order to be inclusive, the official ticket price was set at 5 Shekel (approximately US $1.45), a fee that did not allow the space to build its own financial autonomy. Similarly, the DoC do not charge for any of their screenings, none of which are hosted by commercial theatres. Yet, a central task the DoC identified for themselves was to "revitalize" cinema culture in Palestine by bringing people back to the theatres (catalogue 2015). In turn, May Odeh explains that the Jericho International Film Festival project relies on the site of the theatre as the cornerstone of a potential film industry in Palestine. Here she articulates the cinephiliac ideal of film quality and its inclusion within commercial networks:

> I don't think you can create a cinema industry with just good films. It is not enough. You have to have the whole circle, with good films, a good team, good productions, and good infrastructures to screen locally and to distribute it. For this you need theatres (interview with the author 2015).

In this view, a margin of the profits made on the screenings' entrance fees would be allocated back to the local distributors. In countries like in France, where theatres (and film festivals) are central

to the whole film economy, the box office is also redistributed to the films' producers, the exhibitors, and a national fund that supports future productions. In this context, film festivals are fully integrated in the local film economy, but their access is conditioned by the audience's finances. This contrasts with the current slow and very partial integration of cinema within accepted networks of aid that mediate Palestinians' free access to culture.

Contrary to Harbord's claim then, film festivals' real-time and affective now *is* constantly "harnessed […] for the ethos of a deregulated time of deferral and displacement." Fueled by cinephilia's norms, developmental projects around the Palestinian film economy and film theatres in particular function as promises that establish sets of expectations of stability for infrastructures and their global integration. Arturo Escobar articulates development's discourse of futurity in teleological terms: "the fact of development itself, the need for it, could not be doubted. Development had achieved the status of a certainty in the social imaginary" (Escobar 1995, 5). Yet, the certainty of real-time is rarely achieved in Palestine, and often circumscribed by the temporality of the "not-yet." This deferral comes together with a type of displacement Harbord might not have anticipated, one relying on the discrepancy between what development sets as valuable and the local needs and possibilities of Palestine's media environment. The certainty on which developmental discourses dwell becomes the condition for cinephilia instead of a promise it can realistically keep in any given context. To echo earlier reflection on spectatorial immersion, the real-time of festival screening does not produce safety or stability; rather, safety and stability are necessary for cinephilia's real-time. This is nowhere more obvious than in the convergence of the real-times of film time and news time in the institutionalizing space of the theatre, to which I now turn.

The Institutionalization of Film Time

The second edition of the DoC took place between October 12 and October 20, 2015. On October 1, the media identified the beginning of the "Third Intifada" or "Knife Intifada" following the execution of eighteen-year-old Hadeel al-Hashlamoun by Israeli soldiers at a Hebron checkpoint the week before. An attack on two Israeli settlers on that day in October led to an escalation of the military violence towards Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank over the following few months. Assigning a start to a period embedded in an all-encompassing system of oppression established decades earlier constitutes a difficult exercise of historicization, one that demands that

we constantly question who controls the narrative. Whether the Intifada commences with the primal injustice, the Palestinian response to it, or the Israeli crackdown that follows produces distinct timelines and networks of causalities. Similarly, identifying one particular outburst of resistance as an Intifada is inevitably informed by the model of the First Intifada, the point of origin of a chronology that excludes much earlier uprisings like the 1936-39 Arab Revolt. As Palestinian writer Ramzy Baroud points out, "these scenarios have been in constant replay since [the 1930s], and with each Intifada, the price paid in blood seems to be constantly increasing" (Baroud 2015). What matters might be less the name or the numbering of Intifadas than the very fact of cyclical violence and enduring self-defense. That Oslo has maintained the possibility of this recurrence points once again to the suspension of Palestinian futurities.

While Baroud insists on calling the October uprisings "Intifada," many people in Ramallah were more cautious and referred to it in vague terms such as "what is happening now": in other words, as events. Significantly, in 2015, the organizers did not describe Days of Cinema as a festival, reducing it by default to the status of event as well. The double epistemological instability of the temporality in which DoC took place materialized in the competing real-times of viewing practices. I identify two modes of viewership that correspond to the conflicting and converging environments of news time and film time as they unfolded during DoC. I argue that the film event challenges news time in order to establish a setting favorable to art cinema *spectatorship.* How can festivals' institutionalizing attempts stabilize news time to that effect? To echo El-Hassan, what are the possibilities for *watching* films during an Intifada? By contrast, I choose the ubiquitous term "witnessing" to discuss the viewing practices that institutionalize news time and re-assert periods of unrest as numbered Intifadas dominated by contingency.

Practices of witnessing emerge from within the saturation of human rights discourses in Palestinian society after Oslo, which has provided the context for an economy of images based on suffering. Visual proofs of damaged Palestinian bodies or house demolitions have been used to affectively interpellate the international community (Allen 2009). These representations have extended to Palestinian TV as well, and supported political debates around the efficacy of Palestinian victimhood to reclaim human rights under attack. In 2015, the "necessity to bear witness" also mobilized Palestinian (non-)citizen journalists who reported human rights violations. Videos of the confrontations between the youths and the Israeli army circulated widely and structured modes of viewing during the ten days of DoC. These were posted and shared on

Whatsapp, Twitter, and Facebook through local popular pages like "Ramallah News" (*Ramallah al-Ikhbari*, 1.5 million followers). The same events would be captured by multiple cameras and filmed from various angles. Friends would replay them together and comment on them. Witnessing would organize modes of sociality embedded in instability.

While it contributes to consolidating news time's status quo of crisis, witnessing is also criminalized by the Israeli authorities as being a source of political instability itself rather than its mere expression. To the many already existing monikers, newspapers added those of "Internet Intifada," "Facebook Intifada," or "Smartphone Intifada" modelled on the rhetoric used to report on the Arab uprisings. For cultural anthropologist Rebecca Stein, these appellations were "not only erroneous but outdated, as [they] presume we should be surprised by the presence of social media in the political theatre. But in fact, this is the new normal" (cited in Poucher Harbin 2015). These appellations simultaneously revealed Israel's attempt at controlling the Palestinian cyber space as well as the territories. Faced with the popularity of these videos, the Israeli government released statements arguing that these images ignited tensions and constituted a threat to political stability. This justified more than 400 Palestinian arrests between 2015 and 2016 for content circulated on Facebook, which were conducted with the complicity of the company (Nashif 2017). In turn, Israel put in place a campaign discrediting the videos, exploiting the narrative of "Pallywood" according to which Palestinians fabricate images of Israeli military violence in order to pose as victims.[28] Within this framework,

> the story of the fake Palestinian death figured digital fraudulence, rather than military violence, as the chief offense to which the image testified. In other words, Israeli and pro-Israeli readers understood the suspicious images as violent ones. But the violence they identified rested in neither Israeli strikes nor the broader regime of military occupation. Rather, it took shape in the act of image manipulation in its various guises. In the process, wartime atrocities were refigured as pixels under scrutiny. In this way, a new field of warfare was being introduced. In the estimation of suspicious readers, image manipulation became the real war crime, and social media became the court in which the crime was tried (Kunstman and Stein 2015, 70).

The fiction of Pallywood transformed basic empathy towards human suffering into a dramatic ploy to extract unwarranted emotions, and Palestinian image-making into a crime. This discourse

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[28] The term was coined after the controversy surrounding the video coverage of the death of the Gazan teenager Mohammed al-Durrah in 2000 at the beginning of the Second Intifada.

responded to the rhetoric of witnessing by displacing the location of violence from physical military attacks to practices of visualization. The epistemology of witnessing was additionally placed under suspicion because of its (metaphorical and fantasized) association with Hollywood cinema's mode of production (with "special effects"). The mobilizing power of witnessing posed a threat to Israeli control because of its adaptability to instability.

Embedded in news time and Oslo's human rights economy, witnessing hints at institutionalizing practices of viewership strengthened by instability. Witnessing takes on an even deeper meaning if we think about it together with the term *istishhadi*, the martyrdom operator, or more commonly used, *shaheed*, the one who dies because of the violence of the occupation (whether involved in the armed resistance struggle or not).[29] The two words share a similar root with the verb to watch (also used for films): *shahada*. Literally, the verb *istishhada*, to become a martyr, can be translated as "to become a witness" of violence. This *embodied* mode of viewership structures the constitution of Palestinian collectivity. The different meanings of witnessing parallel Esmail Nashif's "three defining and intertwined forms or phases of death [present in every Palestinian], namely the victim, the martyr, and the martyrdom operator." Nashif continues: "Each of these forms may be described as an active socio-historical form of presence with its own particular mode of action. [They are] mechanisms [of labor] that regulate the relations of the Palestinian collective with itself" (Nashif 2013, 175). In other words, martyrs act as mediators between the social body and the physical violence of the occupation evidenced on their own corpse. By becoming news, these deaths effectively become symbols of structural oppression that recognize Palestinians as a common suffering people.

Nashif suggests that these various Palestinian deaths work in similar ways to what Lori Allen identifies as public spheres. In an early article, Allen argues that martyr posters create a public sphere because they start a conversation about the construction of national subjects through the act of martyrdom and its instrumentalization by various interest groups (Allen 2006). Later on, she describes this public sphere as "mediated" and contends that the news replaces "a coherent national project" (Allen 2009, 170). Nashif however complicates this account of the public sphere by grounding the social relations emerging from martyrdom within biopolitical regimes of colonial

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[29] *Shaheed* designated the freedom fighter (*fida'i*) in the 1960s and 70s, and evolved to meet the horizon of the rising human rights economy in the 1980s. NGOs then started to cast the unintentional martyr as the archetypal Palestinian victim (Khalili 2007, 114).

administration, carried by the PLO and later the PA (Nashif 2013, 179). The collective labor of martyrdom became translated into a symbolic and exchangeable value when statehood supplanted liberation as the primary goal of the First Intifada in the years preceding Oslo. Martyr death no longer produced a future of Palestinian return, nor did it act as the unmaking of the *Nakba*. The value of the act of martyrdom was transposed into its commemoration. It is with that context in mind that the news, as the institutionalized practice of witnessing and commemorating these deaths, can be understood as "replacing a coherent national project."

What of cinema's competing institutionalization of a gaze capable of consolidating the national project? What relationship does cinema spectatorship entertain with martyrs and the PA's administration of Palestinian deaths? And what is cinephilia's capacity to control instability? On October 12, the opening day of the Days of Cinema in Ramallah, the city was overshadowed by yet another martyr death that prompted all the shops downtown to close in solidarity. During uprisings, public parties in bars are deemed indecent and shut down by political parties and movements – Fateh, Hamas, or Islamic Jihad alike. Celebrations of all kind are toned down in respect for the daily casualties. It was then surprising to many that the festival would still take place, a testament to the exceptional status of culture. Whether or not the DoC should be held was debated internally with the advisory board, and it was ultimately decided that the event would be maintained in the name of countering colonial forces of cultural erasure. The Ramallah International Film Festival had followed a similar logic eleven years prior, during the Second Intifada (Dickinson 2005, 269).

Street commemoration was thus mirrored by more institutional and cinematic forms, and the opening night used Palestinian nationalist symbols in order to position the film event in alignment with the mourning nation. With the last-minute reconfiguration of the ceremony around events that fell outside of the organizers' purview, the festival attempted to challenge news time and remediate martyrdom through film time. Before the opening film was introduced, public relations and event coordinator Maya Abu Alhayyat presented an homage to the *shaheed* Ahmed Sharaka, a fourteen-year-old boy from the nearby refugee camp of Al-Jalazun. The audience rose to the sound of the national anthem and a film clip was played, which functioned as a response to the videos of military violence and the daily news reports on *shuhada*.[30] The excerpt, taken from acclaimed Greek auteur Theo Angelopoulos' *To Livadi Pou Dakrizei/The Weeping Meadow*

[30] *Shuhada* is the plural of *shaheed*.

(2004), an example of the director's aestheticized treatment of political history and an epic about refugees, re-instated martyrdom within the individual detachment and emotional involvement of film time. This curatorial choice was embedded both in the universalization of individual suffering through global art cinema, and the national celebration aiming to reclaim these deaths as part of a larger struggle. In this sense, global art cinema can participate in "the nearly universal experience of loss and communal remembrances of martyrs, [which] create an imagined community of resistance or suffering and translate the private loss into a national narrative of meaningful and purposeful self-sacrifice" (Khalili 2007, 149).

The translation into film time was eased in by the fictionalization of the space of commemoration as the opening film began. Despite having been selected months prior to the screening, the opening film was a direct comment on the current "events." Set in Gaza where the directors hail from, Arab and Tarzan Nasser's *Dégradé* (2015)[31] features women trapped in a hair salon while clashes between political parties make the streets of Gaza City unsafe. The film's scenario, a story behind closed doors, ironically resonated with the dichotomy between the "safe" space of the theatre constructed by the legitimization of the cultural event in Ramallah, and the streets outside, where boys were being killed. This discrepancy is however absent in the reception environments to which the film commercially addresses itself. The violence of the outside was not a concern, for example, in the guarded theatres of Cannes, where the film premiered at the Critic's Week. The stereotyping of the characters (each woman filled one particular function) and the explicit references to daily life in Gaza displayed for pedagogical purposes revealed the processes of fictionalization for foreign audiences.

In other words, the film was composed *for* a safe space. In her book *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (2002), Mary Ann Doane traces the epistemological changes that occurred in the domain of the sciences accompanying distinct and transformed relationships to time. These parallel the transition from the cinema of actuality, the first experiments in non-fiction cinema before 1907, towards classical cinema, one that is organized around an edited narrative. These two modes' differential approaches to contingency translated into the viewing spaces. While cinema of actuality celebrated the *unexpected* quality of the event in film form as well as in the social interaction of the audience, classical cinema required

[31] The French title reflects the primary French funding of the film. "Dégradé" is a type of layered haircut. It also means "deteriorated."

a space that reflected a sense of control, order and safety in order to attract middle and upper-middle classes. She concludes:

> the time of classical cinema, clearly manufactured for the desires of the spectator seated in the timeless space of the theatre, is disconcertingly familiar insofar as it consistently reaffirms the plausibility, the probability, *the irreversibility*, and the fundamental recognizability of "real time." Classical form in the cinema has functioned to restabilize a time subject to multiple disruptions in the nineteenth century's confrontation with the epistemological implications of the loss of determinism and law (Doane 2002, 138, my emphasis).

Similarly, *Dégradé*'s focus on Gaza's internal conflicts presented a "dramatization of control and its loss" (Doane 2002, 135) emphasized by the mimicking of real-time proper to the "behind closed doors" genre. Narrative cinema and the theatre space together ensured the control over environmental contingency.

As established earlier, transforming the witnessing gaze into a spectatorial one hinges on a broader film experience of *safety* produced by the film theatre itself. As it was the case for the RIFF and other festivals, the opening film was hosted by the prestigious Ramallah Cultural Palace, a venue that concretizes the PA's post-Oslo cultural politics dictated by international donors and the NGO-ization of the economy. The safe space of the Palace was exceptionally protected by its international aura and its location in Ramallah's embassy quarter. The context of the Intifada reveals cinephilia as an inherently privileged and elitist experience. The same safety could not be guaranteed for all screenings. On October 14, the screening of Salim Abu Jabal's documentary *Roshmia* (2014) at the Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem was interrupted "due to the murder of Mutaz Zawahreh (twenty-seven-year-old football player at [sic] Ibda' Football Team) by the Israeli occupation forces" during a protest (FilmLab Facebook page 2015). The announcement was shared on the FilmLab's Facebook page, resulting in the event's promotional tool working in spite of itself as a news outlet. The army's metaphorical (and yet very material) incursion into the emotional space of the camp threatened "the irreversibility" of film time and re-asserted the impossibility of watching films during the Intifada.

In the Dheisheh refugee camp, cinema spectatorship was once again supplanted by news time's *reversibility*, military violence and the uncoordinated efforts at work in the streets. The space of cinema spectatorship, although unable to provide safety as a new national project, adjusted to the news by playing with the elasticity of the *festival* event. Where news time is

instantaneous and viral, film time can be extendable. Without entrance fees, the Days of Cinema was free of commercial obligations and could schedule films by prioritizing access rather than profit. The film's director, Salim Abu Jabal, a member of the organizing team, facilitated access to the film. As a result, *Roshmia* was rescheduled at the Ibda' Center a few days later after the mourning period had passed – after commemoration. Similarly, all the events scheduled for Jerusalem were postponed until the end of January 2016 because the city was the site of the highest political tensions from October to December. The real-time of cinephilia was, once again, deferred.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated cinephilia through Palestinian attempts at developing an art film economy mainly supported by European funders and relying on the real-time produced by film festivals and cinephiliac spectatorship. Cinephilia manufactures a fantasized "affective now" that ideally constructs the space of the theatre as a refuge disembedded from global capitalist economies – a discourse that reveals its privileged European origins. In Palestine however, the pervasive threat of the occupation, whether direct or mediated by the news, constantly jeopardizes the stability offered by cinephilia's discourse and economy. The contingence of stability, as well as its imbrication within the elitist, neocolonial, and uneven framework of the developmental economy, thus become evident. In this context, film festivals emerge as flexible structures that allow Palestinian practitioners to navigate political and economic instability and negotiate their own interests in the face of international donors' pressure.

Days of Cinema's unstable identity as a "not-yet" festival exposed the structural tensions between cinephilia and news' competing real-times and their respective strategies to achieve stability. Yet, in 2017, after a controversy around the closing film, Ziad Doueiri's *Qadiat Raqm 23*/*The Insult* (2016), which some Palestinian groups called to boycott, Days of Cinema issued a statement in which they identified themselves as a "festival." Since 2016, the event has grown to include awards for the shooting, post-production, and distribution of Palestinian projects, as well as a local industry meeting opened onto the regional market. Days of Cinema, renamed Palestine Cinema Days in 2017, has thus quickly evolved from its first edition in 2014 until the latest in 2018, where the event has discursively overcome its unachieved status. This suggests that Palestinian cinema and cinema in Palestine are gaining traction among international, regional, but also local funders, with exceptional support coming from the telecommunications company

Jawwal for example. We can thus see the development of a model that diversifies funding sources by cultivating European support and slowly integrating the regional creative industries. These are consolidating around the multiplication of Arab film funds (the now defunct SANAD in Abu Dhabi and Enjaaz at the Dubai International Film Festival, as well as the growing Arab Fund for Arts and Culture - AFAC), film markets (formerly at DIFF), and regional awards (such as the projected 2018 Pan-Arab Oscar ceremony organized by the Dubai-based Arab Film Institute, where six Palestinian productions are to be presented).

What does it mean then, almost ten years after Zobaidi's assessment of Palestinian cinema's mode of production as individual, "independent from the authorities of state, religion and commerce," to talk about a Palestinian "independent" cinema? The gradual regionalization of Palestinian cinema's funding does not necessarily suggest a whole new economy, nor does it imply more independence, despite the discourse of Arab partners. Rather, examining those developing networks should direct our attention towards the complex imbrication of Palestinian cinema's economy with various forms of international aid that exceed film-centered organizations, or complicate the ways these are expected to function. In the next chapter, I focus on the work of a Palestinian cinema non-governmental organization in the West Bank, Shashat Women's Cinema, (also present in Gaza), in order to start disentangling the relationships between local practitioners and the human rights economy.

Chapter Three – Sustainability and the Politics of Cinema Outreach

> It's when life has been put in a more or less serious survival threaten [sic] that we begin, or has sense [sic], to speak about sustainability. It's a sort of negative, reversal of meaning. It takes relevance when the destructive outcomes start to dangerously get closer to the line of regeneration.
> Diego Segatto, *Campus in Camps: Collective Dictionary*, 2013

This statement followed on from a workshop conducted at the Dheisheh refugee camp-based educational program Campus in Camps near Bethlehem. Attendees were asked to reflect on the term "sustainability" (*el-Istidama* الاستدامة) and its fundamental meaning for life in the camps. The participants reported the discussions held during the workshop in the *Collective Dictionary*, a booklet that illustrates the educational program's own pursuit of sustainability. Unitedly defined as "something that enables the society to run by itself in an on-going process" (Al-Jaffarri 2013, 9), sustainability equally applies to knowledge and culture as well as material goods and infrastructures. Weddings, for example, are said to articulate elements of familial and friendly relationships, economic investments, and material exchanges in a movement of balancing social life (Abu Baker et al. 2013, 10). How does this relate to cinema? I argue that we should consider Palestine's contemporary cinema culture to be largely embedded in the complex imbrication of macro- and micro-economies that strive to create sustainable economic, cultural, political, and social forms.

In this chapter, I am interested in how Palestinian cinema Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) situate their actions in and take inspiration from a multi-layered understanding of sustainability rooted in Palestinian history and economic futures. Locating regeneration as emerging from within destruction, as the opening quote from the *Collective Dictionary* suggests, strangely echoes the World Bank's poverty-focused development plan for Palestine entitled "Towards Economic Sustainability of a Future Palestinian State: Promoting Private Sector-Led Growth" (World Bank, 2012). The report identifies a fiscal crisis due to the decline of international financial assistance, the main source of revenue for the Palestinian Authority (PA). In response, the study prescribes an intensification of the privatization process already in place in Palestine since the 1994 Oslo Peace Accords. It advocates for the consolidation of local trade policies and infrastructures as well as a new legal and regulatory environment meant

to attract foreign investors. As Cheryl Payer puts it in her pioneering analysis, "clearly, the Bank equates good economic management with policies favorable to foreign investment" (Payer 1982, 44). Since the 1980s, the Bank's traditional doctrine of growth-led development has gradually incorporated the discourse of environmental sustainability to produce a vision of *economic* sustainability that projects the market as the guarantor for the basic needs of both individuals and the biosphere (Reid 2013). The United Nations' Brundtland Report on sustainability most famously translates the stakes of a multilateral conversation as follows: "What is needed now is a new era of economic growth – growth that is forceful and at the same time socially and environmentally sustainable" (UNWCED 1987, 7).

Both the World Bank and the residents of the camp mobilize the practice and discourse of sustainability in moments of crisis – however protracted those are – albeit with distinct and divergent meanings. The World Bank's recommendations prolong twenty years of policy-making around development in Palestine, which have maintained the political conditions for the PA's double dependence on donors and Israeli control (Tartir and Wildeman 2012). Donors recognize that the greatest impediment to reducing poverty is Israel's control of the borders and restriction on the movement of Palestinian people and goods. Yet, the Bank's policies remain unchanged, primarily aiming to "compensate" for the economic and humanitarian effects of Israeli closure (Le More 2008, 125). Ultimately, international aid has relieved Israel from its economic responsibility of providing humanitarian assistance to the people under its occupying rule as formulated in the Fourth Geneva Convention, thus allowing Israel to focus on financing expansionist colonial policies instead (Le More 2008, 128). Economic sustainability as conceived by the World Bank perpetuates Palestine's institutional crisis at the very moment it acknowledges it, formulating new programs that both accommodate Israel's colonial structures and the Bank's own systemic need to generate more loans in order to survive (Payer 1982, 50). On the contrary, the participants of Campus in Camps regard sustainability as the strengthening of social life in the camp. Partaking in community-grounded activities such as weddings or food-sharing simultaneously opposes the temporary nature of grants-led projects and substitutes the status quo of the aid economy with the permanence of Palestinian culture.

This chapter continues my investigation of a Palestinian film economy emerging from within foreign development under colonization. In Chapter Two, we saw that the Palestinian project of an economy of global art cinema and cinephilia could converge with ideals of stability

central to developmental rhetoric under occupation. I established foreign funding's ascendency within cultural projects, one very challenging to circumvent and which has become an accepted compromise to what is often perceived as a lack of institutional alternatives. Art cinema festivals' dependency appeared lessened because of their investment in constructing an industry increasingly embedded in regional networks, and a system that could ultimately foster some independence through profit-making. In the present chapter, I analyze the ways in which paralleling non-cinephiliac attempts at film institutionalization are entrenched in the NGO-ization of the West Bank's economy and work fully within the framework of international aid. Cinema NGOs' operations are in tension but remain compatible, and even oftentimes overlap, with cinephiliac projects. NGOs' dominance as a model of economy as well as governance largely informs both imaginaries of, and possibilities for, a sustainable Palestinian film economy.

At the same time, the structure of the Palestinian NGO[32] constitutes a site of convergence for the World Bank's and communities' (such as the refugees of Campus in Camps) conflicting understandings of permanence, regeneration, and sustainable present. The World Bank has insisted a model, generalized in the late 1980s and 90s, by which most bilateral and multilateral development agencies must frame and coordinate donors' intervention in so-called developing countries through project-tied grants and loans. Seen as a key strategy for achieving economic sustainability, grants follow a planning process[33] that encourages the specialization of local organizations as well as their professionalization, subjecting them to Western standards that maximize the agencies' implantation. On the one hand, NGOs function as a vehicle for civil societies' supposed natural aspiration for democracy as defined by donors, and have been criticized for their role in de-radicalizing Palestinian politics of resistance (Hanafi and Tabar 2003; Nabulsi 2005). On the other, Palestine's long history of social organizing dates back to the late Ottoman era and most recently came to a head in the 1970s and 80s – in the occupied West Bank as well as

[32] To avoid any confusion, I use the acronym Palestinian "NGO" as opposed to "PNGO" (Palestinian NGO), which refers to Palestinian organizations that have joined the eponymous network. Not all Palestinian NGOs have joined the PNGO network. I have been unable to access a comprehensive list of NGOs registered in the network. For that reason, in what follows, I characterize all named local organizations as Palestinian NGOs rather than PNGOs.

[33] Cheryl Payer describes the various stages of the project cycle as follows: the identification of suitable projects, the examination of the possible assistance available, the appraisal of the project, the negotiations with the aid recipient, the supervised implementation and the evaluation of the project (Payer 1982, 72-86).

around the Palestine Liberation Organization in exile – with the implementation of new strategies of mass mobilization and grassroots activism.

In the West Bank in the 1980s, Palestinian associations took a variety of shapes, from trade unions to women's groups, from cultural centers to voluntary committees, and formed a de-centralized network that attended to the construction of national resistance as well as health services and agricultural needs which had all suffered under Israeli rule (Dana 2014a, 128). A proxy for political parties, the grassroots model for collective action sustained the First Intifada (1987-1993) with some degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency that served as a basis for Palestinians' empowerment and struggle for social justice. The large increase of Western aid in the 1990s, heightened by the nature of the Oslo Accords and the involvement of the World Bank as of 1992, incorporated these various groups into the aid paradigm. This shift isolated Palestinian organizations from one another by spurring competition for funding, and enforced the necessity to comply with the donors' re-definition of "rights" and "social justice" (Dana 2014a, 124). Palestinian NGOs are thus now located at the crux of two assemblages of historically situated economies, social imaginaries, and power structures: one that establishes civil society as a sphere of pluralism and democracy sustained by, and expressed through, foreign investment; the other that envisions civil society by way of a grassroots model for collective organizing. Both models have informed Palestinian means of film institutionalization over the years, and continue to do so.

The NGO economy is closely tied to cinema in Palestine. Contemporary international and local NGOs do not only provide partnerships for individual film events. NGOs also constitute one important source of income for multi-talented filmmakers or producers through the creation of temporary jobs, including documenting NGO meetings or shooting advocacy videos promoting the work of these organizations. These assignments contribute to gaining recognizable skills transferrable to the film industry, as envisioned and formulated by the cinephiliac approach as well as the more news-oriented one (see Chapter Two). The A.M. Qattan Foundation, a multi-million dollar Palestinian NGO financed by a wealthy British-Palestinian family and a major policy maker and charity actor in Palestine, is even sometimes said to fulfill the function of the Ministry of Culture (Fadda 2016, 164). More broadly, the NGO-ization of the Palestinian economy has enforced the habit of free access to some forms of culture – which are largely defined by foreign funding. In a similar play between local needs and macro-economic and political benefits, NGOs' cartography of aid distribution tends to emphasize urban centers that concentrate capital and render

foreign investment more visible. At the same time, the mapping of foreign funding discursively – if not necessarily effectively – highlights the importance of catering to marginal populations further isolated by Israel's continuous fragmentation of the Palestinian landscape. These balanced observations do not intend to neutralize the oppressive nature of the NGO economy, but rather to identify opportunities around which Palestinian organizations can mobilize and have already strategized.

The semantic instability of key terms like "sustainability" or "participation," which cross the grassroots historical tradition as well as the current developmental economy, points to how the aid industry has re-purposed vocabularies of resistance in order to settle its own influence. This also suggests, however, that these terms' radical meaning can be re-activated. Following Tariq Dana's assessment that contemporary NGOs have "disconnect[ed] civil society from [their] historical extension" (Dana 2014a, 117), can we conversely identify some ways in which Palestinian filmmakers may re-connect with their grassroots (and revolutionary) past through cinema organization? The local NGOs of the 1970s and 80s do not alone exemplify the Palestinian history of collective organizing. The Palestinian *fedayeen* (freedom fighters) in exile in Jordan and then Lebanon from 1967 to 1982 also formulated their own modes of sociality. These translated into the film units attached to the various political parties under the PLO, such as Fateh, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). The Palestine Cinema Institute (PCI) founded in early 1970s Beirut under the auspices of the PLO is widely considered to represent the first form of institutionalization of Palestinian cinema (Gertz and Khleifi 2008). The PCI's organizational structure as well as the militant films it produced and archived have become increasingly inspirational to the new generations of Palestinian filmmakers in Palestine and beyond.

In her assessment of the contemporary Palestinian context from the historical perspective of the militant period, Nadia Yaqub asserts that, "there is [currently] little space for Palestinians to imagine any sort of collective political solution" (Yaqub 2018, 198). This chapter focuses on the politics of outreach as one locus for the re-formulation of a sustainable film economy in Palestine. This economic project exists in tension with the structures of development and film industrialization on the one hand, and Palestinian histories of militant and grassroots institutions on the other.

Outreach, or the "effort to bring services or information to people where they live or spend time" (Cambridge Dictionary 2018), is essential to the varying strategies of sustainability of Palestinian cinephiliac *and* NGO-based film festivals, training workshops, and exhibition practices. The fragmentation of the Palestinian territory into various zones of governance after Oslo and the many restrictions on travelling and access due to checkpoints, segregated roads and military violence highlight the importance of de-centralizing cultural projects. This martial geography has further enforced economic and socio-cultural differences. Sustainable cultural practices devoted to creating social connections have thus entailed addressing distinct "niche" sensibilities with targeted programs of outreach. For that reason, most film festivals in Palestine have adopted a polycentric organization, distributing their presence over the major cities in the West Bank and Gaza. Furthermore, the mobility implied by de-centralizing efforts grounds the sustainability of outreach in the permanence of Palestinian life. Establishing a circuit, "bringing" cinema to its audience and makers, imprints Palestinian trajectories into the increasingly inaccessible territories. Outreach similarly drives donors' interest for capacity-building and "[has] enable[d] the society to run by itself in an on-going process" – to repeat Campus in Camps' *Collective Dictionary* – similar to the distribution of services during the First Intifada.

As the latter analogy suggests, the rhetoric of outreach tends to posit cinema as a type of service. The very "useful" nature of cinema here emphasized (Acland and Wasson 2011)[34] thus calls for a re-qualification of the function of Palestinian film production and exhibition. Is the aim of cinema production and exhibition in Palestine to build a national image-based industry, or is it to promote cinema as a pedagogical tool supporting "personal emancipation" and inclusive professional practices in the already existing local image economy? To a certain extent, this question reformulates widespread concerns around Global South films (World Cinema)'s lack of circulation in their countries of provenance and the postcolonial structures of cinema funding that sustain them. In other words, what are Palestinian films meant to *do* (what is their use) in Palestine, in a context where most of these productions are predominantly addressed to international audiences? Commitments to both cinema as an end and cinema as an instrument co-habit in the various Palestinian projects of film institutionalization. These two views, however, carry different

[34] Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson define useful cinema in opposition to commercial cinema and by its "ability to transform unlikely spaces, convey ideas, convince individuals, and produce subjects in the service of public and private aims" (Acland and Wasson 2011, 2).

implications for a politics of outreach and the distribution of audiences and producers' roles – of who can do what. In his study of indigenous film practices in urban Bolivia, Jeff Himpele insists on the political ramifications of self-representation and the "indigenization" of the film distribution circuit. If, as he suggests, "practices of assembly and circulation are related to self-determination" (Himpele 2008, xvii), how do Palestinian practices of cinema outreach negotiate the various micro- and macro-economies as well as imaginaries of sustainability that organize their present and future?

This chapter addresses the re-formulation of Palestine's film economy through politics of outreach by focusing on the *conceptual convergence* around the term "sustainability." The multiplicity of its meanings has bridged various contemporary institutional engagements and economies, but also different historical projects. I borrow the term "conceptual convergence" from Karen Ferguson's study of the reinvention of racial liberalism through the collaboration between Black Power and the Ford Foundation in the 1970s (Ferguson 2013, 10). Ferguson shows that the philanthropic organization directly engaged Black activists' call for separation and self-determination in order to push a seemingly common agenda: that of a Black leadership, which could be re-integrated into the Foundation's elite model of US pluralism (Ferguson 2013, 7). Here I similarly interrogate the articulation of the aid economy's structure of outreach with Palestinian organizations' commitment to unity and inclusion of the margins of their society. However, I privilege the work of re-contextualization over chronology-building in order to escape teleological temptations, focus on the fluidity of meanings, and identify potential collective re-organizations.

To that end, I concentrate my study on one cinema NGO with multiple functions, Shashat Women's Cinema, which I situate within the larger pool of the West Bank's human rights and cinema crossovers, and in contrast with the cinephiliac initiatives developed in Chapter Two. I start by identifying two competing yet overlapping modes of outreach and their respective economies of sustainability. These reveal differential scales of outreach, attached to diverging film aesthetics as well as industrial models. The convergence around sustainability and outreach becomes the site of competing visions for a future film industry grounded in historical debates around unity and inclusion in Palestine. Lastly, I release sustainability's historical meanings in the Palestinian context to open up the possibilities for collective cinema outreach.

Outreach as Sustainability

As highlighted in Chapter Two, the climate of institutional instability in Palestine demands cultural structures that can endure the shortage of national financial support and political tensions. While the cinephiliac approach embraced the art film festival and its economy as an engine for global partnerships through international film funds, other initiatives – also partially taking the shape of festivals – have relied on their status as NGOs to claim and perpetuate their institutional and social durability and consistency. Despite this apparent divergence, however, outreach and the promotion of cinema access and educational rights in remote communities have played considerable roles in defining the sustainability of all of these diverse institutional projects alike. Moreover, it often happens that Palestinian filmmakers and organizers are involved in both types of projects, be they supervising NGO trainings while serving on the jury of art-oriented festivals' awards; or serving on the board of one, while exhibiting their own productions in the competition of the other. These crossovers speak to both the mobility of workers in a small community, and the converging ideologies around the necessity of outreach – of bringing Palestinian cinema to Palestinians. Early initiatives like Rashid Masharawi's Cinema Production Center (CPC) and its Mobile Cinema for refugee camps, established in 1996, heralded future organizations' dual focus on centralizing production and de-centralizing training and exhibition. The Center proposed workshops facilitated by internationally-known Palestinian filmmakers and became a space for watching movies. The mobile cinema in turn travelled to refugee camps with a 35mm projector to screen films and culminated with a yearly festival dedicated to children. Outreach, as a strategy for achieving cultural, but also economic, sustainability has thus broadly configured local understandings of cinema as an agent of social change in Palestine as well as the institutional structures that could support it in the long term.

This is the case, for instance, in cinephiliac projects. The production company Odeh Films, also invested in the revival of the Jericho International Film Festival cited in Chapter Two, received the support of Danish partners and the PanArab distributor Mad Solutions for its "Area C mobile cinema." The itinerant film screening caters to the "marginalized and culturally isolated" (DHiP 2016) of the most militarized zone of the West Bank, and "hopes to grant cultural and educational rights to the youth [by] spreading cinematic lights as it is driving through the Jordan valley" (Mad Solutions website 2018). In turn, the Palestinian nonprofit FilmLab situates its own origins in the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency)-affiliated "Palestinian Memory Documentation Project" filmmaking workshops led by Hanna Atallah in the Talbieh Refugee

Camp in Jordan in 2008-9. The Lab was founded a few years later in order “to empower Palestinian youth through providing them with the resources and equipment needed to tell their own personal histories and document their collective memory” (Days of Cinema catalogue 2015, 3).

Practically, this has meant introducing the youth to new technologies such as iPad tablets. This accessible device allows experimentation with digital approaches to images that are both more familiar to the newer generations and in accordance with competitive film industries’ imperative of innovation. In addition to workshops, Days of Cinema, the Lab’s exhibition arm, systematically offers a special program of children’s films dubbed in Arabic. The integration of marginal populations and groups that most evidently symbolize a society’s future reproduction is thus approached as a key component of the broader project of “spreading cinematic lights” and building an arts and cinema scene in Palestine for “long-term cultural change” (FilmLab website). The combination of digital technologies with analog metaphors (the dominant imaginary of the cinematic light being the beam of the film projector) places the intergenerational work of training within the historical continuity of “technological progress” sanctioned by the market.

Dynamics of global and European film funding also utilize the vocabulary of outreach to expand their markets to so-called peripheral economies. Hanan Toukan reminds us of the ways in which the pervasive NGO-ization of cultural production and the concomitant neo-liberalization of the art scene in the Arab world have cemented around reconstruction economies and the promotion of intercultural dialogue between the West and “the Orient” since the Oslo accords and 9/11 (Toukan 2010). For instance, the prestigious IDFA Bertha Fund, embedded in the International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam, supports non-European films, including from the Arab world, which are innovative and uphold cinematic quality and market potential, but also advocate for social and economic justice, freedom of expression, human rights and education (Film Daily TV 2018). Another example, the Beirut-based Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), established in 2007 in order to boost regional cultural productions through collaborations with European festivals and leading Euro-western philanthropy organizations, promotes art cinema as integral to its own institutional apparatus of transparent governance.

In AFAC’s discourse, art cinema’s aesthetic requirements are modelled onto good politics implicitly defined by the international art cinema market (Dickinson and Saglier forthcoming). Film funds thus contribute to articulating visions of art cinema through discourses of human rights as an *aesthetic* requirement for the “developing” regions. In other words, not only does framing

the sustainability of art cinema through outreach mean subordinating "good art" to "good politics," it also conversely suggests that outreach partakes in the strategy to expand art cinema and its markets outside of Euro-western countries, oftentimes via a discourse of democratization. In this context, outreach becomes an agent of economic sustainability for Palestinian art cinema through foreign investment in a way that is entirely compatible with the World Bank's plan of action exposed in the introduction.

The cinephiliac understanding of sustainability is seen to support the development of cinema in Palestine. Outreach here designates the encouragement of art education and access to cinema culture both *in* the periphery of Palestinian cities, like Area C Mobile Cinema as well as FilmLab's screenings in refugee camps, and *within* the Palestinian cities *as* peripheries to industrial centers in Europe and in the Arab region. In a project where the sustainability of cinema itself is the end goal of outreach, the centralization of resources becomes just as important as its de-centralization. The training workshops produce talents, whose work is later introduced to industry meetings such as the PFM or Ramallah Docs, while residencies (organized by FilmLab, but also, in the paralleling art circle, Atlal in Jericho) intend to attract foreign artists to Palestine's cities. Michael Curtin explains that "clustering engenders a growth spiral, as creative labor migrates to the region in search of work, further enhancing its attraction to other talents (Curtin 2011, 548). The cinephiliac concentration of talent aims to build the Ramallah-Bethlehem-Jerusalem axis as yet another node in the international "festival circuit," here understood as the "contact zone for the working-through of unevenly differentiated power relationships" modelled around global cities (Stringer 2001, 138).

Although some of their objectives and discourses intersect with those of industrializing projects, Palestinian NGOs' efforts of outreach have prioritized the *de-centralization* of cinema structures within Palestine over the centripetal force of clustering talents and resources in emerging peripheral media centers. Rather than constituting one aspect of a multi-faceted plan to foster a film culture in Palestine, the primary mandate of Palestinian cinema NGOs is to address marginal or niche communities such as the youth but also women, disadvantaged social classes, and populations residing in refugee camps and remote villages. These Palestinian NGOs include Shashat Women's Cinema and the Shashat Women's Film Festival; the ephemeral Palestine Human Rights Film Festival (2010); the Palestinian Social Cinema Arts Association (2008-today) and its two main projects, the Palestine Mobile Cinema and the (Insan) Human Rights Film

International Film Festival (2012); as well as the Young Palestinian Filmmakers Society (2009-present) and its two offshoots, the International Young Filmmakers Festival (2011-present) and the Nordic Youth Film Days (2016).

Outreach fulfills sustainability's goal of cultural permanence and continuity by including marginal populations central to the reproduction of society (the youth as well as women). This inclusion is implemented through active professionalization in order to refashion these groups' place and involvement in the existing image-based economy in Palestine, rather than aiming to develop the latter separately. This focus also practically conforms to the aid industry's (orientalist) idea that these groups exist outside of politics. In this view, outreach educates communities positioned "outside of democracy" so they "learn" to participate in processes of decision-making at the societal level. Outreach also targets communities whom international donors believe revolve around potential indoctrination by local political parties. For instance, it is significant that Shashat held screenings in universities during the hours informally dedicated to activities with these parties on campus (Arasoughly, interview with the author 2015). In that sense, the educational outreach provided by Shashat literally replaces the political work of parties, yet at a time when these reflect the division of Post-Oslo's political landscape more than a hopeful engagement with collective action. Palestinian organizations' outreach thus both carves a sustainable social project for minorities and accommodates donors' demands for targeted interventions and one particular type of political engagement defined as *civic* as opposed to party-oriented. The convergence of interests between Palestinian NGOs and international donors finally guarantees the sustainability of foreign financial injections into Palestinian projects. "Outreach as sustainability," as the title of this section suggests, indicates the various long-term social and *economic* benefits of focusing on outreach.

NGO status has procured a certain security and stability for informal initiatives of outreach. The Young Palestinian Filmmakers Society NGO presents a typical trajectory: almost ten years before registering in 2009, its instigator Anis Barghouti and his team conducted yearly filmmaking workshops for the youth in camps, villages and towns, with the practical – if not so much financial – support of established organizations such as the Qattan Foundation, the German Heinrich Böll Foundation, and the Ma'an Development Center, self-described as a "pioneer community development and capacity building organization" (Ma'an website 2017). The workshops' lack of official status hindered access to training facilities and funding requests to donors. Registering as an NGO invested the Society with the legitimacy to approach the Palestinian Cultural Fund and

the Palestinian Ministry of Culture for a minimal budget. This proved pivotal in allowing the first edition of the International Young Filmmaker Festival (IYFF) in 2011, and in building a partnership with the Norway-based Nordic Youth Film Festival (NUFF) (Barghouti, interview with the author 2015).

Not only does a greater – although far from absolute – financial sustainability emerge as a perk of the NGO status, but this economic state of affairs also functions as a symbolic currency in the competition between the various organizations, in which one's sustainability further attracts donors, and begets sustainability. Created at the end of the Second Intifada in 2005, Shashat has built its entire identity around the sustainability of its grassroots model. Shashat registered as an NGO in a context in which these organizations were under heavy criticism for their lack of support of the popular uprisings and their dissociation from the people's actual needs. At the same time, NGO registration represented the most practical solution for local independent groups to become official and receive international funding.

Shashat supports the production of women's cinema and addresses the social and cultural implications of women's representation. In order "to provide sustainability and continuity to these objectives" (Shashat 2017), Shashat has diversified its intervention by inaugurating a media center profiting the whole film sector; the women's film festival and its larger outreach program "Films for Everyone;" and training workshops whose formula morphed over time to eventually focus on film production. Shashat celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2016 after a brief two-year interruption, thus enforcing its own promotional claim that it stands as the longest-running film festival in Palestine and the longest-running women's film festival in the Arab world. Sustainability has been a goal established since the organization's first year in activity. The local press praised the success of the festival's first edition and its unique promises of long-term commitment. For the Palestinian feminist newspaper *Sawt al-Niswa,* Shashat was a response to "the long-term negligence and lack of sustainable institutional accountability in dealing with women's representation in cinema" (Hamdan 2005) while *Al-Ayyam*, one of the major newspapers in the West Bank, cited filmmaker Ghada Terawi (now president of Shashat's board) asserting that "now we Palestinian women filmmakers have a base" (al-Shayeb 2005).

Launched with seed money from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Shashat has secured funding from UNESCO, the Ford Foundation, and the European Union over the years, in amounts that the Palestinian Cultural Fund and the Ministry of Culture could never

have dreamt to match.[35] Yet, the Ministry's official recognition of both the organization itself and its executive director, materialized in the form of Shashat's 2010 "Award for Excellence in Cinema" and Alia Arasoughly's 2012 "Outstanding Cultural Woman Leader Award," legitimizes the project as worthy of international support. Shashat has internalized the vocabulary of grant writing and donors whereby gender equity grants democratic development. The organization also asserts its allegiance to principles outlined by the United Nations' project of the Millennium Development Goals and the European Neighbor Policy. Shashat's grassroots model is thus one fully embedded in the project logic of Palestine's NGO-ization, in which the sustainable work of maintaining ties with the community is mediated by a professional class rather than through mass-mobilization (Jad 2008, 2).

Shashat's grassroots focus on sustainability through outreach and de-centralization has however guided its transformation over the years, as well as its position in the film communities in Palestine. In a context where many of the emerging local NGOs proved largely ephemeral, the sustainability of Shashat was sometimes in dispute. Shashat Executive Director Alia Arasoughly recounts some of the responses they received after the festival's first edition, and she simultaneously confirms outreach as the crucial avenue for the organization's long-term plan:

> We were told it would be impossible for us to go all over, and that we would be restricted to cultural elites and big cities. We said we didn't want to stop here and we wanted to go all over. We want women cinema to be central to Palestinian film culture (interview with the author 2015).

Shashat's outreach strategy has relied on its readiness to negotiate with all its partners in the West Bank and Gaza, which included, in the 2016 festival edition alone, eight universities, one school, two refugee camps, fourteen organizations, one satellite TV program, and a hundred community associations. For example, in 2011, when some screening sites refused to show Fadya Salah-Aldeen's short film *Mamnou' u Bas/Just Forbidden* (2011) because it displayed a girl's menstrual blood, the organization offered to replace the film with another piece from their collection, which

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[35] For example, Shashat's project "I am a Woman" (2011-2012), organized in collaboration with the Women's Center for Legal Aid & Counselling and Al Aqsa University, was granted $570,425 by the European Union's "Investing in People Programme" *alone* (EU Investing in People Programme 2007-2013). By contrast, the total PA governmental funding allocated to non-governmental cultural initiatives in general (as opposed to cinema only) amounts to around $150,000 (Lina Bokhary 2015, interview with the author).

showcased incest – and it was accepted (Arasoughly 2013, 121). For Arasoughly, the festival "really think[s] on the long term and on the cumulative." She adds, "values on women were formed over hundreds of years, we don't think we can change them with one film. So, we're willing to work year after year to build dialogue and build trust with our partners" (interview with the author 2015). As suggested by anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod's study of the circuits of women's rights in Egypt, accommodating institutions that are more conservative distinguishes Shashat from Western NGOs that carry a secular agenda (Abu-Lughod 2010) and re-asserts the grassroots nature of the organization's outreach. This trust has allowed Shashat to circulate surveys during its screenings. These revealed that the spectators in the universities, towns, and refugee camps wanted more inclusion in the films' representations. The surveys also shed light on the university media classes' failure to train women with the same focus as men. These two aspects led Shashat to reconsider the means they had mobilized in order to reach their mandate and prompted an ever-stronger focus on women's film production training.

While Shashat festival's first edition highlighted the screening of women's films from Palestine, the Arab world, and beyond, as well as workshops open to male and female participants where foreign and local women academics and film professionals were invited to speak, the second edition re-asserted its focus around film exhibition in marginal areas.[36] The 2006 festival lasted three months so as to cover a growing number of cities and villages in the West Bank and Gaza, thus explicitly enacting Shashat's driving goal to privilege audiences considered to be peripheral. As of 2007, the workshops stopped catering to experienced male and female filmmakers, but rather addressed young women filmmakers freshly graduated from Palestine's own media programs and coming from modest backgrounds. Production-centered workshops were established in cycles of three years that followed annual themes, in order to introduce the trainees to, and consolidate their knowledge of, scriptwriting, planning a shooting schedule, filmmaking, and editing. From 2008 on, although international, Arab, and Palestinian women's films continued to be screened, the short films resulting from the workshops came to constitute a major part of the festival's programming. The films would eventually circulate as themed series all year long through Shashat's outreach program "Films for Everyone" in coordination with the Palestinian universities and community centers partners to the festival, but also in foreign, Arab and Palestinian women's and human rights film festivals. In the West Bank and Gaza only, "Films for Everyone" has counted, in the past,

[36] The following chronology is a historical reconstitution based on the catalogues and the website.

over 160 screenings a year (a peak reached in 2009), counting the festival events (Shashat 2018). In 2016, the festival reached 6,000 audience members (Shahat 2018). The coverage of the festival's opening ceremonies at the Ramallah Cultural Palace and some Q&A periods by Palestinian and Arab TV networks (Al Jazeera, MBC, al-Arabiya, and Palestinian satellite television) has expanded Shashat's outreach to the Palestinian diaspora beyond the local territorial fragmentation.

By promoting the professionalization of women filmmakers from the center to the peripheries of Palestine, Shashat has positioned itself at the intersection of a circle of film professionals and people-centric practices most evidently exemplified by its slogan: "culture is a human right." A similar combination of discourses around developing "talent" through training workshops with targeted groups and enhancing human rights through inter-cultural dialogue have animated the (Insan) Human Rights Film International Film Festival (PSCAA 2018), the IYFF, and the NUFF (alternately set in Palestine and in the Nordic countries) (interview with Anis Barghouti 2015). These concerns, also present in the cinephiliac festivals, are here highlighted with respect to the *priority* of de-centralizing outreach. Beyond *economic* sustainability, the primary end goal of these organizations thus pertains to human development.

In 1990, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) laid the foundation for a new system of measurement, planning, and monitoring of sustainability in its Human Development Report, a follow-up to the 1987 Brundtland Report cited in the introduction to this chapter. This approach, which has informed the most liberal inclinations of leading multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, expressively places "people" rather than economic growth at its center and identifies NGOs as crucial to strategies of human development and paralleling processes of democratization. Defined as "a process of enlarging people's choices" (UNDP 10, 1990), human development promotes both "the formation of human capabilities" and "the productive use" of these capabilities through education, participation and capacity-building.

Palestinian cinema NGOs' grassroots approach to sustainable outreach here echoes the all-encompassing theory of "development as freedom" coined by famous economist Amartya Sen, a consultant on the UNDP report. In his eponymous book, Sen argues that "development can be seen…as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen 1999, 3), aiming at "advanc[ing] the general capability of a person" (Sen 1999, 10). NGOs variously place emphasis on developing trainees' "leadership skills" (Shashat 2018), "creat[ing] skilled, educated and reliable young leaders" (IYFF catalogue 2011), and bettering the youth's *peaceful* integration into

society by "spread[ing] the culture of non-violence, tolerance and reconciliation" assumed to go against Palestinian youth's natural tendencies (PSCAA 2018). Thus, NGOs' outreach strategies conceive of cinema as a tool for individual education and self-accomplishment as a stepping-stone for building a stronger society. We observe a similar interest in "talents" in cinephiliac initiatives, although these consider cinema itself as another end goal.

In his critique of Sen's argumentation from a biopolitical perspective, David Chandler contends that human development dis-locates development from the material world. Instead, he continues, "the subject becomes the object of transformative practices of governance as development rather than the subject of development as external transformation" (Chandler 2013, 73). In other words, as Chandler further explains, "for Sen, the individual is the only agent of development but the individual is a vulnerable subject needing the enabling or empowering of external agency; the individual is thereby both the ends and the means of development as freedom" (Chandler 2013, 73). Choice is something which institutions can "educate" and "improve" by providing the "proper" tools for "better" choice-making. In conceptions of human development, under-development is thus not caused by a lack of will but by individuals' *incapacity* to make savvy decisions, which can be rectified by a person's participation in "rational" public discussions. Sen comments on the fate of local cultures in the face of external global pressures in those terms: "ways of life can be preserved *if the society decides to do just that*, and it is a question of balancing the costs of such preservation with the value that the society attaches to the objects and lifestyles preserved" (Sen 1999, 241; my emphasis). The direct tension between choice capability and Palestine's colonial context of cultural erasure highlights development's conciliation with larger conceptions of freedom pushed by the market rather than recognizing how local context is determining. It is significant that Sen, although balancing out economic growth with human development, evokes the iconic liberal economist Adam Smith to evaluate "freedom of exchange and transaction [as being itself] part and parcel of the basic liberties people have reason to value" (Sen 1999, 6).

Chandler's critique, coming from a radical perspective, points to the inevitable commercialization of rights that follows neoliberal development politics and economics, and the subsequent inflection of definitions of freedom. With the Palestinian context in mind however, we can speculate on possibilities for remaining sympathetic to this radical critique at the same time as we consider how Chandler's very argument locks the functioning of local NGOs in their historical

present. Chandler here ironically "disconnect[s] civil society from [its] historical extension," for which Dana, cited in the introduction to this chapter, has blamed neoliberal politics. This theoretical tension is most visible in the context of women's rights, on which I elaborate further later in this chapter, and which defines Shashat's field of action. More often than not, Palestinian NGOs prove aware of this academic critique and experience first-hand the complicated compromises that dealing with transnational organizations imply, including concessions around what "women's rights" means. Abu-Lughod has described how international reports ascribe the violence imposed on Palestinian women to Palestine's patriarchal culture alone while local organizations document both domestic violence and other forms due to the military occupation (Abu-Lughod 2010, 22).

Contrary to what Chandler's argument of de-contextualization suggests, "Palestinian NGOs and projects…may be funded by the Scandinavians, the Germans, the Ford Foundation, the Open Society, WHO, and UNIFEM, […] but at the core of their efforts are the inescapable realities of occupation and militarization" (Abu-Lughod 2010, 17-18). For example, Shashat's 2011 partnership with the European Union allowed it to smuggle film equipment and hard drives in and out of besieged Gaza through diplomatic cars (Arasoughly 2013, 122). The relationship of the Palestinian women's movement – and local cinema NGOs in our case – to politics of resistance needs to be historicized to allow the "un-locking" of key terms such as "choice" and "participation" that the ideology of human development has effectively colonized.

I delve into the political opportunities of an encounter with the aid economy and the possibilities for re-formulating Palestinian sustainable film economies later in the chapter. In the next section, I examine what the emphasis on decision-making and choice means for diverging contemporary visions of outreach and film economies in Palestine. As a vehicle for stories, self-expression, collective memory, and representation of minorities (including Palestinians as minorities in global circuits), cinema-making revels in structures that emphasize choice as artistic empowerment, a means of becoming visible, and a re-assertion of Palestinian women, youths and artists against both intra-societal discrimination and colonial practices of cultural erasure and political annihilation. However, the issue of scale, which differentiates understandings of who constitutes the periphery that outreach projects must first address, also produces competing views on the goals and meanings of empowerment through inclusion for a Palestinian film economy. I

argue that these tensions are embedded in the competing circuits of film circulation and the historical re-organization of NGOs after Oslo.

Outreach and Fragmentation

While the previous section established the various ways in which outreach is construed as a key strategy for a sustainable film economy in Palestine, I am here interested in examining how competing visions of "periphery" imply distinct understandings, and distinct *economic* and *aesthetic* norms and standards, for cinema. Here, considering outreach's relation to distribution clarifies certain stakes. Sean Cubitt usefully illuminates the articulation of time and space that structures distribution practices when he writes that "modern distribution is characterized by its commodity form; contemporary exchange by its readiness to rework time as a raw material for the construction of markets, to play stasis against change, and to organize space hierarchically." He concludes: "distribution is the construction of difference" (Cubitt 2005, 194). The market segments populations into differentiated audiences through strategies such as "windowing," which consists in establishing primary and secondary zones of access to culture through distribution. In his study of film distribution in 1990s Bolivia, Jeff Himpele remarks that the movement of 35mm copies from the elite center to the periphery of the social classes was impressed into the very physical deterioration of the film's materiality. After total destruction, movies could eventually claim an afterlife through pirated video replicas. As a result, distribution itineraries produced maps of social differences, and "the value of circulatory materials corresponded to their sites of extraction and so too the social status of their associated publics" (Himpele 2008, 46).

Conversely, we can approach outreach as a response to distribution's construction of the periphery. As mostly evidenced by Shashat's slogan that culture is a human right, outreach functions as a corrective to uneven differentiated access, which is, in Palestine, embedded in class and gender differences, histories of forced displacement, developmental cartographies, and the military fragmentation of the Palestinian territory carried through direct attacks on human rights. The choice of strategies and modes of inclusion to implement that corrective is, however, where Palestinian organizations differ, thus revealing tensions in the way in which minority groups are envisioned to relate to the production of Palestinian cinema and film culture, as well as the very meaning and goal of a film economy in Palestine. These diverse views, I argue, are not just typical of discussions about festival circuits, but also enmeshed within the historical role played by local

NGOs in furthering the national struggle, and the re-organization of these political groups after Oslo.

My argument stems from two interconnected critiques addressed to Shashat by some members of the film community in order to disentangle the stakes of these differentiated views on outreach. The goal is evidently not to distribute blame or approval, but rather to identify points of disagreement symptomatic of structural questions about what it means to build a film economy in Palestine. The most striking difference in strategies was highlighted in an interview with a male filmmaker involved in the Palestinian cinephiliac community. He recognized the value of Shashat's impact on a targeted population, but pointed to how he himself gradually stopped attending the festival after the focus started being primarily placed on the films produced during the training workshops, which he categorized as "amateur" (interview with the author 2015).

Shashat's outreach relies on the circulation of films made *by* the community *into* the community, outside of the centers of Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jerusalem, where art cinema projects predominantly operate. The films are meant to stimulate debates around the place of women in society and the freedoms they can claim, as introduced by the interested party themselves. The International Young Filmmaker Festival (IYFF) similarly privileges showing films made by youth (albeit predominantly international) to the youth, in order to highlight the varied experiences of growing up.

This major self-referential focus inflects the films' aesthetics because the audience and their expectations, codes and desires are considered to differ from what a cinema within the reach of international markets, even when produced by Palestinians, can offer. In that view, the audience's identification with the narrative appears subordinated to its relatability to the means of production, in which technical skills reflect "genuine" self-expression, as opposed to a supposedly slick orientalist authenticity directed at a foreign audience exterior to the Palestinian experience. In addition, self-expression also requires a negotiation of the films' content, and what it means to address a Palestinian audience about their own culture. In Shashat's workshops, the tension between the expectations of international audiences accustomed to watching art cinema and that of Palestinian spectators has materialized in collaboration with foreign trainers. Here "trainees were effectively encouraged to develop negative aspects or the downsides of their culture in the projects, [and] given the feeling that this was what 'success' required" (Arasoughly 2013, 111). This point of contention spurred discussions about for whom the films were made. The ideal of

"self-expression" thus articulates artistic visions, technical skills, and content-making in very situated ways.

In her study of a modular indigenous film festival circuit in the Americas, Amalia Córdova describes how grassroots productions can display a "distinctive" look, "as indigenous festivals often screen works developed in training workshops where the appearance has the rough feel of an exercise, as opposed to a more 'polished' aesthetic" (Córdova 2012, 67). Yet, Shashat's films are not welcomed in such terms by their primary audience in the "peripheries," nor is the production value undermined or subordinated to women's empowerment in the organization's discourse itself. Shashat's website displays an account of the 2016 festival opening in Gaza by Palestinian NGO worker Amal Shanty, who describes the films as "artistic," "expressive," and "capturing the social, political, and economic dynamics of the Palestinian society" (Shanty 2016). Besides this festival-sanctioned discourse, an article published online by independent newspaper *Ma'an News* reported on Shashat's screening at the Arab American University in Jenin. The reviewer lauded Areej Abu Eid's short *Seif Har Jiddan/A Very Hot Summer* (2016) and its depiction of the 2014 war on Gaza. A testimony of a "mature cinematic experience," the film was said to distinguish itself from the usual news reports and documentaries about the Strip by its "artistic choices" and technical achievements (Abu Maala 2016).

Although the appreciative terms employed by the reviewers of Shashat's screenings may coincide with cinephiles' descriptions of their own cinematic preferences, "artistic," "expressive," "experience" and "choice" hold specific implications in the context of human development unraveled earlier. As Arasoughly emphasized in her interview with cinema scholar Patricia Caillé, the goal of the training workshops was to empower women as much as to invest them with the "*decision making role* of the director" (her emphasis, Caillé 2015). Choosing (the angle from which to shoot, the lighting, which shots should be kept in the final editing, or the narrative structure of the editing itself) becomes, in itself, an artistic gesture, because it constitutes an act of self-expression. The new role women take on is further celebrated in a separate press document published by Shashat every year in addition to the edition's catalogue. The leaflets each feature one female director, and include a still, a description, and the full credits of the film she directed that year as well as her own picture and a biography recounting her achievements within and beyond Shashat. This material anticipates the constitution of future portfolios, thus ensuring the

professionalization of the women's profiles at the same time as it enhances their capacity to make decision, direct, and create.

The founder of the Young Palestinian Filmmakers Society similarly placed the emphasis on self-expression when I asked him what constituted a "successful" training workshop to them:

> In the workshops, we consider two things: first, which is more important to me, the process. It is being together, from different areas, and working together as a team, so they start to realize what team work is...The other thing is the development of their personalities. It's not a big thing, but it is very important. I want to bring an example here. One of the groups was from a village. They were girls, and when they started coming here, at the beginning they were shy, and they would speak slowly and in a very hesitant voice. At the end of the workshop, they talked differently. The workshop allowed them to express their thoughts, to express themselves more, to give them more confidence. *This is not something to please the other, this is a film to please yourself. This is your film, your thoughts, your ideas, and you have to make it as you think is right*, not as I think, or your father, or your mother (Barghouti, interview with the author 2015, my emphasis).

For Anis Barghouti, the focus on self-accomplishment and self-development impacts how we conceive of the film productions coming out of the workshops, what their function, goal, and utility is, which challenges cinephiliac definitions of art cinema:

> There is the process and then the result. Usually the result is not perfect. It doesn't have to be perfect, it has to have something different. And that's why in the editing process we work with them and we explain to them how things are made, but we leave the decision to them: how to name their film, how to put it together. Although sometimes there are some shots that work better for the film, but if they say we want this [other] shot, then we let them have the freedom. *It will be their film, so it has the sense of youth. It's their own atmosphere, their own taste. That's it* (interview with the author 2015, my emphasis).

In this view, the sound may be mixed inappropriately, the zoom-ins a bit hasty, or the close-ups omnipresent, but this does not take away from the films' intimate look. In Shashat's productions, the young filmmakers' sincerity when faced with desires that upset society's norms and the military occupation's legitimacy is not diminished. Shashat films for example convey the intimate relationship between siblings, even within a disagreement, in *El-Ukht u Akhuha/The Sister and Her Brother* (Omaima Hamouri and Michael Krotkiewski, 2010); the strength it takes to study abroad and announce it to your loving but disapproving family in *El-Qarar/The Decision* (Lialy Kilani, Anna Persson, Dara Khader, Ina Holmqvist, 2010); the poetic ode to the Gazan sea, prey

to garbage and Israeli fishing restrictions in *Shaklu Helu…Bas/It Looks Pretty… But!* (Rana Mattar, 2013); or the double lamentation over the pollution of Hebron's countryside by the fumes of local metal scrappers and the latter's tragic lasting unemployment in *Reef bil Asswad/Countryside in Black* (Fida' Naser, 2013).

This is not to say that achieving technical skills is secondary in this view: this capacity works hand-in-hand with self-expression. Good technicians, like good artists, are those who can convey ideas, emotions, and a message that resonates with its intended audience. Faye Ginsburg's concept of "embedded aesthetics" can usefully redirect our attention away from artistic value. In the context of Aboriginal media, she argues, "the quality of work is judged by its capacity to embody, sustain, and revive or create certain social relations, although the social bases for coming to this position may be very different for remote and urban people" (Ginsburg 1994, 368). As the *Ma'an* journalist emphasized in his review of *A Very Hot Summer*'s depiction of the Gaza war cited earlier, the film's account of suffering echoed the audience's loss of family members during the Israeli invasion of the Jenin refugee camp in 2001. The post-screening discussion revealed that "suffering is one" (المعاناة واحدة) and a unifying factor of the Palestinian experience (Abu Maala 2016). Capacity-building, thus, addresses both technical skills, and how these serve the community needs of self-representation.

However, as the film selection of Shashat's "Film for Everyone" reveals, art cinema in general, and Palestinian art cinema in particular, is not completely evacuated from the organization's vision of outreach. International films by Andreï Tarkovski, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Abbas Kiarostami, Theo Angelopoulos, and Guillermo del Toro, or internationally successful Palestinian films by Cherien Daebis, Elia Suleiman, and Tawfik Abu Wael were screened between 2007 and 2009.[37] Some of Shashat's programs thus very much resemble Area C mobile cinema's programming of Annemarie Jacir's *Lamma Shoftak/When I Saw You* (2012) or Mai Masri's *3000 Layla/3000 Nights* (2015). In the last section of this chapter, I'll expand on ways to think of the crossovers between cinephiliac and grassroots outreach projects. Of interest to us here is how the inversion of priorities between art cinema and community-driven productions in the two visions points to more than a mere ideological stance on aesthetics. It signifies the differential placement of peripheral audiences (in terms of age, gender, class and geography) *identified as such* in the production mechanisms of the emerging Palestinian film economy. In other words, the rift goes

[37] Data is missing for the years following 2009.

beyond film appreciation and the need to personally relate to the stories told. The divide is importantly industrial and includes the economic models in which the competing aesthetics are embedded.

Shashat's grassroots workshops have successfully produced eleven film collections[38] and seventy-seven films from 2008 to 2016. Yet, some members of the film community at large, including women, have criticized the organization's choice of demographics for conforming to the demands of the aid economy rather than addressing the needs of the local industry and laborers. After acknowledging how much she had benefited from Shashat's work of festival organizing and film production training in the early years of the project, a mid-career female filmmaker in an interview spoke to the changes instituted over the years. In particular, she articulated how the shift towards featuring young women and the products of their workshops has ascended to the detriment of a whole category of mid-career film workers who need the infrastructures made available by Shashat in a context where opportunities are scarce:

> There is a lot for young filmmakers but not for the ones stuck in the middle. In Palestine, in general, with the funds, there is an interest in youth. That is why a lot of projects revolve around youth. When young people want to start working independently they are stuck. They can't find funds, expertise. You need to learn from your mistakes, we don't have that. Only a few people succeed to make it easy for them to get funds to make their films and get them distributed abroad (interview with the author, 2015).

Others, including women, observed in informal conversations that men and women filmmakers alike were subjected to the hardship of the Occupation, thus the focus on gender would not be conducive to solidifying the filmmaking community. Shashat itself conceived of its own intervention as a response to the competition and exclusiveness imposed on girls from the periphery (Arasoughly 2013, 102). However, the organization has effectively leaned towards partnerships with international festivals and institutions (Göteborg International Film festival in 2008, Jan Vrijman Fund in 2009, the Stockholm Dramatiska Institutet in 2010) as well as women's and diplomatic organizations (Goethe Institute in 2008; Ford Foundation, European Union, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation in 2010, the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling in 2011;

[38] The film series are the following: "Confessions" (2008), "Masarat" (2009), "A Day in Palestine" (2009), "Jerusalem, so Near… so Far" (2009), "Palestine Summer" (2010), "Crossroads" (2010), "I am a Woman from Palestine, part 1" (2011), "Worlds" (2011), "I am a Woman from Palestine, part 2" (2012), "Remnants" (2013), "What is Tomorrow" (2016).

the European Endowment for Democracy in 2016) rather than engaging with other local film associations. The films produced by Shashat predominantly travel in very defined networks of women's rights, human rights, youth or identity-based film festivals.[39] These occasionally also procure visibility for Palestinian art cinema as a secondary network, after the films have circulated in the competitive festivals that guarantee them artistic and international legitimacy as well as the promise of more funding. The *primary* focus on human rights and its variations may be seen as potentially burying Palestinian cinema in a new niche, one less profitable to the sustainability of art cinema. This, even as human rights festivals are also increasingly serving as brokers in order to solidify their own networks. Human rights film grants have for now focused on exhibition and outreach rather than film production (Movies That Matter website 2018; Human Rights Film Network 2018). Yet, in 2018, Shashat announced its new cycle "I am Palestinian" (Ana Falastiniyyah) set to support the production of another ten films. In addition, the project is to dispense sixty sub-grants over three years, for an amount of 5,500 euros each. In exchange, recipients must commit to twenty community screenings and discussion activities throughout the year (Shashat newsletter 2018).

Palestinian films' divided distribution between competing – yet also to a certain extent complementary – networks of circulation is symptomatic of what Marijke de Valck has called "the rise of the thematic film festival" in 1960s Europe, which has also organized global circuits since then (de Valck 2007, 178). On the one hand, de Valck historicizes the shift towards specialized festivals with the need to create alternative platforms for the new left-leaning and anti-government cinematic movements. On the other, specialized programing has allowed festivals to distinguish themselves from one another and "carve a niche into the global cultural agenda of cinema" (de

[39] The list of international festivals include but is not restricted to: "Women and Freedom," Bordeaux, France, 2015; "CinemAmbiente 18th Environmental Film Festival," Torino, 2015; "Hakaya 8th Film Festival," Amman, 2015; "Aegean Docs International Film Festival," Greece, 2015; "UNRWA-Spain" Basque Country 4-city tour of the following films, 2015; "Bristolian Mediterranean Film Festival," UK, 2015; "FiSahara International Film Festival," Algeria, 2015; "UN 3rd Women Film Festival," Jordan, 2015; "Rencontres Cinématographiques – Palestine: Filmer c'est exister," Geneva, 2014; LECCE European Film Festival, Italy, 2014; Goldsmith University, 2014, as part of the Jean Mohr and Edward Said "After the Last Sky" exhibition; NUFF@TIFF, Tromso, Norway, 2014; Arab Film Festival in the Netherlands "Women Making a Difference," 2013; Cineffable Film Festival, Paris, 2013; "Ciné-Palestine, dans les pas de cinéastes," Toulouse 2013, UNESCO, Palestine Permanent Delegation to UNESCO, Paris, 2013; NUFF@TIFF 2013; Algerian Ministry of Culture, "Committed Cinema Film Festival," 2013; Malmö Arab Film Festival, 2012; NUFF (Nordic Youth International Film Festival), 2012; London Palestine Film Festival, 2010; Boston Palestine Film Festival, 2010.

Valck 2007, 179). The proliferation of events in the 1980s rendered specialization indispensable to the viability of the film market. Gender-oriented film festivals as well as human rights festivals emerged during that period, the most iconic of them being the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Film Festival established in 1977. Typically, 1970s women's, gay and lesbian, and more generally queer film festivals were instrumental to community-building and their organization was subordinated to the situated movements of sexual liberation in which they were respectively inscribed.

However, these festivals evolved to either promote the commercialization of a new gender-based film aesthetics (see how new queer cinema has shaped a niche within the markets of global art cinema) or focus on human rights, especially in the South and ex-Soviet countries that are dependent on European funding (Armatage 2009, Barlow 2003, Loist and Zielinski 2012, Rhyne 2007). The formation of "niches" was thus meant to both reach out to specific communities and for (predominantly European) producers and funders to invest in low-risk and predictable markets. Fragmentation, in that context, constitutes an industrial tool to manage an expanding market, where A list film festivals such as Cannes, Venice and Berlin are still considered to be both the center and the norm. The tension between cinephiliac and NGO modes of outreach and their respective *industrial* as well as *community* strategies thus relies, once again, on the prioritization of certain circuits over others. This prioritization determines the branding of Palestinian films according to these circuits and the success of their circulation within them, but it also dictates which market will penetrate Palestine to support the emerging film economy, the types of jobs that are available to film workers, and *who* can be a film worker.

These tensions around the competition between (and within) diverse groups of film workers reflect larger debates around issues of "unity" in the Palestinian National Movement, which emerged as part of the reconfiguration of the NGOs' roles and institutional structure after Oslo. Although not directly voiced in terms of politics of resistance by the film community, the critique of "fragmentation" that underlies the insecurity felt by Palestinian film workers on both sides points to diverging principles of outreach symptomatic of nationalist debates: one that professes a *unity* centralized around a group of educated filmmakers and nodes in the global network of film festivals with local ramifications; the other that defends the local *inclusion* of specific marginalized groups in order to redress internal inequality. The latter's specialization in women's or youth issues challenges the former's idea of a pre-existing national unity in the face of both the occupation and

global economies (which would materialize with the recognition of Palestinian cinema abroad). On the other hand, NGOs' detractors also identify the demographic focus as a symptom of the professionalization and de-radicalization of civil society.

Asef Bayat addresses NGOs' "politics of fragmentation" in his critical analysis of the social transformations carried out by subaltern populations in the Middle East. He argues that the division of activist collectives into various interest groups mirrors, and has been responsible for, a shift in resistance politics whereby principles of rights and accountability have replaced charity, and insider lobbying has superseded street politics (Bayat 2010). This tendency can be observed in the history of women's rights advocacy in Palestine, from which Shashat has inherited. In the 1970s, the women's movement was embedded in the nationalist struggle, and committed to the challenging task of "identify[ing] with nationalism while also reconstructing it, through their activism, in an attempt to subvert its gender boundaries" (Jad 2008, 4). The various feminist organizations (*uttor nassaweyya*), traditionally affiliated to political parties under the umbrella of the PLO, redistributed foreign aid at the grassroots level, and consequently acquired a significant mass base (Jad 2008, 3). These Palestinian organizations were however confronted with a new configuration of power when the negotiations between the PLO and Israel started at the 1991 Madrid Conference. The women's movement suffered from the internal split of their institutional base (the various parties) in disagreement over whether or not to condone the Palestinian representatives' decision to engage in a dialogue with the colonizer. The restructuration of the parties' leadership undermined women's positions, thus de-mobilizing them.

Following the more general decline of the politics of parties and unions, the feminist organizations themselves also faced internal conflicts over their diverging opinions on the peace process. The gradual dissociation of the feminist agenda from nationalist politics, as well as the failure to establish a common women's front, led to the specialization of women's centers into separate entities. The split of the parties left these newly independent organizations penniless, and in need of funding that international aid agencies were ready to supply. The integration into the networks of the Western aid economy further encouraged the specialization of women's organizations as well as their focus on professionalization and the "legal understanding of women's oppression," as opposed to party politics relying on mass mobilization that addressed integrated structures of nation, class, and gender (Jad 2008, 13). In other words, for Islah Jad,

professional NGOs have directed their energy inwards, into the fabric of Palestinian society and governmental structures, instead of addressing colonization's overarching structure of oppression.

As Rabab Abdulhadi remarks however, the critique according to which feminist groups engaging with the legal status of women bolster certain colonial structures of oppression obscures the "paradigm of difference" that situates women at different intersections of systems of oppression. She argues that "the diversity of women's expressions can be understood by recognizing that windows of opportunity and the changing political context affect different categories of Palestinian women differently, thus producing different manifestations of the movement" (Abdulhadi 1998, 665). Here, like in the various scenarios of cinema outreach I have uncovered, the rhetoric of unity can also be deconstructed as a form of prioritization. The Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), identified by Jad as emblematic of the turn towards NGO-ization and a privileged partner of Shashat, exposes its position with respect to the nationalist movement in those terms in Shashat's 2011 catalogue:

> The protracted military occupation of Palestinian lands limits women's safety, independence, self-determination, and blocks women's citizenship in a Palestinian nation-state. In addition, national resistance against the occupation can be a factor limiting women's development as it treats women's needs as being of secondary importance (Shashat catalogue 2011).

Shashat's films have in fact engaged with both aspects from a critical perspective, thus testifying of the wide range of feminisms the organization supports. Fadya Salah Aldeen's short documentary *Heik el-Qanun!/This is the Law!* (2012) follows a Palestinian (Muslim) woman judge's attempt at defending women's right to ask for divorce in the context of the West Bank PA's dismissal of women's issues after the establishment of Oslo. The film implicitly supports feminist associations' "Model Parliament" meant to propose legal reforms, an initiative whose campaign focused on revising the "Personal Status Law" that denies women many domestic and private rights (Jamal 2001). Laila Abbas' *Khams Fanajeen u Fanajan/5 Cups & a Cup* (2011) takes on a different approach to the same issue, and uses the opportunity of a fictional meeting between the representatives of the women's movement in preparation for their encounter with the president about the Personal Status Law in order to show the movement's elitist tendencies. The women's discussion foregrounds their condescension towards other Arab countries and their admiration for the West. Their concerns betray the movement's total dissociation from the

women's base incarnated by Um Mohamad (or Um Ahmad, as the representatives can't remember her real name), the coffee lady who is mistreated and shown outside the conversation. Other films directly address the occupation: Lialy Kilani's *Lew Akhdhuh/If They Take it!* (2012) documents an elderly woman's steadfastness as she holds on to her house despite the violent attacks of nearby settlers; Ghada Terawi's *'Aleahu/On Air* (2011) starts with the fictional TV announcement of elections for a one-state solution soon to be interrupted by the Israeli army's invasion of Ramallah, thus evoking the Second Intifada as the marker of the end of the Peace Process and a direct threat to political imagination; finally, Alaa Desoki's *Daja/Noise!* (2012) stems from Gaza cities' constant rumble to evaluate the political use of noise in popular demonstrations.

The objective here is neither to confine Shashat's position to the spectrum of feminist nationalist politics, nor is it to transfer women's groups' internal disagreements onto cinema organizations in Palestine. I am merely attempting to extract how the issues of fragmentation that have animated the debates around the re-organization of women's groups after Oslo can illuminate some dynamics at work in the contemporary Palestinian film economy. Diverging politics of outreach reveal the climate of competition between Palestinian film workers due to both developmental economies' re-organization of civil society and the mirroring of a global formation of niche and hierarchical circuits that allow differential penetrations of the human rights and the art cinema economies. In this context, a consideration of the competing modes of organization based on unity and inclusion leads us to question what forms of solidarity can underlie the contemporary formation of a film economy in Palestine. In the next and last section of this chapter, I argue that both conceptions of outreach are struggling to find ways to address their common legacy of militant cinema and its forms of organization. The different politics of outreach all conceive of sustainability as a necessity inspired by a historical model of futurity (one of liberation formulated in the militant period from 1968 to 1982) in need of re-negotiation at a moment of partial statehood under continuing colonization. They all ask: What does it mean to build Palestinian film institutions for Palestinians in post-Oslo Palestine?

Outreach, Sustainability, and *Sumud*

In this section, I propose, as announced earlier, to unlock the meanings around sustainability that have been colonized by the aid economy. What happens if we expand our contextualization of outreach – defined as a way to produce sustainable Palestinian film institutions – to the period

preceding the “de-radicalization” of civil society, the latter’s subjection to a regime of neoliberal economics of human rights, and its dissociation from the mass base? The purpose is not only to replace these organizations’ various addresses to marginalized Palestinians in a larger history of sustainability. I also want to understand how Palestinian film workers’ *relationships* with their own militant history can serve to productively re-think the place of outreach in the contemporary Palestinian film economy. In other words, how can contemporary proto-film institutions support a “popular cinema in which people find themselves in the process of making history,” in the same way that the PLO and its film units in exile advocated for through the liberation movement and its associated aesthetics from 1968 to 1982 (‘Adnan Mdeinat, cited in Matar 2018)? Furthermore, how can we conceptually approach this temporal dissonance?

First, some historicization is in order. As Nadia Yaqub notices in the most extensive study of Palestinian cinema of that period to date, both popular and foreign outreach were central not only to the revolutionary project of Palestinian militant cinema as of 1968, but also to its *institutionalization* by the overarching Palestinian Liberation Organization. This dynamic followed the formation of a centralized state power in exile, which gained strength in the second half of the 1970s (Yaqub 2018, 125) after the recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people at the 1974 Arab League Summit in Rabat. Among the many institution-building initiatives, Yaqub mentions that the Palestinian Cinema Institute (formed under the auspices of the PLO), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (the PFLP; one of the three major parties under the PLO), and the Samid (the PLO’s economic development wing) continued the mobile cinema scheme initiated in the late 1960s by Fateh’s Palestine Film Unit, and organized film screenings in military bases, refugee camps, and villages. The films included productions by the various PLO-affiliated groups as well as reels from the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban allies.

From 1968 until the mid 1970s, the party-produced films were decidedly addressed to the sensibility of Palestinian audiences, and questionnaires were distributed to the spectators in order to collect feedback on their aesthetic preferences and what visual strategies would best mobilize them (Massad 2006, 36). The parties also regularly curated film nights in ciné-clubs in Beirut and Damascus, which would showcase art and political cinema from Europe and the third world. The screenings were followed by discussions that were later reported in the cultural columns of the PFLP’s magazine *al-Hadaf* (Yaqub 2018, 127). Interestingly, strategies of outreach extended beyond participative exhibition, and included *professional development* in photography. The Iraqi

PFLP filmmaker Kassem Hawal trained Palestinian fighters who had been wounded and even traveled to South Yemen in order to provide equipment and expertise to the local cinematographers documenting the revolution there. Similarly, the pedagogical impulse of Fateh's early PFU materialized in Hany Jawhariyyeh's draft of a technical syllabus, left unachieved after the famous revolutionary cinematographer's death in 1976 (Yaqub 2018, 133).

This popular outreach to Palestinian audiences was combined with the necessity to communicate the Palestinian struggle for liberation to the rest of the third world in the spirit of transnational discussions around a third world cinema movement carried out in Algiers and Buenos Aires in 1973 and 1974 (Mestman 2002). The Palestinian Cinema Group, an ephemeral collaboration between the PLO's various film units, symptomatically advocated for international outreach in its 1973 founding manifesto. As part of its mandate, the group assigned to itself the tasks of "cooperation: to strengthen relationships with revolutionary and progressive film groups around the world, to represent Palestine in film festivals, and to provide available film facilities to all allies working in the interests of the Palestinian revolution." (cited in Dickinson 2019, 94). International outreach eventually occupied a central place in the PLO's agenda, and its network expanded from the Baghdad Film Festival, the Damascus Film Festival and the Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage to allied film festivals in the West, including the Leipzig Documentary Festival where Palestine was distinguished with a prize in 1974. In the second half of the 1970s, the increased circulation of Palestinian cinema abroad, combined with its gradual institutionalization within the PLO, meant that the films' aesthetics of liberation were increasingly subjected to the diplomatic project of state-building in exile rather than embedded in a revolutionary movement (Denes 2014, 238).

Palestinian revolutionary cinema's evolving forms of institutionalization have nonetheless marked the imaginary of Palestinian film workers. In October 2009, the Ramallah-based Al-Kasaba International Film Festival dedicated its fourth annual edition to then-recently deceased Mustapha Abu 'Ali, widely considered to be the founder of Palestinian revolutionary cinema in 1968. In his welcoming letter, al-Kasaba festival director Khaled Alayyan remembered how Abu 'Ali had refused to be honored at the opening of the first edition in 2006. The filmmaker had allegedly claimed that such a celebration would be meaningless unless "[Palestinian] officials ke[pt] their promise to support Palestinian cinema" (cited in Alayyan 2009). Building on Abu 'Ali's statement three years later, Alayyan took this opportunity to point towards the PA's under-

funded budget for culture and reminded the officials that "culture cannot remain a future project waiting for political and economic stabilization," but rather, "is part of development and state-building" (Alayyan 2009).

Abu 'Ali's complaint is testament to a change in the regime of images, in which cinema no longer plays a role in official discourses.[40] In response, Alayyan's statement first re-asserts Palestinian cinema's embeddedness in the formation of a political and economic project of liberation central to the *spirit* of the revolution, of which Abu 'Ali is reminiscent. On the other hand, however, Alayyan positions this imperative within the framework of state-building both sketched in the second period of the revolution and at the core of today's context, in which "stabilization" is impossibly construed as both the means and the end of self-determination (see Chapter Two). In other words, the symbolic reference to Abu 'Ali appeals to a past where the PLO is imagined to integrate cinema as an organ of its political machine. Yet, state-building in the current context of the two-state solution is here framed as the only possible outcome for liberation despite the shortcomings of Oslo. How can the militant period speak to a present of development, then? And how can the contemporary imaginary and implementation of outreach take root in revolutionary grassroots practices?

Nadia Yaqub suggests that the Palestinian Revolution, when it is represented at all in Palestine's official discourse today, is incorporated into a teleology that leads to the PA and Yasser Arafat as its president and ultimate martyr (Yaqub 2018, 218). In this chapter, I am upsetting the linear historical chronology from the 1960s until today in order to avoid such teleological temptations, whether they end with the PA or contemporary attempts to negotiate the militant legacy. Instead, I propose that one way of understanding the historical rephrasing of practices of outreach in the present includes focusing on slippery concepts such as *sumud* (صمود, steadfastness). Lena Meari insists that *sumud* has no fixed meaning and incarnates a multiplicity of significations and practices which resist the normalization of colonial power relations (Meari 2014). I argue that beyond those, the multiplicity of meanings that have aggregated around the philosophy of *sumud* further point to a convergence of interests and, importantly, the sustainability of the concept itself. In self-referential prowess, sustainability has perpetually regenerated to adjust to new historical

[40] The PLO and its various parties did not actively support film initiatives with funding; neither did they call for the establishment of the various film units, which were initiated by the filmmakers. However, films took part in the PLO's broader "cultural activism" (Matar 2018) and as such were deemed useful.

times. The term has given way to linguistic translations firmly rooted in sustainable aid economies such as "resilience," as I will explain. *Sumud* both articulates the transition from revolution to developmental economy in its historical practice and allows the potentially discursive and hopefully material and economic re-activation of collective meanings in the current Palestinian film economy. Finally, *sumud*'s conjoint approach to the marginal identity of Palestinians and the marginal populations within the Palestinian nation provides an entry point to further engage with contemporary politics of outreach and their possible re-organization into collective economies. The convergence around and the sustainability of *sumud* designate it as a hinge to understanding the organizational articulation of collective Palestinian futures, in which Palestinian cinema has been historically engaged. In that sense, *sumud* could procure the historical continuity to produce a "popular cinema in which people find themselves in the process of making history," as enounced earlier by 'Adnan Mdeinat.

The reliance of liberation revolutions on foreign aid is a major axiom of the Cold War and the dispute of the two super powers through the proxy of the third world. South-South and Pan-Arab solidarity movements have similarly been pervious to imbalances of power in the distribution of financial support. Here I delve into this history to question how *sumud* both proposes a vision for a sustainable militant economy and intersects with the aid economy's definition of sustainability. The debate around aid in and for Palestine can be traced back to the late 1970s and parallels the re-conceptualization of *sumud* as a philosophy of resistance. In the 1960s, *sumud* was primarily employed to describe the refugee condition and the daily struggle for survival in the Palestinian consciousness. It was repurposed by the PLO over the years to address the revised image of the Palestinian as a freedom fighter – including women – which transpires in the political posters designed until the mid-1980s (Palestine Poster Project Archives 2018; Fig. 3). In the 1970s, the word's meaning broadened to also designate Palestinian life in the occupied West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Finally, the term gradually encompassed the economic strategies deployed to maintain a large population of Palestinians on the land in the face of growing Israeli expansion (Rijke and van Teeffelen 2014). As of 1978, this effort was greatly supported by the Palestinian-Jordanian joint committee's creation of *Amwal es-sumud*, a fund meant to succor Palestinians and "combat the collapse of [their] social and economic fabric caused by the Israeli colonization of [the] land" (Shehadeh 1982). The Fund primarily allocated resources to municipalities, education, agriculture, and housing. However, it managed large amounts of money and its administration

soon became corrupt, thus tainting Palestinians' attachment to the term *sumud* altogether. Moreover, the Fund began to be seen as creating dependency rather fostering resistance. For famous architect and activist Ibrahim Dakkak, "steadfastness and resistance were replaced with a conventional philosophy of financial support. Political divisions flourished and dependency and social polarization increased" (Dakkak 1988, 290).

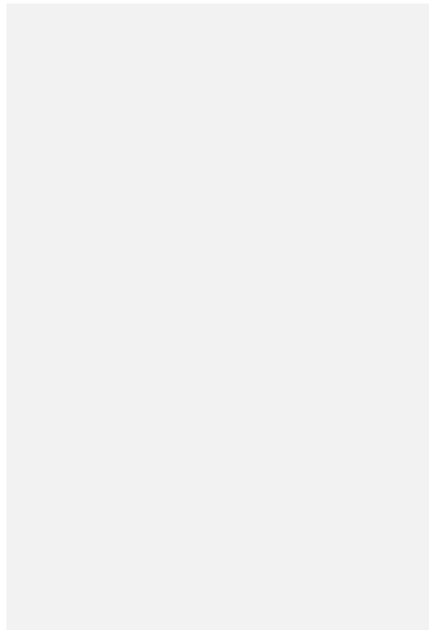

Figure 3: Militant poster representing *sumud* in the context of the armed struggle. The poster was designed by Kamal Nicola circa 1980 for the Palestine Red Crescent Society (the Palestine Poster Project Archive website).

Sumud thus underpinned the establishment of enduring and sustainable Palestinian grassroots institutions autonomous from the Israeli Civil Administration before any official formulation of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories in the early 1980s. As it evolved, the concept constituted a basis for developing an economy reliant on foreign aid partly emanating from the Arab countries, which challenged Palestinian independence in the process of economy-building in the territories. In addition to being corrupt, the aid money represented the "official Arab 'guilt money' for abandoning the confrontation with Israel" (Tamari 1991, 61). The Fund finally became increasingly suspicious to leftist parties in the territories, which they saw as an attempt by both Fateh and Jordan to assert their political influence (Sayigh 1997, 479). A conference on "Development in the Service of Steadfastness" was held in 1981 in the West Bank, which discussed ways to articulate two options. In his assessment of the event, Dakkak describes

sumud muqawim (resistance through steadfastness) as a possible alternative to the static conception of *sumud*. The latter, in his view, simply advocated for maintaining the physical presence of Palestinians in the occupied territories and served a politics of development that aimed to reduce Palestinian emigration rather than actively struggle for more rights.

Until today, this form of "static *sumud*" (Dakkak 1988, 288) is very gendered and transpires within popular representations of women protecting olive trees threatened to be uprooted. For Dakkak, static sumud also emanated from the vision of an exiled leadership disconnected from the grassroots and materialized the *institutionalization* of the revolution (Dakkak 1988, 289). The alternative of *sumud muqawim* sought to formulate a plan rooted in the Palestinian context against "the imposition of 'standard priorities' developed by the 'outside' [here the PLO in exile] or strategies developed by 'futuristic' studies [which] could lead to misleading conclusions" (Dakkak 1988, 295). In other words, in 1981, Dakkak opposed the unsustainability of external input, which also prefigures the project logic so fundamental to NGOs' intervention a few years later. In contrast, Dakkak advocated for a complete cohesion of social and political needs in the face of possible normalization of the relationship with Israel. He concludes: "*sumud* is a pre-requisite for any just and durable solution to the conflict. This *sumud* must be *sumud muqawim*" (Dakkak 1988, 307). Similar arguments can be found today, including in the Campus in Camps booklet that opened this chapter. Tariq Dana's formulation of a "resistance economy" also inscribes itself within *sumud muqawim* and proposes an "institutionalized form of economic struggle that envisages a transitional reorganization of the economy and social relations to be in harmony with the political requirements and objectives of the Palestinian national liberation process" (Dana 2014b.).

Sumud muqawim highlights the necessity for an "indigenous strategy" championing local employment as well as import substitution in order to foster independence from the Israeli economy. It also promoted the control of foreign aid distribution (Dakkak 1988, 297). This resonates with Shashat and other organizations and festivals' work of outreach. In fact, Shashat's desire to "have an impact on Palestine," to repeat Alia Arasoughly's words (interview with the author 2015), not only translates the necessity of taking action within the confines of the Palestinian territories, but also amounts to increasing self-reliance through programs of "capacity building" closely associated with distribution strategies. The participatory aspect of Shashat's screenings strives to include Palestinian needs as a foundation to its own mode of operation. In

addition to the discussions following the films, we saw that Shashat circulated surveys that inflected the direction of the organization. These closely echo the questionnaires distributed by the militant Palestine Film Unit and other parties such as the PFLP at screenings and in schools with the aim of "canvassing the Palestinian audience." For Joseph Massad, the PFU's strategy relied on a form of "instrumentalism wherein film [wa]s seen as a pedagogical tool to incite people to politics, [which] became prominent, as did audience tastes and desires" (Massad 2006, 36). Furthermore, the "popular consultations" were integral to the process of militant filmmaking, in which the relationship between the concerned masses and the filmmaker should always be at the forefront (Abu Ghânima 1977, 38).

Shashat's surveys have similarly evaluated audiences' preferences around the length of the screening and the discussion, the film selection's fit with the audience, the films' clarity and choice of topic, the mediation of the discussion, whether the activity achieved the desired goals, whether the discussion contributed to improving the audience's knowledge on women's issues, and the general appreciation for the activity (Nazzal 2013, 117). Furthermore, the PFU's interest in "the audience tastes and desires" re-contextualizes Shashat and the IYFF's emphasis on self-emancipation in the creative process as a return to a collective understanding of Palestinian youth and women's desired representations *of themselves as a collective category*. Both the PFU's questionnaires and Shashat's early surveys, which were decisive in the shift towards in-house productions, emphasized the need to represent the community itself. As Colleen Jankovic points out, "not only [does Shashat] make space for a supposed non-existent audience, they also aim to expand the parameters of that audience, or rather the kind of society that can be fostered and envisioned via that spectatorial space" (Jankovic 2014, 19).

Despite the individual promotion of the filmmakers through leaflets separate from the catalogue, the productions resulting from the workshops are meant to circulate as a bundle rather than individually. In other words, the film series travel *as a collective effort* to which everyone has contributed at various levels by occupying different functions in turn, and not only for the benefit of one artist's reputation. Can we, maybe, address this epistemological shift as enacting the singular-collective mode that Lena Meari assigns to Palestinians-in-*sumud*? Can we think of outreach as contributing to the "continuous process of reorganization of social relations," to quote Meari's qualification of *sumud*'s potential (Meari 2014, 555)? Local NGOs instrumentalize cinema in the name of minorities' self-expression and as a priority over building infrastructures

for cinema's sake. Shashat has implemented a geographical coherence between production and distribution that challenges other festivals' practices, which is formally (and to a certain extent ideologically) reminiscent of PLO's "Samid"[41] productions in the Studio Sakhrah, its outreach projects, and its professional development workshops dedicated to Palestinians' control of their own image.

While Shashat's initiatives are largely embedded within aid economies and require planning capacities for writing grants and establishing multiple year plans in advance, they may also fall of under the temporality of "getting by" as coined per Lori Allen – that is to say, they are the result of constant strategies of adaptation (Allen 2008). In their examination of the various and multiple understandings of *sumud* over the years, Alexandra Rijke and Toine van Teeffelen point to how the term has also been used in order to humanize Palestinians in the eyes of a foreign audience. For these authors, this was one of the consequences of the focus on non-violent resistance in Raja Shehadeh's seminal book *The Third Way* (1982), which contributed to re-popularizing the term *sumud* in the 1980s. The imperative of humanization functions very closely with the goals formulated by Human Development (which describes itself in opposition to economic growth) and its integration within biosphere-oriented sustainable development. In his study of the neoliberal biopolitics of sustainable development, Julian Reid explores the "surface of contact" between sustainable development and neoliberalism, which "ought to make for a tense and political field of contestation but has instead made for a strategically manipulative relation between the two doctrines" (Reid 2013, 108). This contact materializes in a new form of governance that he calls the "sustainable development-resilience nexus," inspired by the UN's definition of resilience as "the capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazard, to adapt by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure" (cited in Reid 2013, 108). Just like Human Development, this meaning of resilience locates political action in the preservation of life rather than in mobilizations that challenge power structures. Sustainable development naturalizes resilience as a "capacity of life itself" rather than one of states and populations, thus subordinating it to the most resilient form of institution: that of the market (Reid 2013, 114-6).

The ambiguous relationship of *sumud* to the aid economy, partly a result of the appropriation of such a popular term to push very different agendas, similarly transpired more

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[41] "Samid" means "the one who performs *sumud*."

recently in former prime minister Salam Fayyad's instrumentalization of *sumud* to defend his plan for a neoliberal Palestinian state (Rijke and van Teeffelen 2014). Appropriating the title of Shehadeh's book, Fayyad created the Third Way party in order to offer an alternative to Hamas and Fateh in the 2006 elections. For Itiraf Remawi, coordinator for the Bisan Center for Research and Development, Fayyad's economic plan stands far from promoting a form of sustainable development under the occupation. Instead, "with Fayyad's neo-liberal policies, our collective rights, our economical and societal rights under these policies have been affected, our steadfastness has been damaged'" (cited in Malik 2013, 13).

What to make, then, of cinema NGOs genuinely dedicated to grassroots and collective outreach but relying on the hierarchized structures of the aid economy and the management of elected boards? What are the avenues for the Palestinian films circulated both by cinema NGOs and cinephiliac mobile cinemas to become popular despite their embeddedness in international markets of human rights and art cinema? How can Palestinian film practices of outreach "make for a tense and political field of contestation"? Despite the entanglements in neoliberal and developmental politics, philosophies of *sumud* primarily propose a thinking of cultural permanence, historical continuity and popular regeneration throughout, in ways that engage with Palestinians' histories of marginality. In 2003 during the Second Intifada, Palestinian American filmmaker Annemarie Jacir co-organized the Dreams of a Nation Film Festival in Jerusalem mentioned in this dissertation's introduction, which showcased two films from the revolutionary period: Kassem Hawal's *'A'id ila Hayfa/Return to Haifa* (1982) and Mustapha Abu 'Ali's *Laysa Lahum Wujud/They Do Not Exist* (1974). The organizers even succeeded in smuggling in the latter's director (Yaqub 2018, 200). Mimicking, in the cultural realm, the steadfastness of claiming the land for continuing Palestinian presence, the festival constituted for Jacir "a matter of survival, of resisting [Palestinian] culture's disappearance" by promoting images of Palestinians by Palestinians in Palestine (Jacir 2006, 29).

From the late militant period, *Return to Haifa* is an adaptation of famous Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani's eponymous book, in which a Palestinian family forcibly driven out of Haifa in 1948 returns in 1967 to reunite with the son they had to leave behind, only to see him adopted by the Israeli family that now occupies their home. The first and only feature fiction made under the auspices of the PFLP, *Return to Haifa* involved a large cast of volunteers from Lebanon's refugee camps of Nahr el-Barid and Badawi in reenactments of the Nakba. Not only did the film

address the Palestinian masses then, it also directly represented and enrolled the very populations who had been dispossessed. Envisioned as a model for "alternative cinema in the Arab world" by Hawal (Yaqub 2018, 158), the film opens with an epic reproduction of the 1948 Palestinian exodus from Haifa realized with little financial means. The scene combines the aerial view from the Zionist military planes and the point of view of the crowd itself. As they reach to boats to escape, Palestinians become gradually individualized with close-ups reminiscent of UNRWA footage from that period (Fig. 4). The rest of the film ambitiously alternates between different time periods (figured with the differential use of black and white and color) and geographies (Poland, Ramallah, Haifa). In turn, *They Do Not Exist* offers a counter-testimony to former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's denial of Palestinian existence by documenting life in refugee camps and the Fedayeen's training. A pillar of Palestinian militant history, the film clearly illustrated the goal of the Dream of a Nation Film Festival.

Figure 4: Aerial views from the military planes and point of view of the refugees in the opening sequence of *Return to Haifa* (screenshots).

Both *Return to Haifa* and *They Do Not Exist* resurface in Annemarie Jacir's *When I Saw You* (2012). A romanticized portrayal of the revolution mediated by the point of view of a young Palestinian refugee boy, Tareq, yearning to return, the film includes direct citations of militant productions. The scenes of collective life in the 1960s refugee and Fedayeen camps reference historical details on point from *They Do Not Exist*: the towel as an object of value that refugees would gift the Fedayeen, the letters sent in support of the Freedom fighters, as well as the very setting of their camp. The parallel even extends to the uncanny physical resemblance of Jacir's feda'i, played by the famous Palestinian actor Saleh Bakri, with the feda'i featured in Abu 'Ali's film (Fig. 5). Similarly, Qais al-Zubaidi's *Far from the Homeland* (1969) inspired the shot of

children playing in the infrastructures of the UNWRA camp (Yaqub 2018, 200-1), and the guerilla training sessions depicted in *Bi-al-Ruh, bi-al-Dam/With Soul, With Blood* (1971) are faithfully reproduced (Fig. 6). Shot in Jordan where Jacir was stranded, unable to enter Palestine, the film's topic thus also duplicates the filmmaker's own life at the time of its making.

Figure 5: The setting of the fedayeen's camp in *They Do Not Exist* and *When I Saw You* (screenshots).

Figure 6: Guerilla training in *With Soul, With Blood* and *When I Saw You* (screenshots).

On the other hand, the similarities with *Return to Haifa* can be found in the production methods employed and the formulation of an "alternative cinema from the Arab world" reminiscent of *sumud muqawim*. In an interview with Guy Hennebelle about the militant film *Kafr Kassem* (1974), a fictionalization and reenactment of the Israeli massacre that occurred in 1948, Lebanese filmmaker Borhan Alaouié similarly reflected on the necessity of addressing his audience in a dramatic manner, while avoiding the registers of dominant European and Egyptian

canons. Whereas the shooting of *Return to Haifa* mobilized a relatively spectacular mise-en-scène, cumulating a large number of volunteers as well as a variety of locations, *Kafr Qasim/Kafr Kassem* aimed to be, in Alaouié's own words, "commercial, in the right sense of the term," and part and parcel of the quest to find "a new aesthetic typical of the Arab world" (Alaouié 1977, 155-6, my translation from French).

Sympathetic to these views which have found a new life in the past ten years with the emergence of strong regional support for the arts, Jacir has insisted on relying extensively on Arab grants in order "to break the reliance on European funding [and] have a strong and independent film community" (Jacir AFAC website 2013). Her project effectively gained the financial support of the Jordan-based Khalid Shoman Foundation, the (now-defunct) Abu Dhabi fund SANAD, and the regional Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC). Hiring and working locally was also central to the enterprise, and the film's cast and crew all hailed from the region. Finally, the extras populating the fictional refugee camp proved to be the very children of refugees and Fedayeen portrayed in the film, thus embodying Palestinians' historical continuity and cultural persistence through cinematic reenactment in the same manner Ginsburg's "embedded aesthetic" cited earlier could "sustain, and even revive or create certain social relations" (Ginsburg 1994, 368). Yet these relations also survived the inflections necessary for the film to circulate internationally. The point of view of the child introduces humor and drives the narrative away from depictions of violence or partisanship that would have hampered the film's possibility for funding. Simultaneously, this form of address places the storyline within the intergenerational network that supported the film's production. After a first circulation in festivals in Europe, the Arab world, Brazil, Turkey, Greece, and India, *When I Saw You* was also screened in Palestine's villages and refugee camps, including as part of Area C mobile cinema's outreach project.

When I Saw You is symptomatic of contemporary Palestinian films' broader tendency to engage with militant history as testified by Azza El-Hassan's quest for the supposed lost archive in *Muluk wa Kumpars/Kings and Extras* (2004); Basma Alsharif's experimental restoration of Kassem Hawal's *Buyutuna al-Saghirah/Our Small Houses* (1974) in *O, Persecuted* (2014); Hind Shoufani's tracking of her father's past in the PLO in *Trip Along Exodus* (2014); and the search for a people's self-image in Mohanad Yaqubi's *Kharij al-Itar: Thawra Hatta al-Nasr/Off Frame aka Revolution Until Victory* (2012-2017). The nine projects pitched at Ramallah Doc in 2017 similarly dealt with past issues instead of representing the present of news time despite foreign

funders' preferences.[42] Among some examples: Mahasen Nasser-Eldin's *We Carve Words in the Earth* proposed to explore the history of Palestinian feminism in 1930s Egypt, and how it intersected with the anti-colonial struggle; Mariam Shahin projected to fictionalize the discovery of Palestinian archives in a settler's house in *Stolen Archives*; Talal Jabari's *Tantura* meant to unveil the vanishing history of the Galilean city destroyed in 1948; finally, May Marei's *Cima* intended to portray the history of Cinema Jenin in the 1950s.

Sumud muqawim might thus entail working within the constraints of the broader economies that create distance from the Palestinian margins and collective action. The prizes awarded by the international film festivals, but also Days of Cinema, all encourage the transnational circulation of Palestinian cinema, its reputation and the promise of new capital for future productions. While filmmakers have devised solutions to turn the requirements for art cinema into opportunities to speak to the Palestinian margins and the Palestinians as marginal, there still lacks proper engagement with outreach in terms of institution-building, as a means of inscribing the embodiment, sustainability and revival of social relations into lasting collective structures. In addition to production and distribution, Shashat has fashioned its own prize dedicated to Sulaffa Jadallah, who filmed and fought alongside Mustapha Abu 'Ali and Hani Jawhariyyeh without ever obtaining the same recognition and legacy. Although very little advertised, the prize constituted an attempt to intervene in the field of cultural legitimization by re-repositioning women filmmakers at its center, and as makers of history.

This objective was also sought by screening women's insights into and contributions to revolutionary cinema. Shashat thus complicated the gendered association of static *sumud* with women's passive defense of the land, but also offered a counterpoint to a male-defined form of grassroots organization. A Palestine Cinema Institute and General Union of the Palestinian Women film, Nabeeha Lotfi's *Li-Anna al-Judhur lan Tamut/Because Roots Do Not Die* (1975-77) documents the life of Palestinian women and children in Tal al-Zaatar refugee camp in Lebanon, before, during, and after it falls prey to a destructive siege by Lebanese Christian militias in August 1976, which ended in the massacre of the camp's population. Partly constructed around local memories collected before the destruction of the camp, the film's editing shows women alternating between their various domestic tasks, from kneading the dough and hanging the laundry to assembling their guns in anticipation of the battle. Following the evacuation of the camp, the

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[42] I owe this remark to Mohanad Yaqubi.

women narrate the loss of their sons and daughters, as well as their own sacrifices. Dahna Abourahme's *The Kingdom of Women* (2010) similarly focuses on women's labor and their reconstruction of the Ein el-Helweh refugee camp after Israeli attacks in 1982 and in the wake of the PLO's departure. Finally, Heiny Srour's *Layla wa al-Ziap/Leila and the Wolves* (1984) playfully re-tells the history of Palestinian women's resistance whose multiple forms of heroism – from smuggling weapons under the nose of the occupying British army and throwing boiling water onto soldiers to turning their guns against the Irgun terrorist group during the infamous 1948 Deir el-Yassin massacre – have consistently been denied and dismissed by their male comrades starting from the 1936 revolt until the Lebanese Civil War.

Addressing the refugee, even if this meant refashioning the Palestinian identity as freedom fighter, has provided the impulse for outreach in the militant era. After Oslo, this became an ethical imperative because the Palestinian Authority ceased to represent Palestinians outside of Palestine in what has been widely perceived as an utter betrayal. The positionalities of refugees and women, epitomes of marginality, encapsulate the stakes of Palestinian self-determination and collective projects, including of film representation and organization. It is significant that Mohanad Yaqubi's *Off Frame*, a protracted project on "a people in search of an image," follows this transformation of the marginal par excellence, thus turning the filmmaker himself into a researcher of what and who is always already excluded. The never-ending quest for a social relation of the Palestinian collective that translates into a style (an independent Arab cinema?) necessarily poses the question of inclusion as opposed to unity – the question of outreach.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the conceptual convergence of distinct film and political historical projects devised around "sustainability." The goal has been to map out the frictions, overlap, contradictions and negotiations between the multifarious meanings of sustainability which coexist in the contemporary formations of collective and economic futures for cinema in Palestine. A discourse simultaneously, yet differentially, rooted in 1960s Palestinian steadfastness, 1970s militant politics, 1980s grassroots organizations, as well as contemporary neoliberal resilience and aid economies, sustainability organizes current Palestinian efforts in expanding their networks of film production and exhibition towards marginalized populations and isolated areas. The multi-layering of sustainability both constrains film workers to performing a constant adjustment to

economies of aid and human development and opens up possibilities for infusing current formulations of economic futures with militant strategies inherited from earlier periods of resistance to colonization. The conceptual convergence builds a bridge between histories and potentially re-ignites the militant potential of narratives of sustainability, modes of collective work, as well as the integration of audiences.

I first argued that a commitment to economic sustainability and values of empowerment and capacity-building conditions the possibility for financial viability of Palestinian film projects in the contemporary West Bank. In cinephiliac economies, this translates into a hierarchized network of media centers and peripheries. By contrast, Palestinian cinema NGOs dedicate their resources to canvasing the territories in order to rally more audience members. These two projects sketch competing yet complementary maps of outreach, film aesthetics, and ideologies of popular access. Despite these divergences, the cinephiliac and NGO initiatives both locate their industrial and institutional models in the specter of Palestinian militant cinema. By examining the acknowledged and unwitting resonances between historical modes of filmmaking and cultural formations, this chapter has located the political future of sustainability at the crossroads of its historical discursive iterations.

Chapter Four – Emergency: Humanitarianism and the Life of Cinema

> In my family, we love the sun. We decided to sit outside and watch the F16s bombing Rafah.
> Fida Qishta, *The Guardian*, 2009.

Mohamed Jabaly's documentary *Isa'af/Ambulance* (2015) begins with a series of statistics assessing the human and material damage caused by the murderous Israeli bombings on Gaza during the Summer 2014. The noise of urban life, suddenly interrupted by the fall of a missile, provides the soundtrack to those measurements. When the film's image finally emerges from the dark screen, it does so from the rubble. The handheld camera traces the panic of the cinematographer's body as he runs, panting, towards the scene where the attack has taken place. Here the film edits together two complementary points of view: one that accompanies paramedics in the midst of the house's debris in search of trapped dwellers; the other, a drone-generated bird's eye view, which situates the filmmaker's camera among the many reporters and rescuers on site (Fig. 7). The film thus makes evident the inextricable articulation of recording technologies and destruction (particularly manifest with the use of the drone), but also the convergence between economies of filming and saving lives. Jabaly shot *Ambulance* as he toured with Abu Mazrouq's medical team from one explosion to the other. Upon their return to the hospital's Emergency Room, the ambulance would be welcomed by a crowd of reporters, photographers, and camera operators intent on following the paramedics to the surgery ward. The movement of sewing bodies together was therefore entwined with its very documentation at every given moment. During the bombings, hospitals formed a new public sphere, both as a forum where the public opinion would get shaped through news documentation, and a shelter where dispossessed injured and non-injured families alike would feel safe. Under Jabaly's camera and sutured through a collective effort of reportage, hospitals operated as guarantors of Gazans' physical *and* social life. They would also, for that very reason, become a privileged target for Israel's attacks.[43]

[43] In an opinion piece in *The Guardian*, Helena Kennedy mentions that 17 hospitals, 56 primary healthcare facilities, and 45 ambulances were damaged or destroyed, and that the total cost of the conflict to Gaza's healthcare system is estimated at $50m. Helena Kennedy, "The 2014 Conflict Left Gaza's Healthcare Shattered. When Will Justice Be Done?" *The Guardian*, 29 June 2015. Accessed 29 April 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/29/2014-conflict-gaza-healthcare-hospitals-war-crime-israel-hamas

Figure 7: Two complementary points of view in Mohammed Jabaly's *Ambulance* (screenshots).

In this analysis, *Ambulance* does not provide a comment on the power of witnessing. I take seriously Pooja Rangan's critique of documentaries' exploitative involvement with endangered and dehumanized lives (Rangan 2017, 1). Similarly, the aforementioned interconnection of filming and saving lives does not infer a link of causality between the two. In *Ambulance*, camera operators would often obstruct the way to the surgery room, or reporters would pressure a patient in need of breathing space. Instead, this interconnection points to a material, aesthetic, and political convergence between humanitarian economies and the metaphorical and material revival (the bringing back to life) of cinema in Gaza, of which the making of *Ambulance* and its successful circulation in international human rights, news media, and documentary festivals are also testament.[44] I have touched upon two different types of convergence earlier. Chapter Two

[44] *Ambulance* received the One World Media award and won several other prizes, including at the BBC Arabic Festival, Festival International de Programmes Audiovisuels (FIPA), and Days of Cinema. The film

examined the convergence between the news and the cinephiliac film economies as a site of competition between two divergent visions of institutional development. In turn, Chapter Three engaged with the conceptual convergence around the term "sustainability." This convergence highlights both the paralleling interests of human development and community outreach film projects on the one hand, and the possibility of reactivating revolutionary meanings in tension with aid and human rights' futurities on the other. In Chapter Four, I am theorizing the convergence between film economies and humanitarianism in Gaza as an example of what Lila Abu-Lughod calls "the cultural life of human rights."

In her study of women's rights in Egypt and Palestine, Abu-Lughod offers an alternative to the "moral posturing that traffics in judgements of the work of women's rights as either a form of collusion with imperialism (to be denounced) or a hopeful sign of universal emancipation and progress (to be celebrated)" (Abu Lughod 2010, 32). In other words, these are two visions of rights as ontological (Douzinas 2007, 7). Instead, she argues, we should track how human rights are themselves organizing discourses that both shape and get shaped by local practices and social and political fields. As a result, in this chapter, I examine how the *cultural* life of human rights and humanitarianism effectively constitutes the very material and discursive framework that allows practitioners to articulate various strategies for developing a Gazan film economy, whose *life,* expressed in almost *biological* terms, needs regenerating. In other words, the multiple projects involved in making cinema possible in the Strip situate their intervention within the realms of humanitarianism and human rights by differentially locating cinema as both essential to Gazans' social cohesion and resistance, and as an infrastructure itself endowed with a life that is threatened by Israeli and/or Islamist aggressions.

Although human rights and humanitarian discourses and economies are necessarily interconnected, their temporalities, aims, and modes of action differ. For Costas Douzinas, one of the complexities of human rights rhetoric dwells in the confusion between legal and moral discourses, and their respective characteristics as real and ideal (Douzinas 2007, 8). As such, human rights remain an open horizon: as either a principle to defend in a court of law, or one to uphold in the face of injustice. On the contrary, humanitarianism subordinates human rights

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was also selected at prestigious documentary festivals such as Sheffield Doc, International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA), or CPH:DOX in Denmark. The film also screened in Palestine at Days of Cinema and opened the Red Carpet Human Rights Film Festival in Gaza.

discourses to the calculations of emergency's immediate present. Craig Calhoun draws a clear distinction between humanitarianism and human rights in his study of emergency as a social imaginary in global affairs:

> Humanitarianism is … kept distinct from several other projects. It is not the long-term agenda of economic development. It is not the promotion of democracy. It is not the advocacy for human rights. It is the focus on immediate response suggested by the emergency imaginary, with its emphasis on apparently sudden, unpredictable, short-term explosion of suffering (Calhoun 2010, 49).

These differential temporalities and economies do not form two separate logics that operate in parallel. Instead, humanitarianism reconfigures human rights to the service of humanitarian politics in which all disasters, whether of natural origins or not, are mediated by planned regimes of governance that are all but "sudden" and "unpredictable." In *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (2012), Eyal Weizman coins the term "humanitarian present" to describe how, since the 2000s, humanitarian management has come to replace regular modes of political governance in contexts where the collusion of humanitarianism, human rights and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is abused by state, supra-state and military action (Weizman 2012, 18). This regime of crisis management is articulated around risk assessment and the testing and calculation of acceptable thresholds of destruction and deaths, with the oppressive states' objective to maintain a certain degree of legitimacy in front of the International Community while enforcing maximum control on the ground. As Weizman explains elsewhere, such a focus "creates an extended present without a conception of history and future, and thus without politics" (cited in Manfredi 2013, 170).

Gaza proves an epitome of the humanitarian present, one that is protracted, continuous, and almost permanent, and which has crept in with increased restrictions to movement since 1991 and the building of the barrier in 1994. The process has worsened since the 2006 legislative elections that brought Hamas to power, in reaction to which Israel enclosed the Strip and unleashed a cycle of bombings on its inhabitants. Food aid dependency, unemployment, as well as the lack of access to basic services and medical supplies all constitute facets of Israel's "'humanitarian management,' exercised as the calibration of life-sustaining flows of resources through the physical enclosure, one meant to keep the entire population close to the minimum limit of physical existence" (Weizman 2012, 210). In this scenario of "almost humanitarian crisis, but not quite," the catastrophe is always imminent. In 2012, a UN report asked: "Gaza in 2020, A Liveable

Place?" It established that 90% of the water was unfit for drinking and expected the aquifer to be unusable by 2016, while the water's contamination by salinization and sewage would prove irreversible by 2020 (UNCT 2012, 3). Yet, it seems hardly necessary to wait for the 100% landmark to assume that infrastructural issues and the limited access to basic resources such as water *already* threaten livelihood in Gaza and make it unlivable as it is. Adi Ophir calls this "catastrophization," the discursive interval "that makes possible both moral urgency and political manipulation" (Ophir 2010, 57). "Catastrophic suspension" ultimately encourages the collaboration of forces of catastrophization and those that attempt to prevent it, uniting them in their shared interest to keep catastrophe at a distance (Ophir 2010, 62). Gaza's repeated destruction thus sheds light on the failures of humanitarianism as a coping mechanism only addressing the immediate present and complicit in maintaining the state of imminent disaster. For Head of the UN Work and Relief Agency (UNWRA) Karen Koning Abu Ziad, Gaza is "on the threshold of becoming the first territory to be intentionally reduced to a state of abject destitution, with the knowledge, acquiescence and – some would say – encouragement of the international community" (cited in Amnesty International et al. 2008).

Questioning the livability of Gaza is prompted by the obvious and urgent facts on the ground, but this focus also risks perpetuating a humanitarian discourse on futurity. Weizman's discussion of the "humanitarian minimum" cannot but evoke Agamben's concept of "bare life." Widely used in the literature about the various forms of occupation enacted on Palestine, it situates Palestinian bodies as those "who may be killed, and yet not sacrificed," those on which (Israeli) sovereignty builds its power by excluding them through their very inclusion (Agamben 1998, 8). The generalization of bare life as the permanent state of exception provides a seminal framework for thinking of Palestine's fragmented space and refugee camps (Hanafi and Long 2010, Hanafi 2012). Yet, one can wonder to what extent the discourse of state of exception contributes to supporting the social imaginary of emergency and its material translation into humanitarian management. In Bonnie Honig's words, what would it mean to "democratize" and "de-exceptionalize emergency" (Honig 2014, 48)? How can we displace the focus on sovereignty as a trait of executive power and relocate it as a potential trait of popular power? In an earlier piece, Honig proposes a politics of care for the self, as a synecdoche for the system, which protects the integrity of democracy under emergency by focusing on the process of survival rather the moment of decision that justifies the state of exception. This survival is re-named "sur-vivance" after

Derrida and identified as "a surplus life" *combined with* "mere life." Drawing from classical philosophy, the term adapts the concept of "overliving," which applies "to those who ought to have died but go on to more life." Sur-vivance thus signals "both the needs of life and the call to overlife" (Honig 2009, 10). This double signification fundamentally addresses the permanence of emergency and the simultaneous possibility for building Palestinian futures inherent to popular and populist resistance.

This present chapter embraces Honig's opening towards a politics of "more life" that coexists with the imperative of "mere life." It examines how multi-directional efforts, whether top-down (Hamas) or bottom-up (Palestinian film practitioners themselves), utilize the construction of emergency, humanitarian management, and economies of aid to *revive* a film culture in Gaza. Significantly, Helga Tawil-Souri claims that Gaza is larger than life because "its genius, its largeness is that despite conditions of a near-impossible normal life, [arts] continue and are *generated* anew" (Tawil-Souri 2016, 17, my emphasis). Revival thus both functions as a metaphor celebrating the ingenuity and resistance of Gazans and proposes very concrete ways of inhabiting the humanitarian present. Like Tawil-Souri and Dina Matar's edited collection on Gaza, I take metaphor as a driving methodology for this chapter's investigation (Matar and Tawil-Souri 2016). The rationale is here twofold. First, Gaza and its future emerge at the confluence of a multiplicity of humanitarian imaginaries formulated by various aid agencies, Hamas, Palestinian filmmakers, but also myself, a Western researcher who could access neither the Strip nor the festivals that constitute this study. More importantly here, a focus on metaphor engages the widespread discourses on revival that are commonly applied to infrastructures and economies in the Gazan context, and explores what it means to think about these *literally*. What does considering life and economies of cinema together reveal about the agency of Palestinians? In other words, I argue that, on the one hand, the metaphor operates as a descriptive tool of expanded contextualization that subjects all sectors of society to a broader semantic field (here: life, survival, and revival); on the other, it addresses the very material underpinnings of specific sur-vivance mechanisms and their reliance on various forms of humanitarianism.

Gaza's cinema life is embedded in the local humanitarian history. The first movie theatres opened in the mid-1940s. These were followed by mobile screenings organized by UNRWA that traveled around refugee camps as early as 1948. The waves of openings and closures of the cinemas reflected the political tensions and the rise of political Islam. Gaza cinema historian

Mahmoud al-Roqa estimates that over ten movie theatres emerged over four decades (cited in Othman 2015). After a first interruption at the beginning of the Israeli colonization in 1967, the cinemas continued to operate until the First Intifada, when the Israelis shut them down again. The few later attempts at re-opening certain theatres at the time of Oslo, with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the Strip in the mid-1990s, failed, because the venues were immediately subjected to vandalism. This resulted from tensions between various social groups, and the arsons were attributed to Hamas and the other Islamic movements who accused theatres of screening pornographic content (Euromed Audiovisual 2013, 99; Othman 2015). After the 2006 Parliamentary elections and the subsequent domination of Hamas over the Strip, the Islamic movement formulated new policies towards cinema, which it considered could be part of the project of resistance, independence, and reconstruction. Maybe surprisingly then, Gaza has been home to several film festivals recently, among which many are encouraged by Hamas itself. The EU-funded program Euromed Audiovisual's 2013 report on Palestine identified four festivals in Gaza: The Gaza International Film Festival, the Gaza Documentary Film Festival and Through Women's Eyes Film Festival,[45] whose starting dates are not indicated, and the Gaza Palestine International Festival of Films announced by Hamas in January 2013 (Euromed Audiovisual 2013, 104). To these must be added the 2009 International Al Quds Film Festival and the Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival initiated in 2015, as well as the Gaza antennae of festivals that are primarily based in the West Bank like the Shashat Women's Film Festival, the Franco-Arab Film Festival, the Young International Filmmakers Festival, and Days of Cinema, discussed in earlier chapters. This chapter focuses on the period spanning from 2007 until today.

In order to lay out the mechanisms of convergence between the humanitarian and cinema economies in Gaza, I begin by examining the Strip's contemporary visual regimes under emergency. I retrace how the representational trope of victimhood is engrained in histories of humanitarianism that has informed current modes of image-making and spectatorship in Gaza. I look at a series of film examples that problematize what type of filmmaking can emerge from within emergency, and question what conceptual framework can adequately address the conditions of possibility for cinema in the Strip. Secondly, I argue that local film festivals pragmatically

[45] I couldn't find much information on these. Palestinian festivals' names as well as their English translations tend to be very much in flux. Moreover, many of them sound similar and it can be hard to tell them apart, or sometimes even be sure that they are not one and the same.

operate at the intersection of human rights, humanitarianism, and cinema networks that make possible international and regional alliances for Hamas and independent Palestinian filmmakers alike. I build on the metaphor of the humanitarian space to understand how Hamas and filmmakers differentially utilize human rights discourse in order to financially support film festivals. However, divergently, this metaphorical figure reveals the actual material ramifications underlying the organization of these events. Finally, the metaphor of the humanitarian space points to the broader semantic field of "revival" and "bringing back to life," which pervades descriptions of reconstruction economies in Gaza during emergency. Following the intersections and divergences of Hamas and independent endeavors, I focus on film infrastructures and the project of an *art* cinema industry as the locus for the reconstruction of Gaza through film. The visual regime of art cinema, claimed in varied extents by the different actors, also proposes a new mode of image-making and self-representation in tense compatibility with the humanitarian present of witnessing.

Humanitarian Present's Visual Regime

The convergence of humanitarianism and film economies pertains to a long history of media representations and infrastructures' involvement in human rights struggles and humanitarian crises, with its own specificity in Gaza and Palestine. The concomitance of the 1948 Nakba with the expansion of UN's humanitarian mission is no coincidence. For Vijay Prashad and Karim Makdisi, "many of the early UN agencies were born of the conflict over Palestine, and many others would find themselves embroiled in it… The struggle over Palestine produced the institutions of 'peace-keeping' and of the 'UN mediator'" (Makdisi and Prashad 2017, 1-2). However, paradoxically, the UN itself sanctioned the Partition Plan that would allow the forced displacement of more than 750,000 Palestinians. This double history tends to be effaced by the presentist logics of emergency. While Weizman's theory of the humanitarian present relies on a suspended temporality of risk calculation, anthropologist Ilana Feldman insists on the present of crisis, whose narrative of immediacy and exceptionality forges new thresholds of historical acceptability. More particularly, the rhetoric of "return to normalcy" after the "crisis" creates new standards of living conditions based on the context directly preceding the "disaster," which was itself the consequence of a previous crisis left unresolved. As a result, "if crisis has the effect of lowering the floor for 'normal' conditions, another effect of crisis language is the loss of history" (Feldman 2009, 30). In contrast to this erasure of time, Feldman argues that humanitarianism in fact constitutes the

most consistent aspect of Palestinian life since the Nakba. Early humanitarian interventions have had long-lasting consequences on the very fabric of Palestinian society. For example, the division between "native" Palestinians and "refugees" meant to facilitate the distribution of relief after 1948 in Gaza has continuously structured how Gazans position themselves. In Feldman's own words, humanitarianism thus "helps shape a political field of identity and action" (Feldman 2009, 27), which is also particularly manifest in visual representations of Palestinians as victims.

Since the early days of the colonization of Palestine, Zionism has undertaken to conceal the existence of the Palestinian people physically through ethnic cleansing. This occurs visually as well through the creation of a visual apparatus that denies Palestinians a history on the land (more on this in Chapter Five), with which humanitarian regimes have been to a certain extent complicit. In 1948, the UN tasked the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC, Quakers) with the responsibility of providing assistance to the refugees, before the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) took over the duties of coordination in 1950. In the general context of active Zionist concealment, these humanitarian organizations[46] gained control over the representation of the so-called "Arab refugees," producing a vision that intersected with a common Western and colonial imaginary of the Holy Land stuck in a mythical past, within which Palestinians constituted a mere folkloric addition. The ICRC's film *The Wanderers of Palestine* (1950) as well as UNRWA's productions *Sands of Sorrow* (1950) and *Beneath the Bells of Bethlehem* (1960s, n/d) established Palestinians as a passive mass of people victim to a timeless natural disaster. These representations de-contextualized Palestinians' exile and connection to the land and reduced them to the poetic and universal category of refugees as wanderers (Latte Abdallah 2007, 69).

The UN's discourse shifted after 1967, when it recognized that the "Arab refugees" pertained to the dispossessed Palestinian people. UNRWA's 1968 film *The Aftermath* thus provides a very different imagery of Palestinians' daily life in the camps reminiscent of certain passages of Mustapha Abu 'Ali's 1974 militant film *Laysa Lahum Wujud/They Do Not Exist*. Here

[46] The United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees (UNRPR), in charge of coordinating the Quakers in Gaza, defended a vision very different from the ICRC. For the Quakers, the activity of relief was not to be dissociated from the role of mediators and conciliators, thus involving political stakes that were absent in the ICRC's mandate. Their visual documentation reflected this stance, and it established a continuity between the pre- and post-exodus period by showing life in Gaza before 1948. However, these representations were minor (Latte Abdallah 2007, 66).

exile is historicized through a cartography of Palestine's fragmentation. The documentation of refugees' schools, daily chores, medical visits, and multiple job activities is combined with interviews about Palestinians' hope to return home. Yet, *The Aftermath* is no revolutionary film. Its rendering of Palestine's history is told with a passive voice that obscures the responsibility of colonial powers. The film parades the names of the donors involved in assisting refugees' education, care, and daily supplies through oral mentions, intertitles superimposed on the image, and visual quotes of the organizations' logos on advertising boards.[47] It ends with a tirade about the importance of knowledge as a tool for self-improvement (rather than struggle) illustrated with footage of children at school, who evoke future discourses of human development, as studied in Chapter Three.

In contrast with the popular call for the budding liberation struggle, the film's voice-over concludes that it remains for the international community as a whole to secure a just peace settlement as a condition for the region's political stability. That the protagonists and the voice-over all express themselves in English with an Arabic accent suggests that the film was intended for an international audience and the donors upon which UNRWA's work of assistance greatly depends. Moreover, it reveals the involvement of local populations in the making of the film.[48] Sociologist Riccardo Bocco reminds us that the Agency's employee base (which excludes the managing class) has historically been composed of more than 99% Palestinian refugees and host country nationals. As a result, he argues that "the history of UNRWA and the history of Palestinian refugees are … inseparable" (Bocco 2010, 236).

In a dynamic comparable with the training of Palestinian filmmakers by international news agencies during the Second Intifada (evoked in Chapter Two), one can wonder what kind of impact the growing culture of human rights has had on crafting a Palestinian visual language about their own suffering. This, as always, raises the question of the different ways used to prevent Palestinians from narrating their story (Said 1984), and whether humanitarian images play a role in censoring their voice by confining it to pre-established forms of representation. Most recently under Gaza's bombing in 2008, 2012, and 2014, international documenting crews retreated like they did during the Second Intifada, leaving Palestinians with the dangerous task of recording the

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[47] These include the Lutheran World Federation, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the British Save the Children Fund, the Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work, and the UNRWA.
[48] Samir Hissen is cited in the credits as one of the film's narrators, and Salim Fakhoury as responsible for the sound work.

explosions assumed to be already part of their quotidian life. The devolution of reporting responsibilities resembles the turn towards "remote management" in humanitarian organizations. This expression designates the techniques international humanitarian agencies have been implementing in the past fifteen to twenty years in response to an increased perception of risk in the countries where they intervene. The technique consists of evacuating humanitarian workers in order to keep them safe, while continuing to control rescue operations from afar by relying on local organizations (Smirl 2015, 75). The Palestinian images produced under emergency tend to both relay international humanitarian imaginaries and, by the same token, materialize the global hierarchy of the lives that can be spared, and those that can be wasted.

One could establish a continuity between films like *The Aftermath* and Fida Qishta's *Where Should the Birds Fly?* (2013). A former wedding photographer documenting life in Gaza and its promise of future reproduction (literally, the "surplus life"!), Qishta started documenting the violence and destruction brought about by the siege as part of her involvement with international human rights observers and the International Solidarity Movement. *Where Should the Birds Fly* is narrated in English by the journalist filmmaker and follows Mona, a young girl who witnessed first-hand the 2008 bombings and recounts her trauma in the midst of the cities' rubble (Fig. 8). Replacing words with images in support of a supposedly international language, the film proposes "a visual documentation of the Goldstone Report"[49] according to the promotional website, while also revealing "the strength and hope, the humanity and humor that flourishes among the people of Gaza" (Where Should The Birds Fly, 2018). Seemingly a rather simple promotional gesture and a discursive metaphor, the parallel with the UN report discloses the convergence of imaginaries assembled around an ethics of legal and humanitarian witnessing that also guides the making of the film. The UN fact-finding mission suggested that the Israeli army and the Palestinian armed groups bore equal responsibility in war crimes and possible crimes against humanity (Goldstone 2009, 419, par. 1950). Exposing themselves to bullets and bombs, Palestinian filmmakers' testimonies, as opposed to fighters, embody a significant, legitimate resistance in the eyes of the international community. As Qishta herself argues on the film's website: "I feel safe behind the

[49] The Goldstone Report, also known as the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, was a team formed by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) set to investigate the violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law after the so-called Operation Cast Lead in 2008-9.

camera: If I'm shot, my camera will capture the bullet that kills me" (Where Should The Birds Fly, 2018).

Figure 8: *Where Should the Birds Fly* described as the visual documentation of the Goldstone Report (screenshots).

Celebrating life and resilience in Gaza, both of which allowed the making of the film itself, *Where Should the Birds Fly* also conveys the renewed possibility for Palestinians to produce images of their own plight and humanity under the imagined auspices of the UN and international law. Significantly, the promotional discourse surrounding the film presents it as the first production documenting the Gaza attacks directed by Palestinians themselves. This unique point of view adds value to the authenticity of the testimony at the moment when global solidarity groups advertise the film's world-wide screenings in community centers and film festivals for documentaries, human rights, and emerging talents. Moreover, the humanitarian discourse is here combined with one about the emergence of a certain kind of Palestinian filmmaking in the Strip, thus supplanting historical precedents of fiction films such as Rashid Masharawi's Gaza-based *Hatta Ishaar Akhar/Curfew* (1993), itself considered the first film produced by a Palestinian company. Predating the siege by almost fifteen years (yet a couple of years after 1991's early restrictions on movement), *Curfew* introduces the consequences of Israel's military occupation through a closed drama unfolding in the backyard of a Gazan family confined to their house. These stylistic and narrative choices directly oppose the logics of witnessing and its wide landscapes of misery. The broad discourse that situates Qishta's production at the start of *one* genealogy of Gazan filmmaking thus effectively places contemporary Palestinian cinema and its economy within a temporality of

crisis, one that rewrites new beginnings as a counter to destruction by the very act of erasing a non-humanitarian past. Ultimately, *Where Should the Birds Fly*'s promotional discourse points to the crafting of a new niche assisting the distribution of Palestinian cinema: that of the Palestinian human rights film, which relies on a certain image of Palestinians as victims.

This brief historical census of humanitarian images of Palestine illustrates the complex articulation of the concealment of Palestinians' existence and rights through processes of delegitimization put in place by Zionist media, and the hypervisibility of Palestinian suffering enhanced by the human rights and humanitarian economy. There is no Palestinian or Palestine-oriented NGO or humanitarian organization that has not engaged with posters and video campaigns exposing the sufferings of men, women, and children under occupation or the bombs. As Feldman remarks after Luc Boltanski and others, "the global circulation of images of suffering becomes a necessity for 'transforming emotion into donations'" (Feldman 2009, 25; Boltanski 1999). This has thus materialized as a central strategy for human rights organizations to collect funds. John Collins famously remarked that Palestinians' double-edged visibility both supports the development of a global consciousness and has facilitated the control of Palestinian representation by their opponents (Collins 2011, 6), contributing to what Gil Hochberg has called "a pre-existing, saturated, overdetermined field of representation" (Hochberg 2015, 125). In addition to being a currency, victimhood becomes something that can be proportionally measured and utilized by both the oppressor and those who side with the oppressed. The necessary calculation of what counts as proper victimhood makes it a very versatile weapon, since victims always run the risk of losing their status. The 2014 war on Gaza has proved that the value of the casualties could be appropriated in various ways. The discourse around the injured and killed could quickly shift from victims to "human shields," that is to say from being the recipient of a colonial attack to being more or less willing combatants thus responsible for their own death – while Palestinian men are always already considered guilty (Mikdashi 2014).

Other Palestinian filmmakers and artists have reflected on the kind of image that can be produced and circulated from within humanitarian disasters. In her five-minute video made in response to the 2014 bombings, *Shuja'yiah, Land of the Brave* (2014), Hadeel Assali subscribes to the humanitarian visual regime to the extent that she highlights Gazans' denied humanity. The film responds to the moral obligation of sharing the Palestinian people's humanity as a gesture of

assistance[50] and as a means of pressuring higher authorities into actively sending humanitarian help. Similar to a home movie, the video features footage of Assali's own family and daily life in Gaza during the relatively peaceful Summer of 2013, thus aiming to attract the detached spectator into a personal commitment towards the lives that would be destroyed in 2014. However, the film's tension emanates from the images' contrast with the voice-over, a passionate speech by journalist Samer Zaneed accusing the ICRC in particular of having abandoned Palestinians during the bombings by refusing their calls to provide assistance. Assali here recognizes the limitations of witnessing images of violence and its translation into humanitarian action. Instead, she relies on the power of everyday images to keep humanitarian organizations accountable in front of the international community of viewers, and points to the losses these agencies could have prevented.

In his rigorous study of the politics of human rights "after evil," Robert Meister examines how these have developed as "a new political discourse of global power that claims to supersede the cruelties perpetrated by both revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries" during the Cold War (Meister 2011, 2). This shift has informed conceptions of victims, perpetrators, beneficiaries, and bystanders, in which bystanders are reconfigured from being indifferent onlookers to compassionate witnesses. This recasting of moral responsibility also redeems past and present beneficiaries and absolves indifference through affective expression. As a result, the spectator-witness identifies with the victim, feeling and performing common humanity, and refusing to recognize oneself in the bystander who has not experienced the same feeling of compassion. In this case, Meister argues, "the fantasmatic 'we' … is the transtemporal union of the consumer of today's visual culture of human rights and the past bystander whom they are not" (Meister 2011, 214).

To return to *Shuja'yiah, Land of the Brave,* Assali's refusal to show images of violence and immediate victimhood privileges dignity over compassion in order to reshape the fantasmatic "we" in positive terms. Moreover, Assali's gesture exposes the ICRC as bystanders who failed to recognize Palestinians' humanity. She gives the organization no opportunity to express the compassion necessary to redeem themselves as witnesses by denying them the spectacle of Palestinian suffering. The film thus uses specific mechanisms of counter-witnessing that reassert

[50] Luc Boltanski argues that "speaking up" in its different forms (including through film) is necessary for the spectator (here Hadeel Assali) to maintain their integrity when direct action is impossible (Boltanski 1999, 20).

humanitarian organizations' responsibility during the bombings. Assali charges the ICRC with choosing to respect the military zone established by Israel instead of fulfilling their moral and professional duty of assistance. For her, this makes the Red Cross both bystanders and perpetrators, in a reversal that reinstates the duality of perpetrator/victim which the status of the witness has effaced. In a regretful yet unapologetic response to Palestinians' widespread anger at the ICRC in *The Guardian*, Head of the Red Cross Delegation in Israel and the Occupied Territories Jacques de Maio considered that the ICRC "cannot end the conflict. As ever, humanitarian organizations are a sticking plaster, not the solution" (de Maio 2014). Yet simultaneously, pro-Palestinian investigative journalists have reported the ICRC's collusion with Israeli military think tanks,[51] thus broadening the scope of the organization's involvement with the occupying regime and sustaining the ambiguity of a position that is not "neutral" despite its own claims.[52]

If *Shuja'yiah, Land of the Brave* does foreground dignified images of Palestinians that circumvent the visual language of victimhood, the objective of re-humanizing these othered bodies continues to hold a testimonial function. As a result, Palestinians' victimhood is still implied at the same moment we are denied a view of their suffering (Fig. 9). Victimhood, or the celebration, on screen, of the lives which we presume have been lost, remains that which guarantees and reveals Palestinians' humanity – as well as the ICRC's culpability. The risk might then be that the film reproduces the exclusion of Palestinians through their very participation, by marking them "as others … through the seemingly inclusive gesture of inviting them to perform their humanity" (Rangan 2017, 6). This, Pooja Rangan argues, is conveyed through documentary's trope of "immediation," which promises an unmediated truth while reinventing "the very disenfranchised humanity that it claims to redeem" (Rangan 2017, 1). As such, the discourse of dignity, which surrounds many humanitarian films (including *Where Should the Birds Fly*) and festivals like the

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[51] In her article "Why is the ICRC helping defend Israeli war crimes?," *The Electronic Intifada* writer Charlotte Silver reports that the Red Cross co-sponsored a conference planned with an Israeli military strategy think tank, the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), during which allegations of war crime on behalf of Israel were indemnified (Silver 2014).

[52] "Neutrality" is invoked as a humanitarian principle in International Law. However, various humanitarian organizations position themselves differently with respect to it. While Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has historically opposed neutrality (and defended interventionism), ICRC primarily describes its own neutrality as deriving from its legal status as a neutral body, in which neutrality represents "the duty to abstain from any act which, in a conflict situation, might be interpreted as furthering the interests of one party to the conflict or jeopardizing those of the other" (ICRC website).

Karama[53] Film Festival (in Jordan, Palestine, and beyond) that choose to foreground Palestinian empowerment, supports the re-shaping of a humanity that can apply to Palestinians at the same time as they are singled out as others and possibly non-human.

Figure 9: Humanizing Palestinians in *Shuja'yiah, Land of the Brave* (screenshots).

In contrast, Gil Hochberg contends that Basma Alsharif's *We Began by Measuring Distance* (2008) "interrogates the limits of visual images of violence and suffering to solicit any meaningful ethical and/or political reaction from their spectators by the way of their pleasing aesthetic effects" (Hochberg 2015, 120). Produced before and during so-called Operation Cast Lead, the film combines archival news footage and shots of natural life (jellyfish, forests, seagrass) reminiscent of Jean Painlevé's surrealistic depiction of seahorses. By reframing representations of Israeli bombings and women in distress with spectacles of *natural* beauty, *We Began by Measuring Distance* points to the fetishization of the war on Gaza – as well as its naturalization – and reveals

[53] "Karama" means "dignity" in Arabic.

the status of these images *qua* images. As Alsharif puts it vis-à-vis the impossibility of making sense of the news coverage, "Gaza became a cluster of digital pixels" (cited in Hochberg 2015, 129). This description provides a fuller meaning to Alsharif's later video *Home Movies Gaza* (2013), in which images of daily life disclose the quotidian political violence of the siege. The film shows a similar fascination for the capture mechanisms of the natural realm by technologies of recording and measurement. In *Home Movies Gaza*, a National Geographic documentary airs on the TV of Alsharif's family house in Gaza City, depicting the slow death of an elephant under the attack of a pack of lions. The image twitches and blurs – a "signal" of Palestinians' waning control over their own satellite space – until the killing is made indistinguishable. The television's pixels become then directly transferred onto the body of animals outside of the documentary. Blue bolts of lightning travel along a fly's chest as it dwells on a tablecloth; the blue color gradually invades turkeys' bodies in the yard, turning them into the photographic negative of their own image (Fig. 10). At the very moment pixels take over what Agamben would call *zoe* (bare life, the non-qualified life for which animals here seem to stand), the camera's time code appears. Imaging functions as a measurement of the time of life, following the logic of the humanitarian calculation of risks and thresholds of acceptable catastrophe.

Figure 10: Basma Alsharif, *Home Movies Gaza* (screenshots)

In We *Began*… (2008), measurement was able to grasp one meaning of the war on Gaza – on the condition, however, that measurement itself be subverted. The playful calculation of obvious physical distances ("we measured a 360-degree circle and found it to be 360 degrees") transitions into absurd translations (the dimensions of an apple are "an orange") and political measurements between emblematic Palestinian cities and historical colonial landmarks (Fig. 11a). The Madrid agreements and the Oslo Accords were supposed to bring Gaza and Jerusalem closer,

but the distance of 78 km, seemingly unattainable after the construction of the wall, remains dictated by the 1916 Balfour Declaration, the 1948 Nakba, and the 1967 Naksa. In both videos, Alsharif transports her belief from images onto the poetry of language itself and places a visual emphasis on the English subtitling of the Arabic narration. Rather than a retrospective addition to the video aimed at widening its audience, the subtitles appear in bright yellow across the image and replace the objective translation of measurement with the poetic translation of words. For example, the growing feeling of being "unsettled" (in both senses of being ill at ease and dispossessed from their land) expressed by the voice-over through the long repetition of "more" is inscribed as a glowing banner over the landscape (Fig. 11b). The relationship between words and images, and between Arabic and English, might provide a better starting point for a critical engagement with the effects of persisting colonization. With their disbelief in the image as testimony, *We Began* and *Home Movies Gaza* follow critical theory's approach to humanitarian visual regimes, which the films treat as inherently de-humanizing and unable to forge solidarities (Chouliaraki 2013, 42).

Figure 11: Basma Alsharif, *We Began by Measuring Distance* (screenshots)

Conversely, twin artists Arab and Tarzan Nasser's approach to images from within emergency differs much from Alsharif's intellectualizing take. The two brothers, who gained notoriety when their short *Condom Lead* (2013) and feature *Dégradé* (2015) were selected at Cannes, started as visual artists in Gaza and protégés of filmmaker and festival director-to-be Khalil Mozian. To them, Hollywood and auteur cinema represented visual reference points much more than news reportage ever did. In their series of posters and DVD covers entitled *Gazawood* (2010), they unlock the cinematic potential of the contemporary and historical code names of Israel's military operations in Gaza. The series features imagery from imaginary films that can never be produced due to the local lack of film infrastructures. The posters for *Autumn Clouds, Cast Lead, Defensive Shield,* and *Wooden Leg* among others all feature the two brothers in the process of reenacting tropes of Hollywood genres such as action films and Westerns – whose colonial foundations are particularly appropriate in this context (Fig. 12). The series' title, which evidently evokes Hollywood, could also constitute a grassroots and artistic response to the 2009 announcement of "Hamaswood," the Islamic movement's institutional and self-proclaimed effort at building a film industry, which I discuss later on in the chapter. However, "Gazawood" mostly re-asserts Gaza as a cinematic site, a place where cinema's drama and storytelling is inherent to life in the humanitarian and military present. The "surplus life" of entertainment here replaces witnessing as "mere life"'s mode of image-making and spectatorship, and as a source of imagination for future filmmaking infrastructures.

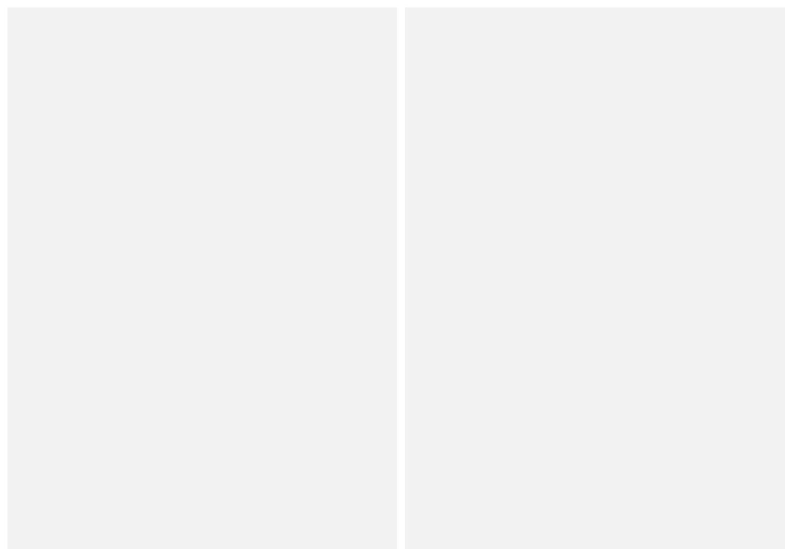

Figure 12: Arab and Tarzan Nasser, *Gazawood* series (Palestine Poster Project Archives)

Scholars of humanitarian visual studies have differentially attempted to rescue humanitarian visual regimes and their testimonial function, including by investigating their use in a variety of activist contexts. A landmark in the field, Lilie Chouliaraki's 2013 book *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* acknowledges the increasing reliance of humanitarian campaigns on the marketing logic of the corporate world. Yet, Chouliaraki proposes that the theatrical foundations of humanitarian communications can be salvaged if we focus on theatre's classical potential for pedagogy. The collapse of grand narratives of solidarity (formerly spearheaded by Marxism for example) and the technologization of communications, should open us up to a reconfiguration of solidarity by way of new communicative practices that support a restored humanitarian imaginary (Chouliaraki 2013, 45). Similarly, Sonia Tascón and Tyson Wils consider humanitarian visual regimes as part of a broader structure that circulates images and which can further their potential for social change. For them, activist film festivals and the space they create for discussion and organizing can provide a context for countering the unequal dynamics of spectatorship between the viewer and those who suffer on screen (Tascón and Wils 2017).

However, by consistently relying on the theatrical structure, these theories might unwittingly further a vision entirely based on the binary of testimony, seeing the West as a repository for the hope of social change in the Global South. In contrast to their own experience in the Netherlands, Movies That Matter festival organizers Matthea de Jong and Daan Bronkhorst point to the differences that emerge when we think of Human Rights Film Festivals located in the Global South and which reflect on their own issues. They write: "where we work [in the Netherlands], one hardly feels the urge to make people aware of their own rights [as it is the case with the Ciné Droit Libre festival in Burkina Faso] – it's more about the rights of others, those oppressed and marginalized by repressive regimes, and it is about being critical and knowledgeable about complex issues" (De Jong and Bronkhorst 2017, 107). More than reminding locals of their own suffering (which, surely, they know better than anyone), the aim of Global South human rights film festivals seems rather to be about "convinc[ing] the target audience to adopt human rights as political values because human rights are the best possible legal and political standards that can rule a society" (de Jong and Bronkhorst 2017, 114). The authors also identify this (moral) objective as central to their own organization Movies That Matter, which provides funding to other human rights film festivals worldwide, including in Gaza. It is thus important to think about visual regimes

in accordance with the legal and political futures that they push forward. The humanitarian mode of image production in the Global South (as a source for witnessing in the Global North) relies on a legal and political system illustrated by specific moral values modelled on Western liberal democracies yet considered universal, which maintains the world order's hierarchy between "civilizations."

On a very practical level, and beyond the "white savior complex" narrative that justifies Western interventions based on its supposedly welcomed propagation of human rights values, I am interested in how human rights film festivals have more access to zones of intense conflict because they belong to networks that already operate there. As Dina Iordanova observes, most "activist film festivals are affiliated to overarching NGOs such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, or supra-national bodies such as the United Nations" (Iordanova 2012, 13). Iordanova notes that parent organizations have a vested interest in using these film events because "film supplies the human face and the story and provides the much-needed narrative background for activist work" (Iordanova 2012, 14). This line of thought should be pushed even further to include a reflection on how human rights film festivals work from within the normalization of humanitarian networks as providers of political futures. In other words, we need to account for the economic structure of the Human Rights Industry, which Lori Allen defines as "the complex of activities and its institutions that function under the label of human rights, the formulas that they have learnt in order to write reports and grant applications, and the funding streams that this industry generates and depends on" (Allen 2013, 4).

The universalist moral stand inherent to the testimonial framework fails to provide us with useful tools to understand how human rights film festivals function when they are set *within* the humanitarian crisis. We must keep in mind the power relations inherent in the human rights economy discussed in Chapter Three and intend to avoid reproducing them in our analysis. In what follows, I take inspiration from Margaret McLagan's pioneering 2005 study of human rights communications infrastructures. Building on the example of the international activist video training organization WITNESS, McLagan examines the appropriation of the human rights discourse by stateless, diasporic, and minority actors. More particularly, she discusses activists' needs to fit into pre-existing media protocols and generic storytelling conventions in order to successfully circulate their human rights videos (McLagan 2005, 225). As she puts it, "WITNESS'

actual work consists of *constructing* issues as 'rights issues' and assisting in the internationalization process through *strategic* use of video" (McLagan 2005, 226, my emphases).

My theoretical focus shifts from the dominant examination of the power of images, towards studying the *strategic* aim and the *logistical* implementation of image-making in Gaza. I am interested in Palestinians' instrumentalization of human rights to the service of local populations' needs – as opposed to the corporate instrumentalization of images of suffering. I focus on the Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film festival and Hamas' involvement in cinema, which mobilize the testimonial function of film largely engrained in Palestinians' practices of humanitarian images – *Where Should the Birds Fly* was a case on point. This serves Palestinians' strategic inclusion in humanitarian economies, wherein local ideals around the necessity to "narrate" Palestinians' stories in their own terms converge with cinema's ability to both augment life in the Strip and strengthen the nationalist movement for independence.

Film Festivals' Humanitarian Space

In 1991, Israel started enforcing restrictions on Palestinians travelling from Gaza to Israel and the West Bank by retracting the general exit permit, requesting that individuals apply for case-by-case authorizations instead. The construction of a separation barrier enclosing the Strip began soon after in 1994 and was condoned by the Oslo Accords. Israel has further isolated Hamas and the inhabitants of the Strip since the Islamic movement won the 2006 Parliamentary Elections and gained control over the Strip after an open conflict with Fateh in 2007.[54] Gaza was then declared "hostile territory," and subjected to a systematic and uncompromising siege (or blockade, in the words of the UN) organized with the direct collaboration of neighboring Egypt. In addition to controlling the Gazan airspace, sea access and digital infrastructures, the Israeli army implemented ever harsher restrictions on the circulation of people, basic goods such as food, medical supplies, construction material – which became increasingly crucial in order to rebuild Gaza after Israel's

[54] Narratives sympathetic to Hamas emphasize how Fateh, armed by the US and with the complicity of Israel, tried to curtail Hamas' legitimate exercise of power after the elections. Fateh also requested that the movement recognize Israel's right to exist – thus putting a stop to this dimension of the anti-colonial struggle. Moreover, it demanded that Hamas consider the Fateh-led PLO as the "sole representative of the Palestinian people," a claim Hamas sees as undeserved after the compromises of Oslo and in the face of their own popularity (Tamimi 2007, 229).

multiple bombings – and fuel, necessary to keep hospitals' services and the manufacturing and agriculture sectors afloat.

One solution Palestinians have found to circumvent those essential limitations is to dig tunnels under the barrier and smuggle items that are denied entry into the Strip. However, the vast majority of provisions' imports are carried out by foreign donors, international aid agencies, and NGOs that include UNRWA, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme-led inter-agency Logistic Cluster, and the ICRC. In worldwide contexts of disaster, these operations also increasingly involve Logistics Service Providers (LSPs) like UPS or DHL to which international agencies outsource the work of procuring, warehousing, transporting, and distributing supplies (Vega and Roussat 2015, 353). Lisa Smirl similarly argues that studies of "humanitarian interventions," defined as "the full spectrum of international responses following a large-scale disaster, from emergency relief to long-term development programmes," should additionally account for private security contractors (some would say mercenaries) like DynCorp that are entrusted with the implementation of some UN missions (Smirl 2015, 14-15). In other words, highly securitized humanitarian wagons have tended to become the only entities allowed in and out of Gaza by the Israeli authorities. The logistical role humanitarian organizations play goes well beyond channeling donations into supplies. Instead, they are embedded in complex mechanisms of supply chain management, that is to say, the management of materials, information, and financial flows in a network consisting of suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, and customers (Hau Lee, cited in Logistic Cluster website 2018).

Given the almost total dependency of Gazan life on humanitarian aid, we can wonder to what extent the logics and logistics of humanitarianism also affect the conditions of possibility for film festivals in the Strip in a situation of permanent emergency. As indicated by the Euromed Audiovisual Report cited earlier, all the festivals set in Gaza must first be approved by the Hamas government (Euromed Audiovisual 2013, 104), which also scrutinizes the film selection and the festival's choice of venue. Gaza's festivals must then negotiate between what one could assume are the conflicting ideological and economic realities of the humanitarian present, and the moral and political obligations set by Hamas. This tension particularly arises with respect to financial assistance, largely jeopardized by the international political and economic boycott of the Islamic movement that also impacts cultural projects in Gaza more generally. Either because they consider Hamas a terrorist organization or dealing with the Islamic movement can prove a liability on the

international scene, most foreign and Arab donors[55] demand that the funds be channeled through Fateh and the Ramallah branch of the Palestinian Authority in order to bypass Hamas, with the help of NGOs and UN groups (Feldman 2009, 23). Moreover, the Israeli authorities only accept consignees approved by the Fateh-led Palestinian Authority and refuse to send cargos to Hamas and its affiliates (Gaza Logistics Cluster, n/d).

However, it would be a mistake to radically oppose humanitarian and human rights principles with the values publicly upheld by Hamas. In her rigorous and provocative study of humanitarianism in Palestine, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine* (2013), Lori Allen demonstrates the centrality of human rights to Hamas' own conception of governance. She asserts that the movement has actively developed charity structures to provide social and economic support largely responsible for the movement's wide popularity. It has also been deeply engaging with human rights organizations, "providing human rights training and submitting reports to UN bodies" as part of their own state-making efforts (Allen 2013, 157). The dialogue around human rights also reflects the political-ethical approach around ideals of sincerity, transparency, and national solidarity pushed forward by Hamas as the basis for its Islamic nationalism. For Allen, the movement has tried to produce a form of government that can engage the international community on these bases, in order "to find points of political intersection and bases of mutual recognition" (Allen 2013, 158). Similarly, Sara Roy rejects the argument that Hamas' charity organizations are illegitimate, re-directing assistance funds towards the movement's military wing, and indoctrinating the youth through education. Instead, she contends that Hamas' discourse has shifted from political and military action to social and civil development since 1995. The movement has put forward values of civility and tolerance and supported the unfolding of a civil society into independent entities compensating for the deficiencies of the "State" (Roy 2011, 51). After a brief review of the movement's formation since its break away from the Muslim Brothers in 1987, Roy concludes: "Hamas remains not only open to sharing power, it also has a history of non-violent accommodation and political adaptation, ideological reflexivity and transformation, and political pragmatism that the West should welcome" (Roy 2011, 49-50).

[55] Hamas officials however suggested in 2013 that Qatar could be willing to directly support the movement's artistic projects (al-Ghoul 2013b)

Understanding the convergence between human rights organizations' values and Hamas' nationalist politics provides one thread of contextualization for the emergence of film festivals (and human rights film festivals more particularly) in Gaza. Contrary to the dominant narrative, Hamas has, of late, actively encouraged the development of *one particular* cinema in the Strip. In 2013, Gaza Minister of Culture Mohamed al Madhoun articulated his support for Palestinian cinema and a potential local movie industry around the necessity of highlighting "Palestinians' suffering" in terms that are similar to those mobilized by humanitarian agencies (Euromed Audiovisual 2013, 102). This suggests that human rights film festivals can potentially emerge in accordance with the principles and goals of both the humanitarian present and Hamas. With humanitarianism being such a central organizing principle in the Strip, the focus on human rights supplies film festivals, be they organized by Hamas or independent film practitioners and organizations, with a legitimate justification for their existence in the midst of destruction. This is all the more pertinent when the temporality of emergency seems to a priori contradict the experience of cinema spectatorship. Moreover, such a thematic festival, when organized by non-government actors, can more easily navigate the opposing political authorities that decide what can or cannot happen in Gaza. Finally, film festivals can benefit from the humanitarian logistical apparatus and its human rights film counterpart responsible for funneling most funding into the Strip. Film festivals thus represent one link within what Ilana Feldman calls the "humanitarian circuit," that is to say, the "relations among donors, relief organizations, and recipients of aid, through the medium of assistance technologies" (Feldman 2011).

This section argues that Gazan film festivals inhabit the humanitarian present by carving out a metaphorical "humanitarian space." Humanitarian actors define their own practice around three guiding principles: humanity (universality of human rights), neutrality (independence of the agency), and impartiality (all needs must be equally attended to). These principles, established in the Geneva Convention, represent the means necessary to secure the humanitarian space. The imperative of neutrality in particular allows relief workers to create a safe zone where first care can be freely provided. However, the humanitarian space is in practice predicated on "the existence of certain conditions that permit humanitarian aid to be given in accordance with its purpose" (Terry 2002, 19). The humanitarian space thus results first and foremost from negotiations between non-humanitarian actors such as governments or the military, and relief agencies.

Widely criticized within the field of humanitarian studies for being actively limited and largely politicized, the humanitarian space nonetheless constitutes the expression and aspiration of humanitarian assistance (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). What Rolando Tomasini and Luk Van Wassenhove call the "virtual humanitarian space" might be even more suited to thinking about film festivals here, as the concept designates "the interaction between the different members of the humanitarian ecosystem, and how they create an environment where their mandates can be executed" (Tomasini and Van Wassenhove 2009, 26). This mandate relies upon a legitimate justification of the space by human rights principles. In our case, cinema proves the ultimate outcome of the negotiations between different parties insofar as it procures a certain humanitarian relief, either by performing Palestinians' humanity or building a sense of community and solidarity in suffering. Importantly, these festivals emerge from the negotiations between human rights organizations, government interests, aid recipients, as well as the professional and amateur film community in Gaza.

The Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival results from such an encounter that permits films to be shown in the midst of destruction and emergency. First held on 12-14 May 2015, the Red Carpet Festival was initiated by Gazan filmmaker Khalil Mozian under the umbrella of the Jordan-based Karama Human Rights Film Festival (established in 2009) and with the financial support of the international human rights organization Amnesty International's Movies That Matter and the French Cultural Institute. The promotional strategy for the first edition very much resembled humanitarian campaigns. Engaging with the theatrical metaphor of witnessing quite literally, the event's marketing revolved around the spectacle of Gaza's ruins after so-called Operation Protective Edge in the Summer 2014. A red carpet was rolled out among the rubble leading to the outdoor screening area set in the Shuja'yiah neighborhood, the epicenter for the Israeli bombings – and the subject of both Hadeel Assali and Fida Qishta's films cited earlier. The promotional video "A Tale of Two Red Carpets," published by Aljazeera's online news platform AJ+, garnered 8.7 million views on Facebook alone as of 2018.[56] The trailer efficiently hinges on contrasts: drone-generated bird's-eye view shots emphasize the incongruity of a red carpet amidst destruction (Fig. 13), while the editing introduces Gaza as a direct counterpoint to the Cannes

[56] In 2016 when I first cited it, the video had reached 8.5 million viewers. The fact that the video has continued circulating much after the festival is a testament of the persisting actuality of the spectacle of destruction in Gaza. https://www.facebook.com/ajplusenglish/videos/559487844192727/

festival happening simultaneously in France – a country that has also incidentally shown increased support for Israel's colonial policies over the past ten years since the Sarkozy government. Two years later in 2017, the irony of this diptych took on even greater significance when Israeli culture minister Miri Regev walked up Cannes' stairs wearing a dress celebrating the fifty years of the occupation of Jerusalem (in her own words, its "liberation" and "unification") since the 1967 Six-Day War. Among the many memes that circulated of the dress, those replacing the view of Jerusalem's Old City (and the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif) with an Israeli airstrike on Gaza or a wailing Palestinian woman standing in the rubble, pointed to the need for a counter-narrative to the elitist red carpet in Cannes (Fig. 14).

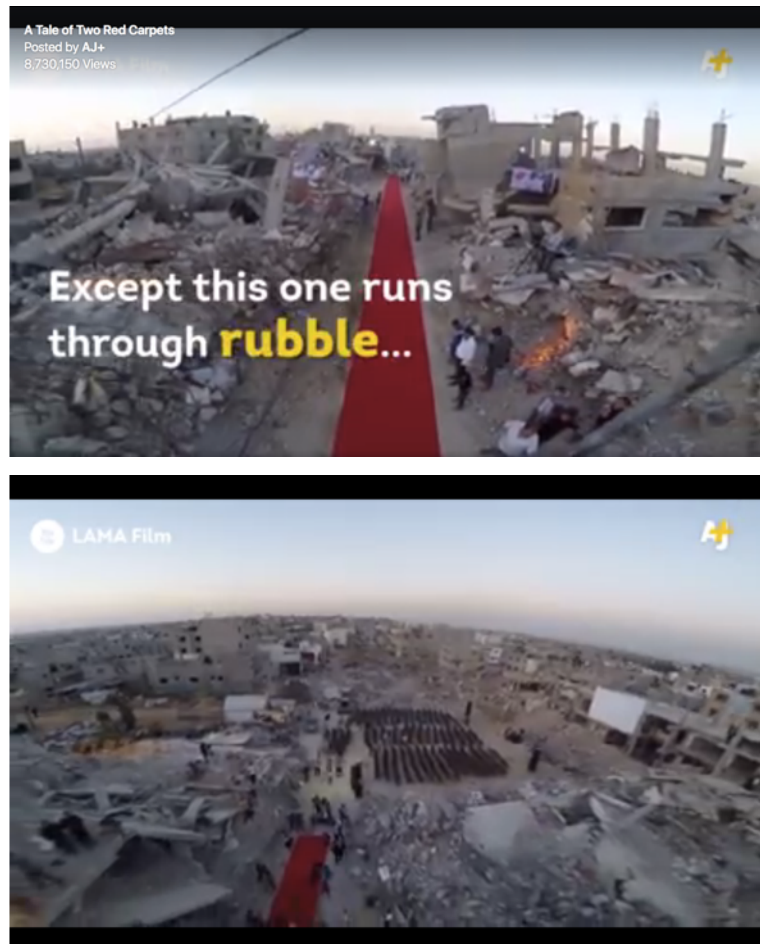

Figure 13: Promotional video of the Red Carpet's first edition (screenshots)

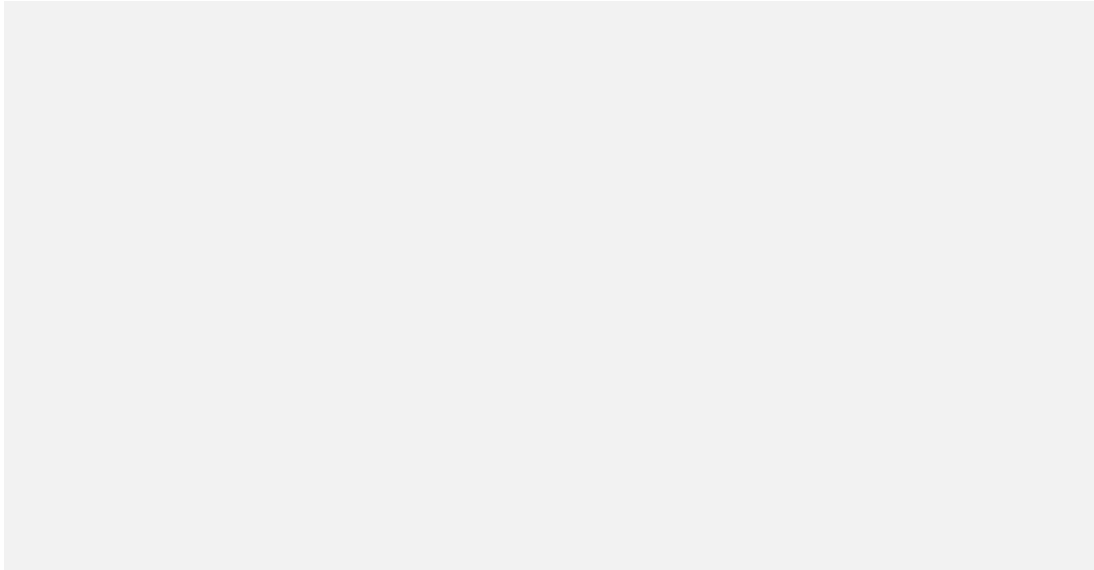

Figure 14: Miri Regev at Cannes 2017, and memes (*Mondoweiss* and *Dawn*)

Drawing a visual parallel between Palestinian "victims" and Cannes celebrities as they tread their respective carpets achieves several purposes. First, the trailer takes advantage of Cannes' visibility to redirect attention towards Gaza, thus piggy-backing the fame of the former that is denied the latter. Second, the video suggests that the human rights thematic of the Red Carpet Festival is very much contingent on the damage caused by the war and the humanitarian present. Gazans are by the same token claiming the ability to organize cinephiliac events just like Cannes – as we will confirm later by looking at the film selection. Third, the focus on dignity announced in the festival's name highlights the shocking difference in privilege, which by contrast elevates Gazans to higher moral grounds. In an interview with *The Electronic Intifada*, Mozian explains that "the red carpet symbolizes equality — that not only celebrities and high profile personalities or politicians deserve to walk on red carpets but also the people who witnessed the brutal war and experienced the loss of a family member or the imprisonment of another" (cited in Aburamadan 2015). The video fully engages with the humanitarian present's politics of life by making the point that the people of Gaza, too, are human. Yet, the call for dignity and equality further resonates with the demands formulated by the region's uprisings a few years prior and contributes to casting the festival as an expression of popular will deeply grounded in a sense of political and economic justice – also foregrounded in the discourse of the mother Karama Festival in Jordan – as opposed to a mere demand for compassion.

The festival's trailer and its choice of setting utilize visuals of humanitarian crisis and a message of global compassion compatible with Hamas' recognition of Palestinian suffering as a "value" conducive to resistance (Euromed Audiovisual 2013, 102). It also echoes Hamas' "commitment to strengthening society through community life, […] individual and collective rights, and the public good," which the movement honors on a regular basis through educational workshops and charity (Allen 2013, 161). We will see later, however, that Hamas did repress the festival's later editions when the event positioned itself as a critique of the Islamic movement's rule. The Red Carpet's subtle ways of navigating languages of victimhood through dignity and "more life" (for example, by upgrading Palestinians' *zoe* to the political and communal life of *bios*) allows the festival to speak both to the local population invited to attend, and a global spectatorship of human rights sympathizers who were exposed to the horrific images of the 2014 Gaza War. Taking place only a few months after the attacks on the people of the Strip, the festival emerges as an adequate, positive, if not opportune, response to destruction. It also re-appropriates the spectatorship of disaster away from colonial practices, best exemplified by the group of Israelis who sat on a hilltop by the city of Sderot, the Israeli town closest to Gaza, in order to watch and cheer on their army's military bombing the Strip (Mackey 2014). This viewing position is similarly imposed on Palestinians for whom the shelling becomes normalized. The quote from Fida Qishta which opens this chapter reveals that Gazans also watch the spectacle of F16s dropping bombs, but only because that comes with looking at their own sky. The festival thus contributes to redressing the uneven distribution of visual rights established by colonial practices of surveillance, wherein Palestinians can finally be in the position of watching (after) *themselves*.

Yet, the humanitarian space of the Gaza Karama Festival is made possible not only because of the kind of necessary community relief it provides. Instead, I contend that the festival's focus is also dictated by the fact that human rights films most likely thrive in an environment where human rights are under threat, for *material* as well as *practical* reasons that derive from the festival's belonging to the humanitarian circuit. The Gazan cinematic landscape illustrates the prominence of humanitarian themes because filmmakers with little equipment document what surrounds them. As argued earlier with the example of *Where Should the Birds Fly*, Palestinian films from Gaza have partaken in the shaping of a niche of Palestinian human rights films that helps them circulate around the world. Significantly, most filmmakers acquire training through TV agencies such as Ramattan News or Aljazeera – while Hamas' media producers gain an education

in the offices of Hezbollah's TV channel Al-Manar and, since 2008, in the Al-Aqsa Center for Training and Media Development. For women more specifically, Shashat's filmmaking workshops place the emphasis on human rights, and the training's end products are distributed in human rights festivals worldwide. Gazan filmmaker Riham Al-Ghazali, who recently collaborated with May Odeh on the regionally acclaimed short documentary *Gaza By Her* (2017), acquired training through this outlet. Abdelsalam Shehadeh, a filmmaker, cameraman, sound engineer, journalist and mentor for Shashat's workshops, produced several films about child labor and rights (*Al-Aydi el-Saghira/Little Hands*, 1996; *The Cane*, 2000), women's rights (*Human Rights Are Women's Rights*, 1998), and the 2004 Israeli bombings on the Rafah refugee camp (*Rainbow*, 2004) even before Qishta's film. Red Carpet festival director Khalil Mozian similarly provides an example: after spending six years studying cinema in Russia (a fascinating reminder of Cold War solidarity), he produced many social programs related to women and children for Ramattan and international TV stations. Among his independent film productions, the documentary of the theatre play *The Gaza Mono-logues* (2012) brings together testimonies about life in Gaza during so-called Operation Cast Lead and the war's impact on the psychology of children. The film won the Public Liberties & Human Rights Award at the Aljazeera International Documentary Film Festival in 2012. These films weave in, and add to, a media environment centered around humanitarian issues that conditions further projects. Not only do international audiences expect these stories from Gazan filmmakers, but so do the organizations that provide the funding for production as well as local distribution and exhibition endeavors.

Typically, the Red Carpet Festival partakes in a pre-constituted network of human rights film festivals ready to expand. It first benefited from the support of the Jordan-based Karama Human Rights Film Festival (hereafter KHRFF), whose partnership Mozian sought in the wake of the 2014 Gaza war (interview with the author 2017). There were strong precedents to that collaboration. Since its creation, KHRFF has contributed to the emergence of several similar human rights film festivals in Tunis (2012), Libya (2012), Mauritania (2013), and later Lebanon (2016). It also jointly created the West Bank-based Karama-Palestine HRFF in 2013 with "the acknowledgement of many local, regional, and international relevant stakeholders; official bodies; Human Rights organizations and activists" (KHRFF website 2016). The sister festivals developed as the Arab uprisings were gaining momentum, thus both fulfilling local demands and further attracting international donors seeking to circulate stories that so predominantly headlined in the

global news. KHRFF's influence over the multiplication of Arab human rights film festivals partly derives from its membership in the Human Rights Film Network (HRFN), a partnership established by Amnesty International's Movies That Matter and forty affiliates strong. The HRFN's very mission since its inauguration in 2004 has been to expand the circuit of human rights films and festivals and assist emerging festival organizations (HRFN Charter 2016).

The model of mutual assistance between festivals seems particularly adapted to the region's needs. In 2011, KHRFF's founding association Ma3mal 612 Think Factory took inspiration from HRFN's global structure and established a mirroring network specific to the region, the Arab Network for Human Rights Film Festivals (hereafter ANHAR), with the hope of promoting a vision of human rights less subjected to Western agendas. The network's objectives include: "promotion of Human Rights Film Festivals and enhancing cooperation between established and emerging festivals," and "creat[ing] *a safe and supportive* environment for Arab and international filmmakers, especially those who face censorship repression *and risk their lives* in the process" (ANHAR Charter, website 2018, my emphases). Following the metaphor of the humanitarian space, the charter foregrounds both the urgent need to create a safe area for the festival (and protect audiences from Hamas and the occupation alike, in Mozian's view) and the professional network that can assist in securing this very space. The Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival has similarly endeavored to expand and strike alliances across the region. In 2017, filmmaker and producer May Odeh quit the Karama festival held in the West Bank and joined the Gaza team to organize a multi-sited and Palestine-wide event that includes the '48 territories. That same year, the Red Carpet simultaneously held screenings in Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia, and became a full member of the HRFN.

These solidarity networks prove all the more necessary as the humanitarian spaces of human rights film festivals must constantly re-assert their legitimacy, even within the operational field of human rights principles and practices. Reviewing the challenges KHRFF has faced since its creation, its director Sawsan Darwaza also mentions financial obstacles. In her own experience, "available funds often focus on direct humanitarian rescue projects but consider festivals and cultural events to be luxurious, even when they are directly related to human rights issues" (Darwaza 2015, 150). International human rights film organizations' response to these practical restrictions has involved mobilizing strategies that cross over activist and humanitarian practices, such as the modularization of organizational tools and collective actions. Organizational

modularity compliments standardization's efficiency by adding adaptability to local contexts in order to ease cooperation between various actors. The renewed complexity of the human rights matrix, with its blend of grassroots politics, Internet culture, and corporate marketing strategies, increasingly requires specialized forms of knowledge (McLagan 2005). Activist groups have since the 1990s developed modular forms of organization that allow for sharing repertoires of tactics transferrable to a variety of contexts. The "fractal structure" of digital media has further contributed to this tendency by stimulating the circulation of tutorials and downloadable PDF "action kits" (McLagan 2005, 232-233).

More recently, humanitarian supply chain management literature on emergency rescue has focused on how organizational (as well as physical) standards and modularity can enhance responsiveness, cost efficiency, flexibility, and inter-operability through standardized manuals, guidelines, handbooks, training kits, and pre-departure checklists (Jahre and Fabbe-Costes 2015, 361). These build off of a long tradition in humanitarian relief. Feldman describes how educational, carpenters', midwives', and fishermen's "self-help kits" were distributed by the American secular organization CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) in Gaza in the 1950s and 60s (Feldman 2011, 217). CARE's packages uniquely constituted a technology of assistance destined to be used by Palestinians themselves with the optic of adding development to the cooperative's mandate heretofore restricted to relief. In contrast, other relief providers like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) focused on the kits' potential to respond to crisis instead of long-term economic projects (Feldman 2011, 217). Today's international humanitarian organizations have transferred these technologies into their own internal practice, thus generalizing the use of modularity across the humanitarian circuit. The suitability of kit formats and practices of modularity in both situations of crisis and development risks blurring "self-help" strategies and relief (Feldman 2011, 222). Yet, the double address to temporalities of crisis and development also responds to the flexible nature of the film festival – an unstable institution, as we saw in Chapter Two – and even more so in a context of paradoxical permanent humanitarian crisis.

HRFN and Movies That Matter have spearheaded the modularization of human rights film festivals, from which the Red Carpet has also benefited. Since 2006, Amnesty International's film arm organizes "Cinema Without Borders," a yearly multi-day programme dedicated to the mechanics of setting up a human rights film festival. The 2014 edition, taking place in Jordan and co-led by KHRFF director Sawsan Darwaza, was attended by both Khalil Mozian and May Odeh.

The workshop arguably proved key to the realization of the Red Carpet Festival the following year and the strengthening of regional cooperation. The daily discussions were complemented by night-time screenings at the Karama Human Rights Film Festival, heralded as a staple for such events in the Middle East and North Africa (Movies That Matter). The programme as a whole eventually served as a basis for a written version of the topics under scrutiny. In 2015, HRFN, the One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Prague, Movies That Matter, and FiSahara collaboratively published a free and downloadable PDF-format guidebook on *Setting Up a Human Rights Film Festival* with a focus on the Global South, an area left unaddressed in the eponymous first volume. In 2017, the manual was translated into Arabic by Movies That Matter, HRFN, and KHRFF, and the official launch took place during the Jordanian festival.

A typical example of a "modular repertoire" (Tarrow, cited in McLagan 2005, 233), *Setting Up a Human Rights Film Festival* breaks down the different stages of organizing a human rights film festival and features case studies of different contexts in the Global South. The manual addresses the importance of the mission statement and the festival's goals and identity; what, where, and when to program in order to attract the desired audience; how to foster a productive and safe discussion; different models of team organization; technical aspects; promotional strategies; finding financial resources; and evaluating the festival post-event. An additional section, which directly speaks to the status of human rights festivals as humanitarian spaces, explores how to devise "a security plan to mitigate risks" in contexts of active censorship and threats of violence (De Jong 2015, 51) Advice around categorizing risks, optimizing team organization, and securing local partnerships with NGOs are here coupled with links to Digital First Aid Kits to cope with digital threats. In turn, the funding chapter offers a budget sample as well as lists of potential donors and supportive organizations. This information, regarding both film festivals and film production as well as grant writing strategies, is also available on Movies That Matter's website. Finally, the online platform provides a film database that compiles synopses, trailers, and contact information of productions that have successfully circulated in the human rights network, from which (emerging) festivals can take inspiration.

The selection includes key contemporary Palestinian films that also screened at the Red Carpet and in prestigious art festivals around the world, such as Hany Abu Assad's *Ya Tayr el-Tayer/The Idol* (2015), Salim Abu Jabal's *Roshmia* (2015), Amer Shomali's *The Wanted 18* (2014), and Mahdi Fleifel's *Alam Laysa Lana/A World Not Ours* (2012). May Odeh has pointed

to how the Cinema Without Borders workshop enhanced regional cooperation around exchanges of film, subtitles, and contacts (Movies That Matter). Festivals are thus also likely to take inspiration from each other in more informal ways and replicate some of their neighbors' selection choices year after year. On the one hand, mixed humanitarian and activist strategies have enforced a certain standardization without which modularization is ineffective. On the other, they have allowed the de-centralization of organizational efforts (McLagan 2005) and have strengthened a *flexible* human rights festival network and its humanitarian spaces locally, regionally, and globally. Just how flexible it is will be the object of further inquiry in the last section of this chapter.

As a site of negotiation, the humanitarian space of the Red Carpet is subjected to Hamas' approval vis à vis its film selection and the choice of venue. The Islamic movement championed the first edition of the Red Carpet because its humanitarian focus drew attention to the plight of the Palestinians (The Straits Times 2016). Yet, Gaza's independent artists generally expect certain topics and representations to be censored, and possibly receive death threats. In 2010, Mozian's own short film *Masho Matouk* was banned locally because its depiction of an (unveiled) woman smiling to an Israeli officer was deemed to normalize the occupation after the film went to Cannes. Mozian consequently cut out a kissing scene in anticipation of the screening of his film *Sara* (2014) at the Red Carpet. The festival's second edition was in fact met with more suspicion by the local authorities. The 2016 event called for Israel and Egypt to open the checkpoints, and for Hamas to loosen its grip over the inhabitants of Gaza. With the slogan "We must breathe,"[57] the organizers appointed the festival as a space where life could be reclaimed and the basic right to breathe – taken literally, the right to live – could be exercised. Initially planned to take place in Gaza City's port, the opening screening was displaced to the Rashad Shawa Cultural Center on the orders of Gaza's Culture Ministry for security reasons. In a personal interview, Mozian recounted how he was summoned by officials a few hours prior to the opening ceremony and asked to separate women and men in the audience. This division was implemented despite Mozian's refusal. Additional tension was added when Hamas officials turned the lights on during the opening screening, to which the organizers responded by turning the lights off, before the authorities turned them on again. This battle over two modes of spectatorship, one condoned by Hamas, the other defended by cinephiles, continued over the days following the opening, and during the third edition

[57] The theme interestingly resonates with the slogan "I can't breathe" mobilized by Black Lives Matter activists in the US. However, there is no indication in the promotional material that this is intentional.

in 2017 (interview with the author 2017). Despite these constraints, the event counted 12,000 visitors (Movies That Matter). This success highlighted, among other things, Palestinians' longing for cinematic experiences denied to them since the closure of Gaza's theatres after the First Intifada.

Despite Hamas' crackdown on certain types of spectatorships and their historical aversion to the development of cinema spaces, the Islamic movement has also recently demonstrated an interest towards utilizing film as part of its overall resistance strategy against colonization. The metaphor of the humanitarian space functions differently here. While festivals supported by Hamas, similarly to the Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival, draw from the principle that "safe areas are based on human dignity" (Yamashita 2004, 2), the movement also utilizes cinema events to foreground claims of sovereignty. Political scientist Hikaru Yamashita distinguishes several models of safe areas in his study of humanitarian spaces as a practice. He argues that while the "conventional model" abides by the framework set by state sovereignty, wherein neutralized zones require prior agreement between states, the "homeland model" relies on an understanding of sovereign space based on self-determination. Launching from a case study of the Kurds in Northern Iraq, Yamashita establishes the homeland model as fluctuating, and one that is defined by the potential of a humanitarian space to develop into a new spatial entity. The twin norms of human rights and self-determination are here mobilized towards the protection of the people claiming independence, whose safety can also be insured by the use of force (Yamashita 2004, 20). The same combination of human rights claims and aspiration towards self-determination can be found in Hamas' mission statement laid out in "This is What We Struggle For,"[58] a late 1990s memorandum prepared by Hamas Political Bureau at the request of Western diplomats in Amman:

> The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) is a Palestinian national liberation movement that struggles for the liberation of the Palestinian occupied territories and for the recognition of Palestinian legitimate rights… Hamas regards itself as an extension of an old tradition that goes back to the early 20th century struggle against British and Zionist colonialism in Palestine (cited in Tamimi 2007, 265).

[58] I reference the memorandum as opposed to the Hamas Charter because the latter is largely deemed unrepresentative by Hamas officials themselves. More of a historical document that was drafted without broad concertation with the movement's leading base, the charter contains anti-Semitic language that is said to misrepresent the movement's anti-colonial and anti-Zionist stance vis-à-vis Israel (Tamimi 2007, 147).

For Hamas scholar Aziz Tamimi, the movement recognizes the diplomatic and strategic need to employ human rights' universal discourse in order to reach out to peoples and nations around the world (Tamimi 2007, 155). Cinema in general and film festivals in particular consolidate this humanitarian space by strengthening the values at the core of the movement's struggle, thus contributing to Hamas' larger anti-colonial infrastructure of *i'lam muqawim* (resistance media).

The movement developed an informal media network since its inception in the late 1980s, tightly associated with efforts in the cultural, educational, and social sectors. The leaflets, posters, booklets, videos and audio-cassettes, mosque pulpits, and graffiti were used to share news items, comments on the events of the Intifada, addresses on local issues, or calls for action (Abdelal 2016, 71). Very early on, these media engaged with discourses of human rights and humanitarian economies: Leaflet 45, for example, appealed for UNESCO to pressure for the re-opening of schools by the occupation forces in July 1989, with the title: "Education is a sacred human right, we are dedicated to it, and it is not a favor from anyone" (Abdelal 2016, 85). Later on, during the Oslo years leading to the Second Intifada, and despite much repression from the PNA (who seized Hamas' media equipment and shut down its proxy newspaper *Al-Watan),* the movement opened a new outlet (*Al-Risala*). It also established the global radio station Al-Aqsa (which was to develop into a satellite channel in 2006) addressed to the diaspora as well as those inside. These outlets relayed the discourse of humanitarian networks at the same time as they preached values of resistance, thus casting human rights as an essential tool to carry the liberation struggle. For Wael Abdelal, "Al-Aqsa radio played a prominent role in the transfer of 'humanitarian appeal' to the people about the shortage of food and medicine, and how to deliver them through international organizations such as the Red Cross and the UN" (Abdelal 2016, 115). After the Parliamentary elections, *al-i'lam al-muqawim* was further centralized and augmented by a rhizome of pro-Hamas independent outlets (such as the newspaper *Falasteen*, the Alquds satellite channel, and SAFA news agency). These were put in the service of a *mujtama'a muqawim* (resistance society), with a focus on the moral and humanitarian aspect of resistance (Abdelal 2016, 172).

While close to no academic literature engages with Hamas' interest in film, several newspaper reports reveal anti-colonial and international alliances designed to materialize into cinema infrastructures and film festivals combining rhetorics of human rights and resistance. In 2015, Atef Asqul, the Director General of the Arts and Creativity Department at Gaza's Ministry of Culture, voiced his support for the establishment of movie theatres in the Strip as a means of

stimulating local film production. For him, they constitute "the final link in the movie-making process" and "are considered to be a key factor in the effects of the movie industry on society and culture" (cited in Othman 2015). In other words, theatres would enable the screening of local productions suitable to reinforcing nationalist values.

A series of projects led the way to Asqul's public support for cinema. Prior to this statement in 2009, the International Al Quds Film Festival (21-23 December) set in Gaza City consolidated cinema's position at the core of resistance strategies in line with both Hamas' discourse and UN values of cultural recognition and development. The Palestinian Film Forum – a branch of the Union of Palestinian Artists – organized the event under the umbrella of Jerusalem, Arab Capital of Culture 2009. Instituted by the Arab League under UNESCO's Cultural Capital Program, the celebrations took place in different locations over the West Bank, Gaza, and refugee camps in Lebanon. Hamas was instrumental in passing the resolution to select Jerusalem that year, which was justified by the increased "hebraization" of the city through settler activity and Israel's continuous erasure of Palestinian history. Early on in the discussions, the Palestinian national preparatory committee suggested cinema play a role of choice, with the proposal to produce thirty documentary films about Jerusalem (Samhan 2008, 9). Gaza's Festival responded to the program's general mandate by selecting films (between thirty-three and fifty-two) hailing from six to eleven Arab countries (Zammit and Daniell 2010, Almeghari 2009)[59] that engaged with the history of Occupied East Jerusalem and the occupation more generally. As a shared venture, the celebrations were divided financially and logistically between all Arab states, Jerusalem, and the rest of the Palestinian territories. Gaza's Ministry of Information thus coordinated the festival while the films traveled with the help of an independent Palestinian dignitary from Cairo (Almeghari 2009).

In the following years, Hamas struck more international collaborations around cinema and Palestinian resistance and rights. In 2013, the Director of Public and Foreign Relations at the Ministry of Culture in Gaza, Mohammad Aeraar, announced that the Ministry had signed an agreement with Iran in order to coordinate the establishment of movie theatres in Gaza (al-Ghoul 2013a). While the funds were eventually cut (supposedly over Hamas and Tehran's diverging positions on the conflict in Syria), the memorandum of understanding between the Iranian Ministry of Culture, the Palestinian Ministry of Culture in Gaza, and the Hamas cultural department called

[59] The two sources are in disagreement as to how many films were shown and the number of Arab countries involved. I decided to include both as an estimated range.

for a substantial cooperation between the two countries around film production and distribution. This included: conducting film festivals in Tehran and Gaza about Palestine, Jerusalem, and the Intifada; establishing bilateral relations between the film unions in both countries; supporting Palestinian film production, especially about Jerusalem; establishing cultural institutions; equipping libraries in the Gaza Strip; and establishing a cinema complex and museum to commemorate the Palestinian resistance (al-Ghoul 2013b).

According to Gaza Minister of Culture Mohamed al-Madhoun, the government's projected support to the nascent film industry complied with the movement's agenda and meant to "implement a cinema preaching values and resistance" (cited in Euromed Audiovisual 2013, 102). In 2013, Gazan director Sameh al-Madhoun (to the best of my knowledge, unrelated to the minister) announced a festival similar in spirit to the partnership designed in the memorandum of understanding with Iran and in conversation with Hamas' discourse of resistance. The founding committee counted filmmakers from Palestine, France, Egypt, and Syria, including renowned director Mohamed Malas, whose successful navigation of both regional markets and international global art cinema circuits was meant to set an example (Sadek 2013).[60] The festival planned to offer training workshops for Palestinian filmmakers in order to strengthen their skills on the ground, but also aimed more broadly to enhance partnerships between local producers, Arab artists, and the sympathetic Muslim filmmaking community at large. The diversity of professional actors involved in the event was reflected in the selection of genres, from features and documentaries to amateur films. Ultimately, the festival would highlight the power of cinema and art to convey Palestinian humanity and resistance (El Kahlout 2013), and the project received the direct endorsement of Gaza's Ministry of Culture (Sadek 2013, Euromed Audiovisual 2013). In the pro-Hamas newspaper *Al-Risala*, festival director Sameh Madhoun declared: "The festival sends a clear message to the occupation: the talent of Palestinians will shake the dust off your crimes, and will re-kindle the spirit of resistance" (Hanieh 2013, my translation).[61] While I could find no press review of the event after it occurred, thus providing no confirmation that it did in fact happen, the conception of the festival itself significantly points to Hamas' tri-fold strategic

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[60] While nothing confirms that the festival actually took place, neither can we be sure that all the guests announced were involved. For example, Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan is cited as a future guest in *Al-Risala*, but there is no mention of his attendance in the other sources and beyond.
[61] This translation was completed with the help of Farah Atoui.

approach through the lenses of industrial development, human rights, and resistance, advanced either by the Ministry itself or "independent" initiatives that act as its proxy.

Hamas' multifaceted plans for cinema in the Strip resonates with decolonization projects from the 1960s and 70s in the Pan-Arabic and Pan-African networks of the third world, which similarly unfolded at the crossroads of human rights claims, resistance movements, and the development of film industries. Festivals in Tunisia (The *Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage*, est. 1966-today), Burkina Faso (FESPACO, est. 1969-today), and Third World Cinema Committee meetings in Algiers and Buenos Aires (1973 and 1974) all utilized cinema to solidify regional and transcontinental routes of cultural, political, and economic exchange between countries of the Global South after they gained their formal (yet incomplete) independence. These networks foregrounded militant cinema and nationalist causes as one foundational structure for the new liberated societies, thus echoing Hamas' claims for an *i'lam muqawim*. Differently from Fateh, Hamas' engagement with human rights and the humanitarian space of cinema proves more than just a rhetorical move. Rather, for Lori Allen, the Islamic movement re-politicizes human rights by building the independence project around "the problem of rights violations and the impunity of the perpetrators into the political context of occupation and international siege" (Allen 2013, 178). Hamas thus offers an ambiguous interpretation of human rights that both fits the liberalization discourses of violations as attacks on human development, and an anti-colonial narrative where rights signal the material liberation of a people. In the context of the movement's media strategy but also in Gaza more broadly, human rights claims are always already articulated around discourses of resistance. These, in Hamas' view, can benefit from a strong film infrastructure consolidated through regional partnerships that follow Islamic principles and values.

The metaphor of the humanitarian space illuminates very practical strategies and constraints wherein both Hamas and independent (proxy and non-proxy) cultural actors engage with the discourses, funding opportunities, and organizational models of human rights and humanitarian economies in order to justify and make possible their focus on cinema in the midst of emergency. This instrumentalization constitutes a political and/or artistic choice, and a necessity in the face of international pressure (Hamas) and lack of access to diversified resources (Hamas and Red Carpet). Emergency therefore shapes cultural and political futures either by transferring activist and humanitarian strategies of modularization and crisis management into the realm of film festival networks (Red Carpet), or by fueling international political and cultural alliances

through the recasting of human rights as paradigms of Islamic resistance to colonization (Hamas). In both cases, festivals and movie theatres are constructed as zones of exception where humanitarian relief occurs both in the shape of shared experience of suffering and promises of political and economic self-determination. Humanitarian economies hold a double mandate of saving lives and engineering the reconstruction phase. According to this discourse, not only is society growing stronger through the deployment of humanitarian strategies in cinema economies, but the film industry and its infrastructures themselves also find a new life. In what follows, I examine how human rights and humanitarianism support a narrative where the regeneration of life in Gaza is partly mediated by, and expressed through, the rebuilding of its film industry and infrastructure(s).

Infrastructure and the Life of Cinema

The material turn in media studies has placed the emphasis on built spaces and infrastructures as tools of biopolitical control and governance. The destruction of infrastructures, including electrical, water, and sewage facilities, has counted among the major strategies of pressure against Gaza since Israel declared it a "hostile territory" in 2007. In his seminal study of Israel's architecture of the West Bank's occupation, *Hollow Land* (2007), Eyal Weizman examines how "Palestinian life, property and political rights are constantly violated not only by the frequent actions of the Israeli military, but by a process in which their environment is unpredictably and continuously refashioned, tightening around them like a noose" (Weizman 2007, 5). Architecture and the land itself become the very medium by which Palestinian life is governed. Similarly, Helga Tawil-Souri has shown that the high-tech enclosure of Gaza, which relies on the privatization of telecommunications and its dependence on Israeli networks on the one hand, and the multiplication of technologies of surveillance and control as a replacement for manpower on the ground on the other, continues the colonial work of dispossession and confinement to which Gazans were subjected before Israel's so-called "disengagement" in 2005 (Tawil-Souri 2012).

In a later communal project developed within the Goldsmiths University-based research agency Forensic Architecture, Weizman expands the relationship between infrastructure and life beyond the study of spatial and political domination. Developing a methodology inspired by forensics, built spaces emerge as the blueprint for reconstituting life as well as attacks on its sovereignty. Furthermore, modes of inquiry into infrastructures *animate* material objects and

landscapes by converting them into data and images that can be used as evidence for war crimes to be tried in courts of international law, as opposed to only serving policing strategies (Weizman 2014, 10). The counter-hegemonic work of *forensis* here establishes collaborations between researchers and civil society organizations, NGOs, activist groups and prosecutors, and opens up emergency and the humanitarian present to a future of accountability for the violators of human rights. What interests me in this perspective is how infrastructures and built spaces come to *embody* models of "sur-vivance" that shift the focus away from bare life and towards the regeneration of polities, by using the tools fostered by human rights and humanitarian economies. In this section, I do not utilize the methodology of forensics myself; rather, I consider how the discursive and methodological process of animating buildings for the defense of human rights can help us understand the strategic articulation of the discourses around film theatres and reconstruction economies, and the possible development of a film industry in Gaza.

Hamas, independent filmmakers, festival organizers, audiences, and human rights organizations alike have highlighted the important role of film theatres and cinema infrastructures as a cement for social life, conduits for shared values and principles, and a space to defend Palestinian human rights. Animated by multiple narratives from these various social actors, theatres have been endowed with the role of *witnesses* to Gazan past life and derelict present, at the same time as they have become one site for the development of Gaza's *post-conflict humanitarian imaginary of reconstruction.* In other words, the memory of theatres, open and running, and as contributors to Gazans' social life, provides the basis for imagining what comes after emergency while the siege continues. Just like "suspended time" structures life and economies in the West Bank, the temporalities and economies of emergency response and post-disaster reconstruction strategies paradoxically co-habitate in attempts at proposing a future for Gaza. For example, the PLO-led (and thus Oslo-oriented) Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) has been funneling funding since 1993 from the World Bank and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development towards infrastructural improvement programs in the West Bank and Gaza. Historically, humanitarian organizations in Gaza have struggled with the scope of their mandate, and they have debated whether it should include reconstruction and development plans or be restricted to relief alone (Feldman 2011). This tension is resolved in the general, contemporary humanitarian logistics' disaster management cycle, which underlines the various phases of humanitarian intervention. Alessandra Cozzolino

describes a typology in which disaster is followed by a first immediate response where "temporary" and "silent" networks established during the pre-disaster preparation phase are activated. The following "restore sub-phase" tries "to restore in the shortest time possible the basic services and delivery of goods to the highest possible number of beneficiaries," while the reconstruction phase engages with a long-term perspective (Cozzolino 2012, 9-10). In Gaza, this linear temporality is upset by the permanence of political and structural colonial disaster. As a result, the sub-restore phase's imperative of *preserving* life overlaps with the reconstruction phase's objective of *sustaining* it.

The focus on film infrastructures and theatres allows Palestinians to both gauge the repeated destructions of Gaza's built landscapes over the years and to plan a post-disaster phase where the project of a film industry contributes to the general reconstruction of life. Theatres function as a reminder of the chronology of Gaza's political timeline: established by humanitarian agencies, the first cinema spaces in 1940s Gaza were mobile and temporary, just like the refugee condition was supposed to be; the Strip's ten built theatres first closed with the beginning of Israel's occupation in 1967; they were then forcefully shut down by the colonial armed forces during the First Intifada; the attempts at opening them again in the 1990s were stopped by arsons and acts of vandalism led by Islamic groups among which some were affiliated to Hamas; the siege finally prevented most infrastructural expansion and rehabilitation, while a great part of the responsibility for the closures is often attributed to Hamas alone. Theatres thus also concentrate much of the relationship between governance and the "governed." In his study of media infrastructures in Northern Nigeria, anthropologist Brian Larkin reminds us of the ties between the representational logic of infrastructures and the state, as the latter strives to regulate populations through mediating built spaces (Larkin 2008). Similarly, Gazan theatres and film infrastructures now represent Hamas' aspiration towards an Islamic society and an independent, decolonized Palestinian state, as well as Palestinian populations' desire for political and public freedoms of all kinds – including ones formulated against Hamas. We will start by exploring Hamas' investment in film infrastructures as part of its development plan for Gaza, before turning towards independent initiatives for reviving film theatres and new visual regimes that exceed the humanitarian present of permanent emergency and destruction.

Soon after its coming to power in the Strip, Hamas announced its project to build a "media production city" called ASDAA[62] (which translates into "echoes" in English) and located on the site of an evacuated Israeli settlement after the so-called "disengagement." In some ways, ASDAA responded to the occupation's "politics of verticality" (Weizman 2007, 12) used to dispossess Palestinians and make them invisible, by replacing a symbol of Israeli colonialization with an infrastructure meant to bring Palestinians together through the telling of their history of resistance. For the Western press, the media complex itself and the two films that it produced constitute the movement's new propaganda arm (Bernaud 2011). For researcher Wael Abdelal, it represents a new front in Hamas resistance, and the site for a counter-psychological warfare (Abdelal 2016, 145) in response to the long-term traumas engineered by ever more sophisticated techniques of occupation (Tawil-Souri 2012). As a result, the project takes part in the movement's effort to share (a specific) Palestinian history (RT online 2008), self-preservation, survival, and claims of Palestinians' right to live.

It is significant that the city came to include, alongside production and graphics studios and satellite technology: gardens, water ponds, a children's entertainment area, a theme park, a zoo, an array of cafés and restaurants, a dairy factory, as well as models of Palestinian villages and cities – which add yet another layer to the Gazan landscape. A piece written by the Associated Press (AP) and re-published in Israeli liberal newspaper *Haaretz* before the realization of ASDAA City slammed the estimated budget for the realization of the project ($200 million), accusing Hamas of misusing funds in times when its population were struggling to feed themselves (Associated Press 2007). The financing of Hamas' media infrastructure is largely kept secret and the current budget for the city is not confirmed (although some sources mention they raised only one million). However, the entertainment complex and theme park were said to partly resolve Hamas' quest for funding, jeopardized by the international sanctions imposed on the movement after 2007, by contributing its revenues to the self-financing of the media city (Abdelal 2016, 153). AP's critique resonates with the common dismissal of cinema and entertainment when life is threatened – which in the article goes hand in hand with the normalization of Israel's siege. Another perspective, which I develop throughout this section, could also see the building of these infrastructures as being very

[62] Hamas media scholar Wael Abdelal transcribes the name all in caps, although there is no indication that ASDAA stands for an acronym. Newspaper articles use a variety of transcriptions, such as Asdaa, or Asda'.

much part of the effort to sustain life by augmenting mere survival through *reconstruction under emergency*.

As one of the Al-Aqsa media network branches, ASDAA Media Production City was meant to become a symbol of popular prosperity for Gazans as much as a political tool to pressure the enemy. At the occasion of the invite-only premiere of Hamas' first film production at Gaza City's Islamic University in 2009, Gaza's Interior Minister and producer of the film Fathi Hamad coined the term "Hamaswood" to celebrate the local achievement (Associated Press 2009). The comparison with Hollywood drew more from the symbolic value and narrative of popular power than the type of financial investment made in the film, which proved minor ($120,000). The parallel also suggested Hamas' new position vis-à-vis Western film productions, no longer considered to be *inherently* immoral – some officials even cite the *Ice Age* franchise among their favorite films. The film's theatrical distribution similarly mimicked (at a considerably lower scale) Hollywood's windowing strategies: after the exclusive premiere at the University, the film was screened for a week every day at 5pm at the more popular Rashad Shawa Cultural Center in August 2009. Dedicated to telling the epic story of a hero commander of Hamas' military wing killed by Israeli troops in 1993 and written by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahmoud Zahar, *Emad Akel* (Majed Jundiyeh, 2009) featured many action sequences and no romance, responding to the aim of "mak[ing] quality art that is Islamic and about the resistance, without provocative (sexual) scenes" (Hamad, cited in AP 2009).

Losing Shalit (2014), also directed by Majed Jundiyeh and partly funded by Hamas (which allegedly put in $95,000 out of $120,000), was intended to be the first volume of a trilogy on the popular story of the Israeli soldier's abduction that led to the release of a thousand Palestinian political prisoners. The film celebrated Hamas' victory but also directly addressed Israeli audiences: most of the dialogues delivered by the IDF soldiers in the film were in Hebrew, even as most of the Palestinian amateur actors had no prior knowledge of it (Barzak 2014). Film was instrumental to the very prisoner swap in the first place: in April 2010, a 3D animated clip in Hebrew with English and Arabic subtitles, which pictured Gilad Shalit's ageing father and evoked the imminent death of the soldier, had been used to directly pressure the Israeli army into the exchange (Telegraph 2010). By coupling features and *musalsalat* in both Arabic and Hebrew, the media city insures itself a wide and varied audience to a double end of popular resistance and "counter-psychological warfare."

Referring to his own productions, Majed Jundiyeh declared that he was "working to establish a movie industry of resistance in Gaza, to reflect the Palestinian story with Palestinian actors" (Barzak 2014). However, the development of an industry for Palestinians and with Palestinians doesn't seem, in this case, to translate into the recognition of actors' labor. The majority of the *Losing Shalit*'s performers were amateur volunteers, while in contrast Mohammad Qarara, who played the main protagonist, received a salary of 2,000 NIS a month (around $550) (Nouvel Observateur 2014), sizable in comparison to the $174 monthly average in Gaza in 2014 (UNRWA 2015). As a result, the built infrastructure and the films remain the most visible *witnesses* of "Hamaswood" and its promise to forge the path to liberation and Palestinian human rights – while labor rights and the institutionalization of a media workforce are suffering.

The media city represents the possibility of a larger production. Significantly, the Al-Aqsa channel built a replica of Jerusalem's Old City in ASDAA in order to produce a thirty-episode long *musalsal* for Ramadan called *Bawaba as-Sama'/Gate of Heaven* (2017), which documents Palestinian life in Jerusalem and the population's struggle against the systemic violence of settlers and Israeli police (al-Araby 2017). Despite challenges concerning construction materials such as cement or iron as well as recurring electricity shortages, the media city is planned to eventually include permanent buildings that reproduce the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock Mosque, prisons, and Bedouin villages (al-Araby 2017). Not only do those replicas function as a claim over Palestinian history and land, but they also allow actors and extras to wander the streets of a sacred city and maybe even "visit" the third holiest site of Islam in the future, whose access is denied to them by the siege (Fig. 15). One can also imagine that these film sets could one day be opened to the visitors of the entertainment complex as a whole. ASDAA Media Production City has become evidence of Hamas' growing power over their own narrative of liberation through cinema, which intimately connects the end product of film with *the very capacity* to build entertainment infrastructures. The supply of construction materials under the siege therefore also points to Hamas' utilization of the more "secret" and widely used infrastructure of the tunnels (Haddad 2018), yet another built space that symbolizes Gaza's own reconstruction strategies and its population's resistance.

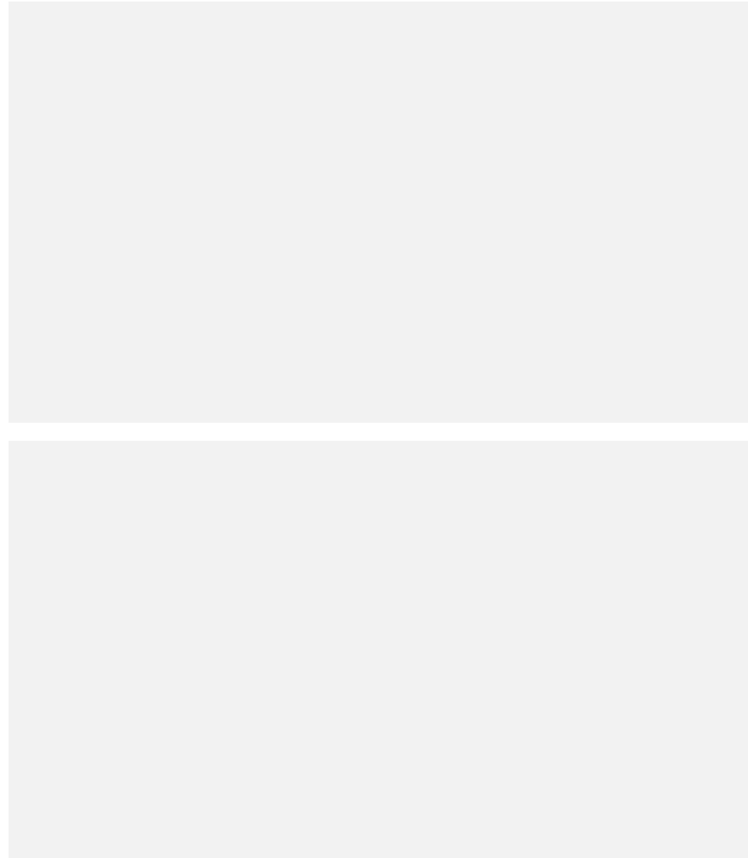

Figure 15: Old Jerusalem's replica in ASDAA City (al-Araby 2017)

Hamas has also officially (at least discursively) encouraged independent attempts to re-instate Gaza's old cinema infrastructure and institutionalize new ones. Gaza's Ministry of Culture official Atef Asqul expressed the government's support for a local film industry. At the same time, the Ministry re-asserted its lack of responsibility in the prolonged closure of the theatres – against the popular narrative – arguing that the theatres' private owners were facing legal issues around inheritance that prevented the spaces from running (Ahmad 2017). Civil society projects did succeed in temporarily restoring some theatrical spaces. In 2016, the media production company Ain Media organized a screening of the Palestinian-Jordanian film *Ma'tef Kabir Lihajem/The Oversized Coat* (Nawras Abu Saleh 2013) in a theatre of the Red Crescent Society (a humanitarian infrastructure), which was followed by regular film events under the label "Gaza Cinema." In 2017, the iconic Cinema al-Samer, first established in 1944, was re-opened for one night for the premiere of Gaza-produced film *Ashr Snin/Ten Years* (Alaa Alaloul 2017). Both films dealt with the reality of the occupation, Israeli assassinations, and Palestinian prisoners. The two screenings

were envisioned in a commercial perspective: while the former required a US$ 2.50 entry fee, the premiere of the latter was free and attended by local television and cinema critics and professionals. Further screenings in an *ad hoc* theatre, however, charged US$ 5.50. Both events finally symbolized a first step towards "bringing *back* the idea of cinema in Gaza," as media coordinator Ghada Salmi put it (cited in Abou El Oun 2017, my emphasis), thus building on a pre-existing local history.

The prospect of restoring theatres is commonly received as a sign of hope and "*revival"* by Gazan audiences and film professionals (Ahmad 2017, Gostoli 2016), one that also provides an opportunity to revisit the Strip's cinematic and community history. Many spectators have seen the theatrical screenings as a bridge across generations, connecting the youth that would experience cinema for the first time and those who remembered life before the First Intifada (Erem News 2016). Some idealized this period as one of abundance, during which American, Egyptian, and Chinese films were screened. Samir El-Efranji, al-Samer cinema accountant and manager of al-Nasr Cinema, referred to this era as the "Golden Age when the cinema was operating in Gaza" (Balousha 2018). The recurring idea of "revival," however, also points to the humanitarian aspect of both infrastructures and people's rights. One attendee of the al-Samer 2017 premiere typically invoked Palestinians' "human rights to have cinema*s* in the Gaza Strip like so many other people who have the chance to go to the cinema in their countries" (Ahmad 2017, my emphasis), thus highlighting not only the right to watch films, but also the very *right to film infrastructures*. This claim echoes the larger demand to replace "darkness" with entertainment by putting an end to the electricity crisis (Ahmad 2017). Access to electricity has been drastically reduced since the destruction of Gaza's power plant by Israel in 2007. Moreover, both Europe and Israel have restricted their diesel imports, necessary to produce power, based on a "humanitarian minimum" imposed by Israel after the plant's reconstruction (Gisha 2009). The re-opening of theatres therefore also stands for a future in which Palestinians could access and control their own resources, including electricity.

In the remainder of this section, I examine how the Karama Red Carpet Human Rights Film Festival utilizes the flexibility of human rights film networks to revive Gaza's cinematic history and "reconstruct" a film economy through a renewed visual regime. Festival director Khalil Mozian counts among the few people who have cumulated an extensive knowledge of Gaza's film history based on active research that has also imbued spirit to the event itself. Mozian's own

production company, which assumes the organization of the Red Carpet Festival, takes its name "Lama Films" after the Lama brothers, the first Palestinian filmmakers to ever establish a film studio, in 1920s Alexandria. Mozian further reports the findings of his historical investigation in the art film *Gaza 36mm* (2012), in which he reactivates old theatres with an *ad hoc* 35mm projector mounted on a bike. His diegetic and real-life assistants and protégés, soon-to-be-famous filmmakers and twin brothers Tarzan and Arab Nasser cited earlier complete this transgenerational project. Finally, the film directs a critique at the Islamic movement's destruction of theatres considered to be places of moral corruption and a threat to their own social and political control. Significantly, Mozian's pitch to the funding provider Doha Film Institute humanized film infrastructures in order to translate the violence of Hamas' censorship as equal to bodily harm. The blurb concluded that "the assassination of theatres was a personal assassination of [Gazans'] thoughts" (Doha Film Institute 2012). The Red Carpet Human Rights Film Festival thus constituted one response to these "assassinations," which called for cinema and theatres' lives to be rescued.

The festival's inscription in Gaza's urban environment enacted the mission to revive cinema spaces in order to achieve a better political future for Palestinians. The first edition's choice to hold the screenings in the rubble of Shuja'yiah intentionally played with the metaphor of a society and its infrastructures rising from the ashes – thus coming back to life (Emarat Alyaoum 2015). Mozian had similarly used this imagery to describe the making of his own film *Sara* (2014), which follows a young Palestinian woman refugee threatened by honor killing. Some of the film's shooting took place in Lama Films' offices in the Basha Tower after it was destroyed by Israeli shelling in 2012, along with Mozian's entire film collection. As he put it, instead of abandoning the project in the wake of the collapse, he "turned the ruins and rubble of [his office] into a real movie scene that highlights the ability of the Palestinian people to rise from the ashes like a phoenix" (cited in Alashqar 2014). Eventually, the Shuja'yiah metaphor turned into a material reality. The 2015 festival erected its stage in the very neighborhood that saw the opening of the first movie theatre in Gaza in the 1940s, the al-Khadra Cinema, which was relocated soon after and changed its name to al-Samer Cinema (Othman 2015). The festival's slogans have similarly focused on infrastructural revival and popular control over the years. The second edition, entitled "We must breathe," referred to Gaza's confinement as much as Hamas' restrictions, which cinema could overcome by bringing in hopes and dreams. As we have seen, the fight for infrastructural

control was then manifold: based on the occupation's impact on cinema space and resources – including limited power supply – Hamas' interdiction to hold the event in the port, and its management of the audience configuration and the lighting environment during the screening. More importantly, the third edition's theme, "we will return" combined the running metaphor of coming back to life with the political project of a Palestine for all Palestinians further epitomized by the opening ceremony's location in the port, a symbol for the refugees' departure and future return.

But the Red Carpet's literal revival of Gaza's cinematic history occurred most predominantly through the collusion of two a priori distinct projects: the promotion of human rights, and the development of a grassroots and market-oriented (as opposed to Hamas' top-down model) cinema industry in Gaza. The festival's NGO partner Movies That Matter articulates this idea in evocative terms:

> The organizers, Lama Film Group, are determined to create an annual event that stimulates the Palestinian cinema industry and revives cinemas that have been destroyed. The festival hosts film screenings, debates and panel discussions about human rights issues in Palestine (Movies That Matter website 2016).

The human rights organization justifies its own intervention by identifying the development of a film industry (as opposed to the festival alone as argued in the previous section) with the pursuit of human rights, wherein movie theatres stand for metaphorical lives needing to be saved. The statement suggests that the disappearances of cinema spaces among the many other material damages might have been caused by the recent bombings, rather than as a consequence of the protracted historical process of closures. This interpretation of history informed by the temporality of crisis feeds into the urgent nature of rebuilding the Palestinian film economy as part of Gaza's reconstruction phase after the latest disaster.

While I have so far argued for the prominence of witnessing as the visual regime guiding many Gazan independent film productions and festival strategies, I now turn to how Red Carpet contributes to expanding the definition of human right films. The rhetoric and material achievements of reviving cinema foreground the development of a Palestinian economy of *art cinema* constructed as human rights films, as one locus for Gaza's reconstruction phase. We explored a similar dialectic with respect to art cinema and news' visual regime in Chapter Two. The focus on art cinema is, maybe surprisingly, not unlike the discourse upheld by Hamas' film

director Majed Jundiyeh, who studied filmmaking in 1990s Germany under famous new German cinema director Volker Schlöndorff. The advertising billboard poster for Jundiyeh's film *Emad Akel* suggests that the production embraces the opulent, epic style of war and action movies rather than auteur cinema's calculated austerity (Fig. 16). However, the filmmaker expressed how he hoped to enter the film in the Cannes festival competition (Usher 2009). Hamas has similarly shown interest in the circuits of art cinema before, as demonstrated by the example of the Palestinian International Festival of Films cited earlier. As bizarre as this might seem, art cinema represents a point of convergence for Hamas and independent filmmakers that oppose their politics. The genre allows celebrating prestige and attracts international alliances, as well as being adaptable to an elastic concept of human rights.

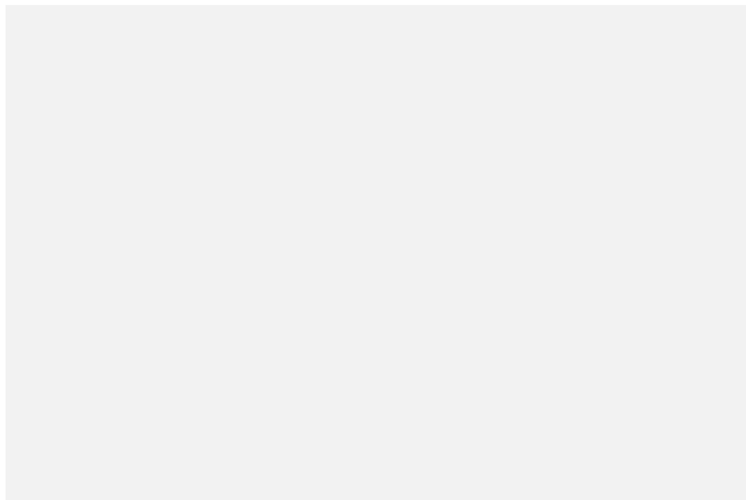

Figure 16: *Emad Akel's* billboard (ABC Australia)

Red Carpet's programming reflects the malleable definition of human rights film and the potentially new visual regimes that this allows, in accordance with Hamas' own paralleling restrictions. In addition to some European productions often addressed to children and some international examples, the selection mainly features films from the Arab world and the Middle East more generally that have traveled around the global art cinema circuit and received prestigious prizes from institutions such as Cannes, TIFF, Dubai, IDFA and the Oscars. These films, while rather foreign to what one could expect in the activist and humanitarian scene, are yet also very strongly represented in Movies That Matter's database for human rights film festivals. As a result, Red Carpet doesn't offer a subversive view on the matter, but rather takes advantage of fluctuating

categories put in place as part of the modular structure of the human rights film economy set to adjust to situated environments. Red Carpet abides by the principles established by the Human Rights Film Network that have underpinned its own partnership with Jordan-based Karama Human Rights Film Festival from the start. The Network's lack of requirements regarding the genre of the films, its openness to encouraging fiction films in environments where film literacy is limited (Bartošová et al. 2015, 36), and the promotion of "films that have good cinematic quality in photography, narrative, rhythm, audio and other technical characteristics" (Charter of the Human Rights Film Network) facilitates the festival's inclusion of global art cinema pieces, and their construction as human rights films. As artistic director of Bologna's Human Rights Nights Festival Mariagiulia Grassilli explains, "the definition of a human rights film may be as broad and potentially malleable as the film festival's notion of human rights" (Grassilli 2012, 36), which here coincides with the necessity of reconstructing Gaza.

In fact, most of the films programmed at Red Carpet do not primarily evoke the human rights theme, only flirting with the witnessing gaze of the humanitarian economy rather than primarily engaging with it. For Mozian, while most films did not explicitly deal with human rights directly, it was easy to find a human rights angle to them (interview with the author 2017). The film plots, which are submitted to Hamas' censorship bureau for approval, must also reflect a concern for the Palestinian cause or principles of dignity compatible with Hamas' Islamic values of community and modesty. One might also consider how many of these films have already had to adhere to explicit and implicit morality constraints from, for example, the Gulf festivals involved in their development or national censorship rulings. These limitations still leave a lot of space for creative selection, from Oscar nominees and animation to experimental cinema. Art cinema-turned-mainstream films like Hany Abu-Assad's *The Idol* (2015), the Jordanian Oscar-nominee *Theeb* (Naji Abu-Nowar, 2014), Palestine's pick for the Oscars *The Wanted 18* (Amer Shomali 2014), Jordan's pick for the Oscars *3000 Layla/3000 Nights* (Mai Masri, 2015), and *A World Not Ours* (Mahdi Fleifel, 2011) offer very local tales from the human rights-friendly points of view of children, women, refugees, and even anthropomorphized animals. *The Idol* more particularly celebrates Gaza's own singer and winner of Arab Idol contest Mohamed Assaf, who embodies Palestinian culture, *sumud*, and success in the face of colonial erasure. Animation film *The Wanted 18* starts with telling the story of Palestinians' White Intifada against Israeli taxes in the 1980s through the eyes of anthropomorphized cows and finishes with a critique of Oslo's

failure to address Palestinians' needs (a commentary aligned with Hamas' own sentiment). Set in the 1980s, *3000 Nights* showcases Palestinian historical steadfastness in Israeli prisons with a focus on a pregnant woman. Abandoned by her husband (a thread potentially irreconcilable with Hamas' principles), she finds a new family in a community of resisting prisoners (a redeeming turn of event). Finally, *A World Not Ours* follows refugees' lives in the Lebanese camp 'Ain el-Helweh over generations.

While it proves rather easy to conceive of the popularity of these productions based on the legibility of their storytelling, other films screened at Red Carpet foreground a much more experimental style. This might a priori deter non-cinephiles, but the films similarly speak to the core of Palestinian life under occupation, to which most viewers can connect intimately. Unexpected cinema languages become just as readable by appealing to personal and communal experience. For instance, the third edition opened with Raed Andoni's *Ghost Hunting* (2017), a ninety-minute long re-enactment of the traumas undergone in an Israeli interrogation center, reconstructed on set based on the memories of the actors and construction workers who had all spent time there. Similarly, Egyptian Jasmina Metwaly and Philip Rizk's rather sober *Barra fel Share'/Out on the Street* (2015) documents a theatrical workshop of factory workers engaged in reenacting daily confrontations with the Egyptian police and management before and during the uprisings. Mohanad Yaqubi's *Kharij al-Itar: Thawra Hatta al-Nasr/Off Frame AKA Revolution Until Victory* (2015) is a seventy-minute long compilation of archival footage produced during the militant era of the 1970s, which follows the changing representations of dispossessed Palestinian refugees into freedom fighters. Finally, Jessica Habie's psychedelic *Mars at Sunrise* (2014) utilizes references to painting and poetry in order to evoke the violence of Israeli torture techniques used during interrogation.

These films replace the witnessing gaze with models of spectatorship built around the communal participation in re-enactment workshops (*Out on the Street*), the mutations of Palestinians' production of their own image and modes of looking at themselves (*Off Frame*), and poetic translations of physical pain (*Mars at Sunrise*), thus introducing visual regimes in tension yet compatible with the humanitarian present. These films, in the context in which they are shown to a Gazan audience, no longer rely on the moral validation of a witness, and, rather, demand that the spectator confront their own personal and community experiences. In other words, rather than mobilizing the narcissistic self of Chouliaraki's "ironic spectator," who directly benefits morally

from acting for others, the audience's performance here provokes genuine sym-pathy: etymologically, literally suffering with. The endpoint of watching is not the moral enjoyment of feeling compassion for someone else, but the possibility, like Mozian told me in an interview, of understanding your own suffering and shared experience.

The festival has developed its advertising campaign on the two fronts of human rights and cinephilia equally. These both contribute to the paradoxical *re*construction of Gaza's *future* film industry – the revival of a cinema economy that never really was, yet existed as a latent, maybe re-fashioned, past desire. Much of the event's promotion on Facebook (a major outlet and archiving tool for the festival) insists on the infrastructures of film spaces with videos that document the construction of the outdoor stage during the first and third edition as well as the installation of posters and the boat's carcass (a metaphor for the port which they could not use that year) nearby the Rashad Shawa Center during the second edition. These visuals have been mobilized to update the Facebook page and keep the momentum going in between editions. Regular postings also advertise each film in isolation through screenshots, film descriptions, and individual trailers starting a month before the festival until the end of the event. Each edition also features at least two promotional videos that mash up films from the yearly selection with fast-paced editing to the rhythm of thriller-like music, very unlike what one would expect of human rights films. The outdoor billboards also sometimes display direct references to the opening films, as was the case with *The Idol* in 2016, a film with particular resonance in Gaza and which opened the second edition (Fig. 17). Although Mozian insisted in an interview that the film selection reflected human rights issues from all over the world in order to include Gazans in a larger community of suffering (interview with the author 2017), the festival eventually proved a conduit for the promotion of local Palestinian and occasionally Gazans' art cinema productions – including Mozian's own *Sara* and *Gaza 36mm*. The festival even set up a submission form to encourage local participation. The double focus on human rights and cinephilia thus foregrounds the Palestinian cause through local productions and reminds us that reconstructing Gaza can also be achieved by supporting a film economy that exceeds humanitarian film networks while building from them.

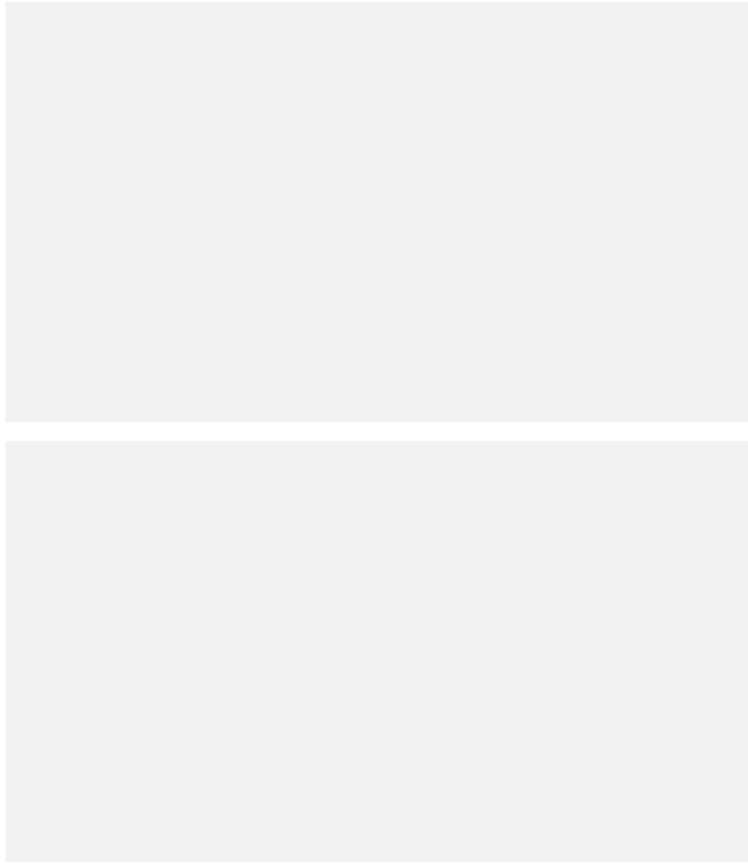

Figure 17: The Red Carpet Festival's billboard for the 2016 edition (Lama Films)

The metaphor of cinema's revival in Gaza drives a multiplicity of interconnected discourses that seek to augment life, at the same time that most international efforts direct themselves towards supporting mere survival. What I have termed "reconstruction under emergency" attests to the development of seemingly premature film projects that take root in the humanitarian present rather than anticipate the end of the disaster management cycle. These cinema endeavors focus on built spaces for symbolic reasons: infrastructures represent a major casualty of the war and siege on Gaza. Their maintenance and expansion can be proof of Palestinian resistance and operate as a catalyst for the people's liberation, while buildings also become an expression of Gaza's community and cultural history. Finally, film infrastructures represent the condition of possibility for a new visual regime that extends beyond humanitarian discourses. This regime utilizes a broad definition of human rights as well as the economic and financial networks that support it, in order to include artistic, experimental, and globally recognized aesthetic forms of Palestinian narratives

necessary to kick start a film economy in Gaza. The material life of cinema thus takes full part in the reconstruction efforts of the besieged Strip.

Conclusion

The cultural life of human rights organizes the convergence of humanitarian and film economies in Gaza. A conduit for international funding, a cement for regional solidarity networks, a promise of self-determination, and an elastic visual regime, human rights and humanitarianism can be used to quench the necessity to preserve “mere life” and enhance and sustain the “surplus life” of entertainment and creativity. Palestinians utilize humanitarianism as a symbolic basis for expressing the vital issue of developing cinema, and a material framework to establish the (re)construction of its infrastructures. The ingenuity Palestinians and Hamas have shown in exploiting the malleability of humanitarian and human rights categories and systemic arrangements should not, however, distract us from acknowledging the lasting consequences of the Human Rights Industry as a provider of political futures. The instrumentalization of human rights can prove relatively successful insofar as it obeys or appeases the market forces that cultivate their own advantage in sustaining Gazans’ surplus life. In other words, the life of cinema must be to a certain extent complicit with the marketization of humanitarian practice and agencies’ imperatives of performance, which the multiplication of human rights film festivals fulfils by heralding the promise of a supposedly “just” legal and political order.

Eventually, the humanitarian imaginary and its focus on theatrical structures of communication, whether instrumentalized or not, remain predicated on *dialogue* as a basis for a renewed imaginary of global solidarity. As examined successively in Chapter Two, Three, and Four, convergence itself articulates the complex relationships between various economic networks and actors. In the following and last chapter, I apply pressure to the paradoxes underlying dynamics of convergence, in order to attain the point of highest tension: the moment when the discourses and economies of inter-cultural and political *dialogue* cease to effectively allow any convergence or bring any relief to structural colonization through film. By examining the space where ethnic cleansing most deeply and yet, less visibly, endures – the 1948 territories – Chapter Five examines film politics and economies of tentative disengagement, refusal, and active *divergence*.

Chapter Five – Recognition Beyond the End of History

> Man is a *yes*. I will never stop reiterating that.
> *Yes* to life. *Yes* to love. *Yes* to generosity.
> But man is also a *no*. *No* to scorn of man. *No* to degradation of man. *No* to exploitation of man. *No* to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom.
> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, 222.

> They want to view me as a good 'Israeli Arab director' or a 'nice Israeli Arab'…The moment you say Palestinian, though, you become the enemy.
> Suha Arraf, cited in *The Electronic Intifada*, 2014.

In 2014, Hany Abu-Assad's *Omar* (2013) entered the Oscar's competition for the Best Foreign Language Film as a representative of Palestine. A major shift in cultural diplomacy, the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (AMPAS)' implicit recognition of an entity named Palestine – still deprived of any determined political status – was the result of a decade of negotiation within the institution and on the international scene more broadly in spite of pressure from Israel. The proto-state of Palestine's recently acquired status of non-member observer state at the United Nations in 2012 certainly helped AMPAS justify their decision. This also reflected the changing imaginaries that the name "Palestine" could elicit in US and global cosmopolitan settings after the Second Intifada, wherein the proto-state might appear as a partner for commercial and cultural exchange as opposed to a terrorist group with whom no discussion is possible. After a failed first attempt at presenting Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention* (2002) at the Oscars in 2002, such a turning point in the history of international political and cultural recognition of Palestine initially materialized with Abu-Assad's previous feature *Paradise Now* (2006). A fictional reconstitution of the psychological journey of two suicide-bombers-to-be, the film was also nominated at the Oscars for the "Palestinian territories" and won the Golden Globes' Best Foreign Language Film on behalf of "Palestine." The film's topic and the fact that it was distributed by Warner Brothers in the US pointed to Abu-Assad's desire for international *artistic* recognition, his engagement with stereotypical international concerns about Palestinians, as well as foreign audiences' curiosity and willingness to be exposed to a more contrasting view on the matter. Yet, ultimately for Abu-Assad, the recognition of *Paradise Now* and *Omar* as hailing from Palestine did not speak to the actual proto-state's strengthening cultural force, nor did it celebrate the two-state solution. Instead, these

two films represented “a nation fighting for equality and freedom and justice” (Abu-Assad cited in Herndon 2014) – a political project still in formation and driven by identity rather than geography (Associated Press 2014).

Like twenty percent of Israel’s population, Hany Abu-Assad is Palestinian with Israeli citizenship. His claims to Palestine therefore reveal some of the tensions that arise when Palestinian identity does not collude with the geopolitically accepted space of Palestine in international contexts where culture and diplomacy are closely entwined. At the same time, the identities of Palestinian individuals and cultural objects in Israel are constantly negated, contested, redefined, and re-appropriated so as to fit the dominant narrative in which Palestinians have been “assimilated” or “transferred,” with the hope of finally disappearing. Abu-Assad publicly declared: “[Citizenship] doesn’t make us Israeli. As long as the state is exclusive, you can’t identify with the state as long as it doesn’t recognize you as equal” (cited in Associated Press 2014). What does the international recognition of Palestinian films and directors mean when filmmakers are denied basic rights in the local political space in which they exist? How does international recognition impact the opportunities for developing Palestinian films and film networks *in Israel*? How can we understand the project of a Palestinian film economy beyond the confines of the Palestinian proto-state? And what is the potential of such a Palestinian film economy in the process of decolonizing Israel?

Palestinian citizens of Israel belong to the families who stayed in Israel after the state was established on the (still ongoing) systematic erasure of Palestinian culture and lives. For them, this space remains that of “historic Palestine,” which I will also refer to as “the 1948 territories” or “‘48.” Palestinian populations in Israel have not been untouched by colonial violence. Many have been forced out of their home and displaced within the current self-defined – yet not officially declared – borders of Israel, and were subject to martial law from 1948 to 1966 (Masalha 2005, 9). Palestinian citizens now hardly enjoy the same rights as Jewish Israelis in terms of access to education, housing, and job opportunities because they are not considered to be equal nationals. The distinction between citizenship (*ezrahut*) and nationality (*le’um*) established in the early days of the state[63] was meant to enshrine the differential statuses of Jews and Arabs in the legal structure

[63] The 1950 Law of Return for Jews and the 1952 Nationality Law for Arabs inscribed the distinction between (Jewish) colonial immigration and (Arab) native occupants in the legal structure of the state of Israel. It was meant “to resolve the ambiguous status of the nearly 180,000 Palestinian Arabs who had used

of the state while avoiding claims of discrimination under the guise of equal citizenship. According to the recent UN report commissioned by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,[64] the foundational distinction between the two nationalities constitutes evidence of Israel's apartheid regime. Following the commission's investigation, the fact that "only one nationality, Jewish, has legal standing and only Jewish nationality is associated with the legitimacy and mission of the State" (ESCWA 2017, 36) means that Palestinians are considered to be temporary residents depending on the government's "mercy" and *de facto* excluded from a future vision of the Israeli state. Passed in July 2018, the project for a new Basic Law that defines the constitutional foundations of the state of Israel confirms and reinforces these apartheid logics. As noted by various organizations such as the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Adalah), the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) and progressive Zionist New Israel Fund (NIF), the voted nation-state law forsakes any reference to Israel as a democracy (NIF 2018). It also restricts the right of self-determination to the Jewish people and relegates the Arabic language from official to one with a "special status." Finally, the law "formalizes … the possibility to discriminate on the grounds of religion, race, and nationality in the allocation of land and in promoting settlement" (ACRI 2017), and turns decades-long and illegitimate colonial, racist and discriminatory practices into an expression of the rule of law (Adalah 2018, 4).

It is therefore of little surprise that Abu-Assad considers all of Israel (historic Palestine) under occupation, and rejects the abstract "Israeli Arab" identity, imposed on '48 Palestinians and designed to erase their historical attachment to the land. Yet, to a foreign eye, Abu-Assad's identity constantly oscillates between his Palestinian roots and his legal status in Israel, which also impacts the international circulation of Palestinian works *as Palestinian*. The volatility of cultural recognition becomes subordinated to a host of contradicting geopolitical and financial interests, but it also provides an opportunity to redefine the parameters of Palestinian existence locally and internationally. For example, that *Omar* was shot in Nazareth, a city located in Israel with a majority of Palestinian inhabitants, epitomizes how opposing identity claims both threaten the integrity of Palestinian works and may open them up. On the one hand, Israel's supporters who focus on the geographical boundaries of the country argue that the shooting location makes it an

and would continue to use all means at their disposal to remain in or return to the country" (Robinson 2013, 111), while preserving the privilege of Jewish citizens and later immigrants.

[64] The UN Secretary-General António Guterres deemed the report too controversial and had it removed from public view – after it was widely shared on the internet and made accessible on various platforms.

Israeli film – paradoxically recognizing and claiming the film, endowed with a distinct Palestinian narrative, at the very moment they deny its Palestinian origins. On the other, Abu-Assad's focus on the identity and history of Nazareth legitimizes his relationship to both the city and the film as his own, and by the same token expands international conceptions of Palestine's cartography. As we will see, strategies of Palestinian existence in Israel may seek to accommodate the egalitarian integration of Palestinian filmmakers within the Israeli film economy. Palestinian artists also at times build opportunities for the metaphorical and/or material return of those expelled from historic Palestine, the West Bank, and Gaza in 1948 and 1967. This contributes to the hypothetical space of a Palestine that exceeds the geography of the proto-state and the formation of new Palestinian futures.

The theme of recognition has run throughout this dissertation as a whole. As explored in Chapters Two and Three, cinema projects based in the West Bank have benefitted financially from European countries and organizations' partial recognition of the proto-state. This political acknowledgment enabled the development of international funding programs as well as cultural and professional exchange with Palestinians. It also supported an impetus for *artistic* recognition in global circuits, manifest in Palestinians' imaginary of and emphasis on film festivals. Chapter Four's focus on Gaza engaged with a recognition of a different sort, also introduced in Chapter Three: that of Palestinians as victims, a process in which human rights and humanitarianism primarily mediate flows of capital and sociability. In turn, Chapter Five examines how dynamics of recognition inflect Palestinian modalities for local and transnational cultural exchange under apartheid and from within the settler colonial state of Israel. I use anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli's definition of recognition as a technique for governing (racial and cultural) difference, a major feature of what she calls "modern late liberalism." This temporalization critically locates current political regimes and economies vis-à-vis teleological discourses that consider liberal democracies to intrinsically and uniquely guarantee human freedom. Often exemplified by the United States and policies of multiculturalism, the model of liberal democracy is said to mark "the end of History" and the completion of human progress. Povinelli's phrase "modern late liberalism" also accounts for the reconfiguration of liberalism's management of cultural difference in the wake of successful social and anti-colonial movements in the 1960s and '70s. In her own words,

> late liberal cultural recognition incorporated and disciplined the challenge that anti-colonial and new social movements posed to liberal forms of government by shifting the locale of crisis and creating a definitive, though undefined, limit on the formative legal and social power of cultural difference (Povinelli 2011a., 26).

For Wendy Brown, the discourse of tolerance (and by proxy, multiculturalism) constitutes one driving element of contemporary liberal governmentality that regulates the presence of the other both inside and outside the liberal democratic nation-state (Brown 2006, 8). As I will examine later, liberal practices of recognition are meant to discipline culture as a set of practices that threatens the discursive universality of liberalism (Brown 2006, 21).

The Israeli state project, designed by Jewish Ashkenazi communities hailing from Europe, identified with liberal democracy from the beginning. However, the government was soon confronted by the challenge of combining the liberal vision with its own colonial structure and reconciling "the separatist imperative of settler rule and the more incorporative expectations of liberal democracies after the Second World War" (Robinson 2013, 55). Keeping the appearances of a democracy before the international community proved essential in the late 1940s in order to advance the new state's bid to the UN. It was thus in a context where Israel was seeking Western recognition that Palestinians were granted the right to vote in 1949 – before a citizenship bill was even passed (Robinson 2013, 55). Simultaneously however, the Israeli government retained its colonial logics by adopting a permit system that both limited Palestinians' ability to accumulate wealth and increased their dependency on the regime, with the ultimate goal of "render[ing] the public suffrage and (after 1952) its citizenship rights meaningless" (Robinson 2013, 44). Additionally, the dualism the state created by establishing distinct nationalities for Jewish immigrants and Arab natives proved inadequate to position "Oriental Jews" or "Arab Jews" (also known as Mizrahim) who came to Israel from the Arab world as part of Zionist immigration policies. Ella Shohat points to this other contradiction at the core of the settler liberal state: "Within Zionist ideology, the very term 'Arab Jew' is an oxymoron and a misnomer, a conceptual impossibility" (Shohat 1999 [2017], 102). In many ways, the discrimination against Palestinians has thus extended to the Mizrahim, whose Arabness jars with the Ashkenazi European narrative of civilizational superiority that both drives liberal discourse and marks its limits. Ethiopian Jews figure even lower than Mizrahim in Israel's ethnocratic structure and racial imaginary and are often stigmatized as "infiltrators" (Yerday 2018).

Nowadays, Israel's claim that it constitutes the only democracy in the Middle East positions it as a beacon of liberty in a sea of "barbarism" typical of liberalism's civilizational worldview. Beyond sustaining the military engagement of its own "war on terror" against any form of violent or non-violent Palestinian resistance (or just existence, for that matter), Israel's identification with liberalism has also re-organized national strategies of inclusion and exclusion differentially along the lines of gender, ethnicity, and race. Rebecca Stein reminds us how, in 1990s Israel, emerging politics and policies of "tolerance" towards heretofore marginalized groups would often take the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as the state-centric site for the integration of non-conforming sexual practices and gender identifications. Significantly, these new politics of integration concurred with Oslo's forced re-location of West Bank- and Gaza-based Palestinian laborers, who worked in Israel, into the job market of the increasingly shrinking and isolated occupied territories (Stein 2010). Jasbir Puar further theorizes the articulation between Palestinians and Israeli queer minorities by attending to the term "pinkwashing," the strategy by which Israel uses the promotion of gay rights in order to conceal the realities of growing apartheid. At the heart of multi-million-dollar campaign Brand Israel, pinkwashing reiterates colonial tropes of the sexual backwardness of the Palestinian other and "harness[es] global gays as a new source of affiliation, recruiting liberal gays into a dirty bargaining of their own safety against the continued oppression of Palestinians" (Puar 2010). This has multiple consequences: from pitting sexual and gender minorities against racial ones, thus threatening necessary solidarities, to undermining Palestinian queer populations and activism (whether they are based in Israel or the territories).

Cinema plays a major role in reinforcing the idea that Israel is a safe haven for gay groups while negating Palestinians' rights. At home, the Tel Aviv International LGBT Film Festival (TLV Fest, est. 2006) is fully integrated in the global circuits of gay and queer tourism and scheduled to coincide with Tel Aviv Pride as a celebration of Israel's politics of (selective) inclusion. Israeli films that suggest a national promotion of gay rights such as Eytan Fox's *Ha-Buah/The Bubble* (2006) also circulate in art and LGBTQ film festival networks internationally. Additionally, Israel has recently sent financial support to similar events abroad, including San Francisco's veteran festival Frameline (est. 1977) whose collusion with pinkwashing has been widely denounced by local and international queer and pro-Palestine activist groups.[65]

[65] Pro-Palestinian queer and Jewish activist Sarah Schulman supported the work of Palestinian Queers for BDS (PQBDS) locally in the US and followed the controversy around Frameline. In her book *Israel, Palestine,*

While delving into Israeli state politics around sexual and gender minorities is beyond the scope of this chapter, pinkwashing here exemplifies how cinema partakes in what Povinelli calls "the intercalation of the politics of culture with the culture of capital" (Povinelli 2002, 48). She describes as such the ways in which politics of recognition and logics of cultural (in)tolerance are of concern to transnational markets and the organization of finance, commerce, and trade. The economies of art and tourism in particular build on a liberal imagery of minority inclusion. In the Australian context on which Povinelli focuses, state economic strategies have increasingly relied on the popular abstraction of "indigenous traditions" to attract private capital, thus using a fiction of aboriginal authenticity to sustain the institutions and authorities that have endangered and forcefully disciplined indigenous cultural practices in the first place (Povinelli 2002, 136). In Israel, Palestinian filmmakers must similarly reckon with the complexity of their own claims of authenticity as well as dynamics of un-recognition and co-optation with which they are inevitably confronted when they request funding for, promote, and circulate their own work locally and internationally.

In search of a model of social justice, Nancy Fraser considers that identity recognition is indivisible from its economic counterpart of redistribution because logics of marketization act as processes of differentiation that discriminate between ethnic, gender, social, cultural, and economic standings. According to her, "markets do not simply dissolve status distinctions; rather, they instrumentalize them, bending pre-existing patterns of cultural value to capitalist purposes" (Fraser 2003, 58). Much before Fraser, Frantz Fanon articulated the theoretical bases for thinking of capitalism through racial relations when he wrote that "the Negro problem does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes living among white men but rather of Negroes being exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white" (Fanon 1952, 202). While Zionist colonialization is first driven by *cultural* claims on the land, the strategies the regime uses are fully embedded in capitalist economies and values of property. In other words, there is no politics of cultural difference that is not always already imbricated with the capitalist

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and the Queer International (2012), she reports that Frameline received the modest sum of $2,500 (out of a $1 million budget) from the Israeli consulate and refused activist groups' offer to fundraise the equivalent amount on the condition that the partnership with Israel be dropped. The festival had received communications from long-term donors who threatened to pull out their support if they declined the Israeli funding (Schulman 2012, 160).

division of labor and structures of property ownership (and dispossession), all crucial to understanding Israel's apartheid as a form of racial capitalism (Clarno 2017).

This chapter engages with recognition and redistribution through the dialectic of convergence and divergence. I have discussed different meanings and manifestations of the former term in Chapters Two, Three, and Four. Here, convergence refers to Palestinian attempts at integrating the liberal and colonial structures of Israeli film production and distribution. Yet, I argue that we should always think of convergence in tandem with divergence, manifest through either the ways in which institutions undermine minorities' rights by following skewed politics of dialogue, reconciliation, and inclusion; or Palestinians' suspicion of and/or deliberate move away from these liberal logics. The dialectic is further exacerbated by the liminality of Palestinian citizens of Israel in the context of Manichean discourses of conflict-resolution. Pegged simultaeously as cultural translators and central agents in peace-building, and potentially suspicious for being exterior to both sides, Palestinian citizens (and thus, filmmakers) in Israel prove, however, key to imagining a post-apartheid film industry.

Convergence and divergence, engagement and disengagement, may take the shape of small refusals and hesitant approvals; they may also boldly assert Palestinian existence against the seemingly unstoppable progress of colonial and liberal history *in cooperation with* Jewish Israelis. Yet, opening up decolonized spaces and temporalities of what Eyal Weizman calls "co-resistance" (Estefan and Weizman 2017, 103) – that is to say, collaborations between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis that go beyond a mere co-habitation blind to the situation of structural violence – is challenging. The earlier discussion around recognition and redistribution suggests that co-resistance can only emerge from a "two-dimensional" perspective (Fraser 2003), which would address both the forging of a new identity within the space of Palestine-Israel and the development of economic structures in harmony with it. Yet, as Dene First people Glenn Coulthard reminds us, this new articulation should always occur at the same time as we question the colonial foundations of settler states (Coulthard 2014, 36).[66]

[66] In his critique of the politics of recognition in colonial contexts, Coulthard expresses his interest in Fraser's model of recognition and redistribution. However, he convincingly argues, "[Fraser's] model rests on the problematic background assumption that the settler state constitutes a legitimate framework within which Indigenous peoples might be more justly included, or from which they could be further excluded" (Coulthard 2014, 36).

The logics of boycott, deployed over the past fifteen years under the banner of the much-debated BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions),[67] constitute one important example of a transformative modality of exchange that mobilizes economic strategies to address the recognition of Palestinian *rights* – before their cultural difference. A grassroots movement developed within Palestinian civil society with the growing support of international and Jewish activists, BDS sees its roots in multiple contexts, including anti-colonial Palestinian boycott movements in the 1930s, similar actions carried out during the First Intifada in the late 1980s, and anti-colonial boycotts of the 1960s and '70s in the third world at large (Musa 2016). Largely inspired by the strategies of institutional and economic pressure against Apartheid South Africa (Soske and Jacobs, n/d; Maira 2018), the idea of an organized boycott of Israel gained momentum at the 2001 UN-backed World Conference against Racism in Durban. It formalized in 2004 around three demands: "1. Ending the occupation and colonization of all Arab lands [occupied in 1967] and dismantling the wall 2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality 3. Respecting, protecting, and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties, as stipulated in UN Resolution 194" (Barghouti 2011, 6).

While I unfortunately do not dwell on the material victories of boycott as much as could be deemed necessary, I extract some of its theoretical potential to understand Palestinian tactics towards self-determination through dialectics of convergence and divergence in processes of "intercalation of culture with the culture of capital" (Povinelli 2002, 48). As Sunaina Maira argues, Boycott foregrounds "decolonial principles of cultural, in addition to political, liberation enacted through the withdrawal of collusions with colonial institutions" (Maira 2018, 46). In Israel proper, these institutions are involved in managing Palestinian culture through skewed politics of recognition. This chapter thus uses Boycott to frame and understand individual filmmakers' strategies to engage with Israeli institutions in ways that can accommodate some space for

[67] For pro-Zionist groups and individuals who conflate criticism of the state of Israel with an attack of the Jewish people as a whole, BDS is understood as fundamentally anti-Semitic. Yet, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), often cited as supportive evidence, defines anti-Semitism as possibly targeting "the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel *similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic*" (IHRA 2018, my emphasis). Moreover, echoing the BDS campaign's self-description as an institutional critique within an antiracist and anti-anti-Semitism framework, international pro-Palestinian Jewish activist groups such as Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) in the US, Palestinian Jewish Unity (PAJU) in Québec, and Union Juive Française pour la Paix (UJFP) in France have supported the claim that the criticism of Israel and the promotion of Palestinian rights as enunciated by the BDS campaign does not constitute anti-Semitism.

Palestinianness and Palestinian rights. Cultural industries provide a productive environment for observing attempts at negotiating and challenging the politics of segregation that have presided over the global fragmentation of the Palestinian people since 1948. This context might finally produce new temporalities that conform to the imaginative geographies of a common space of return to Palestine-Israel.

This chapter seeks to examine the aporia of recognition under settler colonialism. Liberal rhetorics of dialogue, which drive both the peace process and European cultural policies and economic agreements with Israel, provide limited engagement with the reality of Palestinian discrimination and dispossession, serving to reinforce the status quo. I then turn to what I call, after Povinelli's insights, the transnational management of cultural difference, which disciplines cultural expressions by Palestinian citizens of Israel. I discuss the inclusion mechanisms by which successful Palestinian films are designated as Israeli in transnational networks and yet at the same time are excluded from the domestic economy and cultural sphere. As a result, what does it mean for Palestinian citizens to use funds emanating from the colonial state? Here I introduce the potential of BDS, and more particularly boycott, both as a way of theorizing individual Palestinian filmmakers' various relationships to the institution, and as a major organizing discourse in Palestinian, Israeli, and worldwide debates around films produced at the intersection of Palestinian identity and Israeli funding. I move on to look at more specific dynamics of co-optation, arguing that these perpetuate the logics of ethnic cleansing so intrinsic to the settler state. In response, Palestinian filmmakers propose various economic strategies of dis/engagement with settler institutions that reconfigure their positionalities vis-à-vis recognition. Finally, I analyze the articulation of cultural appropriation, property, and claims to the land as they are grounded in conceptions of history. Attending to this entanglement points to the "material-symbolic" value of images and locates one possibility of re-writing history through aesthetic interventions that reflect on the economy and the redistribution of images.

Dialogue Is a Structure, Not an Event

In his comparative work on the United States, Australia, and Israel, anthropologist Patrick Wolfe argues that logics of elimination are inherent characteristics of settler states. These rely on the double project of dissolving native societies and erecting a new colonial society on their expropriated lands. In other words, "invasion is a structure, not an event. In its positive aspect,

elimination is an organizing principle of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence" (Wolfe 2006, 388). The 1948 Nakba, during which the Haganah and the Irgun[68] destroyed more than 400 Palestinian villages and expelled close to a million natives, established the bases for perennial measures of demographic control. A recurring point of debate among pre-1948 and post-1967 Zionist leaders revolved around the development of "population transfer" policies. These were destined to manage Palestinians' high fertility rates said to present a "demographic threat" to the (future) state of Israel's Jewish majority and, after 1967, to the occupied territories meant to be eventually annexed. Numerous polls conducted among Israeli citizens from 1967 on have shown a strong permanent base of popular support (minimum 27-40 percent) for the transfer of both Palestinians from the territories and those endowed with an Israeli citizenship (Masalha 2000, 207). In 1993, at the time when Oslo supposedly marked an effort of "reconciliation" that pervaded Israel's own Palestinian citizens, then-leader of the Likud party and soon-to-be Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu wrote: "If the statistics suggest any demographic 'threat' at all, it comes not from the Arabs of the territories but from the Arabs of pre-1967 [that is, the Israeli Arab citizens]" (cited in Masalha 2000, 206).

In fact, in addition to encouraging Jewish migration and fertility, Israel's demographic policies have included the repeated destruction of Palestinian houses and "unrecognized villages"[69] as well as the arbitrary revocation of citizenship *within* Israel (Cook 2017).[70] Both measures have targeted, among others, Palestinian Bedouins in the Naqab (Negev) because of their high rate of birth and the area's strategic land reserves. Under the guise of developmental endeavors reminiscent of early Zionist rhetoric about making the desert bloom, the Prawer Plan, frozen in 2013 and re-activated in late 2016, engineers the dispossession and forceful displacement of 80,000 to 90,000 Palestinian Bedouin citizens of Israel, denies them land ownership rights, and violates their constitutional protections (Adalah 2017). Israeli leaders also regularly suggest land

[68] The Haganah and the Irgun were two Zionist settlers' paramilitary organizations operating in Mandate Palestine. Both played a major role in the 1948 war, and the Irgun was especially involved in perpetuating massacres on Palestinians. The two were absorbed in the Israeli Defense Forces after 1948.

[69] For Adalah, Israel describes these Bedouin villages as unrecognized "based on false information…: first that the Bedouin community is trespassing on 'state land' and their very presence there is 'illegal' and second, that the Bedouin have no legal claim to their ancestral land in the Naqab and any final settlement on Bedouin land claims should be resolved in favor of the state" (Adalah 2017).

[70] Used since the early years of Zionist colonization, house demolition is also a very common measure of "collective punishment" in the Palestinian territories since 1967, subordinated to larger goals of demographic control.

swaps. In 2014, echoing the Liberman Plan devised ten years before, Israeli officials proposed swapping a portion of the Galilee, a region with a vast majority of Palestinians, with a future Palestinian state in exchange for the full integration of West Bank-based Jewish settlements into Israel. This calculation was meant to reduce Israel's Palestinian population to 12% (Tait 2014). In the face of such patent ongoing ethnic cleansing, Palestinian citizens tend to treat with suspicion discourses of co-existence and mutual understanding as a basis for the recognition of their culture – as opposed to rights – within Israel. In what follows, I explain the aporias of dialogue – the liberal solution to all political hostilities – in the context of settler-colonialism.

Dialogue is often invoked as a solution to the "Israeli-Palestinian conflict" and constitutes the premise for the internationally brokered peace process. The Oslo Accords promised the recognition of Israel and Palestine's "mutual legitimate and political rights" in order to "live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security" (Declaration of Principles 1993). By assuming that Israel and Palestinians could claim equal rights to the land, Oslo framed the issue as a conflict between two national movements of symmetrical legitimacy that ignores the settler-colonial context. The Accords psychologized the reconciliation process by equating the two sides' need for recognition. In Nadim Rouhana's words, "according to this rationale, if only the mutual fear, mistrust, denial, and de-humanization can be addressed, then the parties will be able to achieve a peaceful agreement and perhaps even reconciliation" (Rouhana 2018, 653). This scenario also supports Israeli allegations that Palestinians are unwilling to engage in a dialogue when they demand more rights or disagree to indecent negotiating terms, casting Israel as the unique, legitimate "partner for peace."

Films are expected to play a great part in bringing the opposing parties to listen to each other and foster a just settlement based on mutual *cultural* understanding, especially within Israeli society where Palestinians and Jewish Israelis already "co-habitate." Liberal Zionist organizations external to Israel and based in the US like the Other Israel Film Festival (OIFF) and the New Israel Fund (NIF) describe their own scope of action in those terms. For OIFF, the goal "is to use film as a catalyst for a dynamic and inclusive forum for exploration of, and dialogue about Israeli and Palestinian societies…The Other Israel Film Festival uses film to foster social awareness and cultural understanding" (OIFF). Similarly, NIF's mission rests on "recogniz[ing] and reinforc[ing] the essential pluralism of Israeli society and tolerance for diversity" (NIF). In Israel proper, the non-governmental New Fund for Cinema and Television (NFCT) "promote[s] the values of

tolerance and social justice while enriching the cultural landscape" (NFCT); the Gesher Multicultural Film Fund (GMFF) "aims to bridge the significant gaps between the Israeli multiculturalism and its representation in film and television" (GMFF); and the Haifa International Film Festival (HIFF), set in a predominantly Palestinian area, "makes sure to promote ideas like pluralism, co-existence and peace" (HIFF).

In those instances, dialogue functions as an event as opposed to a structure, detached from the historical forces that have shaped power imbalances in the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis and in full compatibility with the very erasure of those the process purports to recognize. Povinelli comments on liberal ideology's complicity with overt colonization, where "to care for difference is to make a space for culture without disturbing key ways of figuring experience," thus "leaving background assumptions intact" (Povinelli 2011, 26 and 50). So-called "Israeli Arabs" may enjoy some of the benefits of citizenship on the condition that they do not re-activate the colonial past to which their Palestinian identity is testament. Multiculturalism and co-existence thus prove *contingent upon* legislations such as the 2011 Nakba Law forbidding any celebration of Israel's "Independence Day" as a mourning of the 1948 Nakba. By denying the historical trauma that inherently organizes Palestinian lives, the law insures the permanence of multiculturalism and intrinsically rejects the foundations for a "new democratic political order" based on decolonization, equality, and reciprocity (Rouhana 2018, 657).

Cultural diplomacy similarly abides by a configuration of dialogue that maintains (transnational) liberal power infrastructures. It shows very little tolerance towards elements that upset its management of difference. In March 2004, the Paris-based festival Cinéma du Réel partially withdrew its commitment to Eyal Sivan and Michel Khleifi's *Route 181 – Fragments of a Journey to Palestine-Israel* (2003) and ran only one of the two announced screenings. This change of schedule occurred after the French Ministry of Culture and the Centre George Pompidou, the festival's host-institution, labelled the film "a risk to public order" in a "context of racial tensions prone to igniting anti-Jewish and anti-Semite sentiments" (Ayad 2004, my translation). By doing so, the government aligned itself with a collective letter signed by French intellectuals, directors, and actors (including the notorious supporter of Israel, racist and Islamophobe philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy) demanding that the state assume its responsibilities, yet "without calling for censorship" (Ayad 2004). The object of what Sivan and Khleifi identified as censorship nonetheless (Sindibad Films 2014), *Route 181* champions a

particular form of dialogue through its production strategy and its message of true reconciliation. A road-movie, the film foregrounds the collaboration between the two filmmakers, one Jewish Israeli, the other Palestinian, and follows the tentative borders outlined by the 1947 UN Partition Plan in Resolution 181, whose implementation was precluded by the 1948 war. The encounters the two travelers have along the way reveal the deep racist foundations of Israeli society while also suggesting the radical possibility for a decolonized dialogue between Palestinians and Israeli Jews through the idea of a common state. In response, the French artists' petition and the government's execution de-legitimized a dialogue that could unsettle the structures of liberalism and the fantasy of multiculturalism (which implicitly blamed the "Arabs" as the source of all societal problems both in France and Israel) with the claim to protect democracy. As Eyal Sivan and Armelle Laborie put it, critiques of Israel are silenced in the very name of freedom of expression (Laborie and Sivan 2016, 70).

In contrast, liberal forms of dialogue thrive due to a tight network of well-funded organizations engaged in "peace-building," commonly referred to as "the dialogue industry" (Giacaman 2009; Botmeh 2010).[71] To many Palestinians, these non-governmental and government-affiliated groups are deemed inefficient yet very lucrative (Mustafa 2009). Dialogue projects such as "Seeds of Peace" organize Summer camps, year-round leadership programs, and interfaith and mediation workshops that mix Palestinian and Israeli youth. All these activities assume that colonization can be remedied through increased cultural understanding alone – in addition to prompting successful diplomatic careers. They operate in the continuity of the NGO-ization of the West Bank after Oslo (see Chapter Three) and with the financial support of private foundations and supra-national and state organizations that include the European Union and USAID. The dialogue industry also parallels and often conflates with a new liberal praxis of solidarity embodied by a demographics which political scientist Linda Tabar calls "the internationals" (*el dawleyeen*) (Tabar 2017). These activists constitute the product of the reformulation of the third world and 1970s anti-imperialist and feminist political movements into the one-way (North/South) logics of the aid industry. They enact

[71] Based on an unpublished 2002 report by the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that that "between 1993 and 2000 [alone], Western governments and foundations spent between $20 million and $25 million on the dialogue groups." See Kalman 2008.

> the ability of privileged Western actors to cross national borders in an uncanny mirroring of the movement and logics of global capital…occluding hierarchies, power relations and the material realities of the majority of people around the world who cannot cross borders, like native Palestinians, who are imprisoned in smaller and smaller parts of their own land (Tabar 2017, 415).

In other words, liberal dialogue is primarily aimed at individualistic politics of emancipation that normalize the occupation, reproduce racial hierarchies, and reinforce geopolitical power relations under the guise of "progress" and "historical advancement."

The assessment that "dialogue is a structure, not an event" after Patrick Wolfe's phrase thus also proposes a reflection on temporality, History (with a capital H), and futurity. Here I extend Rouhana's critique of the discourse in which Palestinians and Israel are considered equal in dialogue, wherein equality is a means of continuing colonization. Equality can signify its exact opposite only if History has reached its end and liberal democracy's promise of multiculturalism constitutes a mechanism that disciplines civil rights demands. In other words, dialogue is perverted by a substitution which silences claims for more rights in favor of a de-politicized recognition of culture. In what follows, I examine how liberal recognition is attached to a civilizational discourse and a conception of History that perpetuate structures of oppression. Theoretical reconfigurations of History may in turn suggest alternatives to material inequalities and allow processes of decolonization, in which film may also play a role.

A leading theory of liberalism, Francis Fukuyama's famous opus *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) builds on Alexandre Kojève's study of Hegel's dialectic of master and slave. In this conception, recognition and the search for self-consciousness through reciprocal acknowledgment operates as a driving force in the process of superseding the contradictions of previous ages. The always incomplete recognition of the master, who is met with the unsatisfying approval of a being emerging as inferior to himself (the slave), engenders further stages of History. Human dignity and full access to self-consciousness can thus only be realized through a system of rights granted by the embodiment of self-government, the liberal democratic state. These rights guarantee the persistence and universality of mutual recognition. In this view, human rights mark the end point of History and the full completion of human progress, "because what truly satisfies human beings is not so much material prosperity as recognition of their status and dignity" (Fukuyama 1992, xviii). Without recognition, economic and technological advancement is void; yet, recognition is also intimately tied to the economic possibilities and rationalities of capitalism.

The main implication of such conception of History lies in the argument that liberal democracy is now free of contradictions. Societal and economic inequalities are relegated to mere accidents and anomalies independent from the political and economic regime's structure and deemed inconsequential in the face of the larger pattern and movement of a directional, rational, and universal History. Ultimately, the larger goal of the end of History and the full achievement of human progress gives meaning to, makes legible, and justifies "the particular events of history" (Fukuyama 1992, 56). Particular events include imperialism or the Holocaust, interpreted like any other historical processes as a desire for recognition. As horrifying as these may be, Fukuyama argues, they "do not nullify the obvious fact that modernity is a coherent and extremely powerful whole" (Fukuyama 1992, 130). In the present times in which all countries supposedly strive or should strive towards liberal democracy, capitalist economic development (the necessary companion of human rights) is potentially available to everyone regardless of their resources. Cultural habits, customs, religions and social structures of non-Western peoples as well as bad policy-making here constitute the real obstacles to economic prosperity and recognition (Fukuyama 1992, 103).

Fukuyama's description of liberal democracy posits non-Western culture as that which precludes the achievement of human rights, and as always already external to liberal democracy. Even in a "multicultural" context, non-Western culture forms an object of tolerance, a latent threat which may potentially destroy the "host" (Brown 2006, 27). For Wendy Brown, liberal democracy recasts "inequality, subordination, marginalization and social conflict, which all require political analysis and political solutions, as personal and individual, on the one hand, or as natural, religious, or cultural on the other" (Brown 2006, 15). Recommendations for improving emotional, personal, and attitudinal practices replace political transformations. Echoing Rouhana's critique of the psychologization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, dialogue functions as a means of redressing so-called deviant (cultural) behaviors. Multiculturalism thus fully partakes in the de-politicization of culture and the "culturalization of politics," a discourse heralded by the Cold War's ethos of a Huntingtonian "clash of civilizations" (Brown 2006, 16). Brown pushes this argument even further and contends that liberalism represents itself as being *altogether* antithetical to culture because its principles are supposedly universal and therefore cultureless (Brown 2006, 21). She writes:

> Without liberalism, culture is conceived by liberals as oppressive and dangerous not only because of its disregard for individual rights and liberties and for the rule of law, but also because the inextricability of cultural principles from power, combined with the

> nonuniversal nature of these principles, renders it devoid of judicial and political accountability. *Hence culture must be contained by liberalism*, forced into a position in which it makes no political claim and is established as optional for individuals (Brown 2006, 21-2, my emphasis).

In other words, Western culture remains invisible as a norm while “foreign” cultures alone imperil democracy and must be disciplined. As a result, the rights of individuals framed as culturally other are reconfigured by liberalism’s denial of structural marginalization and social conflict and confused with these individuals’ access to a superficial and conditional “mutual recognition” mediated and contained by politics of tolerance.

Tawfik Abu Wael’s *Atash/Thirst* (2004), for instance, epitomizes the culturalization of politics. The film builds on the universal theme of the father-son relationship and portrays the family as a timeless and patriarchal tribe refractory to modern civilization, elevating Palestinian experience to an abstract metaphor. *Atash* opens with a wide angle shot depicting the story’s primary setting, a dry area with a few isolated concrete buildings – in reality, a former Israeli military training camp established on Palestinian land confiscated fifty years prior. Two children, a young woman, and their two parents traverse the space of the screen from one corner to the other, dragging heavy buckets of water towards a large stack of burning wood and throwing mounds of sand in the flames to control the carbonization process. Close-ups reveal faces covered with ash and defying looks between the father and the younger male child, who finally escapes to go to school without paternal approval (Fig. 18). The water well becomes the focus of the father’s rage and heralds the long quest for a proper water pipe irrigation system. The specter of an Israeli soldier who allegedly damaged the newly installed water pipe and the intermediary who sells the family’s charcoal constitute their only contacts with the outside world. This introduction to a Palestinian family and its secluded charcoal business sets the tone for the rest of the film. Significantly, the film avoids the depiction of daily colonial violence, psychologizing it through the father’s deep trauma also discretely given as a possible alternative explanation for his tyrannical behavior. The family’s unlawful occupation of the abandoned site alone accounts for the lack of running water. Their forced displacement is additionally characterized as voluntary exile due to politics of shame and honor internal to the Palestinian community, rather than being the result of colonial politics of discrimination around housing and land property.

Figure 18: The opening scene of Tawfik Abu Wael's *Atash* (screenshots)

Frantz Fanon articulates a seminal critique of Hegel's dialectics in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) which further deconstructs the liberal foundations of dialogue and its civilizational ethos. The assumption guiding Hegel's struggle for recognition, he remarks, is that the two initial consciences setting the dialectics in motion are equal and symmetrical. This false universalism proves inconsistent with Fanon's own experience of structural racism. Instead, Black people are trapped in a "zone of nonbeing," "neither of appearance or disappearance" (Gordon 2007, 9), and must struggle to attain the same ontological value as the White man. As a result, for George Ciccariello-Maher, the absence of "a shared basis for reciprocity and ultimately recognition… prevents the dialectic from entering into motion to begin with" (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 58). This casts a shadow of doubt onto whether Black populations are really freed from slavery – what is freedom when it is conceded by the master himself? Fanon writes: "For Hegel, there is reciprocity; here [in reality] the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work" (Fanon 1952, 220). Indigenous political scientist Glenn Coulthard transposes Fanon's insights into the context of Canada's settler colonial and liberal regime. For him, "recognition is not posited as a source of freedom and dignity for the colonized, but rather as the field of power through which colonial relations are produced and maintained" (Coulthard 2014, 17). The future created by politics of recognition is one of continuation, status quo, and steady progress towards the colonial takeover of indigenous land. In the case of Palestine, dialogue does not undermine the political and legal framework that sustains the occupation and segregation – rather, it legitimizes its continuation. Dialogue as event promotes continuation and linearity, embedded within teleological accumulation and dispossession.

Yet, Fanon does not forsake the recognition paradigm entirely, and instead proposes a focus on *self*-recognition that lays the groundwork for decolonial politics. Reclaiming the Black identity disrupts a political and social structure that conceals Blackness and marginalizes it into a zone of nonbeing. Fanon's exegete Lewis Gordon summarizes the paradox of Black self-assertion as follows: "to change things is to appear, but to appear is to be violent since that group's appearance is illegitimate. Violence, in this sense, need not be a physical imposition. It need not be a consequence of guns and other weapons of destruction. It need simply be appearance" (Gordon 2015, 11). The Black man's self-recognition thus risks falling back into the role of violent being that is prescribed to him in advance. For Fanon however, and in the words of Ciccariello-Maher, making himself known as a Black man primarily offsets outside over-determination with a form

of "counterontological violence" (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 50). As Ciccariello-Maher further clarifies in his study of decolonial dialectics to which Fanon contributes considerably, the re-assertion of difference through counterontological violence directly *combats* false universalisms and what will be later formally referred to as the end of History. In other words, *struggle alone* should lead the way to the transformation of social relations, mutual recognition, and self-perception away from racial hierarchies. Coulthard's formulation makes it clear: "Without conflict and struggle the terms of recognition tend to remain in the possession of those in power to bestow on their inferiors in ways that they deem appropriate" (Coulthard 2014, 39). However, Fanon warns us against the temptation to proclaim a resolution to social difference through its universalizing subsumption. Dialectics of recognition must remain an open-ended process if they are to maintain their emancipatory potential. "Premature reconciliation" or "the preemptive closing" of that dialectic would engineer a return to determinist and teleological logics, wherein liberal power recolonizes identities and social relations (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 6 and 50).

The Boycott movement (BDS) and its cultural chapters mean to pressure Israel into recognizing Palestinians' rights and similarly engages with fundamental elements of Fanon's "combative moment" of counterontological violence (Ciccariello-Maher 2017, 71). First amongst all, it advocates that Palestinians and the world at large bring to a halt any dialogue or normalization of social relations with Israel and its institutions. Politics of refusal, which I briefly examine later in this chapter, intend to shake the structures of the liberal conflict-resolution approach that bypasses the necessity of struggle and fails to alter the formation of mutual consciousness. As Palestinian American human rights attorney Noura Erakat explains, the abolition of the apartheid regime must include a reformulation of social relations between colonizer and colonized:

> In contrast to the deployment of dialogue as an opportunistic tactic aimed at reinforcing and reproducing the status quo, dialogue must begin with an understanding and appreciation of Palestinian rights and demands, if it is to lead to co-resistance. *It must begin with the awareness that Israelis are not neighbors, or even occupiers, but colonial masters and beneficiaries of ongoing Palestinian deprivation* (Erakat 2017, 99, my emphasis).

Focused on the present of struggle, BDS takes its strength from its refusal to determine the political regime which will bring about Palestinian liberation. The movement remains open-ended as to which solution (two-state, one-state, binational, federative or else) can carry the emancipation of

both perpetrators and the oppressed and it constantly re-asserts itself as a *means* towards liberation as opposed to an end goal *per se* – it constitutes a tactic rather than an ideology (Maira 2018, 36). Yet, BDS' focus on human rights potentially heralds its recolonization by naïve universalism and liberalism's unitary rhetorics of reconciliation. Aware of this tension, its supporters articulate Boycott as a "rights-based *strategy*" (Botmeh 2010, my emphasis) and "an instrumentalization [of the] universalist framework of international law" (Maira 2017). Instrumentalization suggests yet another form of convergence in addition to those examined in previous chapters. Nonetheless, the tension between engagement and disengagement is here exacerbated to the limit of breaking point – and *suspended* in a combative moment.

It is not my intention to lay out the challenges, impasses, and struggles around recognition as a *normative* framework for the rest of this chapter. In other words, I do not judge Palestinian filmmakers for their individual positionality within politics of Israeli and transnational recognition. Instead, I have here established philosophical concerns about historical processes and liberation as terms for the debate around recognition that *already exist* in Palestine/Israel. What I provided here is the theoretical context for further examining the *conditions* of Palestinian appearance in transnational and domestic markets mediated by Israel's diplomatic and governmental power. I therefore now turn to the role of dialogue in the cultural and economic management of Palestinian culture both domestically and internationally.

The Transnational Management of Cultural Difference

Palestinian filmmakers with Israeli citizenship first accessed this state's funding in the early 1990s with the turn towards global art cinema. In 1995, Elia Suleiman consulted with a team of lawyers and lobbied Israeli state film funds to secure the production of *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996) (Brooks 2006). Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi note that Rashid Masharawi, Ali Nassar, and Nizar Hassan similarly sought subsidies from diverse governmental organizations (Israeli Fund for Quality Films; Israeli Film Fund; Channel One of Israeli television) which supported some of their most famous features (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 57). This opportunity, uniquely available to Palestinian citizens of Israel, sparked off debate in the Palestinian filmmaking community at large. In the mid-2000s, London-based filmmaker and distributor Omar al-Qattan weighed in:

> I would have no problem working with an Israeli producer. But I would never take money from a state that I believe is racist and discriminatory. It is a matter of principle. When you take money from a government that doesn't recognize that you exist, you are automatically compromising yourself (cited in Brooks 2006).

The responding arguments are diverse and this chapter examines them in turn. For now, the broader context prevails. The expansion of global art cinema and its gradual inclusion and (artistic) recognition of Palestinian talents opens up an unprecedented channel of circulation for Palestinian works. Despite the multiplication of global film funds inclusive of racial and cultural minorities in the past ten to fifteen years (see Chapter Two), the fierce competition for financial support encourages filmmakers to seize every chance they might have, including when the latter is supplied by an apartheid regime that owes Palestinians the same financial redistribution as its other citizens. More often than not, co-producers also require that filmmakers gather a financial basis from their own country's institutions. I am here interested in how Palestinians' access to state funding is mediated by Israel's transnational management of cultural difference. At the same time, Palestinian filmmakers adopt strategies to inhabit what Povinelli calls "the brackets of recognition," where they "endure the material conditions that compose their limbo" (Povinelli 2011, 78). As "camouflage" (Povinelli 2011, 30) or "mimicry" (Bhabha 1994, 121), Palestinian filmmakers' positionality reflects the ambivalent construction of the "'reformed' colonial subject" (Bhabha 1994, 124); his or her modalities of representation in accordance, *but not quite*, with colonial discourse and desire; and his or her simultaneous threat to colonial authority. When transposed back into the context of film funding, where the market and Israeli state interest tend to overlap, mimicry entangles similar intricacies to those uncovered by Irit Neidhardt's question:

> Looking at Middle-Eastern films from an economic perspective demands the reformulation of the question as to what stories the films tell or what they represent: what subjects do they *need* to deal with and how do the stories *have* to be told in order to meet the requirements of the market? (Neidhardt 2010, 32, her emphasis)

Tawfik Abu Wael's film *Atash*, discussed above for its psychologization of the colonial paradigm, provides a typical example of slow art cinema with little dialogue and dazzling cinematography. The film's compliance with the codes of global art cinema as well as the representation of Arabs as timeless and "backwards," compatible with the European liberal imaginary, contributed to *Atash*'s successful international career. Yet, following Bhabha's ambivalent mimicry, the film's

apparent de-politicizing detachment from any precise geographical or temporal reference to the real world also implicitly lays bare the fundamental dynamics of expulsion and dispossession. Palestinian filmmaker and scholar Sobhi al-Zobaidi thus reads *Atash* as symptomatic of the "loss of land and of memory" of non-assimilated and doubly-alienated Palestinian citizens of Israel (Zobaidi 2008).

What distinguishes *Atash* from the majority of contemporary Palestinian films is the refusal to grapple with the Second Intifada at the very moment it is unfolding. In the mid-2000s, West Bank-based filmmakers were directing their undivided attention towards the deployment of checkpoints, curfews, and other methods of collective punishment, a reality with which Palestinians in Israel do not have to wrestle in the same terms. Yet, Palestinian filmmakers who hold Israeli citizenship were also joining their effort, such as Mohammad Bakri with *Jenin, Jenin* (2002); Elia Suleiman with *Divine Intervention* (2002); Hany Abu-Assad with *Ford Transit* (2003) and *Paradise Now* (2005); Sameh Zoabi with *Be Quiet* (2005); and Sharif Waked with *Chic Point* (2005). In contrast, Abu Wael asserts his entitlement to investigate the structure of Palestinian society. In doing so, he argues, he "resists the dictations of both Zionist and Palestinian national discourses, or for that matter of the Islamic movement, which has a strong base in the place" (cited in Friedman 2008, 59). *Atash* also subverts the expectations of international audiences – which translate into market pressure – who directly associate Palestinians with the contemporary context of the Intifada. Despite Abu Wael's effort of abstraction however, the press kit distributed at Cannes addressed the global imaginary of the conflict by including a map of Palestine-Israel and a picture of the shooting location in Umm al-Fahm (Mother of Charcoal in Arabic), the predominantly Palestinian town from where Abu Wael originates. Situated on the Green Line on lands which the Israeli army confiscated after 1967, the town and the military outpost were returned to the Palestinian villagers after they conducted large protests. None of this historical information, unnecessary to understand the film, is provided in the press release and Umm al-Fahm is not spotted on the companion map. For Neidhardt who describes the kit, the material misled spectators' expectations about the political content of *Atash*, yet by the same token missed an opportunity to uncover its underlying political message (Neidhardt 2010, 34).

Funded by the Israeli Yehoshua Rabinowitz Foundation for the Arts, *Atash* won the FIPRESCI prize at Cannes' Critics Week on behalf of Israel. The film was also successful within Israel proper where it was awarded Best Film at the Jerusalem Film Festival and Best

Cinematography at the Israeli Film Academy. However, these distinctions did not facilitate the film's circulation in Israel, where local distributors were reluctant to release it in regular theaters. The few who agreed demanded that the filmmaker cover all the accompanying costs. This was not an isolated case: among others, Ali Nassar's contemporary Arabic-language (whose official title is in Hebrew) *BaHodesh HaTeshei/In the Ninth Month* (2002) won the second prize at Jerusalem's festival but similarly failed to screen outside festivals in Israel. Abu Wael bitterly concludes: "Today I know that the Israeli cinema establishment gave me financial support only to put a check on its list. No one really wants an Arabic-language film." He continues: "I made Israel famous all over the world and I expect to be paid for that. I feel like a 'token Arab,' not really part of the local culture...I put Israel on the map and took it to places it never dreamed of and now they step on me" (cited in Pinto 2004). While *Atash* circulates internationally as evidence of Israel's so-called integration of its Arabic-speaking minorities, the film simultaneously remains "too Palestinian" for the domestic audience and institutions, unwilling to start a "cultural dialogue."

Yael Friedman's extensive interviews with several Israeli film officials reveal that support for Arab films is considered a risky investment without guaranteed return because of Palestinians' "inability to communicate" with the "average Israeli" (cited in Friedman 2010, 74). Israel Film Fund's vice-manager David Lipkin pointed out that his organization "supported Arab filmmakers but [the Fund] ha[d] to take into account that issues that are relevant to the Arab community are not necessarily relevant to the Israeli public in general" (cited in Friedman 2010, 74), thus *de facto* excluding Palestinian citizens from the broader Israeli community. Similarly, one of the first Palestinian fiction films of the new art cinema wave in the 1980s, Michel Khleifi's *Urs al-Jalil/Wedding in Galilee* (1987) was financed with public and private capital from various European TV channels and film institutes. Nonetheless, the film's release in Israel after it won the FIPRESCI prize at Cannes was conditional. One distributor demanded that "Galilee" be dropped from the title and the film be shortened by fifteen minutes, allegedly to remove a scene showing then Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres' official portrait (Naficy 2000, 60).

Palestinian events and venues are also subjected to selective, discriminatory, or outright repressive state funding management practices, which puts a lot of pressure on Palestinian community spaces and jeopardizes their very existence. For Friedman, "there are no cinema halls in the Arab towns in Israel" (Friedman 2008, 60). She then tempers this claim by dwelling on the endangered El Sana Cinematheque in the Arab town of Nazareth, subjected to state-induced quotas

that require the screening of a minimum amount of (Jewish) Israeli films. Sapha Dabur, the venue manager, explains that their "audience is not interested in Hebrew-speaking films. The whole point of the cinematheque in Nazareth is that it will meet the demand of the Palestinian public to see films in their own language: Arabic" (cited in Friedman 2008, 60-61). The cinematheque thus owes its existence to private funding rather than a reliance on public money. More recently, in June 2015, the Ministry of Culture withdrew its public funding from the Haifa-based Al-Midan theater, a unique space for Arabic speaking films and shows, which had been created after Oslo in the spirit of the politics of recognition. The retrieval was first justified by the Ministry's disagreement with a theater play that leant voice to what officials identified as terrorism, which gave way to an investigation of the theatre's finances (Goldlist-Eichler 2015). In the face of popular and legal pressure, the Ministry conceded to re-allocating *some* public funding to al-Midan, yet a much lesser amount than previously expected. Many Palestinians interpreted this as a strategic move to institutionalize the decrease of space and money allocated to Palestinian projects (Al Ghussain 2016) while Jewish Israeli allies agreed that "the withdrawal of public funding from Al-Midan [wa]s tainted with the racist desire to obliterate Palestinian identity and history" **(**Zigdon 2015).

The disciplining of Palestinian voices through transnational and national funding has extended to groups and cultural organizations that have expressed solidarity with Palestinians. Despite its core Zionist values, the leftist New Israel Fund (NIF) has supported non-profit organizations condemning governmental racist policies in defense of "Palestinian Israeli" rights (NIF 2018). In 2011, at a moment when Israeli NGOs critical of the state found themselves increasingly under fire from local politicians, the Ford Foundation, through its Israeli arm the Ford Israel Fund, a supporter of Israel-based initiatives since 1948, declared they would not renew their $20 million donation in 2013, supposedly because they considered the organization had grown enough to gain its independence (Guttman 2011). More recently, the anti-Zionist Jewish organization Zochrot, dedicated to raising awareness about the Nakba and supportive of the Palestinian right of return, was targeted by the Minister of Culture. In 2017, Miri Regev threatened to fine the Tel Aviv Cinematheque for hosting the Nakba Film Festival that the NGO had organized because it violated the Nakba Law (Anderman 2017). The next year, for the same reason, Regev urged the cancellation of the funding to the Barbour Gallery in Jerusalem after it hosted Zochrot's launch of a book about the Nakba (Asheri 2018).

These clear infractions to the spirit of “real” integration and reconciliation emerge in a larger cultural context where the Israeli film industry had supposedly re-structured itself in the late 1990s in order to be more ethnically diverse – also indicated by the various funds’ aforementioned celebration of multicultural dialogue. However, as we will see, Israel’s film policies practically translate into a complex *transnational inclusion* of Palestinian minorities in the prestige economy and European collaboration agreements, while reinforcing their *domestic exclusion* through un-recognition. In the late 1990s after Oslo, the Israeli film industry saw an increase in film funding. In addition, the implementation of the New Cinema Law in 2001 meant to offer more access to the populations “peripheral to the Ashkenazi-Jewish secular ‘centre’” (Friedman 2010, 56), a shift which benefited *Atash* among others.

In light of the comments from Israeli officials cited earlier, it is not surprising that the rate of Palestinian films produced in Israel in the following years remained remarkably low, as Yael Friedman’s study reports. Generally, the Ministry of Culture allocates less than 10% of its budget to Mizrahim and less than 3% to Palestinian citizens of Israel (Laborie and Sivan 2016, 99), despite the latter representing a fifth of the Israeli population. Reviewing the number of Palestinian films produced in Israel from 1995 to 2008, Friedman writes that various Israeli film funds combined financed around eight Palestinian fiction films and thirty documentaries. Among the 178 documentaries funded by the Second Authority for Television and Radio (SATR) between 1999 and 2003 – which roughly corresponds to the height of the Second Intifada – only three were directed by Palestinian filmmakers. The same amount can be counted for the period between 2004 and 2006, during which two of the projects were directed by the same director (SATR 2006). At the same time, the public service television of IBA (Israel Broadcast Authority) barely invested in any Palestinian projects (Friedman 2008, 60).[72] The misdistribution of funds thus reflects the strategic management of the cultural other, whose films are presented as epitomes of Israel’s multiculturalism internationally, but whose particularisms threaten the homogeneity of the dominant (Ashkenazi) class at home. Even non-governmental funds that dedicate themselves to social change reflect a dramatic under-representation of Palestinian filmmakers. Between its creation in 1994 and 2018, the NFCT included little more than twenty film projects directed by Palestinian directors (NFTC database).

[72] It has been challenging to find more recent figures from SATR and IBA in English.

The promise of inclusion at the national level paralleled the reconfiguration of the Division for Cultural & Scientific Affairs' mandate towards a broader opening to the region after Oslo. Incorporated in the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the division as well as its film unit are in charge of promoting Israeli culture around the world. In the spirit of the 1990s politics of reconciliation, the division's new mandate advocates "to strengthen the peace process by developing and expanding cultural ties with the Arab world, and acquainting each people with the other's culture" (MFA). However, effective efforts to develop a *cultural* dialogue are particularly directed at Western countries in ways that re-assert Israel's greater affinity with Europe than with its own Arab populations. For example, the many co-production treaties signed between Israel and European countries[73] signal a vested interest in intensifying Israeli trade with Europe, a privileged economic partner envisioned to share a common history and culture. The European Union report for Preparatory Action summarizes Israeli officials' view: "[For them], culture is the belt that binds Israelis to Europe, and cultural exchanges are considered to be evidence of Israeli 'membership' in the Western world" (EU Israel Country Report 2014, 17). Furthermore, Israel takes inspiration from Europe's very own disciplining of cultural difference. The report continues: "Israel looks to Europe and the EU with the expectation of being able to learn how diversity could be managed in a better way" (EU Israel Country Report 2014, 17). Multiculturalism, "characteristic of both European societies and art scenes," becomes a "working model for Israeli artists" who "feel culturally European" (EU Israel Country Report 2014, 17). Palestinian transnational inclusion is thus also always already mediated by larger European politics of tolerance dictated by their own colonial history.

Furthermore, Israel's transnational trading strategy negotiates the international community's expectation and desire for the state's reconciliation with the "Arabs" on the one hand, and Israel's own need and wish to be incorporated in the European sphere of cultural and economic exchange on the other. The concession of "expanding cultural ties with the Arab world" expressed in the Division for Cultural & Scientific Affairs' new mandate both appeases European demands in particular, and yields an *economic* partnership first implemented through the 1994 and 1998 MENA Economic Summits chaperoned by the IMF and the World Economic Forum and later in

[73] As of 2018, Israel has signed a total of twenty co-production agreements, among which fifteen are in the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Israel Film Fund 2018, http://intl.filmfund.org.il/index.asp?id=7&Co-Productions).

the 2003 Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA). Yet, *cultural* dialogue with Arabs is quickly evacuated from the state's priorities and the lack of it is reformulated as the Arabs' responsibility, both at the level of the Arab states and the Palestinian citizens of Israel. The EU report summarizes Israeli officials' position in those terms:

> [Israeli officials] feel that they are sometimes "excluded" from EU programmes – although Israel, as a partner in the European Neighbourhood Policy, is eligible to participate – because the main focus is said to be cultural exchange with the Arab World, while Arabs refused to cooperate with the Israelis; *this does not only apply to the Palestinians and the Arabs in nearby countries in the Middle East, but also to Israeli Arabs*. Israeli government stakeholders feel that the EU acts with greater consideration towards the Palestinians/Arabs than the Israelis (EU Israel Country Report 2014, 16, my emphasis).

Moreover, the officials contend that the transnational inclusion of Arabs happens at the expense of Israelis, suggesting that the two are mutually exclusive and one cannot exist on the international stage (and domestically) at the same time as the other. By reversing the dynamics of power and pointing to a supposed Arab privilege, the officials instrumentalize politics of recognition. They foreground the limits of a politics of dialogue, yet here as a re-assertion of liberal cultureless principles which the uncooperative Arab culture supposedly disrupts. Further, the report provides evidence of Israel's attempt at bargaining out of a cultural dialogue with Arabs, which is here singled out as a European projection in tension with the Israeli reality:

> Officials expressed their fears that the EU – in focusing on cooperation with the Arabs and in excluding the Israelis – may contribute to widening the gap between Israelis and Arabs instead of bridging divides. They therefore proposed that a future EU strategy should refrain from requiring Israeli-Arab cooperation within programmes and projects supported by the EU. These should not be prescribed from outside. They claimed that the explicit propagation of "European values" within EU programmes, for example "peace building," "human rights" and "Arab-Israeli dialogue," should be de-emphasized, because of the sensitive and fragile political situation within Israeli society and in Israel's relations with its neighbours (EU Israel Country Report 2014, 16).

Israeli officials reject dialogue as a European construct, thus temporarily distancing their own culture from one that supports a conception of human rights that would imply starting to cooperate with Arabs and Palestinians with an Israeli citizenship.

The positioning of so-called Arab Israeli filmmakers is therefore tenuous. In this context, the transnational visibility of Palestinian films with Israeli funding in the international market can only occur through a levelling of cultural difference and the subordination to Israel's cultural diplomacy. The Brand Israel Group (BIG), a marketing group composed of American diplomats and marketing specialists charged with re-branding Israel's deteriorating image following the multiple wars on Gaza, places cinema at the center of their strategy. Launched in 2008, the plan solidifies earlier logics and advocates to remove any reference to the "conflict," create positive images in relation to Israel, and highlight the cultural and moral similarities between Israelis and Europeans (Laborie and Sivan 2016, 34). The liberal Zionist initiatives focusing on film and dialogue mentioned earlier, such as the Other Israel Film Festival, also perpetuate the branding of Israel as a democracy, without being directly affiliated to the state. Following the adoption of the strategy by the government in the wake of the 2008 war on Gaza, then-Israeli president Shimon Peres opened the 2009 Haifa International Film Festival by promising Israeli filmmakers that the state would increase its support for Israeli cinema, reminding the role Hollywood played in building the US' world influence (Laborie and Sivan 2016, 100-101). As Omar al-Qattan lamented earlier, Israeli funding is always already attached to the state's desire for international celebration and specific modes of representations that ignore its colonial history and structural oppression of Palestinians, as we will discuss at greater length later.

However, in differentiating the state from individual practitioners such as Israeli distributors, al-Qattan subscribes to the possibility of collective work. Collaborations between Palestinian and Israeli artists still remain a controversial affair. In the "Normalization" chapter of their self-reflexive graphic novel *The Novel of Nonel and Vovel* (2009), Oreet Ashery and Larissa Sansour humorously concoct a "Collaboration questionnaire." The form playfully asks the respective artists about how their Palestinian or Jewish Israeli communities and international audiences are likely to see their collaborative project (among the boxes to be checked: sexy, silly, bold, necessary, unethical, delusional, good PR, offensive, good for fundraising, etc.). The last question "So why on earth are you doing it?" suggests that previous responses were largely negative or counterproductive (Ashery and Sansour 2009, 37). The next section of this chapter thus investigates the complex politics and semantics of "collaboration" between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, and between Palestinians and the Israeli state through funding.

Working Together

In an interview to the online magazine of Middle Eastern art and culture *Bidoun* about *Atash*, Tawfik Abu Wael, as became typical, separates the film's content and identity from the source of funding: "It's a Palestinian story. I don't care from where I take the money. No one told me what to do. I'm a Palestinian who lives in Israel. I didn't transfer to Israel. Israel transferred to me. They're not doing me a favor giving me money to make the film" (cited in Jaafar 2004). This declaration of independence suggests that Israeli funding operates as a form of unwitting state reparation for Palestinian filmmakers who deem that they are owed portions of the financial profit cumulated on ancestral land. Filmmakers might consider these subsidies to come with no strings attached because of the state's lack of legitimacy in their eyes.

Many practitioners share this reasoning and consequently carry various economic strategies examined in the following sections. Here I focus on the discursive and material dissociation between individual and institution, and how the dis/articulation of the two as either estranged, interdependent, or hierarchical shapes debates around filmmaking collaborations in historic Palestine. The diverse relationalities reflect conflicting scenarios of Palestinian agency as well as different conceptions of futurity. These are partly organized around the negotiations of pressures, restrictions, and individual opportunities for representing the community, informed by the hopes of a functioning multiculturalism or wider artistic recognition. *Simultaneously*, the same filmmakers also engage in various ways with the critique of this implicit belief in dialogue through representation formulated within the boycott movement. BDS advocates for a decolonial and antiracist perspective that reshapes forms of interaction in ways that are sometimes perceived within the Palestinian filmmaking community as restricting and limiting of artistic creativity. While the previous section examined the general socioeconomic and political framework imposed on Palestinian artistic productions by the state, here I dwell on the dilemmas and negotiations that structure Palestinians' imagination and practices of "collaboration" with Jewish Israeli individuals or state institutions.

In the global filmmaking community, "collaboration" summons ideals of cosmopolitanism in which transnational funding, institutional partnerships, and multicultural crews constitute evidence of artistic recognition and support for individuals and communities' stories. Transplanted into the context of Israel, the term becomes charged with a heavy subtext in which the "mutual" recognition constitutive of working together (etymologically co-labor) is first and foremost a

matter of sovereignty and population control. Here I do not use "collaboration" as a way of asserting a dichotomy between betrayal and resistance, which many have demonstrated is fallacious (Fadda 2014, Dallasheh 2016). Rather, I refer to the imaginaries that the term crystallizes as well as the structures of oppression that shape its narrative. For Ahmed Sa'di, collaboration – as an antecedent to multiculturalism – constitutes the system of governance that mediated Palestinians' incorporation into the newly established state of Israel after 1948 (Sa'di 2003, 75). The mechanisms and laws that regulated Palestinian integration as (second-class) citizens were themselves directly inherited from the British emergency measures in Mandate Palestine (Khalili 2013, 60). From the early days on, the segregated structure of Israel precluded the equal inclusion of the Palestinian minority, especially in the government's decisional bodies. After 1967, the new system of governance built around the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza demanded a reformulation of the Arab leadership that could discipline Palestinian crowds into accepting their condition. This is what Sa'di calls "minimal hegemony" after Joseph Femia, in which

> the regime develops a coherent political, economic, and ideological worldview for the dominant group, while it develops a framework of common interests with some sections among the subordinates, propagates abstract ideals, and places special emphasis on social norms that serve its interests—such as loyalty and personal success (Sa'di 2003, 81).

Sa'di's framework closely accommodates Laleh Khalili's definition of population-centric counterinsurgency, a widespread tactic developed into a systematic method by the US military in the late twentieth century, "meant to win over that population by 'securing' and 'protecting' them, as well as by providing services that would win over the population" (Khalili 2013, 45).

Yet, Khalili also identifies a mirroring method integral to counterinsurgency which revolves around "deterrence through intimidation" (Khalili 2013, 45). In addition to constituting an insidious mechanism of disciplined integration, collaboration also entails direct and violent pressure and threats. For human rights scholars Ron Dudai and Hillel Cohen, the motives for Palestinian collaboration "were always varied: some collaborated after being … blackmailed; others did it for personal gains; some because of ideological disagreement with the Palestinian political leadership and others due to disagreements, friendships, or alliances of a local nature" (Dudai and Cohen 2007, 40). In a more systematic manner, curfews, closed areas and travel permits, and administrative detention without trial were all British measures of intimidation and

control adopted against Palestinian citizens of Israel until 1966 and exported into the occupied territories after 1967. In the West Bank and Gaza, the occupying authorities now still often rely on their control over "favors" – such as permits for family reunification, visits from foreign relatives, requests for travel documents, permits to work in Israel and building permits – in order to exert pressure on individuals. In a meeting during his mandate as the Israeli Minister of Defense (1967-74), Moshe Dayan made clear that the pressure could be so great that collaboration ended up being very little of a choice, and incentives far from promised protection:

> Let the individual know that he has something to lose. His home can be blown up, his bus license can be taken away, he can be deported from the region; or the contrary: he can exist with dignity, make money, exploit other Arabs, and travel in [his] bus (cited in B'Tselem 1994, 17).

These different methods produce an environment of direct and indirect control that redefines Palestinians' perimeter of action and claims. But deterrence and incentives also single out collaborators of different sorts, from the Intelligence agent, the prison collaborator and the land dealer to the intermediary, and involve a wide range of people such as youth and high ranked Palestinian accomplices (B'Tselem 1994). As individuals, collaborators develop within a structure where freedom and choice are reconfigured around the waning of possibilities for outright resistance and the promise of survival.

The specter of collaboration contributes to organizing Palestinians' relationship to hope, future, and resistance, and as such also drives narratives of life in both occupied and historic Palestine. A canonical example, discussed in detail on Chapter One, Emile Habiby's ironic tale *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Pessoptimist* (1974) describes the main protagonist as a candid, foolish, and cowardly Palestinian citizen of Israel who works as an informer for the Zionist state. With wit and sarcasm, the book follows Saeed's comical change of heart when he rejects his role as a collaborator, left wondering what his options are. Similarly laced with humor, Elia Suleiman's pantomimic film *Divine Intervention* (2002) observes how the relationships between neighbors in a '48 Arab town are poisoned by various loyalties to the Israeli state. Reema Essa's documentary *Biram/Ashes* (2001) adopts a more tragic tone. The filmmaker seeks to understand why her parents did not fight back against the destruction of the village of Biram where they resided in the Galilee, her late father even joining the Israeli police force in the wake of the family's expulsion.

Combining images of the ruins of Biram, pictures of her father, and archival footage of Israeli military actions during the Nakba, the film sets the stage for the daughter's "interrogation" of her mother. Torn between resignation and hope reminiscent of the pessoptimist's dilemma, the mother snaps: "I'm not interested in politics, I'm interested in living." Carried by a similar quest, Ibtisam Mara'ana's *Paradise Lost* (2003) investigates the repressed silence of the inhabitants of a Palestinian village in Northern Israel which suspiciously survived the Nakba. In turn, *On récolte ce que l'on sème/You Reap What You Sow* (2017) records Alaa Ashkar's return to the Galilee after a voluntary exile, wherein he questions his wealthy and reluctant family about what Palestine means to them – oftentimes a word they wish to forget. Like in *Paradise Lost* and *Ashes*, the Palestinian filmmaker is here tricked by a national history of coercions and their own resulting frustration into assuming an interrogator role similar to Israeli intelligence officers. Finally, in the fiction features *Omar* (Hany Abu-Assad 2013), and *3000 Layla/3000 Nights* (Mai Masri 2016), carceral spaces often become the sites for Palestinians' conversion into informers.

Sa'di and Khalili's emphasis on the structure of counterinsurgency represents a theoretical and ethical imperative against the binary of collaboration and resistance. However, this perspective remains limited for filmmakers who investigate intimate relationships with family members perceived to be personally responsible for furthering oppression. The tension between individual and structure, or individual and institution, thus determines instinctive desires to redistribute blame in the effort to understand transgenerational suffering. How does this suspicion also inform Palestinian artists' interactions with the state and the reception of their films in the community? '48 Palestinian filmmakers have had to justify their use of Israeli funding to state institutions who object to watching Arab stories, European organizations that assume there cannot be any Arabs in Israel, and Palestinian filmmakers who refuse any form of involvement with the occupying state. In a 2018 opinion piece in *Haaretz*, Ibtisam Mara'ana meditates on her 2003 film *Paradise Lost*, mentioned earlier. She remembers the compromises she had to make, including changing terms deemed unacceptable by Israeli funders such as "mass grave" and "Nakba." She continues:

> That film was aired on Channel 8, a cable channel. It was viewed mainly by Jews who like the genre. *The Palestinian public in Israel wondered whether a Palestinian and feminist film funded by Israeli money was in fact propaganda cinema*. Today, if I were to return to that same point in time 15 years ago, I would refuse to surrender to the dictates of that same artistic-political consultant. On the other hand, perhaps I wouldn't be making films at all,

if that's what it required to avoid such a paradoxical relationship with the sovereign and the state (Mara'ana 2018, my emphasis).

The central tension between individual and colonial institution can alternatively constitute the framework for designing a path of "moral responsibility," to use the phrase by Boycott Divestment Sanction leader Omar Barghouti (Barghouti 2011, 85). In this context, the boycott guidelines established by BDS since the early 2000s have provided a set of strategies for both global solidarity with Palestinians in exile, under occupation, and deprived of the rights that their citizenship promised; and modes of action for Palestinians themselves to engineer decolonization from within Palestine-Israel. More particularly, the civil society organizations who constitute the Boycott National Committee (BNC) and wrote the guidelines have been attentive to the role of culture in furthering normalization through "collaborations" and partnerships, which occur when "events and activities…portray the relationship of colonial oppression, which is inherently abnormal, as if it were normal" (Eid 2016). One of BDS' most valuable *theoretical* interventions lies in the essential distinction between individual and institution which, they advocate, should guide foreign solidarity. As Barghouti explains, BDS' cultural campaign (PACBI – the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel) does not target artists who do not benefit from state funding, "not because they tend to be more progressive or opposed to injustice than the rest of society … but because [BDS is] opposed *on principle* to political testing and blacklisting" (Barghouti 2011, 118, his emphasis). On the contrary, artists who accept Israeli state funding are bound to national efforts of international propaganda. For example, travel funding provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs *contractually* defines artists as "service providers" who are obligated to "creat[e] a positive image of Israel," yet "will not present [them]sel[ves] as an agent, emissary and/or representative of the Ministry" (Laor 2008).

The BDS guidelines serve as an informal and transnational grassroots policy that defines antiracist and decolonial modes of production for cultural works. As the expression of a body of Palestinian grassroots organizations, this policy also constitutes Palestinians as a *de facto* sovereign voice authoring a social contract that leads to the full respect of their rights. In the midst of these distinctions, PACBI recognizes the particular positionality of Palestinian citizens with respect to Israeli institutions and does not extend calls for boycott to those who receive state funding. The protocol generally reformulates international artists' positions vis-à-vis the settler colonial state; most importantly, it also carves up a space for Palestinian citizens' action within the

settler structure and *legitimizes* their *coerced* interaction with the state, thus clearing the population from the colonial imaginary of the collaborator. Very much in line with Abu Wael's abovementioned argument that his *Palestinian* individuality (and *only* in this capacity) should be separated from the institution supplying the money, the guidelines read:

> BDS guidelines distinguish between coercive and voluntary relationships. Palestinian citizens of Israel live under Israeli apartheid. As citizens and taxpayers, they cannot but engage in everyday relations with Israeli institutions... Thus, Palestinian citizens of Israel are not asked to boycott Israeli institutions (PACBI).

PACBI also provides "positive" parameters for a commendable collaboration with Jewish Israeli artists: they must respect Palestinian demands shared in the general call, advocate for equal rights for the Palestinian citizens, demand an end to the occupation and the possibility for Palestinian return. Only then, like *Route 181*, can a collaboration become a means of co-resistance. Palestinians' relationships to Israeli institutions, despite being exculpated as a matter of principle, do not however all lead to co-resistance. To repeat Salma Jayyusi's words about Emil Habiby's *Pessoptimist*, many "contradictions…crowd the distance between the extreme poles of Zionist colonialism and Palestinian resistance" (Jayyusi 2003, xiii). It is to this grey area in which '48 Palestinian artists "work together" with Jewish Israeli partners or state funding that I now turn. Here I take boycott both as a critical grid to understand the articulation of filmmakers and Israeli institutions, and as a set of principles that establishes parameters for the debate around Palestinian agency vis-à-vis the state.

Like Tawfik Abu Wael almost fifteen years prior, and in accordance with BDS guidelines, Palestinian citizen Maysaloun Hamoud claims her right to use Israeli funds:

> I have to make clear about this point: It's not "taking Israeli money;" we pay taxes as citizens who work and live, and we deserve to get advantages from those taxes as any citizen of the world would. Unfortunately, we are discriminated against, so we don't really take our share of the cake. I'm taking my money. It's not Israeli money. It's not a favor or a bone [thrown] toward me. It's money I deserve (cited in Felsenthal 2018).

Contrary to Abu Wael however, she celebrates her unique partnership with Jewish Israeli producer Shlomi Elkabetz on the fiction feature *Bar Bahar/In Between* (2016), which follows three Tel Aviv-based Palestinian women of variegated lifestyles (two are avid party-goers, including a

lesbian, the third one is a religious and modest computer science student engaged to a man she does not love) and their struggle with Arab patriarchal culture. A Mizrahi also subject to Ashkenazi elite's discrimination, Shlomi Elkabetz forms with Hamoud "the underdog team in the industry." Hamoud continues: "I'm a Palestinian. He's a non-Zionist…I just have to say that our partnership is really a way of life that we can model, a way of being where no one sees him- or herself as better than anyone else" (cited in Felsenthal 2018). Elsewhere, she continues: "there is no hierarchy between us, he never interferes in the decision-making process, but he always helps me make the right choice" (Paname Distribution n/d, my translation). Yet Elkabetz' status as a Jewish Israeli is what allowed the film to be produced, as Hamoud herself points: "Without him as my partner I don't think anything would have happened. His name was also in the budgets, in the connections we got for releasing" (cited in Felsenthal 2018). In fact, in addition to French funding, the film exclusively relied on and successfully secured the vast majority of Israel's available grants: the Israeli Film Council, the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the Israel Film Fund, Channel 10, the Gesher Multicultural Fund, and the Israel State Lottery.

Famous for teaming up with his late sister Ronit, widely proclaimed as the face or the ambassador of Israeli cinema abroad, Elkabetz directed films critical of Jewish patriarchy in Israel (*Ve'Lakhta Lehe /To Take a Wife*, 2004) and how this translates into the country's legal system (*Gett/The Trial of Viviane Amsalem*, 2014). Described as a "non-Zionist" (but interestingly, not "anti-Zionist") by Hamoud in order to reflect his opposition to some state practices, the filmmaker, however, embraced the recognition of *Gett* by various Israeli authorities, including the Ministry of Justice which endorsed it, along with the film's selection as the Israeli contender for the 2014 Oscars. His docu-fiction *Edut/Testimony* (2011) unveils liberal politics and a trust in multicultural dialogue primarily directed at a Jewish Israeli audience – the "Israeli public in general" evoked earlier by Israel Film Fund's vice-manager David Lipkin. The film exclusively employs Mizrahim and Hebrew-speaking actors to reenact the testimonies of both Israeli soldiers and Palestinians about the traumas they endured during the Second Intifada. The project thus attempts to build solidarities between Jewish and non-Jewish Arabs in Israel, which crystallizes around the final Andalusian song performed in Arabic. Elkabetz also explains the choice of translating Arabic into Hebrew, meant to "'turn the viewer into a witness' and turn the language of the occupier 'into his own nightmare'" (cited in Weissberg 2011). Yet, the film simultaneously operates a double erasure, first by equating the experiences of the oppressor and the oppressed, then by stripping

Palestinians of their own representation and language. The inclusion of testimonies by IDF veterans from Breaking the Silence, an NGO that provides a platform of expression for former Israeli soldiers traumatized by their participation in war crimes, occurred after Israeli funders rejected the focus on Palestinian testimonies alone (Anderman 2012). But the veterans, with all their suffering, remain an expression of "the sovereign." As Mara'ana puts it in the aforementioned opinion piece:

> The sovereign [sic], who grew up in and served the political and diplomatic system, is the same sovereign who served in the army, stood at the checkpoints, participated in the wars and settled in the homes of Palestinians. That same sovereign is both the occupier and the one who engages in soul searching and deals with ethical questions; he is seen as both a fighter and as a guardian of democracy. That same sovereign also created the organizations B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence (Mara'ana 2018).

Edut thus accommodates a comfort zone for Israeli audiences which is also manifest in the use of Hebrew. In the same way that the Jewish Israeli restaurant manager snapped at his Palestinian kitchen staff in Hamoud's witty *Bar Bahar*, the audiences "don't want to hear Arabic. It's unpleasant for the customers, who just want to enjoy their meal." Elkabetz eventually conceded the motivations behind *Edut*: "I made the film to quiet my conscience and I didn't do it in order to change something – because I don't believe it can change anything. I made it to confront this issue, to become one of the witnesses to what is happening in this place where I live" (Anderman 2012).

Elkabetz, the (half) sovereign, still proved an ally: an equal at the individual level, and a facilitator who channeled his relative institutional privilege to the benefit of Palestinian voices. His impetus towards the dialogue of multicultural reconciliation materialized through the avenue opened by Hamoud. Nothing like *Edut*, *Bar Bahar* reached the '48 Palestinian youth that the film represents. The filmmaker exults: "a lot of women and girls…felt empowered by the movie. It is the first movie since, ever, that made Palestinians go *en masse* to see a movie at the theater" (cited in Felsenthal 2018). *Bar Bahar* targeted its local audience by almost completely evacuating Jewish Israeli characters from the story in order to focus on the internal dynamics of the '48 Palestinian society and shine the spotlight on female solidarity (Felsenthal 2018). In fact, Hamoud argues that the film could have taken place anywhere in the Arab world or beyond; it just happened to be set in Tel Aviv (Matar 2017). Rather than making the confrontation with Israeli institutional racism its focal point, *Bar Bahar* becomes for its filmmaker the expression of the third generation of

Palestinians after the Nakba, the resistant youth that grew up during the Second Intifada and rose up in unison with their neighbors against undemocratic regimes and Arab conservatism during the so-called Arab Spring (Paname Distribution n/d). The film displaces the cultural and geographic focus from Israel's Eurocentric frame of reference to Arab histories and culture – Tawfiq Zayyad and Leila Khaled figure among many visual quotes. As a result, the film's Palestinian content reflects the filmmaker's expression of independence vis-à-vis Israeli funding by separating the thriving Arab society (with its own history, questions, and problems) – and the gender issues that Hamoud attaches to it – from the colonial structures in which these develop.

Although Hamoud remarks in an interview that colonial assaults on Palestinian "traditions" reinforce the Arab patriarchal structure (Paname Distribution n/d), the film's discursive strategy of institutional independence risks dissolving the tight articulation between various systems of gender and colonial oppression. Several '48 Palestinian critics of the website *Arab 48* also reported their frustration regarding the narrative's separation between social issues and the political context of "Zionist occupation" (Azem 2017) and the lack of engagement with the political marginalization of Palestinians (Ighbaria 2017). The exclusive Arab framework of *Bar Bahar* accommodates the liberal binary between Arab tradition and Israeli modernity, epitomized by the possibilities offered by Tel Aviv (Macguire 2018). *Bar Bahar* was acclaimed in Israel and worldwide for its provoking portrayal of "liberated Palestinian women." The country's top-grossing movie released in 2016 with a $5,742,166 global box office (The Numbers), the film won Best Supporting Actress and Best Actress at the Israeli Film Academy, Best Debut Feature Film and Artistic Achievement in an Israeli Feature Film at the Haifa International Film Festival, the NETPAC (Network for the Promotion for Asian Cinema) Award at the Toronto International Film Festival, and Best Film at the San Sebastián International Film Festival among others. The poster hints at the hidden practices of a whole segment of the Arab youth that the film uncovers, as they drink, smoke cigarettes and joints, and dance in bars (Fig. 19). The French co-producer's title for the film, *Je danserai si je veux* (I dance if I want to) and the Spanish subtitle to the poster, "three women up against traditions in their search of freedom" (my translation, see Fig. 19) similarly emphasize female empowerment in the face of (mostly Arab) patriarchal traditions.

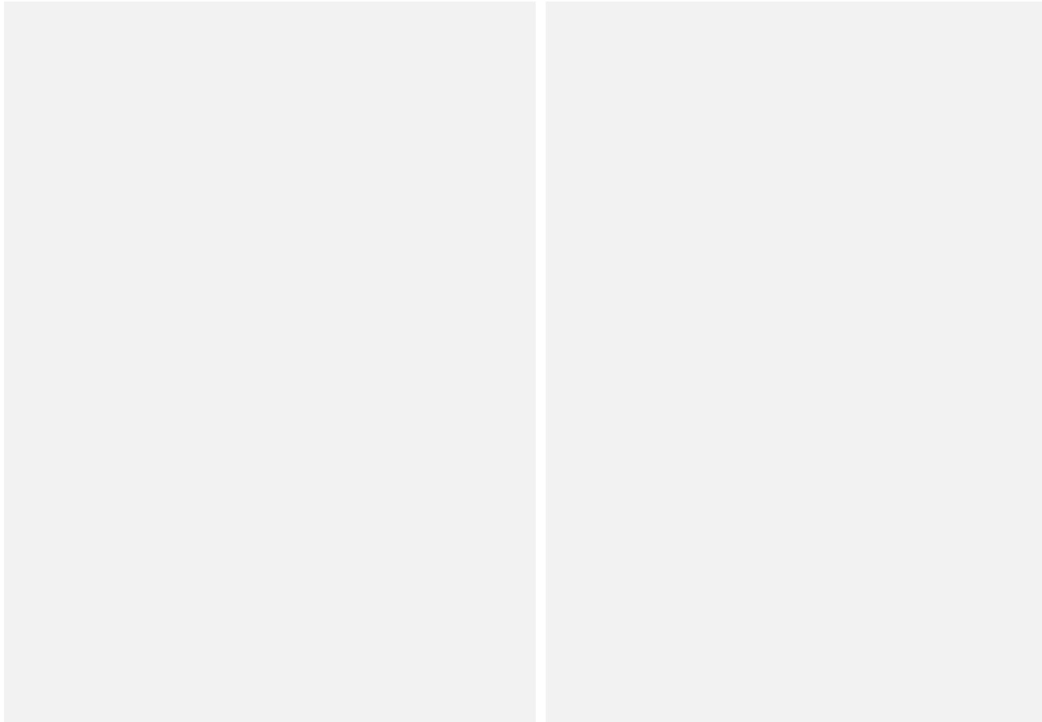

Figure 19: The French and Spanish posters for Maysaloun Hamoud's *Bar Bahar* (AlloCiné and IMDB)

The heated discussion the film triggered in Israel peaked in the conservative Arab town of Umm al-Fahm and served to enshrine the film's public meaning in a binary narrative. In a collusion between patriarchal and colonial sovereignty, the municipality called on the Ministry of Culture to ban *Bar Bahar*. The Arab officials invoked the misrepresentation of two protagonists in the film said to originate from the town: a religious man turned rapist, and a young woman (the victim and one of the main protagonists) assumed to be of easy virtue. Religious leaders consequently issued a *fatwa* that resulted in a slew of death threats for the filmmakers and the actresses. Following the saying that there is no such thing as bad publicity, Hamoud admitted that the controversy contributed to the success of the film (Jones 2017), suggesting that audiences were eager to position themselves in a debate whose terms (modernity versus tradition) symptomatically encapsulate assumptions about the nature of the "Palestinian-Israeli conflict." Later retracting his concerns, with profuse apologies, in the wake of the violent verbal attacks directed at the female artists, the prominent Palestinian screenwriter and cultural critic Sayed Kashua attacked *Bar Bahar*'s choice of representational politics in an opinion piece for *Haaretz*. After praising the film's feminist stance, Kashua questioned the need to demonize the religious character:

> There's no justification in the script for making the religious character the rapist, there's no justification for the person from the Triangle[74]…to be the violent man. *There is no doubt that these are stereotypes of religious people that reflect Israeli and Western conceptions*. The fact that the rapist is from Umm al-Fahm is meaningful in a society where the village you're born in serves as a central identity marker. Imagine, for example, a film about the oppression of women in Paris where the violent rapist is a Jew (Kashua 2017, my emphasis).

Unwittingly then, some of the international and national discussions the film raised contributed to reinforcing the liberal vision in which (non-Western) culture undermines and threatens individual human rights – and especially women's rights when that culture is Arab. The discursive and diegetic separation of the Palestinian individual from the Israeli institution, which BDS had devised as a *decolonial* human rights-based strategy, came to serve and benefit the inner colonial workings of multiculturalism as management of cultural difference. In *Bar Bahar*, Israeli funding objectively became the condition of possibility for Palestinians to discuss "oppressive Arab traditions."

The tension between individual Palestinian citizens and Israeli institutions at the core of *Bar Bahar*'s production was further exploited by pro-Israeli newspapers evidently unfamiliar with, or deliberately misquoting, the BDS guidelines as pertaining to Palestinian citizens' work. *The Jerusalem Post* argued that the Toronto Palestine Film Festival (TPFF) hypocritically showed Palestinian films with Israeli funding, including Maysaloun Hamoud's *Bar Bahar* and Maha Haj's *Omor Shakhsiya*/*Personal Affairs* (2016), "in spite of calls from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement to boycott all projects that involve Israel" (Brown 2017). Michael Mostyn, CEO of the Canadian chapter of ultra-Zionist organization B'nai Brith, interpreted TPFF's choice of programming as an "utter failure of the BDS campaign in Canada," and asked: "if even Palestinians in the Diaspora can't be bothered to boycott the Jewish State, why should anyone else?" (Brown 2017). Similarly, an article in *The Times of Israel* showed some appreciation for the film, in accordance with the liberal values of the reviewer, and highlighted the filmmaker's "precarious position, especially considering how many in the Arab world would like nothing more than to sweep her liberal vision under the safety of the BDS umbrella" (Hoffman 2017). This last comment misidentifies the grassroots BDS, which as we saw does not call for a boycott of

[74] "The Triangle" (historically "the Little Triangle") designates a region with a vast majority of Palestinian towns, adjacent to the Green line and located in Israel, which is particularly poor and religious.

Palestinian citizens who make films with Israeli money, with the larger boycott of Israel enforced by the states of the Arab League since 1945. The latter led Lebanon, for example, to ban the Palestinian film *Personal Affairs*.

Hamoud herself fails to distinguish the specificities of her situation from that of Palestinians in the occupied territories when she laments that a musician from Ramallah declined to collaborate with her for fear of being associated with the Israeli state, "despite knowing they were contradicting themselves" (Matar 2017). The state of affairs for West Bank (and Gaza) Palestinians is however very different. In contrast with '48 residents, BDS' ethical and theoretical stance and the general conversation around normalization strongly discourage them from accepting any Israeli money because they are under occupation by the state, have access to some Palestinian proto-infrastructures and can to a certain extent apply to external funding as Palestinians. Hamoud remarks that the different relationalities to the state create a gap that should not jeopardize the cultural "synchronization" of all Palestinians (Matar 2017). Yet these varied statuses certainly shape separate privileges that change the meaning of the interaction between individuals and the colonial state. The complexity of Palestinians' multifarious positionalities vis-à-vis Israeli institutions thus means that the tools provided by BDS may sometimes be misunderstood.

Finally, BDS and PACBI's efforts at clarifying the articulation of individual and structure may at times fail to re-organize Palestinians' persistent fears around collaboration. Palestine-based grassroots groups organized around BDS are constantly debating how Palestinian and Arab films conform to the guidelines, while some artists are wary that their freedom of expression might be further diminished in the process – maybe at times at the expense of a more structural critique. Simultaneously, PACBI itself, and the numerous independent grassroots organizations that form its sprawling horizontal network, struggle to negotiate what co-resistance can mean and how this fits the imperative of rejecting normalization, a leading discourse in the occupied territories to an extent unseen in historic Palestine. Here I briefly discuss two examples in the West Bank.

In October 2017, independent BDS activists lobbied the Ramallah Municipality into cancelling the screening of Lebanese filmmaker Ziad Doueiri's *Qadiat Raqam 23*/*The Insult* (2017), which closed the Palestine Cinema Days' fourth edition. Set in Beirut, the film follows the escalating tensions between a right-wing Lebanese Christian and a Palestinian refugee worker, thus bringing to the fore unresolved class, ethnic, and racial tensions that have survived the Lebanese Civil War. Starring veteran Palestinian actor Kamel El Basha, the first Arab actor ever

to be awarded Best Male Interpretation at the Venice International Film Festival for his performance in the film, *The Insult* received acclaim in the Arab world at the Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage in Tunisia and the El Gouna Film Festival in Egypt. Yet its director was controversial for his previous film, *The Attack* (2012), which he directed in Israel with a partially Israeli cast – an achievement for a dual citizen of France and Lebanon, the latter being a country that maintains no diplomatic relationship with Israel due its official and ongoing war. Described by *The Times of Israel* as a "collaboration between Israelis, Palestinians, and Lebanese" and a "human story" about the Second Intifada that does not pick sides (Miller 2013), *The Attack* has contributed to the normalization of Arab relationships with Israel. In turn, *The Insult* was also criticized by some Palestinians and allies for its collusion with Zionist production companies and its underlying Zionist sympathies (Ginsberg 2018), and for a misleading depiction of history (Hage 2018).

Two days prior to the closing ceremony, on 21 October 2017, Palestine Cinema Days released a statement on their Facebook page expressing the organizers' full agreement with PACBI's official position on *The Insult,* which was "not subject to the current guidelines of BDS and therefore not 'boycottable'" (Palestine Cinema Days Facebook 2017a). The festival took this opportunity to re-assert their commitment to BDS, which had led to their refusal of several films in the past. Additionally, the statement mentioned the success of *The Insult* in the Arab world, elevated as an epitome of the worldwide recognition of Palestinian and Arab cinema. Two days later however, the festival posted a new announcement in reaction to the municipality's sudden decision to cancel the screening under the pressure of activist groups in the defense of BDS, including Youth Against Normalization, which followed BDS' call for boycotting the *filmmaker* – as opposed to the film (Barghouti in Carey and Salman 2017). The festival's statement established that the decision had come as they were in the process of reaching a consensus with BDS partners. It concluded:

> Filmlab views the repercussions of this decision with a serious concern and calls upon the official cultural institutions, the civil society and all those who care about the cultural landscape, freedom of expression and thought, to move and assume their responsibilities towards preserving the Palestinian cultural achievements and preserving freedom of expression (Palestine Cinema Days 2017b).

Followed by supporters of the festival, Kamel El Basha condemned the cancellation as "shameful" and damaging to Palestinian cinema, promising to "boycott BDS," while Fimlab director Hanna Atallah reiterated his fear of censorship to CNN reporters: "unfortunately now there is censorship…Every Palestinian citizen [sic] should have the right to watch the film and decide whether it's good or not" (Carey and Salman translation 2017). Clinging to a term dear to the liberal consensus, the CNN journalist passionately ended his video report with an ominous question: "What happens next time, what happens when someone doesn't like the content of the next film? Could it lead down the slippery slope of censorship?" (Carey and Salman 2017).

The controversy was multi-layered. On the one hand, it revealed PACBI's unclear allocation of blame for the community: if the filmmaker was to be boycotted based on one particular film *(The Attack*), should all his future films also be a target? Many Palestinian practitioners answered with the negative, further motivated by the presence of a successful Palestinian actor, Kamel el Basha, in the production whose international recognition reflected well on Palestine's growing industry. Yet, the discourse around censorship, applauded by liberal proponents of dialogue worldwide, collapsed grassroots pressure with institutional control, a Palestinian fear justified by the coercive environment shaped by the occupying state and the Palestinian Authority alike as well as broader threats to erase Palestinian culture and resistance pertaining to the colonial context.

The semantic displacement from pressure to censorship materialized in the focus on the film's artistic value. While BDS proponents opposed the structure of normalization to which the film was said to contribute because of its *production* strategies (further illuminated by its racist content) and – *independently* from its aesthetics – the film's supporters comprehended its cancellation through individual appreciation and intersubjective recognition based on taste, calling for the audience to judge by themselves "whether the film is good or not." PACBI's attempt at reconfiguring relations of recognition with a focus on the combative moment of refusal here conflicted with the logics of a film industry driven by prestige, wherein mutual recognition is discursively always already assumed to be a principle for economic relations. Simultaneously, some Palestinian practitioners suspect BDS groups of tracking forms of normalization in an obsessive and unjustified manner seen to continue oppressive nationalist discourses. My second example examines BDS's practical (as opposed to theoretical) confusion around normalization and means of co-resistance.

A few months after *The Insult* was cancelled, BDS released a statement in Arabic calling for the regional boycott of Palestinian filmmaker (and FilmLab co-founder) Muayad Alayyan's new film *Al-Taqareer Hawl Sarah wa Saleem/The Reports on Sarah and Saleem* (2018), a political take on the dangerous affair between a married Palestinian man and a married Jewish Israeli woman. Without providing a full rationale for this decision, BDS' website vaguely mentioned the involvement of Israeli artists and crew members as evidence of the film's active contribution to normalization, linking to their Wikipedia biography pages (BDS 2018). Listing the acceptable conditions for working together with Jewish Israelis, the statement failed to investigate in what capacity the film's production contravened those precepts. As a result, Alayyan replied with a thorough post on his company PalCine Production's Facebook page, demonstrating how *The Reports* did not constitute normalization. Addressing each aspect of BDS regulations, Alayyan's response clarified that no Israeli funding was involved in this Palestinian co-production with the Netherlands, Germany and Mexico; all participants were supportive of Palestinian rights, with one (Israeli) even deeply involved in BDS work and who had helped animate the film screening in the Dutch BDS chapter; and the film did not promote Palestinian-Israeli rapprochement (PalCine Productions Facebook 2018). Alayyan's post was warmly received by the Palestinian filmmaking community in historic and occupied Palestine and in the diaspora, and garnered support from Syrian and Egyptian filmmakers. In fact, the film could even be said to provide an example of "co-resistance" as defined by BDS' own guidelines. A Palestinian filmmaker and film trainer at Bethlehem's cinema school Dar el Kalimat, Majdi El-Omari, summarized the challenges raised by BDS' misguided call, detrimental to both Palestinian cinema and the boycott's growing popular support: "I think there is a misunderstanding and I hope people will not seize this opportunity to attack the film in the name of BDS, and BDS in the name of the film" (El-Omari Facebook post 2018, my translation).

These three examples, Maysaloun Hamoud's *Bar Bahar*, Ziad Doueiri's *The Insult*, and Muayad Alayyan's *The Reports on Sarah and Saleem,* attest to the ongoing work of defining Palestinian individuals and works' relationship to the Israeli state's colonial structure. The distinct positionalities of Palestinian citizens and those who reside in the West Bank and Gaza ultimately reveal the imprint of collaboration as a colonial discourse that differentially disciplines, restricts, and reformulates Palestinians' possibilities for action. In the following sections, I further discuss Israel's management of cultural difference through co-optation. Palestinian filmmakers respond to

this management with economic and aesthetic strategies that both situate them as individuals separate from the colonial structure and re-assert their right to take over Israeli material resources.

Co-optation, Appropriation, and Redistribution

Just like Hamoud and Abu Wael, Elia Suleiman believes he is entitled to use Israeli funding to produce his features. In a 2006 interview, he acknowledges the dilemma this represents:

> Of course it's a dangerous thing to do. If you take money from the Israelis you are basically getting into bed with Mephisto. They will ask you to join their festivals. They will try to twist what you say and appropriate your films. There are always strings attached. If you can get away with not doing it, then of course it is better for your health and better for your soul (cited in Brooks 2006).

The discursive separation between individual and institution established by many '48 Palestinian filmmakers at the level of film production may obscure what happens after, when the film circulates on behalf of Israel in the prize economy. As Abu Wael hinted in the first section of this chapter, international film festivals and awards constitute strategic sites for the re-appropriation of Palestinian works to the benefit of Israel's international reputation as a liberal patron for the arts and a national industry of vibrant multicultural and creative energy. The state's transnational management of Palestinian culture, including through the Brand Israel campaign, systematizes what Sa'di calls co-optation: "a more advanced method of collaboration…set to change the identity of the minority, its culture, and its ideological frame of reference" through a process in which the Jewish state is viewed as a modernizing agent (Sa'di 2003, 91). At the same time, Palestinian artists seek to actively partake in what James English calls "the economy of prestige." Filmmakers follow postcolonial nations in the "quest for wider, European and metropolitan recognition of a national culture whose under-evaluation on the broader and still European-controlled symbolic market support […] demands for redistributive justice" (English 2005, 165). Awards thus potentially crystallize but may also deny what Nancy Fraser terms two "co-fundamental and mutually irreducible dimensions of justice": recognition and distribution (Fraser 2003, 4). Currently, the economy of prestige both ties Palestinians' access to Israeli funding to their own cultural dispossession and un-recognition, and predicates Palestinians' (conditional) international recognition upon Israel's uneven and discriminatory distribution of financial support.

The settler colonial system of deprivation, land grab, and more generally (cultural) appropriation penetrates and organizes politics of recognition and distribution. The co-optation of successful Palestinian films as they travel internationally reproduces logics of colonial dispossession and ethnic cleansing – which similarly result in erasing the other's identity. Patrick Wolfe discusses the university as a site of knowledge production and identity formation which can also describe the film industry, where fund providers and film festivals function as tastemakers and gatekeepers. Wolfe reminds us that cultural and academic institutions are entangled with settler practices of expropriation: "in a settler-colonial context […] claims to authority over indigenous discourse made from within the settler-colonial academy necessarily participate in the continuing usurpation of indigenous space" (Wolfe 1999, 3). In response, Palestinians claim the financial and symbolic resources considered to have been violently stolen, looted, and exploited by the occupier. Palestinians may also as a result redistribute symbolic and/or financial capital among themselves, sometimes forcefully and against the state's will. This section thus examines three scenarios of recognition and redistribution from within historic Palestine, which either continue the spoliation of Palestinian individuals by the colonial institution examined in the previous section or propose a re-formulation of Palestinian filmmakers' relationship to Israeli funding and resources.

My first example, the thriller *Ajami* (2009), was directed by Palestinian citizen of Israel Scandar Copti and Jewish Israeli Yaron Shani. Partially funded by the Israel Film Fund, the film is set in the poor eponymous neighborhood of Jaffa, whose nickname the "Bride of the Sea" reminds us of the city's glorious past as a regional port before colonization. Five interconnected storylines introduce us to drug deals, gang-related murders, and inter-religious and inter-racial tensions and violence, centered around the "terrorist" killing of a Jewish policeman's brother by a Palestinian youth. According to an article in *The Palestine Chronicle*, *Ajami* was celebrated in Israel as a metaphor for the "Israeli-Palestinian conflict" and for its balanced narrative that equalizes suffering on both sides (Kinnucan 2010). A 2012 dossier called "A Decade in Motion: The New Voice of Israeli Cinema" compiled by the Israel Film Fund marveled at *Ajami*'s multiplicity of points of view and built on Yaron Shani's quote that, in the film, "each side has its narrative. Our idea was to make the audience experience what it meant to be the other" (Bronner 2012, 46). At the same time, the film was harshly criticized by renowned Palestinian writer and human rights advocate Raja Shehadeh for de-contextualizing the history of Jaffa and depicting the

city as “a jungle infested by bloodthirsty, uncivilized Arabs who live inside and outside its borders exactly as Israeli propagandists claim” (cited in Kinnucan 2010). Such representations can have dire material consequences. In his history of Jaffa and Tel Aviv from 1880 until today, Mark LeVine discusses how, as of the 1980s and ‘90s, the municipality of Tel Aviv has planned the integration of Jaffa to repurpose it as a center for Jewish history, a site of tourism, and a neighborhood for the Jewish elite. The active campaign of house eviction and gentrification that followed took strength in media representations of the city as crime-ridden and contributed to “the systematic erasure of the identity of the city of Jaffa as a Palestinian Arab city” (LeVine 2005, 227).

Ajami’s complacency with the romanticization of violence in Jaffa thus served Israeli discourses of modernization and allowed the film’s eventual co-optation during its successful international circulation in the economies of prestige, where it received, among others, the Caméra d’Or at Cannes and multiple awards in Israel. A few months after so-called Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) organized a focus on Tel Aviv that showcased *Ajami* with nine other Israeli films that located Tel Aviv as a symbol of Israel’s cultural history. The selection tellingly counted Eytan Fox’s *The Bubble* (2006), which I drew in earlier on account of its fundamental role in Israel’s global pinkwashing campaign (Stein 2010). Moreover, the inclusion of Mizrahi director Karen Yedaya’s *Yafo/Jaffa* (2009) alongside *Ajami* materialized the symbolic annexation of the Palestinian city through curating.

While this special “City to City” program was funded by the Israeli government, the festival co-director Cameron Bailey refused to publicize any Israeli financial support and even denied it in a private conversation with concerned filmmakers (Walsh 2009). However, an early article in the *Canadian Jewish News*, dating from August 2008, resurfaced later and cited Israeli consul in Canada Amir Gissin announcing that Israel’s presence would culminate at the 2009 TIFF as part of Brand Israel (Levy-Azjenkopf 2008). Many Canadian and international filmmakers and intellectuals protested the special program in solidarity with Palestinians. They drafted an open letter, which gathered fifteen hundred signatures, contextualizing Brand Israel as a million-dollar diversion operation. The campaign, so the letter propounded, participated in pulling the international community’s attention away from the state’s treatment of Palestinians and redirected the focus onto its artistic achievements (Toronto Declaration 2009). Some participants of the

festival also withdrew their submissions, such as Canadian John Greyson and Egyptian Sherif Mansour. Eventually, Scandar Copti himself cancelled *Ajami*'s screening, albeit in silence.

The following year, *Ajami* was picked and nominated to represent Israel at the Oscars, which prompted USACBI (the US branch for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel) to identify it as a product of Zionist imagery and launch a call for boycott. Copti, who later demonstrated his support to BDS,[75] subsequently declined to present the film in Hollywood. Echoing Hamoud and Abu Wael, the filmmaker stated in media interviews: "You have an Israeli director and a Palestinian director; you have Israeli actors and Palestinian actors. The movie represents Israel, but I don't. I can't represent a country that doesn't represent me" (Hartman 2010). Yet, Copti here distanced *himself*, as opposed to his film, from state institution and representation, thus leaving it open for Israel to claim *Ajami*. In fact, his co-director Yaron Shani re-asserted that *Ajami* constituted an Israeli film because it was set in Israel, "spoke Israeli" and dealt with Israeli problems (Hartman 2010). After Sa'di, the circulation of *Ajami* as an Israeli film, separate from the Palestinian identity of its co-director and the city in which it took place, contributed to changing its cultural frame of reference. In other words, the film's success unfolded alongside its very "judaization," a term that describes the program of "territorial restructuring of the land … adopted by the nascent Israeli state" (Yiftachel 1999, 371). Judaization survives today in the urban planning strategy following which Arab neighborhoods are gradually replaced by Jewish populations. Inspired by Henri Lefebvre, famous Israeli legal geography scholar Oren Yiftachel argues this "material context of geographical change" reveals "that discourses and spaces constitute one another in a ceaseless process of social construction" (Yiftachel 1999, 364-5). A pawn in the game of settler colonial appropriation, *Ajami* partook in "the process of replacement, [which] maintains the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim" (Wolfe 2006, 389).

The shift in the film's identity operates at multiple levels. *Ajami*'s co-optation, permitted by the recourse to state funding, supports Israeli cultural diplomacy and the symbolic (and potentially material) de-Palestinization of Arab towns and histories. Furthermore, it prevents the film from circulating in the countries in the Arab world who still follow the Arab League boycott against Israel. The "Israelization" of the film is thus co-constitutive of its partial "de-Arabization,"

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[75] In 2010, Copti signed an open letter published in the French newspaper *Le Monde* in support of BDS. See "Boycotter Israël, c'est lutter pour une paix juste," *Le Monde*, 17 Nov. 2010. Last accessed 12 Aug. 2018.http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2010/11/17/boycotter-israel-une-lutte-pour-une-paix-juste_1440957_3232.html

in a dynamic of partition not unlike the pressures exerted on Arab Jews. Ella Shohat explains how "the Euro-Israeli separation of the 'Jewish' and the 'Middle Eastern' parts has ideologically facilitated the actual dismantlement of the Jewish communities of the Muslim world, while pressuring the oriental Jews in Israel to realign their identities according to Zionist Euro-Israeli paradigms" (Shohat 1989, 104). While such realignment proves less evident for Palestinian citizens, the forced separation between the Arab and the Euro-Israeli identities certainly contributes to fragmenting the "synchronicity" of the Palestinian community, to repeat Hamoud's phrase. In other words, economies of prestige designate paths of recognition that may fragment Palestinian belonging to Arab identity as well as regional solidarities. Here again, accepting Israeli funding always already subjects Palestinian films to possible appropriation, which statements about filmmakers' independence cannot curtail.

Ajami's use of Israeli funding facilitated co-optation. My second example, Hany Abu-Assad's *Omar* (2013), nominated for the Oscars on behalf of Palestine, demonstrates that the filmmaker's status as a citizen was sufficient to summon the Israeli colonial imaginary and the *society*'s discursive attempts at appropriating Palestinian success and stories. In this instance, the Israeli government distinctly focused on de-legitimizing the proto-state of Palestine, which the film was understood to represent. In contrast with Scandar Copti's ambivalence, Abu-Assad rejected the legitimacy of Israeli institutions and re-asserted his and his film's belonging to Arab culture. As a consequence, he ambitiously sought to fund *Omar* almost entirely with Palestinian money – none of it coming from the PA – which ostentatiously inscribed his work in the cultural and economic environment of the Arab world. *Omar* benefited largely from the support of rich investors in the diaspora, including loans from the family of Palestinian American actor Waleed Zuaiter, a lead actor in and producer of *Omar*. Diasporic investors provided ninety-five per cent of the necessary budget for the film while Enjaaz, Dubai Film Festival's post-production fund, supplied the remaining five per cent.

The film's successful Oscar nomination occurred while Israel's pick, Yuval Adler's *Bethlehem* (2013), did not pass the first round of selections. The two films ironically presented similar plots and portrayed Palestinian informers for the Shin Bet (the Israeli Security Agency). However, while *Omar* depicts the forced collaboration of the Palestinian protagonist with a cynical Israeli agent (Waleed Zuaiter himself), *Bethlehem* proposes a fantasy in which the Israeli handler and the young Palestinian collaborator entertain a father-son-like relationship only to be

interrupted by an oedipal ending. These different approaches materialize in the films' promotional images. *Omar'*s poster emphasizes the intimacy between the main protagonist (played by Adam Bakri) and his girlfriend Nadia (played by Leem Lubany), suggesting that their love is threatened by the occupation symbolized by the Wall in the background. In contrast, *Bethlehem* presents the handler and his young informant as two sides of the same coin, wherein the Israeli agent looks after the Palestinian boy – protecting him against himself – in a context of military deployment against "terrorism" (Fig. 20).

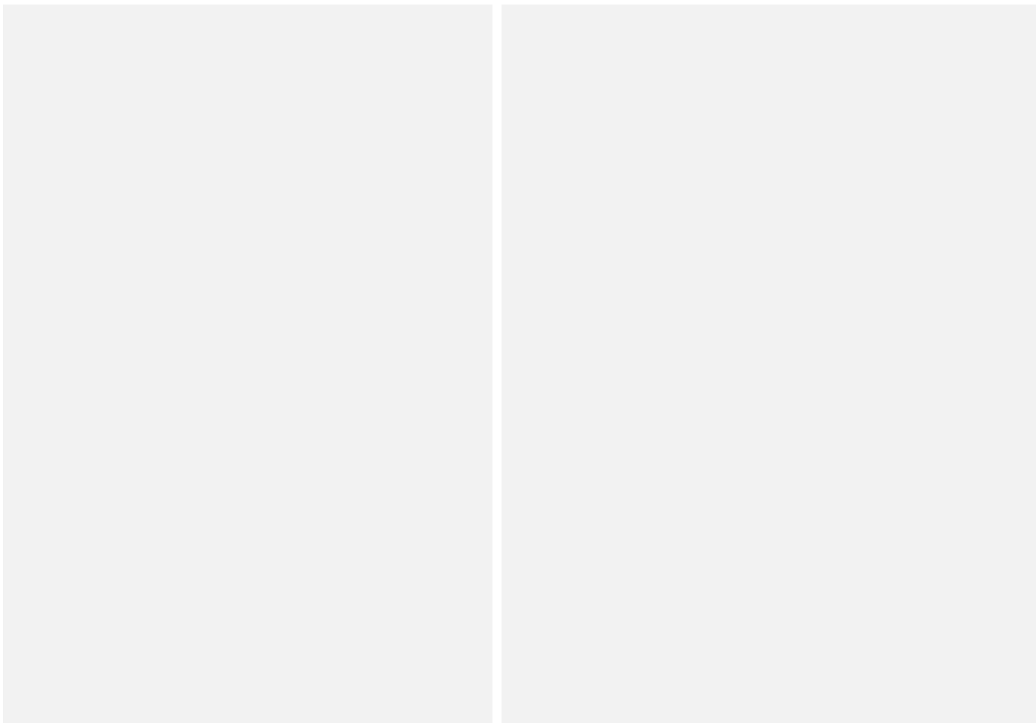

Figure 20: The international poster for Abu Assad's *Omar* and the French poster for Adler's *Bethlehem* (Kino Lorber Theatrical and AlloCiné).

The relative resemblance yet exacerbated comparisons and frustrations on the Israeli side (Miller 2014), prompting the suggestion that the more successful *Omar* should be considered Israeli because it was "filmed in Nazareth, an Israeli town, and with several Israeli Arab cast members" (Kamin and Steinberg 2014). These claims were to a certain extent corroborated by the New Cinema Law, a discursive and material framework that facilitates co-optation and defines a film as Israeli "primarily according to the identity of the production team, the main language of the film and allocation of its budgets" (Friedman 2010, 57). Arabic language and "Israeli residents" are included in this definition (this was before the 2018 Basic Law). Detached from current debates

within Israeli society, the state did not attempt to claim the film. Rather, it attacked the entity the film claimed to represent, Palestine, demanding it be replaced with "Palestinian territories" – which the Academy denied. Abu-Assad's strategy was thus doubly successful. At the level of recognition, *Omar* stood for Palestinians *on their own terms*, and simultaneously re-organized the financial networks that condition the making of Palestinian films. An unsustainable model, the film's transnational and diasporic funding nonetheless established the possibility for Palestinian symbolic and material independence from the Israeli colonial structure, *from within* Israel itself.

My third example, Suha Arraf's *Villa Touma* (2014), both complicates and deconstructs Palestinian individuals' relationship to Israeli institutions with a radical technique of redistribution. Arraf, who wrote scenarios for Jewish Israeli filmmaker Eran Riklis (*The Syrian Bride*, 2004; and *Etz Limon/Lemon Tree*, 2008), directed her first feature *Villa Touma* with funding from the Israeli Film Fund, the National Lottery, and the Israeli Ministry of Economy. Like *Bar Bahar* and *Atash*, the film refers very little to Israel's military regime of occupation and depicts the life of three unmarried aristocratic Christian Palestinian sisters and their young niece in a timeless house in Ramallah – suspended by the failure of Oslo. *Villa Touma* was selected for the Venice Mostra where Arraf registered it on behalf of Palestine, thus enacting the separation between institution and individual Palestinian identity. The Israeli Ministry of Culture immediately responded to this decision and demanded the reimbursement of the $580,000 which various Israeli agencies had allocated to the film (Winer 2014). While the co-producer referred to the film as yet another collaboration "between Jews and Arabs" that should be labelled Israeli, Arraf was accused of stealing money from the government. She recounts being told by the Ministry that "since seventy percent of the funding of the film [wa]s Israeli, the film [wa]s [theirs] and not [hers]." Arraf continues: "It is the psyche of the occupier to claim, 'it is all ours.' They changed current contracts and now any film with Israeli funding needs to be called Israeli" (Nusair 2014).

Like Elia Suleiman and Tawfik Abu Wael before and Maysaloun Hamoud after her, Arraf insisted that Palestinian citizens were bound to pay taxes, yet, unlike Jewish Israelis, they barely benefited from the cultural funds that they have contributed to financing. For her fellow filmmakers, invoking taxes permitted Palestinian access to Israeli funding and discursively challenged the state's legitimacy, while its material structures and co-opting power remained unchanged. In contrast, Arraf's détournement ties the redistribution of Israeli taxes to the re-assertion of her own sovereign Palestinian identity in financial *as well as* representational terms.

The meaning and weight of this strategy of *redistribution* can be further illuminated by the role taxes played historically to support both Israeli control over Palestinian populations in the occupied territories and this same population's resistance. Since 1967, the colonial administration has imposed taxations as part of its effort to integrate the West Bank and Gaza into its own economy, simultaneously creating a maximum dependency on Israeli products while Palestinian ones are conversely denied free access to Israeli markets. In his book, *Living the Intifada*, Andrew Rigby describes how tax hikes were used as a measure of collective punishment during the 1980s uprisings, with Israel collecting some $160 million in tax revenue from the West Bank in 1987 (Rigby 1991, 119). In response, the leadership of the uprising called upon Palestinians to disengage from their financial "obligations" to the occupier by boycotting the taxes, which complemented a commercial strike by store owners. Facing considerable financial loss, Israel placed additional pressure on Palestinians, including by enforcing raids, curfews, destructions, and seizures of property, as well as tying tax payment to the renewing of permits or identity cards. In Beit Sahour, the commitment to the tax strike reached its pinnacle with the slogan "No Taxation Without Representation" – reminiscent of similar struggles during the 1939 Arab revolt against the British. The occupation army thus organized a six-week siege during which the troops raided the village to collect taxes and confiscate property (Rigby 1991, 120).[76]

The leadership of the uprising simultaneously replaced Israel's punitive collection of revenue with an alternative taxation system administered by Palestinian popular committees. These charged Palestinians differentially according to their means (against a receipt, in order to avoid fraud) and redistributed the funds to supply help to the neediest (Rigby 1991, 118). As a result, Israel's rationale for the taxation, the methods it used to enforce it, and Palestinian strikes and recourse to informal systems of social support all reveal that the collection and redistribution of tax money operate as mechanisms that foster *or deny* representation and recognition, ultimately conditioning nation-, community-, and identity-building. Suha Arraf's re-appropriation of Israeli taxpayer money (centralized by the state's various agencies) as Palestinian thus functions as redistribution *with recognition.* In a Fanonian turn, Arraf "made herself known as a Palestinian woman" and opposed techniques of co-optation, which resolve colonial tensions through the un-

[76] Amer Shomali's animated documentary *The Wanted 18* (2014) humorously recounts this episode of historical resistance through the eyes of eighteen cows, wherein the animals are such goods to be repossessed.

recognition of Palestinian difference. Palestinian self-assertion here appears indivisible from the actual re-appropriation of colonial financial resources *claimed as such* from within the structures of the prestige economy. Arraf's gesture proves more than isolated dissent. She suggests institutionalizing Palestinian redistribution in ways similar to the First Intifada's popular committees when she adds: "Maybe it is time that we create a Palestinian fund for cinema" (Nusair 2014).

Despite her obvious critique of the colonial foundation of the Israeli state, Arraf did not pursue a state-centric vision or intent to represent the proto-state of Palestine. Rather, she delivered a statement about Palestinian identity as one that exceeds borders and citizenship – even those defined by the Oslo Accords. Contrary to Scandar Copti, Arraf claimed ownership over her film, and substantiated Abu Wael and Hamoud's calls to identify their story as Palestinian with a financial strategy of appropriation. After the Israeli government threatened to sue her for reparation, Arraf had the classification of *Villa Touma* as Palestinian removed from the Venice Mostra's website and submitted the film to TIFF as "stateless." She told *The Electronic Intifada*: "It is my refugee film. Like Palestinians everywhere, it is stateless" (Strickland 2014).

Following the controversy, then-Minister of Culture Limor Livnat introduced a new law preventing the word "Palestine" from appearing in the end credits (Nusair 2018). Two years later, the Minister of Culture Miri Regev formally submitted a bill on "loyalty in culture," to be approved by the Ministry of Justice,[77] set to give her ministry the power to retroactively withdraw funding to arts institutions and artists that "contravene the principles of the state" (Lis et al. 2016). A prolongation of the 2011 Nakba Law that forbids Palestinians to commemorate the catastrophe brought about by the foundation of Israel, the bill called for a transfer of power from the Ministry of Finance to that of Culture in ways that reinforced the close complicity of material and symbolic powers – and economic concerns of distribution with social issues of recognition. As Adalah made clear in an official statement on their website, the bill primarily targeted Palestinians (Adalah 2016). The government's response thus demonstrates that Arraf's re-appropriation of Israeli funds touches upon the foundations of colonial practices of co-optation. She offers a vision that not only

[77] In November 2018, the bill was removed from the Knesset Agenda. Yet, as the examples of the al-Midan theatres and the Barbur Gallery showed, the Ministry of culture has found other ways to jeopardize cultural initiatives that "contravened the principles of the state."

delegitimizes Israel, but also bypasses the very structure of the nation-state as the essential expression of a people.

As a '48 Palestinian grappling with colonial cultural institutions, Arraf resembles Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's "maroon" in their theorization of academic resistance from the perspective of Black radical tradition. For them, the maroon occupies an impossible position within the university, a site that promotes the capitalist philosophy of the enlightenment – and, as we saw with Wolfe, one that is part and parcel of settler expropriation. The maroon represents that which the enlightenment strove to discipline, and yet the maroon seeks to benefit from a place where knowledge is created. As a result, for Moten and Harney,

> the only possible relationship to the university today is a criminal one. […] It cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, *to be in but not of* – this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university (Harney and Moten 2013, 26, my emphasis).

Similarly, Arraf broke away from institutional representation and "stole" from the occupier. Rather than an accusation echoing the Israeli government's, describing Arraf's redistribution as stealing re-positions state and institutional structures as unfair frameworks responsible for the epistemological corruption of terms such as legitimacy. Arraf's form of stealing only proves illegal in the oppressive context in which property equates with colonial appropriation. Just like the maroon then, she abused Israel's (coercive and unwilling) hospitality, and joined its refugee colony – in the most literal as well as metaphorical way. Finally, Arraf's "counterontological violence," to repeat Ciccariello-Maher's useful phrase, according to which she re-asserts her identity as Palestinian, situates her *in* present-day Israel but *of* Palestine – stateless – thus ultimately pointing to a dialectical and geopolitical reconfiguration in which the two political spaces can overlap.

The re-appropriation of Israeli money to the benefit of Palestinian *identity* opens up geographical futures for the institutionalization of Palestinian culture beyond the confines of the proto-state. Redistribution represents a means and not an end, and as such lays out multiple possibilities for political configurations of Palestine-Israel. Redistribution and stealing operate like boycott: in both cases, the disengagement from normalizing discourses and financial partnerships are meant to produce new forms of recognition unbound by colonial property and liberal

multiculturalism. In his contribution to the volume *Assuming Boycott* (2017), Eyal Weizman similarly emphasizes the positive aspects of boycotts and strikes as acts of refusal that lead to the formation of alternative means for the production of co-resistance and a decolonized knowledge. Building on Rosa Luxemburg's idea of a mass strike, Weizman argues that withdrawal itself is action: "the strike is not only a form of non-action or a means to avoid work; its purpose is to build solidarity, steal back time, and make space for other forms of living" (Estefan and Weizman 2017, 103). In the context of Palestinian film economies, the refusal to partake in the colonial takeover of Palestinian culture translates into redistribution and the formation of Palestinian networks like those established during the First Intifada. In the following section, I explore further the potential of stealing as a term that reconfigures provocative futures, with a focus on the aesthetics and the materiality of the image. To that end, I continue paying attention to the mechanisms of cultural appropriation and definitions of property to which Palestinian strategies respond.

Stealing and Returning

In a 1990 opinion piece to the Canadian daily *The Globe and Mail* unambiguously titled "Stop Stealing Native Stories," Ojibway first people storyteller Lenore Keeshig-Tobias asks: "Why are Canadians so obsessed with native stories anyway? Why the urge to write 'Indian'? Have Canadians run out of stories of their own?" She continues: "The Canadian industry is stealing – unconsciously, perhaps, but with the same devastating results – native stories as surely as the missionaries stole our religion and the politicians stole our land and the residential schools stole our language" (Keeshig-Tobias 1990). Similarly, the co-optation of Palestinian films on the international scene parallels a different sort of cultural appropriation at the level of Israeli film production and storytelling. In 2017, Jewish Israeli Elite Zexer's *Sufat Chol*/*Sand Storm* (2016) was presented as Israel's submission to the Oscars after the film won a slew of awards and successfully navigated the independent cinema festival circuit from Berlin to Sundance. A portrayal of Bedouin life in the Naqab, *Sand Storm* more particularly attends to the trope of the arranged marriage and the restrictions imposed on Arab women by patriarchal customs. Produced with the support of the Rabinovitch Foundation, the Israel Film Council, and the Gesher Multicultural Fund, the film was entirely written by Zexer herself and features Palestinian actors in lieu of Palestinian Bedouins, allegedly reluctant to appear on camera. Zexer was said to have gained access to these communities through her mother, a photographer for the Bedouin council

who worked there for many years and "was treated like family" (Avidan 2016). After spending twelve years writing the scenario, Zexer admits:

> The biggest challenge I faced was making a film about a culture that is not my own. The traditions, beliefs, customs, language — all were very different from mine. While understanding that this is something I could never bypass or ignore, and by this I mean that *this film will always be from an outsider, I still wanted to give it my best shot and have it feel as if it were an internal voice* (Boykin 2016, my emphasis).

This quest for "authenticity" in the narrative (Staff 2017) – at the expense of acknowledging the exteriority of the filmmaker – was reflected in the Arabic translation of *Sand Storm*'s title in foreign poster and the film credits which effectively advertised it internationally as an Arab production hailing from Israel, including during its Netflix and French releases (Fig. 21). This decision is all the more significant that the original title is in Hebrew, thus allowing the film's seamless circulation within Israel. The plan to premiere *Sand Storm* in Israel with a panel of Jewish and Bedouin feminist leaders at the coexistence-promoting Peres Center for Peace (Staff 2017) suggests that the confusion around the film's promotional identity, ultimately serving to advance the Israeli filmmaker's career, was envisioned as yet another attempt at "peaceful dialogue" to the benefit of "oppressed Palestinian women."

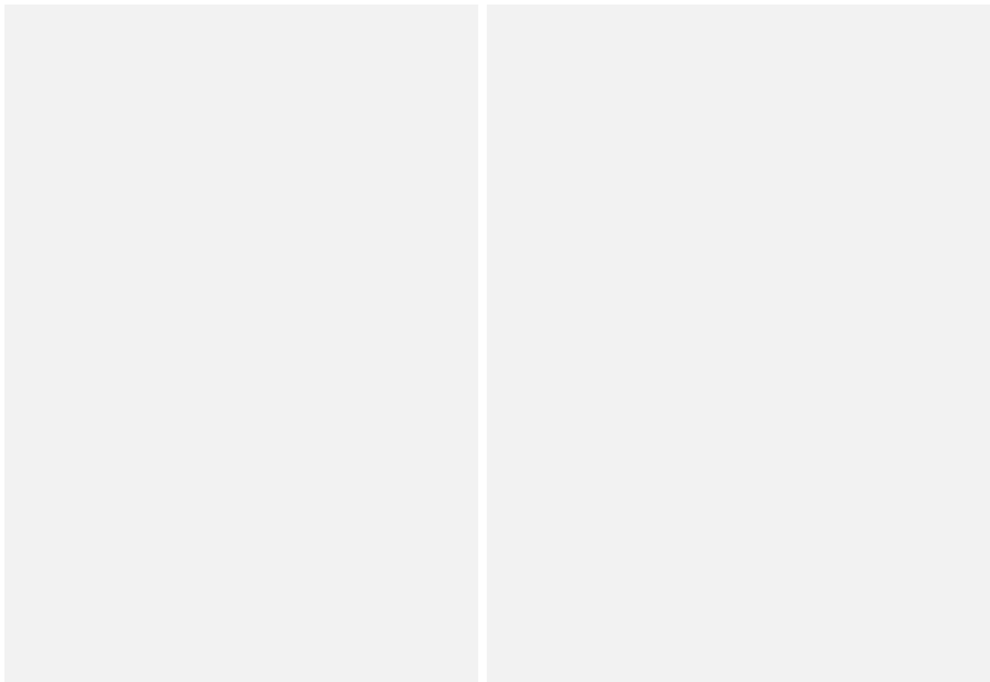

Figure 21: The Netflix and French posters for Elite Zexer's *Sand Storm* display the Arabic Title (Netflix and AlloCiné).

Yet, at the same time that *Sand Storm* was being shot, released, amassing awards and touring festivals on behalf of Israel, "unrecognized" Bedouin villages such as the one depicted in the film were being destroyed with increased intensity. The community at large faced the threat of the Prawer Plan mentioned earlier, a state-sponsored "development" project for the Naqab that endangers the livelihood and directly denies the historic and cultural permanence of Palestinian Bedouins in the area. In her recent book *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Property* (2018), Brenna Bhandar examines the articulation of racialization and legal forms of property under settler colonialism. Studying the specificity of Israeli historical appropriation of Bedouin (and broadly Palestinian) lands, she demonstrates how early political Zionists used land cultivation, an expression of European modernity, as "the primary basis for establishing a moral and legal right to land in Palestine" (Bhandar 2018, 118). In other words, early colonial resource extraction was not primarily driven by the accumulation of capital as was the case in other colonies like the United States or Canada. Rather, cultivation operated as a justification for Zionist encroachment on Palestinian land and provided an opportunity for Jewish settlers to reconnect with "ancestral land" through agricultural labor and reassert their *cultural* claim on the area. Just as *Ajami*'s success had relied on representations that could be seen to support the de-Palestinization of Arab cities, *Sand Storm*'s appropriation of Palestinian Bedouin stories was celebrated by the state and the international prestige economy. This cultural appropriation significantly concurred with Israel's material seizure of Bedouin land. While contributing to the smoke screen around the Prawer Plan internationally, the film also made evident, as Keeshig-Tobias asserts, the parallel and dialectical articulation of "stealing" lands, images, culture, and stories, which all become colonial *possessions* sanctioned by the mechanisms of settler culture and cultural industries.

This section examines how settler and anti-colonial discourses of belonging are supported by a nexus of material and symbolic meanings of property. For Elizabeth Povinelli, this nexus is primarily a temporal one. She terms it "the governance of the prior," and defines it as a liberal narrative that both acknowledges the priority of indigenous laws on the land and serves as a legal principle for the settler state across various levels and domains of social life, including "the juridical properties of the person, the personal property of the market, and the territorial property of the state and its colonial holdings" (Povinelli 2011b., 18). The governance of the prior mutually

implicates indigenous populations and the settler state in competing narratives of truth-value dictated by settler colonial temporalities of belonging and property. For instance, liberal power distinguishes between the "governed prior" who is customary and the "governing prior" who is free – freedom being here also expressed through access to property (Povinelli 2011b, 24). As a result, the governance of the prior assigns different "tenses" and property rights relations to "backward" indigenous and "modern" settlers. Indigenous people are relegated to the past perfect of a genealogical conception of history, while settlers can access the unmarked present and the future anterior as authors of their own destiny (Povinelli 2011b, 23).

The colonial struggle over material access and land use is thus doubled by a discursive one that operates as an infrastructure of its own in the service of perpetual land grabbing. For anthropologist Nadia Abu el-Haj, this infrastructure proves primarily visual. To draw a parallel with Povinelli's theoretical proposition, we can observe that the instrumentalization of visual materials supports the governing prior's attempts at superseding and effacing the governed prior by re-arranging temporal narratives of precedence. In *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society (2001),* Abu el-Haj examines archeology's entanglement with the production of fiction, facts, and the materialization of history. She demonstrates how the discipline has developed in Israel as a method of knowledge production that serves to establish the precedence of Jewish presence in Palestine through "facts on the ground." The collection and naming practices of immediately visible (arti-)facts, such as pottery and architecture, have supported the discursive narrative of Zionist nationalism with material and empirical evidence, ultimately justifying colonization (Abu el-Haj 2001, 100).

Larissa Sansour's recent video *In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain* (2016) and its parallel set of installations extends Abu el-Haj's object of inquiry to include broader image-based modes of fictionalization and storytelling in the production of the governing prior. The film is accompanied by a larger exhibition of porcelains with Palestinian motifs usually found on *keffiyehs* fabricated on an assembly line, which discredits their representation as traces of ancient civilization in the film (Fig. 22). Just like archeological discoveries, images can function as "material-symbolic facts used to render visible the land's identity" (Abu el-Haj 2001, 18) through their modes of production and representation.

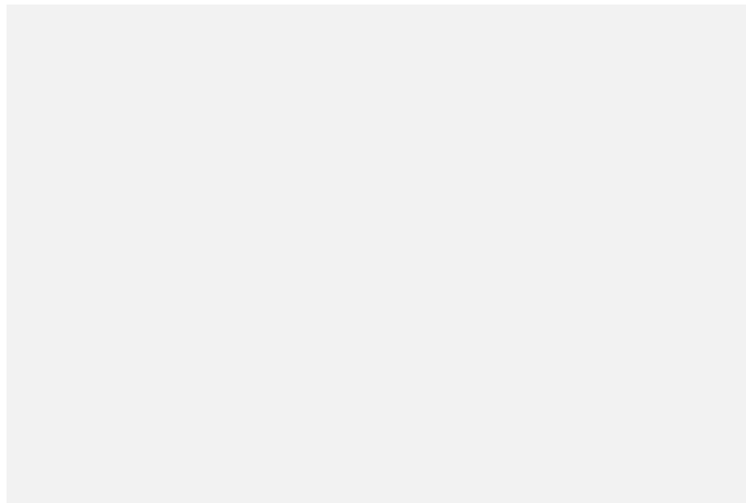

Figure 22: Larissa Sansour's *In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain* (2016), and the accompanying installation piece *Revisionist Production Line* (2017) (screenshot and the artist's website).

An exploration of the sci-fi genre typical of her broader work, Sansour's video features a "narrative resistance group" whose mission is to make underground deposits of porcelain (described as "facts on the grounds") to anticipate future claims to their vanishing land, and "*de facto* creating a nation" (*In the Future* 2016). While the civilization represented by those artifacts is suggested to be "fictional," the video muddles the distribution of roles and truth claims for whoever considers this a literal translation of the reality of Israeli occupation. The porcelain is evidently Palestinian and the self-defined "terrorist" group speaks Arabic. The narrators first appear to stand for the Palestinian point of view and culture, yet they also act as Zionist projections of Palestinians who have embraced the colonial discourse according to which they constitute a fictitious people and a terrorist threat. Meanwhile, the strategy that they implement reproduces the

colonial tactics of exploiting archeological findings as facts on the ground, which Abu el-Haj imputed to Israel, and the film even turns these into sheer forgery (a point Abu el-Haj did not make). Through this blending of positionalities, Sansour seems to be testing the limits of truth claims and history-making mechanisms, while simultaneously pointing to how these have been in fact constitutive of Israel's utilization of the discourse of the governance of the prior.

Images, along with archeology, can be instrumentalized in order to materially and discursively support processes of land appropriation and dispossession. Since the early days of colonization, the development of a Zionist imagery has proved fundamental to the system of land appropriation and colonial legitimation. Zionist modes of representation were largely influenced by preceding Christian depictions of Palestine as the holy land in which Palestinians remained either stuck in an ahistorical Biblical temporality or completely absent. For Issam Nassar,

> the absence of the Palestinian population from most photographs partially reflected both the fact that they were also absent, at some level, from the mind and consciousness of the European or American photographers and a desire to cleanse the holy land from signs and evidence of histories other than the Judeo-Christian one (Nassar 2003, 149).

For instance, between 1898 and 1948, postcards published and distributed by European commercial photographers such as the Beirut-based French company Maison Bonfils became an essential tool of image-making that travelled the world through growing Christian tourism. These postcards promoted an orientalist view of Palestine enhanced by the realistic qualities entrusted to the medium of photography at the time. For anthropologists Annelies Moors and Steven Machlin, "once Palestine had been defined as the 'Holy Land' it was a short step to transform contemporary observations into Biblical representations" (Machlin and Moors 1987, 66). Such depictions continued after the creation of the state of Israel and have nurtured the imaginary of European artists at large.

Ayreen Anastas' experimental film *Pasolini Pa*Palestine* (2005) uncovers the famous Italian filmmaker's use of orientalist and Biblical images as "material-symbolic facts used to render visible the land's identity" in *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per il vangelo secondo Matteo/Location Hunting in Palestin*e (1965), his preparatory cinematic notes to *Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo/The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (1964). Anastas intervenes in the film's editing and narration and illuminates the process by which Pasolini gains knowledge of the landscape (by *hunting* or *seeking* locations, as the various versions of the translation go) through

visual evidence and collectible details of Biblical persistence that function as facts on the ground: here the manger where Christ was born, there the faces of the shepherds that followed him. By superimposing footage from *Sopralluoghi* and a hand-drawn map of contemporary fragmented Palestine-Israel in Arabic, Anastas visualizes the geopolitical discrepancy between Pasolini's Christian imaginary of Palestine and the reality of the Second Intifada that she is living (Fig. 23). Similarly, *Pasolini Pa*Palestine* plays with the enchanted narrator of *Sopralluoghi,* which is substituted with an ironic Arabic-speaking commentator describing Anastas' reenactment of Pasolini's travels. Ultimately, the film reveals how Pasolini's peregrinations materialize his epistemological relationship to the Palestinian landscape and 1960s Palestine-Israel is turned into an *actualized* Biblical topography. Palestinians are circumscribed to a different temporality of existence (similar to Povinelli's tense) that ultimately provides a context for their disappearance, thus reproducing the logics of Povinelli's governed prior.

Figure 23 : Ayreen Anastas' ***Pasolini Pa*Palestine*** **(screenshots).**

This temporal dissonance can similarly be found in Zionist imageries. In separate studies, Nassar and Christine Pirinoli draw a direct continuity between the Christian imagination of Palestine and visualizations of the Zionist narrative of the promised land (Nassar 2003, 149; Pirinoli 2005, 68). For Bandhar, the early Zionist movement reproduced systems of value and civilizational discourses inherited from the European context in which it emerged. She writes that "the Zionist return to Palestine incorporated both Christian teleological and Enlightenment perspectives on history that posited the Jews on the side of modernity in opposition to the

orientalist world of the Arabs" (Bandhar 2018, 130). Where Christian postcards supported an industry of Biblical tourism, Zionist imageries documented the landscape's transition into modernity through the acquisition of the land. The Jewish National Fund (JNF), created at the beginning of the twentieth century with the purpose of centralizing the purchase of Palestinian land for further Jewish settlements, had its own photography department. This office was in charge of buying, ordering, publishing and mailing photographs to Europe in order to attract the immigration of new populations as well as donations (Oren 1995, 201). The JNF, along with other committed Zionist bodies such as the Jewish Agency, the General Federation of Labor, the United Jewish Appeal (UJA), and the Hadassah Jewish Women's Organization, funded documentaries for international audiences in Europe and the United States. Films like Yaakov ben Dov's *Eretz Yisrael Hamithadeshet/Eretz Israel Awakening* (1923) repeated the common narrative of the pioneer discovering the country, converting to the political ideology of Zionism, and promoting it to friends and relatives (Rosenthal 1994, 11). For Ella Shohat, early "Hebrew" cinema partook "in regarding Palestine as a kind of vacuum, an empty land to be transformed by avodah ivrit [Hebrew work] and in eliding the Arab presence there" (Shohat 2010 [1989], 29-30). Driving productions like Nathan Axelrod's *HaChalutz/The Pioneer* (1933), Aleksander Ford's *Tzabar/ Sabra* (1933), and Helmar Lersky's *Avodah/Work* (1934) was the dominant trope of "making the desert bloom," in which Jewish pioneers' hard work on the land brought development to a landscape described as unpopulated and uncivilized (Fig. 24).

Figure 24: Building the country in Helmar Lersky's *Avodah* (screenshots).

By drawing on the aforementioned funds and on pioneers' immigration, Zionist propaganda films supplied the pre-state institutions in charge of land acquisition with the discursive and material infrastructures to support their endeavor. The nexus of Zionist image-production thus collapsed representation of the land into the act of *taking possession* of it. In other words, representing the land came to imply the near-future of land grabbing. For Ruth Oren, the photographs taken in the twenty years following the establishment of the JNF's photography department "gave birth to an iconography that transcended the establishment of the state of Israel, [and] contributed significantly to the development of a sense of local heritage and culture" (Oren 1995, 207). Cultural appropriation, or colonial practices of "stealing," did not only constitute outward violent seizures of resources, representations, cultural practices, and spaces of life. As mentioned earlier, cultivation provided the legal basis for claiming ownership over a territory, "in keeping with a Lockean rationale for (land) ownership premised on labor, and a German romanticism that posited an ideal of ethnonationalism rooted in the possession of land" (Bhandar 2018, 130-131). Stealing occurred with the establishment of a system of ownership represented in propaganda films as a fact on the ground, wherein colonial laws operated as the brutal imposition of notions of legality and legitimacy inconsistent with the Palestinian practice of the land.

Despite previous land reforms under the Ottoman empire and the British Mandate, Palestinians had in contrast remained reluctant to register titles of ownership for their land, including because of misinformation. Moreover, in practice, their prolonged presence had been enough to continue holding their lands throughout. Palestinians' relationship to the land had not been one primarily defined through ownership but active care, as an elderly person whose land now falls under the jurisdiction of the Israeli National Parks and Nature Reserves Authority reminds us in Rima Essa's *Ashes* (2001):

> Now they want to teach us how to protect our trees? It's impossible to teach a farmer how to take care of his land. Many refugees have a spiritual and intellectual bond to the land. For us, it's totally a physical bond. It's not just a bond of faith and intellect. We maintain this bond in a practical manner.

When the state of Israel was established, Palestinians' failure to "officialize" ownership led to their dispossession. In the Naqab, this meant that Bedouins were categorized as landless nomads (Bhandar 2018, 136). As a result, the reality of "dispossession" claimed by all Palestinians, which

supposes a previous property here nonexisting in those terms, can at first glance represent a sort of conundrum. Instead, this paradox re-asserts dispossession as part and parcel of the mechanisms of both cultural and land appropriation, inherent to the larger system of settler-colonialism in which indigenous sovereignty *sans* property does not earn recognition. Robert Nichols argues that dispossession implies "not only the *forcible transfer* of property but *the transformation into* property, albeit in a manner that is structurally negated for some, i.e. the 'dispossessed.'" He continues: "possession does not precede dispossession but is its effect" (Nichols 2017, 5 and 15). This recoding echoes Sa'di's definition of co-optation by which appropriation means an *identity* and a *cultural* change. Cultural appropriation, whose mechanisms are logically *and materially* tied to "dispossession as a mode of property-generating theft," proves a "recursive" process (Nichols 2017, 22). Settlers can claim precedence by establishing structural mechanisms of history-telling and legitimacy that deny pre-existing systems of sociality.

So far, I have argued that images functioned as infrastructures for the material appropriation of land by producing truth claims and discursive precedence that legitimized and materially funded colonization. Furthermore, the very process of image production is also implicated in land grabbing. In *Making Settler Cinemas: Film and Colonial Encounters in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand* (2010), Peter Limbrick reminds us of the concrete materiality of the practices of producing, making, and distributing films, and their imprint on the very space occupied by the colonial state. Among other things, he mentions the cartographic method of location scouting, the engagement with landscapes as film set, and the cross-cultural negotiations over labor and use of land (Limbrick 2010, 7) as examples of colonial encounters that metaphorically and materially leave their mark on indigenous territory. Reflecting on film production practices in the Israeli film industry throughout the 1960s until the '80s, Kamal Aljafari terms the appropriation of Palestinian land through filmmaking "cinematic occupation." With this appellation, he extends the geography of occupation, oftentimes limited to the 1967 territories – as is the case, for example, in the BDS call – to historic Palestine.

In an interview with Nasrin Himada, Aljafari recalls the transformation of his home city of Jaffa into a film set for Israeli films. For the producers' convenience, Palestinians would be evacuated from their neighborhood during the shooting. Their depiction was instead assumed by Mizrahi actors (who are next to the Palestinians at the bottom of the Ashkenazi hierarchy), who had the ironic privilege of playing the Arab terrorists. Aljafari explains: "we were completely

excluded from the image and therefore uprooted twice in reality and in fiction. These Israeli films were claiming the city" (Himada 2014, 95). A process similar to the one explored with respect to *Ajami*, the filmic erasure of the Palestinian presence in Jaffa has contributed to raising the value of the land and aided the integration of the city into the periphery of Tel Aviv and its ultimate gentrification. Aljafari documents the continuing systematic expulsion of Palestinians from their family houses in his experimental film *The Roof* (2006). The cinematic occupation of the space of Jaffa, utilized for its "Arab look" and its old buildings – which the new and white city of Tel Aviv could not provide – also meant that the space was considered to be expandable, as a film set would be. Elsewhere, in a chapter dedicated to Aljafari's study of contested spaces, Peter Limbrick writes about the material consequences that resulted from re-casting Jaffa as Beirut for the film *Delta Force* (Menahem Golan, 1986), which featured Chuck Norris fighting Palestinian terrorists in Lebanon. The city was decorated with Hezbollah flags and the producers authorized explosions that caused damage to the surrounding inhabited buildings (Limbrick 2012, 237). Here as well, the imprint of fiction-making practices (as opposed to just representations) functioned as a very physical fact on the ground, and a violent stamp of ownership over the land.

Aljafari's experimental film *Recollection* (2016) responds to processes of cinematic occupation. Using found footage, Aljafari takes back the land from which Palestinians have been dispossessed, by "stealing" and partially erasing the images produced by Israeli films. *Recollection* appropriates *boureka* films from the 1970s and '80s, a popular genre dealing with "Israeli local folklore" and ethnic tensions between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, initially directed at the Jewish working class and the Oriental Jews. For Shohat, these films procured some escapism for these minority groups who expressed "the almost utopian desire to bridge the gaps of Israeli society and thus promote an image of ethnic/class equality, pluralistic tolerance, and solidarity" (Shohat 1989, 119). Along with the aforementioned *Delta Force,* Aljafari's film appropriates Menahem Golan's staple of the genre *Casablan* (1973), which portrays Jaffa in the process of demographic transition from the point of view of the Mizrahim whom the Ashkenazim establishment forces to leave the city. *Recollection* meddles in the very fabric of these films and reworks the *bourekas*' articulation of ethnic/class (in)equality, which always excludes Palestinians. The result, far from the exuberance of popular cinema or even the violent depictions of poverty and crime that *Ajami* presented of the same neighborhood, is a quiet and introspective succession of vignettes.

Aljafari's intervention was allowed by the digitization of a vast number of these *bourekas*, enabling him to delve into the image, modify it, and travel within it. More particularly, Aljafari erases the Israeli actors who people these productions at the expense of the Palestinians in a process that provocatively responds to – yet arguably does not reproduce – the elision of Palestinian presence. Simultaneously, Aljafari's camera zooms in within the image and redirects our attention towards the background (Fig. 25). We can see a Palestinian woman standing by the window in one image, and an old Palestinian boat left to decay in the port of Jaffa, a place of exile now razed to the ground, in another. In other words, *Recollection* engineers the *return* of Palestinians in their own landscapes. For Aljafari, these *bourekas* paradoxically become a potential archive of a Palestine lost to colonization and Jaffa in the hands of gentrification. During a screening of the film in New York, Aljafari pointed to the irony of these *bourekas*' initial desire to erase Palestinians, while they simultaneously provided them with a record of their past lives (Lee 2016). The film reconstructs a Palestinian history thanks to its new focus and even offers, in the end credits, a description of each Palestinian whom Aljafari, based on his family ties, could identify as an inhabitant of the neighborhood at the moment of the films' shooting. The Palestinian memory of Jaffa appears through the cracks of the film, from whence Aljafari retrieves it.

Figure 25: Israeli actors are erased and the camera zooms in the background to bring a Palestinian woman to the fore in Kamal Aljafari's *Recollection* (screenshots).

Rather than a counter-history, however, I argue that *Recollection* functions as another "combative moment" in the dialectics, to echo Ciccariello-Maher. In other words, the film refuses to resolve the tension between the supposed past of ethnic cleansing and the present Palestinian struggle. The use of contemporary sounds, captured by Aljafari during a walk in the neighborhood, asserts the temporal continuity of violence while pointing to the aural reconfiguration of Jaffa as a consequence of the filmic and urban occupation of the city. As a result, the film does not return to a time before colonization but revisits what is *already* lost. This double temporality of return, one activated, the other denied, does not necessarily call for a future without Israelis. Their erasure, although admittedly violent, opens to a new temporality *sans* colonization within the remains of the present. In other words, here again in ways that remind us of the logic of boycott, Palestinian return does not cause erasure; rather, disengaging with Israeli economies of images, representations, and modes of appropriation (as opposed to people) is necessary if we are to examine how Palestinians can return. Aljafari's previous film *Port of Memory* (2009) foregrounds this paradoxical temporality of return through a different use of *Casablan*. In it, the deployment of digital tools integrates the ghostly body of his uncle into the landscapes of the port of Jaffa, now inaccessible and destroyed. The Palestinian man travels within the past image and accompanies *Casablan*'s protagonist, who in this scene expresses longing for his homeland (Morocco).

Aljafari's uncle here stands in *his* own homeland, at the same time as his dispossession is made obvious and irreversible (Fig. 26).

Figure 26: Aljafari's uncle "returns" to *Casablan*'s untouched Jaffa in *Port of Memory* (screenshots).

While the title *Recollection* refers to a new archive of Palestinian images, re-collect could also mean "repeatedly taking payment for" and point to a new economy of Israeli images "stolen" by Palestinians. Aljafari uses this footage in total contravention of copyrights laws, systems of enclosure that reproduce and prolong colonial land grabbing. Although in small amounts, the *bourekas* were partly funded by the Israeli Fund for the Encouragement of Original Quality Films (Shohat 1989, 119) and undoubtedly belong to Israeli popular culture. Pertaining to the economy of the occupation (which we can extend to its urban ramifications explored earlier), these images partook in constructing an Israeli heritage devoid of Palestinians and have supported the development of an Israeli industry financed around colonial representations.

Aljafari's unlawful use of these films also defies the workings of the film and the contemporary art economy more broadly, which, in the context of Palestinian productions, is

largely organized around European funding organizations and copyright regulations that reproduce colonial dynamics. In the chapter cited earlier, Limbrick discusses Aljafari's disagreements with the German producer ZDF, a public-service television broadcaster, over the funding of *The Roof*. The co-producer wanted to impose a specific historical narrative unsuitable to Aljafari's politics. The filmmaker thus undertook to repossess his images and finished the film on his own terms. In a situation reminiscent of Suha Arraf's confrontation with her Israeli producers, ZDF ruled this action illegal because it claimed to own the material (Limbrick 2012, 222-223). In *Recollection*, the "stealing" of and the return into the Israeli image materialized a popular Palestinian space "com[ing] to life through a peopleing," to repeat Nasrin Himada's words. For Hamid Dabashi,

> Aljafari has confiscated the visual registers of th[e Zionist] thievery and released them into the eternity of a Palestinian claim on that land. Zionists can never possess what they stole. Aljafari, and behind him the entire visual theory of Palestine, have stolen the stolen sign of that land and smuggled it back into their homeland (Dabashi 2016).

Aljafari's claims of re-possession thus do not necessarily re-assert Palestinian *ownership* over images. Rather, it dismantles the structures of dispossession that recursively established property as a driving mechanism for colonization and film economies and invites Palestinian lands and images to receive Palestinian *use* and *care*.

In other words, as Eyal Weizman phrases it, the right of return is "*another name* for decolonization" (Estefan and Weizman 2017). In his contribution to the collective opus on BDS, *Assuming Boycott* (2017), Nasser Abourahme situates the right of return as the limit of Israeli solidarity based on a misunderstanding – with which *Recollection* provocatively plays by erasing Israeli actors. Abourahme writes: "one is struck by how return is always read as a euphemism for (vaguely defined) destruction." Yet, he argues,

> [Return] is an invitation to a future no longer bound to the trajectories of the colonial encounter, or the antagonistic identities forged in that encounter's primal event. The future not of justice (perhaps always a vanishing point), but of co-habitation in Palestine, ultimately rests on joint struggle. That joint struggle will only open up genuine newness by connecting future redress to past dispossession, by *returning* to another time altogether (Abourahme 2017, 121-122, his emphasis).

The formulation of return in temporal terms as opposed to geographical ones redefines the nature of Palestinian and Israeli collaborations, and the meaning of Israeli interactions with the land.

Boycott should precede rightful co-habitation because it functions as a "separatist moment" where the refusal to engage with Israeli institutions is not justified by any ethnic or racist component that would consolidate the relationship. Rather, rightful co-habitation follows a *temporary* exclusion that allows a new temporality to take shape. Boycott responds to the essentialist separatism of ethnic apartheid and its disingenuous dialogues around "premature reconciliation" and multiculturalism, with a strategy of institutional division and instability that foresees a different temporality of unity, that is, one that is not guided by the perpetual renewal of monolithic essentialisms. *Recollection*'s problematized erasure of Israeli actors and the re-appropriation of Israeli films can also be read as the refusal to engage in the normalization of economic interactions with Israel as a legitimate partner in trade, similar to the logics of Boycott. The film's production of a new temporality *sans* colonization within the remains of the present, which I described earlier, could thus provide one element for the "return to another time altogether," in which the place and role of Israeli Jews is left undefined and thus radically open for co-resistance.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the politics of recognition that frame, discipline, and to a certain extent condition the possibility for the film work of Palestinian citizens of Israel. The driving paradox of this chapter lay in the simultaneous recognition of successful Palestinian films as Israeli in transnational markets and their exclusion and un-recognition in the domestic space of Israel proper. This aporia only makes sense if we consider mechanisms of dispossession and erasure as inherent and crucial to the logics of settler states. Any form of recognition and integration devised within this context, and especially those that purport to advance multiculturalism, thus contribute to the active co-optation and un-recognition of Palestinian culture to the benefit of the international reputation and global presence of Israeli culture and liberalism. While the position of Palestinian citizens of Israel seems untenable, they have also strategized around the potentialities of recognition and found ways to combine it with forms of financial and symbolic redistribution. Politics of refusal, partly articulated around various forms of boycott, prove key to the reconfiguration of Palestinian identity and access to material resources. In this context, boycott is akin to a productive disengagement that translates into the proliferation of opportunities for Palestinian expression, claims to existence, and spaces of co-resistance. As a result, Palestinian strategies also disrupt the geopolitical space of Israel and share alternative, yet open and undefined,

visions of a new return to Palestine-Israel where the terms of belonging are no longer dictated by dispossession.

Conclusion: A Means, Not an End

Throughout this dissertation, I have examined the imaginaries and material possibilities of a Palestinian film industry rooted in Palestine-Israel since the Second Intifada. I termed this economic project "paradoxical" because it takes shape within contradictory political and temporal contexts. The so-called Peace Accords of 1994, under the guise of establishing the basis for Palestinian self-determination, further impressed Israel's political and economic domination over Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and the 1948 territories. Today, stagnating settler politics of occupation, siege, and apartheid by law continue to curtail Palestinians' industrial and political futures. This dissertation argued that, rather than simply impeding Palestinian film production, distribution, and exhibition, the persistence of different forms of colonization after the peace process framed specific strategies of film industrialization. Palestinian cultural workers and filmmakers have been building the foundations for their own cultural institutions in negotiation with various geographic scales of economic, diplomatic, cultural, and political power. Drawing funding from multiple stakeholders with interests in the region, the emerging Palestinian film industry intersects with and depends on economies of human rights, human development, and humanitarianism.

The project of a Palestinian film industry, even when it is localized in terms of social actors, audiences, and infrastructures, partially situates itself in dialogue with the global economies of art cinema. This dissertation also described contemporary Palestinian film economies as paradoxical in order to account for the tensions between global standards of film industrial models that inspire cultural workers on the ground and possibilities for their implementation in the fragmented and economic spaces of Palestine-Israel. Informed by this inevitable discrepancy, some of its very practitioners perceive the Palestinian film economy as "not-yet" an industry. I contended that the present of industrial formation ought to be taken seriously, not so much in comparison to what "should" be, but, instead, as a temporality that illuminates the articulation of power relations, historical structures of domination, as well as Palestinians' agency. Here, the "not-yet" does not represent the incompletion of a "weak" industry in development. "Not-yet" stands for the temporalities of Palestinian disengagement from, as well as instrumentalization and re-appropriation of, economic and cultural norms and material networks to the service of the different views of what a Palestinian film industry can become. As a methodological tool, paradox allowed

the identification of co-existing and contradictory industrial logics that make the fabric of the present. Palestinian cultural workers' strategies, debates, and attempts came to the fore in the process of writing a history of Palestinian cinema in the present tense.

By examining film industries through the lens of settler colonial economies, this dissertation placed under scrutiny unchallenged assumptions about the ways in which film industries function, the ideals they put forward, and the futurities they manufacture. Chapter Two demonstrated how local art film festivals function as *unstable* institutions adapted to the political context of the West Bank. At the same time, festivals conform to ideals of political and infrastructural *stability* produced both by the developmental economy that coexists with the military occupation and the global imaginary of film festivals. Chapter Three examined how the discourse of *sustainability* differentially organizes human rights and human development economies as well as historical militant narratives of liberation. I analyzed how this semantic and conceptual convergence, supported by very material networks, translates into ambivalent practices in Palestinian human rights and art film festivals, which coalesce around cinema outreach projects. I concluded that outreach constitutes a key issue for imagining a Palestinian film industry in harmony with a renewed project of Palestinian self-determination. Set in Gaza, Chapter Four asked how film initiatives respond to the permanent climate of *emergency*. I explained how Hamas authorities on the one hand, and independent filmmakers on the other, utilize humanitarian economies in order to support cinema as a basic human right and the reviving of Gazan film infrastructures. What emerged was a complex humanitarian visual regime which expands the definitions of human rights films and global art cinema alike. Finally, Chapter Five identified the many challenges Palestinians in Israel face when producing and circulating their films. Processes of material and cultural *recognition* are inevitably tied to modes of co-optation and appropriation by the settler colonial state. Yet, I contended, Palestinian filmmakers are establishing ways to re-organize modes of recognition and funding redistribution that challenge settler structures. Decolonizing the Israeli film economy, this chapter determined, means contesting the epistemic and material foundations of property that support both capitalist industrial structures and settler colonial regimes of appropriation and dispossession.

The project of a Palestinian film industry in Palestine-Israel – that is to say, the very possibility for Palestinian films to circulate as Palestinian, represent Palestinians, and reach Palestinians with the support of adapted funding and built infrastructures – is undeniably tied to

issues of self-determination. This dissertation did not argue that all Palestinian initiatives constitute radical projects of liberation. On the contrary, Palestinian strategies often bear the ambivalent imprints of liberal human rights and empowerment discourses. Yet, I have highlighted some avenues cultural workers and filmmakers have started to explore. The historical imaginary of the long sixties' militant decolonization informs contemporary institutionalization projects, while the transnational solidarity campaign against Apartheid South Africa inspires forms of economic and cultural disengagements from the Israeli state. The project of a Palestinian film industry may be considered young, but it is taking shape amidst a variety of transnational past legacies that attest to the complexity of film industrialization processes and the imaginaries that sustain them. Taking stock of this historical depth and considering the fabric of the aforementioned "not-yet," this dissertation has introduced a focus on temporality in order to think of the futures of Palestine-Israel through the paradoxical present. Instead of indefinitely weighing up the benefits of a two-state versus one-state solution, what types of future tenses can be imagined to reconfigure (de)colonial relations? What does a film economy of liberation, one that actively works towards liberation, as opposed to one that follows its supposed resolution, look like after Oslo? How can cultural and film economies contribute to re-organizing the material networks that allowed past colonial encounters and perpetuate their present formations? These questions call for very physical and tangible responses, which necessarily include the possibility of Palestinian refugees' return.

By repeatedly establishing the articulation of discourses and their material consequences, this dissertation sought to move beyond a mere epistemological challenge to the definition of film industries. At the center of this research lies the simple and obvious re-assertion that film economies are inherently ideological and political rather than natural, petrified, and unchangeable. Economies are multi-faceted, embedded in social and political projects, and can be manipulated and re-channeled. Film economies' organization reflects global structures of economic and racial domination as well as ways to provocatively inhabit hegemonic spaces and redefine power relations. Yet, despite its work of deconstruction and "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo 2009), this dissertation does not pretend to effectively decolonize media industries studies. Critical race and indigenous studies scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang warned us against academia's tendency to turn "decolonization" into a metaphor that assuages settlers' guilt and redeems them (me!) through conscientization (Tuck and Yang 2012). In Tuck and Yang's own words, "until stolen land is relinquished, critical consciousness does not translate into action that disrupts settler

colonialism" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 19). While framing the limitations of academic work emanating from the settler university, this does not entirely invalidate it. Rather, we should consider conscientization (which may just as well occur through non-academic work) as a necessary yet insufficient step towards active participation in indigenous and Palestinian struggles. This dissertation presents itself as a means, not an end – a mere strategy.

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