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**Between Patriarchy and Occupation:
Joyful Encounters, Intimate Politics and Endurance in Hebron**

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Abstract

By exploring intimate topologies in rural Palestine, this thesis examines Palestinian women's spaces less through the lens of occupation which emphasizes geopolitical violence and more through everyday geographies of perseverance and affect that enable women to cherish spaces of contact. It traces women's agential capacities in relation to endurance and joy as opposed to politics of occupation and patriarchy. In so doing, the thesis asks how Palestinian women from villages maintain and make sense of the spaces they inhabit. Specifically, this research meditates on the question of how women bargain and get by the double bind of patriarchy and occupation.

My research questions urge me to look at (and produce the knowledge of) spaces maintained by women, enabling them to grow powerful together under stifling infrastructures of the prolonged colonial occupation. Rather than just dwelling on the pervasiveness of occupation and patriarchy, this thesis explores, celebrates and connects with other ways of establishing durable bonds among women. Through my voluntary work with a women's handicraft cooperative, I seek to examine the operations of spatial intimacy and of women's spacings that endure under the settler colonial occupation.

In my inquiry into feminist localities and care, I explore three sites – the home, the cooperative and the village – which enable me to trace multiple dynamic relations operating over space-making, thereby helping me examine the different modes of attachment/dis-attachment, bounding and distancing, and perhaps of dwelling in rural Palestine. Shifting the focus of lenses as such on the possibilities of tracing the solidarities and sharing of communal and political responsibilities among women contributes to the literature on geographies of intimacy, affect and gender in MENA. What makes, for instance, a women's embroidery cooperative interesting, I argued, is that it overflows the gendered burden of resistance.

Contents

Acknowledgement	i
Abstract	iii
Contents	iv
Chapter 1 Introduction and Literature Review	1
Shifting the Lenses.....	1
Geopolitics or the Preoccupation with Occupation	3
Space, affect and gendered resistance in Palestine	10
Women in Hebron: Embroidery Cooperative	12
Thesis Structure	13
Chapter 2 Methodology	16
The Outsider Within	16
The Double Bind: ‘Occupation kills you, patriarchy makes you wanna kill yourself’	19
The Methods: How to Do It	25
Interlude 1 Endurance	35
Chapter 3 Locating a Palestinian Village	44
A Long Way from Tel-Arabia to Al-Khalil.....	45
From an occupying city to a lived village.....	51
Arrival: ‘We do not think of you as <i>ajnabi</i> here.’	52
In the Village.....	54
Driving Away: ‘You need to make your fun here!’	55
Occupation as an excuse	59
The Landscape of Endurance.....	60
Interlude 2 Intimacy	84
Chapter 4 Bittersweet Homespaces: Beyond the Familial and Resilient	91
Towards a Topology of Palestinian Homespaces	92
Complicating Women’s Privacy	93
Courtyards.....	94
Bittersweet Homespaces: in the wake of private patriarchy	98
Mothers-in-Law	101
Bittersweet Encounters	106
Placing Contact: Kitchenspace	111
Breathing in the Kitchen	113

The Intimate Talk at the Kitchen Table (or a Marriage That Fails).....	116
Conclusion: ‘Family is not friends’	119
Interlude 3 Joy: Connecting Spinozan Currents to Palestine.....	122
Chapter 5 Joyful Encounters at a Palestinian Women’s Embroidery Cooperative.....	129
Joyful Encounters.....	129
The Old City Shop: the Portrait of Fatma	131
Gendered Publicness in the Village	135
Stitches of Embroidery: The Stories of WomenPotentia.....	142
Exploring Spaces of Contact: The Cooperative.....	149
Beyond the Resistance vs. Resilience: <i>Sumud</i> and Joyful Agency.....	157
Conclusion	167
Chapter 6 Conclusion	168
Key Contributions	169
Landscape of Endurance	170
Intimacy of Homespaces.....	171
Joyful Encounters at a Handcraft Cooperative	173
Final remarks	175
Appendix A Fair Trade Monitoring Form	178
References.....	180

List of Figures

Figure 1: Shuhada Street in Old City, Hebron (photo:Ryan Rodrick/Activestills.org)	6
Figure 2: Sumud Project, Bethlehem (30/11/2017)	39
Figure 3: The Map of Old City, Hebron (www.alaslah.org)	61
Figure 4: "Fight Ghost Town" Old City Hebron (15/11/2017).....	62
Figure 5: Shuhada Street, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)	63
Figure 6: "Liberation, Return, Rebuilding" Old City Hebron (15/11/2017).....	64
Figure 7: Sarah's Day, Hebron (25/11/2017)	65
Figure 8: Settlers, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)	68
Figure 9: "Open Shuhada Street" Hebron (07/12/2017)	69
Figure 10: Shuhada Street, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)	70
Figure 11: Shuhada Street, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)	71
Figure 12: Old City Market, Hebron (15/11/2017).....	72
Figure 13: Old City Market, Hebron (15/11/2017).....	72
Figure 14: Shuhada Street Checkpoint (15/11/2017).....	73
Figure 15 "Land and Freedom", Shuhada Street Checkpoint (15/11/2017)	74
Figure 16: Ottoman Baths, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)	75
Figure 17: "The Wall is on My Heart" Sumud Project, Bethlehem (30/11/2017).....	76
Figure 18: "Open-air Prison" Sumud Project, Betlehem (30/11/2017)	77
Figure 19: "Settlers and Settlements" Sumud Project, Bethlehem (30/11/2017)	78
Figure 20: The Occupation Wall, Bethlehem (30/11/2017)	79
Figure 21: The Occupation Wall, Hebron (12/12/2017).....	80
Figure 22: Birdhouse, Hebron (12/12/2017).....	81
Figure 23: View of the Village (10/11/2017)	95
Figure 24: The Grieving Ceremony (10/01/2018).....	97
Figure 25: "This is Palestine - Fight the Ghost Town" Graffiti, Hebron (15/11/2017).....	131
Figure 26: Cooperative's Shop in the Old Quarter of Hebron (21/11/2017).....	132
Figure 27: Fatma, the Shopkeeper, Hanging Scarves, Hebron (21/11/2017)	134
Figure 28: Courtyard, Village (15/12/2017)	138
Figure 29: Courtyard, Village (15/12/2017)	138
Figure 30: Handmade Palestinian Rugs, Village, 2018.	147
Figure 31: "Women Can Do Anything" Purses, Cooperative, (07/01/2018).....	148

Figure 32: Interview, Cooperative (22/12/2017)	150
Figure 33: Grandmothers, from different villages of Hebron (22/12/2017).....	153
Figure 34: A day of cooking in the cooperative (15/12/2017).....	155
Figure 35: Playroom, Cooperative (15/12/2017).....	157
Figure 36: Darya is making embroidery at home, Village, 2018.....	165

Chapter 1 Introduction and Literature Review

Shifting the Lenses

In one of the frequent evenings that I was invited for dinner, I was feeling appreciated yet timid about my initiation to social life in the village. Yafa, the host of the dinner, and I clicked very soon after I arrived at the village to conduct my fieldwork. My host family introduced us as Yafa and her husband were part of the extended family. Initially, I was invited to stay overnight, but as much as I was touched by her courtesy and hospitality, I did not feel comfortable with the idea of spending the night in a different house than my host family's place. With the help of Faryal, the founder of the women's embroidery cooperative that I volunteered for and was hosted by, I kindly declined the offer and went to the dinner instead. A women-only evening of chatter over delicious Palestinian homemade food... What else could I have hoped for in the second week of my fieldwork?

I was pleasantly warmed by the joy of feeling at ease with my surroundings and a bit surprised by how well the dinner went through the night. An intimate proximity was afforded by cultural literacy and emotional lucidity towards newly established relationships in the village gave me a sense of familiarity as if we had known each other for a long time. The Palestinian home, for that matter, was more of an all-encompassing shelter than a castle where I felt welcomed. There were eight of us in the room: Faryal (50, the director of the *Women in Hebron* cooperative), Regina (16, her daughter), Yafa (27, the host), Aunt Nesrin (55, Yafa's mother-in-law), Sarah (17, her daughter), Ruba and Laila (both 7, Aunt Nesrin's daughters-in-law), accompanied by the circulation of approximately ten small, restless children. Later in the evening while we were having tea, I realized that I was gathered with the women that I was close with in one room but not all of them were related to the cooperative, so I asked:

H: What has changed in your lives in the past decade?

- A lot did. We got married and had kids.

H: Would you say it got better or more difficult?

- It is better now. Everything is easier. I mean, developed. We have washing machines, dishwashers, everything now.

The answers were quite unexpected to me as my interlocutors were affirmatively positive and attentive to everyday life. The past decade that is referred to in my question,

indeed, is just after the 2nd intifada. It happens to be the post-Oslo period where Palestinian people had endured the gradual failure of two-state solution and corruption in the Palestinian Authority, the neoliberalization and NGOization of the grassroots movement building, the mushroomed settlements in the Occupied Territories, the on-going blockade in Gaza, the political marginalisation and dehumanization, just to name a few (cf Ilan, 2018; Peteet, 2017). The encompassing sense of frustration and desperation was in the air. I elaborate more on the materialization of the landscape of endurance in Chapter 3.

During the dinner, none of the women explicitly mentioned the negative effects of the prolonged occupation, the increasing attacks by Zionist settlers and the tightened military rule on their lives. At least, that was neither the first nor the most important thing they recalled about the last ten years. Writing this introduction, I vividly remember and reflect on my own expectations: what made me ask that question and what to do with the answers? In retrospect, I am glad that I was not given any ready-made stories that Indigenous communities prepared to serve predominantly white researchers (cf Smith, 2012: 1–3). My interlocutors would rather choose to talk about the daily dramas of their households and culturally gloried major life events such as marriage and having a baby. Here, I treat my surprise as an invitation to participate in Palestinian women's lives in order to shift the lenses of our analytic inquiry on gendered lives in rural Palestine. I hope this thesis contributes to the de-centring of the canonized knowledge on Palestine (and occupied geographies) to reterritorialize research in a way that allows capturing some of the mundane, entangled, intimate, embodied experiences of sustaining gender and space-making.

This thesis, in doing so, attempts to open up the empirically-grounded theoretical space to think of Palestinian women otherwise. Living in their homeland fissured by violence and inhabiting gendered bodies shall no longer trap them into the binary of being victims (of religion, family, patriarchy) or heroes of the nation. Their subjectivity cannot be limited to the sacred caregivers, the mothers of the nation (Peteet, 1997; Richter-Devroe, 2012a). At the intersection of the settler colonial occupation and patriarchy, I examine the ways in which gendered lives are sustained in Palestine by re-centring the emotional, affective and enduring geographies of women from villages across Hebron. In so doing, I explore what women find interesting to tell or avoid talking about, what excites them or makes them laugh whilst resonating with their wishes, expectations, longings and desires. I pleasantly accept the invitation to have dinner and listen to the stories of washing machines, children and mothers-in-law and embroidery.

The thesis, then, looks at Palestinian women's spaces less through the lens of occupation, which emphasizes geopolitical violence, but more through the everyday geographies of perseverance as well as affective and intimate relations that enable women to cherish spaces of contact. It examines the question of women's agency in relation to endurance and joy and as opposed to the politics of occupation and patriarchy. Along with a number of scholars such as Chris Harker and Rema Hammami, I argue that the violence of occupation and settler colonialism requires a relational and topological understanding of space-making beyond a blanket statement that Palestinians are oppressed and dehumanized (Hammami, 2015; Harker, 2014b). As Lisa Taraki eloquently puts it:

[...] the political reality must be the basic backdrop against which we examine the routines of life and small dramas of daily life; it thus foregrounds the salient aspects of the enduring and ubiquitous conditions of war, near-war, threat, instability and vulnerability experienced by Palestinians for over five decades (2006: xii).

In light of this analytic refocusing, the thesis engages with two overarching research questions:

1. How do Palestinian women from villages maintain and make sense of the spaces they inhabit?
2. How do they bargain with and get by the double bind of patriarchy and occupation?

Geopolitics or the Preoccupation with Occupation

In geographic research, Palestine is typically envisioned as a site for geopolitics rather than socio-cultural geographies (Harker, 2009). Whilst acknowledging the gravity of the politics of Occupation in conditioning space-making in Palestine, this thesis treats it as a vital background of social-cultural work that Taraki highlights above. I, thus, focus my theoretical attention on the intimate registers rooted in everyday life as well as the neglect of the relational nature of space in geographical literature on Palestine.

In his work on the colonial politics of space-making in Palestine-Israel, Eyal Weizman introduces the term 'politics of verticality' to acknowledge the unique geopolitics of the Occupied Territories in which Israel maintains and controls the Palestinian space through '[...] making the ground below and the air above separate and distinct from, rather

than continuous with the surface of the earth' with the help of militarized architecture and planning (Weizman, 2007: 12–15). He argues that architecture and planning have long been the means of dispossession at the hands of Israel. He focuses on the 'fragmented' territories of expansion of outposts, checkpoints, settlements, the Israeli Separation Wall, closures, security zones in order to understand the organization of space across the occupied Palestinian territories. To put it more fully, he looks at 'the contested frontiers of the conflict' where we witness the interplay of different spatial technologies: 'a system of colonial control' as well as 'a means of separation' (ibid: 3).

Particularly in his more recent works, Weizman (2011) also extensively elaborates on the Israeli logic of surveillance and legal system, 'the humanitarian present' which has been informing Israel's warfare in maintaining the occupation. In cooperation with the vertical politics of landscape, the term 'split sovereign' refers to the invisible control of Israel on the occupied territories governed under the two-state solution. After the ending of the Oslo negotiations in 1993, the restrictions on the Palestinian movement has gradually increased and the architecture of occupation has been devoted to separate Palestinians from Israelis at every opportunity. The checkpoint system and the Separation Wall would be the most apparent examples of how the occupation has been carving space and time. According to Weizman, this invisible domination of Israel gets crystallized the most in the architecture of border terminals which are designed in a way that one-way mirrors facing the incoming passengers enable the Israeli police to monitor not only Palestinian travellers but also and more importantly the Palestinian police.

The constant efforts in the vertical reorganization of a fragmented Palestine, however, bring with it a 'border-anxiety' about how to prevent suicide bombers' arrival in Israeli spaces (Long, 2006). As Weizman also puts it, the separation of Israel from Palestine is an unattainable project as 'the two political/geographical concepts [...] refer to and overlap across the very same place' (Weizman, 2007, 16). Palestine was wiped off the map through the creation of Israel since the occupation's aim is to 'gain land without the people living in' (ibid. 140). Joanna Long's article (2009) 'Rooting Diaspora, Reviving Nation: Zionist Landscapes of Palestine-Israel' provides valuable insights on this disinheritance of the settler colonial project. During the creation and naturalization of the Israeli nation state, 'citizen planters,' or planting trees, a practice that is '[...] widely perceived as inherently good and therefore apolitical,' had been in the service of Zionist discourse (ibid, 75). The Jewish National Fund had long circulated the representations of Palestine as 'naked,' 'empty' and depopulated sacred space, 'exploited by Arabs' and in need of redemption by settlers via tree-

planting and forestation. And by remarking the image of a forested landscape, it aimed to ‘interfere with Palestinian landscape memory’, to ‘dispel the desires to return’ by rendering the landscape unrecognizable (ibid, 73).

To understand the geographic impossibility of Palestine without the Palestinians, a deeper engagement on the link between the disinheritng settler colonial roots of the Israeli nation state and the constant failure in the spatial apartheid in the present is required. In his article ‘The Other Shift: Settler Colonialism, Israel, and The Occupation,’ Lorenzo Veracini (2013) aims to examine the Israel-Palestine conflict through the lens of colonial studies. He starts this task by examining the different features and objectives of colonialism and settler colonialism. In his terminology, the former can only succeed by keeping the colonizer and the colonized separate whereas the latter’s ultimate success depends on its capacity to indigenize settlers to the point in which they would no longer be seen as settlers. In doing so, colonialism attempts to secure permanent domination of the indigenous population while ruling from the centre and relies heavily on population controlling regimes and surveillance. Settler colonialism, on the other hand, involves ‘efforts to erase indigenous peoples for the purpose of replacing them with another socio-political body’, and therefore requires major demographic swapping.

Focusing on the pre-1948 period when Israel itself emerged as a successful settler colonial project and the 1967 post-war period, Veracini mentions a similar geographical paradox that the Zionist project starts to fail to actualize itself in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza. It is because the very success of the occupation of these territories through control and segregation and surveillance renders the settler colonial project’s success impossible in terms of integration/indigenization of the settlers (ibid). To put it more fully, for a settler colonial project to be successful, a normalization process is required after the first occupation and displacement of the population whereas colonialism refers to more of a constant state of occupation since there is a constant need for reproduction and maintenance of control. Veracini conceptualizes this antithetical situation of occupied territories as ‘recolonization of the settler colonial project.’ In the West Bank’s case, for example, ‘the enforcement of segregation everywhere has resulted in creating a colonized subjectivity mirroring the institution of colonial, rather than settler colonial forms’ (ibid.).

While trying to make sense of the major increase in Palestinian injuries and deaths, Gordon (2008) reflects on the ‘reorganization of power’ in relation to the changing nature of Israel’s 40-year long occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. He defines two major principles that have structured the occupation: ‘the colonization principle,’ very much

resembling the features of colonialism, and ‘the separation principle.’ At this point, the latter requires more of our attention to understand ‘the recolonization of Palestine’ (Veracini, 2013). The separation principle overlaps with the vertical politics where Israel has no interest in the lives of Palestinians, but only in the extraction of resources and land confiscation.



Figure 1 Shuhada Street Old City Hebron (photo: Ryan Rodrick/Activestills.org)

Looking at Palestine-Israel through the lens of the colonial/settler colonial framework leaves us with further discussion on the limitations of the logic of partition and the two-state solution. As figure 1 above successfully captures, settler colonialism is very much about claiming a space of your own, a home/land in the world, therefore yourself as the landowner, not others (see also chapter 3). The picture above is taken in a street in Hebron which is off-limits to Palestinians, therefore it would not be wrong to say that it addresses Jewish settlers. It is in such capacity of shaping people’s sense of selves, attachments and identifications with space that settler colonialism is an intimate project as much of a brutal one. This study, in this respect, investigates Palestinian women’s counter-veiling intimate practices of living with occupation rather than settler colonialism per se.¹

¹ On how the micro geographies of violence are very much linked to the intimate workings of a settler society, orienting the ways in which Jewish Israelis experience and navigate the occupation, see Natanel, K. (2016). Border collapse and boundary maintenance: militarisation and the micro-geographies of violence in Israel-Palestine. *Gender Place and Culture* 23(6) 897-911.

The existing literature's preoccupation with occupation has resulted in a proliferation of scholarship which overwhelmingly looks at the (vertical) topographies of occupation (Gordon, 2008, 2008; Gregory, 2004; Halper, 2000; Long, 2006; Repo and Griffiths, 2018.; Segal et al., 2003; Weizman, 2007), which seek to reveal the new modalities of power emerging in the late modern colonial geographies (Mbembé, 2003). The spatial-political condition of Palestine, the case of the continued settler colonialism, the political and economic violence as well as the Palestinian Authority's adoption of neoliberal policies necessitate the examination of complex and relational aspects of space-making (see, for instance, Harker, 2020). To do so, topology as an analytical tool can enable us to account for not only vertical spaces of occupation, as it has dominantly captured geographers' attention, but also horizontal spacings as well as the relations between the two. Here, I use the term topology to refer 'not to surfaces but to the relations and to interactions between relations' (Murdoch, 2006, 12). Scholarly-wise, topology tends to be conceptualized on a very abstract level (Allen, 2011a, 2011b, Jacobs and Malpas, 2013, Malpas, 2012, Paasi, 2011) in a way that the analytical possibilities of the term remain underutilized. That being said, by conducting ethnographic research, I would like to apply topology to examine relations of intimacy (see Interlude 2 and chapter 4).

Most ethnographically oriented research has been done in anthropology on the ordinary topologies and everyday geographies of Palestine, and it shows that the intensity and complexity of intimate geographies 'exceed a vertical framing' and require a more nuanced account of 'getting by occupation' (Allen, 2008, Hammami, 2004, Harker, 2014). Feminist imaginaries (Nash, 2005, Valentine, 2008) have also challenged the conventional geographical assumptions by giving more agency to the domestic, the ordinary, the familiar, the intimate spacings since they bear their own importance as politically charged productive realms (Bishara, 2015; Natanel, 2013, 2016b; Richter-Devroe, 2011; Salih, 2016). Yet, the geographical literature on Palestine largely ignores the role of the intimate and the affective due to the dominant use and easiness of words like occupation, colonization and surveillance in explaining the different configurations of power operating over space (except Griffiths, 2017; Harker, 2009, 2010b; Joronen and Griffiths, 2019). This research aims to look at Palestinian women's spacings less through the lens of occupation and thereby, challenge the dominant interpretations of Palestinian space. By acknowledging the affective and intimate registers, I aim to give an empirical account of what difference it makes to grasp space topologically.

My key concern with the geographical literature on Palestine is that most of the time it fails to fully capture the contested nature of space. Looking at Palestine less through the lens of occupation and adopting a more relational approach to space can tell us more about heterogeneities, multiplicities and co-constitution taking place on the ground. The violence of occupation and settler colonialism does still require a nuanced understanding of space-making beyond a blanket statement that Palestinians are oppressed and dehumanized. More importantly, the danger of current scholarship lies in the possibility of reproducing the colonizing discourse by reifying the Palestinian space as ‘hollow’ (Weizman, 2007) and ‘shrinking’ (Falah, 2003) land. Palestine is not just a carved out space; it has many other meanings for Palestinians. Above all, as it is captured in Mahmoud Darwish’s (2013) poem *I Belong There*, in which Palestine is a long-dreamed homeland:

To break the rules, I have learned all the words needed for a trial by blood. I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them a Single word:
Home

However, only rarely has Palestinian space been interpreted through the lens of Palestinians and many scholars in the field have failed to recognize Palestinian agency. Aside from Christopher Harker’s exceptional work on familial relations and home-making practices, most geographical research on Palestine continues to apprehend space as a container of violence and occupation (Harker, 2009, 2012). Harker argues that familial geographies, or ‘the family-subjects as sources of ethical practice,’ play an important role in reducing different groups of people’s exposure to violence, injury and death in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Another important aspect to bear in mind is that relational space is ‘power- filled’ (Murdoch, 2006, 20). Indeed, the ethnographer Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) warned against the tendency to romanticize resistance and instead suggested conceptualizing resistance as the ‘diagnostic of power’ to understand the broader dynamics of oppression and control.

[...] Attention to the forms of resistance in particular societies can help us become critical of partial or reductionist theories of power. [...] Yet it seems to me that we respect everyday resistance not just by arguing for the dignity or heroism of the resisters but by letting their practices teach us about the complex interworkings of historically changing structures of power (ibid. 53).

Through trying not to romanticize resistance while also acknowledging the power geometries embedded in the present, which therefore inevitably effect bodies' capacities for affecting and being affected (see also Interlude 1), I will trace the seemingly private and innocuous intimate spacings in relation to broader shifts in the recolonization of Palestinian space as well as Palestinians women's endurance at home and beyond (Chapter 3, 4 and 5).

Everyday Doings in Palestine

The limited but fruitful studies focusing on the ordinary topologies of Palestinian life have shown that Palestinians are able to find cracks in vertical topographies (Allen, 2008; Bishara, 2015; Hammami, 2015; Harker, 2012, 2014b; Kuttab, 2006; Richter-Devroe, 2011). In exploring the specific geographic context of Hebron, I look at women's spacings, more precisely, the geographies of intimacy and joy in relation to, and as opposed to, the politics of occupation. I attend more to Palestinian women's perceptions of family, home and homeland, in the sense of the cultural geography of Palestine, and less to the dominant discourse of occupation.

Contrary to the literature on geopolitics that I briefly engaged so far, as noted before there is more anthropological research available, successfully capturing the relational nature of bodies and spaces as living relations enacted by and enacting to. Bishara's (2015) ethnography of driving Palestinians (subalterns) in Israel, for example, shows how Palestinians are able to strategize in order to make their journeys happen through the colonized spaces. In addition, Peteet's (2017) insightful research examines the territorial fragmentation experienced by Palestinians within their own land through various mechanisms of spatial control and argues that the 'spatial regime of incarceration' enables Israel to 'control' and 'contain' Palestinian resistance and mobility. In Palestine, where control is very much territorialized and immobility is almost always enforced, movement itself becomes central in the struggle between Palestinian survival and Israeli domination. Ethnographic work of checkpoints sheds light on the ways in which Palestinian exerted a certain level of power in the contested space and, 're-imposed order from chaos' by re-organizing their own informal networks, 'either enabling people and goods to go through the checkpoint or around it' (Hammami, 2015: 39).

The existing literature on Palestinian resilience amidst the settler colonial occupation has looked at household economy (Kuttab, 2006), familial relations (Harker, 2010, 2012), cultural and aesthetic production (Salih and Richter-Devroe, 2014, Sayigh, 1998), urban

space (Allen, 2008, Harker, 2014) and refugee camps (Allan, 2009, Ramadan, 2009). In her article 'The Paradox of Women's Work Coping, Crisis, and Family Survival,' Eileen Kuttab (2006) raises the question of what happens to the Palestinian household, mainly under the control of women, both in relation to the long-term consequences of occupation and in the moments of crisis. She further concludes that Palestinian women have developed different coping strategies in the different stages of the political struggle, from the first intifada to the present. According to her, the Palestinian economy consists of 'resistance economies located in household,' functioning as a 'means of steadfastness.' In a similar vein, Harker's (2010, 2012) works on family spacings emphasize the role household and familial relations play in survival. Palestinian families are able to find their ways out of or, lessen the cruel effects of occupation. Members of an *a'lia* (larger family), for example, can start living in the same house to reduce the living cost if needed.

One point that I would like to emphasize and is important to acknowledge for my own project is that the Palestinian family is somewhat idealized as a shock absorber and 'the privileged symbol of Palestinian resilience' (Taraki, 2006, xviii). Yet, it is essential to note that households and families are not free of conflict and the Palestinian family is a gendered place (see interlude 2 and chapter 4 for further discussion). Being aware of the fact that family is a multi-dimensional, dynamic site in which to start tracing the flourishing geographies of intimacy, it is important to remember that it is not the only one. Recent scholarship proves that intimacy and care can take place beyond the family, proving the inter-spatiality of such practices (Valentine, 2008). Therefore, I argue that in order to account for the less vertical and more topological everyday spacings and the ways in which they are produced, imagined, negotiated by Palestinian women, we need to pay attention to affective intimate registers in a broader sense.

Space, affect and gendered resistance in Palestine

In addition to the more recent literature on Palestinian survival and resilience discussed above, there is an extensive interdisciplinary work that centres gendered resistance in Palestine (Abdo, 1991, 1991, 1999; Frances S Hasso, 1998; Hammami and Johnson, 1999; Kuttab, 2010; Peteet, 1992, 1997; Richter-Devroe, 2011; Sharoni, 1994a). This section tackles this body of work in relation to understanding of the role of gender in the formations of Palestinian resistance and its (lack of) attentiveness to spatial and affective

politics.

The literature that has centred Palestinian women's experience has largely done so by entangling the dynamisms of resistance given the vital role of the national liberation movement and the two Intifadas in shaping Palestinian social fabric. Pointedly, some of this literature underlined the structures of mass organizing under the PLO (Abdo, 1999) as well as the tension between nationalism and feminism given the ever-present risk of the national liberation discourse to erase women's political participation and intersectional struggles (Amireh, 2003; Frances S Hasso, 1998). Following such critique, Nahlo Abdo, as early as at the time of the 1st intifada, suggested that '[...] feminist research has shown that the victory of the socialist or nationalist revolution is not necessarily a victory for women' (Abdo, 1991: 19).

Besides, there is also a more recent body of research that focuses on conventional socio-political forms that are usually assumed to be structuring communities. These works have examined the role of kin groups and village networks, household management as steadfastness (Kuttab, 2006), the gendered division of resistance (Richter-Devroe, 2012), and the political subjectification of women and its transformative effects on the already existing gender roles (Peteet, 1991). Julie Peteet (1997), for example, talks about how the nationalist formation of women as the maternal icons of the nation empowered Palestinian women by validating their political positioning. On the other hand, such gendering of citizenship did not challenge the already existing division of caring labour in Palestinian society, thereby constraining women.

Yet, the literature on Palestinian women's everyday doings, their practices of resilience alongside the participation in the resistance movement does not provide an explicit account of spatial intimacies and affective politics that take place under the prolonged occupation and patriarchy. Following the feminist scholars (Berlant, 1998, Stoler, 2002, Valentine, 2008, Zengin, 2016, Zengin and Sehlikoglu, 2016) who have convincingly demonstrated that intimacy provides a powerful analytical rubric in understanding how women make sense of themselves as well as of the outside world, in this research, I will further interrogate the relationship between doing intimacy and undoing occupation.

I use the term undoing in a Spinozist sense in relation to affect: to a body's affective capacity to respond, act, persevere and change. To put it more fully, the whole thesis shall be read as an act of 'political intimacy' as a project committed to enacting solidarity with

Palestinian women (see also Tabar and Desai, 2017). It is in that spirit, and against the grains of patriarchy and the settler colonial occupation, I further explore intimate and affective spaces that increase Palestinian women's individual and collective capacity to act. '[...] The move to affect shows up new political registers and intensities, and allow us to work on them to brew new collectives in ways which at least have the potential to be progressive' (Thrift, 2004: 58). Besides, the growing literature on spatial activism in Palestine/Israel (Misgav, 2015; Ritchie, 2015) argues that space is an indispensable pivot of analysing 'contentious politics' through which embedded social action and inter-subjectivities unfold (Leitner et al., 2008). Foregrounding affect in the analysis of women's semi-private spaces of work and conviviality demands our analytics to look at intimate topologies beyond the dichotomy of resistance vs. resilience in the existing literature (Abdo, 1991, 1999, 2002; Abu Nahleh, 2006; Fleischmann, 2000; Richter-Devroe, 2008, 2011, 2012a).

At this point, I would like to go back to my overarching objective, to what takes my attention the most: can there be a relationship between doing intimacy and undoing occupation? Here, I purposefully use the term doing intimacy, first of all, so as to refer to the intimate geographies, or what Lauren Berlant calls 'modes of relating' which involve 'proximity, solidarity, collegiality, friendship, the light touch and intermittent ones [...]' (Berlant, 2011, 687). She uses the term to apprehend 'a web of affects that connects people and which, through such connection, both creates and allows for an imagination of a different "habitable material present, or world"' (Salih, 2017, 3). Secondly, I chose to use the word 'doing' because as a verb, it implicitly involves an agency that might help us capture some possible coping and resistance mechanisms, some mundane ways that enable Palestinian women to endure and carve out spaces of friendship, solidarity and potentia.

Women in Hebron: Embroidery Cooperative

In this research, by focusing on *Women In Hebron*, I seek to examine the operations of spatial intimacy and of women's spacings that endure under the settler colonial occupation. *Women In Hebron* is a Palestinian women's embroidery cooperative established in 2005, providing income for more than 120 women from eight different villages across the Hebron district. Today, the cooperative maintains its characteristic as the only women-run business in the centre of the old city market of Hebron. In addition to the

economic empowerment of Palestinian women and their families, women see the cooperative itself as ‘an act of community-strengthening, of honouring the role of women in our society, and a means to show ‘sumud’ – steadfastness – in the face of the occupation of Palestine [...]’.² From this point of view, the thesis examines intimate spaces that are managed, produced and maintained by women.

My research questions urge me to look at (and produce the knowledge of) spaces maintained by women, enabling them to grow powerful together under the stifling infrastructures of the prolonged colonial occupation. Rather than just dwelling on the pervasiveness of occupation and patriarchy, this thesis examines, celebrates and connects with other ways of establishing durable bonds among women (see also methodology chapter for a discussion on my positioning as an affective witness). In this research, my focus has been on the possibilities of tracing the solidarities and sharing of communal and political responsibilities among women, which transgress normative ethical and moral expectations such as mothering. What makes, for instance, a women’s embroidery cooperative interesting for me is that it overflows the gendered burden of resistance.

Thus to repeat the two overarching questions that I addressed at the beginning:

1. How do Palestinian women from villages make sense of the spaces they inhabit?
2. How do they bargain with and get by the double bind of patriarchy and occupation?

Thesis Structure

The thesis, in this regard, dwells on *Women in Hebron* as ‘spaces of otherwise,’ what Povinelli (2011: 6–11) has referred to in imagining the source and space of new possibilities of life. **Chapter 2** offers insights into the feminist ethics and politics that I have adopted in designing, researching and writing up this project through my affective witnessing before/during/after the fieldwork. The main body of the thesis includes interludes that further develop specific bodies of literature and theory in order to refine analytical concepts, and chapters that put those analytical concepts to work empirically on Palestinian women’s doings of intimacy and undoings of occupation.

² See *Women In Hebron*’s website: <http://www.womeninhebron.com/win/our-story>

Interlude 1 meditates on the theoretical contribution of the term of endurance in understanding gendered geographies. And the following **chapter 3** starts unpacking the gendered-ness of impasse in Palestine by grappling with how gendered spaces fissured by the violence of colonization and patriarchy made inhabitable by women as well as the landscape of endurance. ‘Usually, an “impasse” designates a time of dithering from which someone or some situation cannot move forward’ (Berlant, 2011b: 4). The intersecting dominations of patriarchy and occupation over women’s bodies result in an impasse which requires an attunement to immanent geographies of (im)mobility and affect.

In the spirit of the theoretical shifting of lenses discussed in this introduction, chapter 3 starts contextualizing women’s spaces that go beyond the topographic mappings and vertical politics in Palestine. In order to portray how livelihoods are sustained through a mode of living amidst the settler colonial occupation, I introduce the analytical concept of endurance. Endurance, then, allows me to capture the stretch of time, the spatio-temporalities of adjustment, perseverance and moving on with life, ‘a poetic of immanent world making.’ Chapter 3 also portrays the ways in which the affective realms of enjoyment and tacitness co-constitute space alongside the occupation that mediates the lived experience through landscape.

Concomitant to the ‘gathering up scenes of affective adjustment to material that mediates the ongoing present’ (Berlant, 2011b: 15), **Chapter 4** expands the analysis of gender into the cultural geography of Palestinian homespaces. The strength of home as a site of elucidation comes from how intimate world makings that take place there cause the collapse of the seemingly distinct public and private sentiments. Thus **Interlude 2** revisits intimacy as an analytical rubric and its theoretical potentials. Exploring homespaces, including different multilayers (floors, kitchens, courtyards) and intimate relations (topologies of gender), help me undo some of the binaries such as private/public, inside/outside, home/work spaces. In my analysis of such crosscutting sentiments, I trace bittersweet and haunting encounters that take place within the homespaces to show how public patriarchy sneaks into and co-constitute private home.

The first two empirical chapters pave the way for analysis of ‘spaces of otherwise’ by examining the role endurance (see interlude 1) and intimacy (see interlude 2) intermingled to women’s potentia. **Interlude 3** and the following chapter on the cooperative propose the cooperative as joyful space of contact. Interlude 3 examines the theoretical underpinnings of spatial arrangements that afford women joy, conviviality and solidarity. The subsequent **chapter 5** builds on a women’s handicraft cooperative in rural Palestine as a joyful space of

contact (with other women) and *unlearning* (of patriarchy). Whilst interlude 3 contemplates on the politics and possibilities of connecting the Spinozan theoretical currents with research on Palestine, the subsequent chapter dwells on the emergent agential capacities of Palestinian women from villages that are rooted in the affective spectrum of joy and its uplifting power/spaces.

In my inquiry into feminist localities and care, I explore three sites (the home, the cooperative and the village), which enables me to trace multiple, dynamic relations operating over space-making and thereby helping me examine different modes of attachment/dis-attachment, of bounding and distancing, and perhaps of dwelling in rural Palestine. Finally, **chapter 6** provides an overall discussion on the academic contributions that the thesis presents.

Chapter 2 Methodology

Drawing on the scholars that cherished the conversations around feminist ethics and politics in research (Ahmed, 2017; hooks, 2015) and feminist ‘conversation as care’ (Elwakil and El-Nabli, 2019), I tried to find the words and methodology that would articulate such feminist care while designing and writing up this project. I hope to articulate a method legible for academia that does not reproduce the violence of abstraction yet cares about the prolific ways in which ‘[...] even as we experienced, recognized, and lived subjection, we did not simply or only live in subjection as the subjected’ (Sharpe, 2016: 4). This thesis, then, examines the colonial and patriarchal power structures (of especially three sites: the village, the homespace and the embroidery cooperative) from the perspective of those who are subjected to them and at the same time destabilizing them by affirming the intimacies of otherwise (see chapter 3, 4 and 5).

In tune with the overarching questions of the thesis (discussed through introduction) the following chapters care about Palestine, especially Palestinian women and the spaces they inhabit, not to fix answers to those questions, but perhaps to walk with them. In her work *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Christina Sharpe (2016: 10) asks what it means to centre Black people in research, ‘always living in the push toward our death?’ In this thesis, I trace my own questions as Sharpe answers to hers: ‘It means work. It is work: hard emotional, physical, and intellectual work that demands vigilant attendance to the needs of the dying, to ease their way, and also to needs of the living’ (2016: 10). Attempting to do the vigilant work of care where Palestine stands still as an issue of decolonial feminist theory building (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin, 2019; Elia, 2017), I raise three questions that frame this chapter and ground my methodology:

1. The Outsider Within: How did I end up doing this project?
2. The Double Bind: Occupation or Patriarchy?
3. The Methods: How to do it?

The Outsider Within

A story always starts before it can be told
(Ahmed, 2017: 4).

This section scrutinizes my ethical attentiveness to expand the ways in which anti-colonial feminist scholarship and knowledge production could and should care about Palestine (Davis, 2016; Salih et al., 2020), particularly about the different experiences of Palestinian women whose bodies are captured at intersections of race, class, age, gender and location by the double bind of the settler colonial occupation and patriarchal heteronormative society (see Hawari, 2019; Sayigh, 1981). I write about my academic (non-native English speaker from MENA) and cultural upbringing (religious and social literacy of predominantly Muslim societies), racial (brown, Middle Eastern look) and gender (cis woman) margins that I am ‘compelled to inhabit’ and the ways in which they informed my work (Awan and Musmar, 2021). In other words, I attempt to ‘situate’ the knowledge production process that co-constituted this thesis and my/research self. I do so not from a position of ‘transparent reflexivity’ that presumes to ground our ‘positions’ through the medium of reflexivity as a ‘complex but knowable space’ (Rose, 1997: 5).

The researcher-self that many feminist geographers give themselves to reflect on, then, seems at some level to be a transparently knowable agent whose motivations can be fully known [...]. This transparent self then looks outward, to understand its place in the world, to chart its position in the arenas of knowledge production, to see its own place in the relations of power (ibid.).

The asymmetries of power reproduced in the relations of the researcher and the researched (Rose, 1997) as well as the presumed neutrality of claims to knowledge that unsee coloniality (Noxolo, 2017; Smith, 2012) and whiteness (Hamilton, 2020) of academic spaces have long been flagged. And there never was/is a full self-transparency that could overcome our dispositions by means of reflexivity.

My aim here is neither to summarize this literature (predominantly feminist) critical nor to register their questions in my work via reflexivity. I will rather trace my ‘affective witnessing’ (throughout the thesis) before-during-after the fieldwork in favour of a more grounded theory through which I occupy an in-between space as an ‘outsider within’ (Hill Collins, 2009). Within the community that I worked with and carried out research, I was partially judged upon the outsider criteria given that I am not Palestinian, do not speak Arabic, was raised in an urban context (Istanbul) and trained by western education institutions. Yet, my political commitments, gender, religious familial background and the country of origin –Palestinians tend to see Turkey as an ally in the struggle against Israel–

granted me a strong set of insider dynamics. I write from this in-between place not through a process of reflection from inward to outward to claim transparency over my positionality. Rather, my outsider within-ness ground me as an affective witness through which I partake in a capacity to mobilize a multitude of emotions and critical thinking and my writing becomes part of a larger process for social justice ‘as one voice in a dialogue among people who have been silenced’ (Hill Collins, 2009: x). ‘Affective witnessing can only ever produce a contingent account but one that takes the conditions of its production as equally important and is invested in the production of affect across collective bodies’ (Awan and Musmar, 2021: 3).

To unpack how my affective witnessing shaped my scrutiny over neocolonial geographies (Dolek, 2021), including Palestine, I need to cover the pre-field period. For my masters’ degree, I conducted fieldwork in Turkey Kurdistan, arguing that people who went under the category of colonized dealt with the long term consequences of the colonial occupation as well as the unevenness of the violent present with the help of ‘doing intimacy,’ including but not limited to political friendship/militancy, intra-familial negotiations and other economies of care. And when I decided to continue research, my initial thought was to design a PhD project that would examine the gendered spaces of solidarity in the occupied geography of Kurdistan. However, just after I got into a PhD program, the so-called peace process between the Turkish state and the Kurdish freedom movement collapsed and by the time I was conducting my ethnographic research, the region turned into an urban warfare zone (see Ercan, 2019), resembling the Palestinian cities and towns that endured on and off curfews and military occupation during the 2nd Intifada (see Allen, 2008).

As a Turkish passport holder who aligns with the Kurdish struggle for self-determination, disseminating my research that was critical of the state terror made me a target. The political instability in the region where I am from escalated to the extent that it became too dangerous for me to continue research. I was made to abandon my entire PhD project, yet still I was determined to keep researching the intimate reaches of life and sites of struggle under occupation. Where we ‘sit’ ultimately affect our ‘sight,’ the ways in which we witness the world and its injustices. As a researcher from a occupied geography, I wanted to continue walking with my own questions. How we, researchers, rearrange our affairs in order to accommodate the risks of our scrutiny in relation to the margins we occupy cannot be thought independent of and separated by how our interlocutors remake life under occupation.

Whilst preparing this project, I was alerted to the asymmetrical power relations embedded in the notion of research itself, the questions of who can write about whom, for what purposes and who would benefit from the knowledge produced as a result of this process (Smith, 2012). ‘From within an understanding of power as a system of production of colonial differences – across various historical and spatial configurations – Palestine becomes an analytic of a historical global system of exploitation, repression, surveillance effected today through a global regime’ (Salih et al., 2020: 14). Therefore, I have sought a methodology that can unsettle my position as a researcher in the field (volunteering and witnessing), if not turn it upside down. This research is politically grounded in a wider framework of self-determination, anti-colonial struggle and racial justice. Concomitantly, it ‘sees Israel through Palestine’ (Hawari et al., 2019), privileging Palestinian women’s aspirations (over others), their ways of knowing and dwelling and struggle as well as speak out the words of decolonization and self-determination which involve healing, doing intimacies and nurturing.

Throughout the thesis, I will reflect upon how my affective witnessing in the field affects and is affected by the intimate encounters that I trace and what it means to be a researcher and volunteer at the same time. In the following chapters, I elaborate on how my brown body, non-western look and accent put me in a confrontation with the colonizer, how my cultural upbringing was seen as a religious fellowship, therefore granted me a welcoming insider-ness that would remain foreclosed to a white Northern researcher. I also talk about how my voluntary work for the women’s cooperative and cohabitation (my host family was very well known in the village) allowed me to explore homespaces in the village. I was well received and shunned as a volunteer and guest more than a researcher to the extent that very few people cared about my research topic, yet almost everyone wanted to know about my country of origin, family life and thoughts on Palestine. During the semi-structured interviews I conducted with 25 members of the cooperative, my final question was whether they wanted to ask me any question and none of the questions posed to me was research related but about Palestine, how I found the life in the village and whether I would come back.

The Double Bind: ‘Occupation kills you, patriarchy makes you wanna kill yourself’

We must tell these stories of violence because of how quickly that violence is concealed and reproduced. We must always tell them with

care. But it is risky: when they are taken out of hands, they can become another form of beating (Ahmed, 2017: 72).

This section tackles some of the challenges I faced with regard to feminist theory building and the intersections of power whilst I navigated through the encounters, spaces and conversations that Palestine kept raising as an issue (see also Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin, 2019). Here, I draw on my affective witnessing in academic as well as activist circles as ‘raw materials of my feminist instruction,’ as experiences that feed into the process of ‘sensing wrongs’ along with the process of writing this thesis (Ahmed, 2017: 21).

In 2019, I presented my work at the International Conference of Critical Geographers where I also attended several panels interrogating the question of Palestine. I was particularly intrigued by a paper that dwelled on Palestinian homes as ‘infrastructure of intimacy’ (Amrov, 2017). Following the Q&A, I approached the presenter to share my appreciation of her work and ask her thoughts about mine. As a diaspora Palestinian scholar whose work explored the role of the intimate in space making, her opinion mattered to me. During our conversation, it turned out that we had a lot in common as she was from Hebron (my field site) and lived in Istanbul (my hometown). In response to my presentation, she suggested that there was a tendency among especially feminist scholars to look at the intersection of occupation and patriarchy which she found problematic; as a Palestinian woman, she thought that the Occupation hit women’s lives harder.

With regard to my take on Palestine and occupied geographies in general, her comments reached out to me when I was already saturated by the dominance of geopolitics and the strategic feminism that reproduced the sacred categories of motherhood and women as defenders of the nation in the name of resistance. I agree with Gillian Rose’s critique that claiming that women are inherently nurturing or resistant (just because they are Palestinian) can lead to the erasure of colonial brutalities and racial and class privileges maintained by some women (Rose, 1993: 81–87) (see also hooks, 2015). Re-imagining geography and Palestine requires a vigilant attentiveness to the difference among women, including those who may not be hyper-resistant, not invested in the heteronormative family and clan structures and/or national liberation agenda.

Her opinion also mattered due to structural inequalities in (North) academia that make it really hard to engage in conversations with non-white, non-western scholars who know

about rural areas in Palestine.³ I finally got to meet someone genuinely interested in and well informed about my areas of interest to hear that the intersectionality of power structures operating over Palestinian women's bodies may not be even... This particular encounter (between seeming allies) gave me ambivalent feelings as I remembered women (across geographies) I met before-during-after my fieldwork who endured domestic violence and sexual harassment, those who stood up to patriarchy on a daily basis.

The rest of this section briefly dwells on a life event that was shared by a Palestinian activist friend in diaspora⁴ who currently settled in Europe. I juxtapose these two encounters that happened whilst this thesis was in process in an academic and activist space where I had been an affective witness to Palestine. Shortly after the ICCG conference, I attended a feminist activist gathering with some others from the MENA region to share our experiences as female researchers who navigated through diverse geographies, institutions and selves. A fellow friend, let's call her Sama, wanted to kick off by sharing a difficult moment of her day. Sama (28) is a Palestinian refugee who has not been back home for five years, so she tries to 'maintain the intimacy of friends and family via being active in several WhatsApp groups' that involve the members of her extended family. On the day of our gathering, one of her cousins whom she grew up with and considered as her best friend initiated a conversation about sex which Sama had so much difficulty in participating in although she dearly wanted to. Sama said, 'the whole thing reminded her of the days when her family was not dispersed from Palestine, yet she used to feel so vulnerable and alone trapped in an abusive relationship.' Sama describes her family as politically invested in the Palestinian Liberation Movement and open-minded. Still, sex was taboo for both her family and community, and she could have been severely punished if it was to be found out that she had extramarital sex. When she wanted to break up, she was threatened by her then-partner to disclose their relationship, which made her stay in the relationship though she knew it was abusive. She woefully recalls her youth memories in Palestine:

I am not sure how long I could have endured if I had not left Palestine. Imagine I was trapped in this abusive relationship and could not talk about it to a single person for years. Not even my sisters or my cousin who was my best friend. I was

³ On the difficulties of conducting research on racialised and othered persons (Black people, Muslims and so on) within predominantly white academic institutions of the West, see (Johnson, 2020a, 2020b).

⁴ Shared with her permission.

feeling so guilty of shaming my family and making a huge mistake. During my teenage years, I was so desperate and paralyzed by guilt and shame and fear of what could have happened if my family had found out. I was thinking about killing myself (personal communication, 2019).

Sama was still processing the pain of keeping this secret, a decade after her lived experience of abuse and shame enabled through patriarchal norms in her community. Her pain was sharp and alive, missing an apology that could have made a closure possible. She seemed not to know where to put her past injuries knotted to the haunting histories of gendered violence other than communicating them with a group of third-world feminists who were likely to have endured the resonating forms of gendered violence. Familiarity does not mean safety, yet it paves the way for the belief that one could be heard not despite but with her difference, with the uniqueness of her life struggle. 'I think of feminist action as like ripples in water, a small wave, possibly created by agitation from weather; here, there, each movement making another possible, another ripple, outward, reaching. Feminism: the dynamism of making connections' (Ahmed, 2017: 3).

Following the intimate path opened up by Sama, I dwelled on my encounter at the conference where I recently presented my work and was warned by a Palestinian colleague against the dangers of treating occupation and patriarchy as two sides of the same coin. In a feminist safe space, I shared the challenges and ambivalences that I faced through my work as well as in my writing. After all, I was troubled by both, yet I was not sure where to draw the line so that I would not reproduce any of the stereotypes of being feudal, backward, uncivilized that got stuck to Palestinian women (and other communities from MENA) (Abu-Lughod, 2001). Many feminist scholars from the region (Abu-Lughod, 2013, 2015; Elia, 2017; Kogacioglu, 2004) relocated to Northern geographies, institutions and audiences have tackled the challenges of knowledge production 'under western eyes' (Mohanty, 2003).

In her work that problematizes the framing of honour killings in Turkey, Kocacioglu coins the term 'the tradition effect' to critically discuss the ways in which 'once tradition as such is invoked, the role of the institution in question fades into the background' in the making of gender inequality and violence against women (Kogacioglu, 2004: 120). Similarly, Abu-Lughod argues against what I may call 'culture effect' in discussing the shortcomings of contemporary discourse on rights which Muslim women enjoy (or do not enjoy); 'the common Western story of the hapless Muslim woman oppressed by her culture' (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 9). It is important to note here that in the specific context of Palestine/Israel,

the ethnic-racial divisions (Ashkenazi, Mizrahi and Palestinian) within the feminist circles bring unique challenges. Smadar Lavie's work on structural dispositions that block Mizrahi feminism's engagement with the question of Palestine, unlike their Ashkenazi elite feminists who advocate for human rights and peace activism, provide careful insights into the divisions that persist in feminism/s (Lavie, 2011).

Sama's comment succeeding my grappling with the double bind of patriarchy and occupation accompanied my work throughout: 'Occupation kills you, patriarchy makes you wanna kill yourself.' The thesis, then, traces the paths, stories, emotions in which Palestinian women's lives get suffocated by patriarchy and occupation. It also investigates the lived locations in which women strike back; they endure, negotiate, resist and maybe comfort the various forms of domination via enacting joyful politics, spaces and encounters. I hope to give a nuanced, complex and perhaps contested story of Palestinian women's lives in light of such feminist epistemology and practice:

I imagined feminist as another audience for my second book; I hoped that the narratives would persuade them that it is not easy to talk about "patriarchy" or to put one's finger on how power works. I wanted my years of research to offer something unusual to a public that had little understanding of, but strong views about women in the Middle East. Trying to remain true to my experiences of living in this small community in Egypt for so many years –watching children grow up, women struggle to build families, people figure out how to realize their dreams, relationships and roles shift, and hopes sometimes turn to resignation- I did my best to convey the texture of "life as lived" (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 6).

Recognizing the difficulties of feminist knowledge production that the passage above captured, I have walked with two related questions in my project:

- 1.** How to develop effective and ethical ways of carrying out feminist research which would be meaningful for communities?
- 2.** What are the institutional, personal as well as socio-spatially bounded geographical limitations and obstacles in 'crucial work of reterritorializing complexly gendered worlds in flux' (Abu-Lughod, 2015: 505)?

As Lila Abu-Lughod (2013) and others (Perugini and Gordon, 2015) rightly depicted, across an imaginative geography defined by Islam, ‘there are no political projects more vexed by international attention and intervention than those that travel under the label of “feminism,” with its charged cognates from “rights” to “empowerment”’ (Abu-Lughod, 2015: 505). Whilst researching about gendered agencies and space making practices of rural Palestinian women, I am challenged by these two questions as well as the overarching question of this project: how to research the ‘impasse,’ the ‘enclosure in closure’ without romanticizing or victimizing women as devoid of any possibilities for change. The double bind of patriarchy and occupation is a tough one to dismantle. *Tal’at* (stepping out in Arabic), a radical revolutionary feminist movement recently gathered in Palestine, recognizes that ‘patriarchy and occupation are best friends’ and hopes to catalyse grassroots change that would uproot intersecting forms of domination.⁵

The impasse that I talk about here is closely linked to the more than 70 years long military occupation and settler colonial violence that Palestinians endure. It results in ‘stretch of time’ making bodies remain blocked in the present (Berlant, 2011b) for a free home/land, a better future, the freedom to move and make love. The conceptual aim of this work is to grapple with Palestinian women’s poetic of the immanent world making amidst the patriarchal and colonial structures reinforcing each other. Angela Davis wisely captures such vigilant disentangling work of feminist care ethics: ‘And, feminist methodologies impel us to explore connections that are not always apparent. And they drive us to inhabit contradictions and discover what is productive in these contradictions. Feminism insists on methods of thought and action that urge us to think about things together that appear to be separate’ [...] (Davis, 2016: 104). An impasse is a contradiction that takes us to the realm of ambivalent,

⁵ See the self-description of the movement (*Mondoweiss*, 2020): “We aspire to build a different world, for our emancipation is hinged on the shattering of capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy all at once. Hence, *Tal’at* does not prioritize making institutional demands, be it from the Palestinian Authority and definitely not the Israeli state; our struggle is an internal Palestinian one for the building of our social and political fabric, embarking on a process of radical collective healing, that informs our liberation struggle, in discourse and practice. *Tal’at* marks a new dawn for the Palestinian feminist movement, where an independent-grassroots movement is trying to force a revolutionary feminist discourse on the agenda, redefining our national liberation struggle, to one that embodies the kind of society we want to build. What the future holds for us is uncertain, but we know that bringing Palestinian women together under one umbrella, in a decentralized and also de-fragmented space of feminist-political activism, which creates conditions for growth and solidarity.”

bittersweet, and joyful yet stuck, hopeful and at times unmoving spaces of navigating that Palestinian women carve out along the way. In that regard, the chapters explored the same impasse from a different angle: the intimate dwellings that take place in the village (chapter 3) or in bittersweet homespaces (chapter 4) and the joyful encounters at the cooperative (chapter 5).

Sara Ahmed's work on the possibilities and dangers of how to tell stories of (institutional, intimate, racial) violence shares a similar hesitancy. 'When we speak of violence directed against us, we know how quickly that violence can be racialized; how racism will explain that violence as an expression of culture, which is how racism and religion become entangled' (Ahmed, 2017: 72). Feminist commitment 'as screaming, as making violence visible; feminism as acquiring a voice' obliges us to take up the challenge, to be audible and accountable in our anti-colonial and anti-racist scrutiny beyond the symbolic violence of gender in the embodied, affective and material entanglements of gendered bodies in flux who cross, endure and defy different lines of power. My research is informed, inspired and moved by the intersectional feminist critique of the racialised, gendered, classed and Eurocentric forms of knowledge as they call for situating the inherently political processes of knowledge production and the positionality of the knowledge-holder (Ahmed, 2017; Davis, 2016; hooks, 2015; Lorde, 2019; Mohanty, 2003; Sharpe, 2016; Smith, 1999). Subscribing to feminist research and ethics, this chapter inquires about how I inquire (see Rose, 1993).

The Methods: How to Do It

In the last section of this chapter, I will provide a detailed examination of the methods that I used to address the research questions that were set up in the introduction (through extensive fieldwork, ethnographic journaling and mixed-methods qualitative approach). I carried out research on the operations of spatial intimacy and women's spaces that endured under occupation, collecting data through using several qualitatively driven 'non-directive approaches' (Abu-Lughod, 1986).

This approach has strengthened the flexibility and reflexivity of my project given that '[q]ualitative research is deemed to be much more fluid and flexible than quantitative research in that it emphasizes discovering novel or unanticipated findings and the possibility of altering research plans in response to such serendipitous occurrences' (Alan Bryman,

1984: 78). The thesis looks at two overarching questions with each chapter providing a qualitative analysis of a research question in relation to them:

1. How do Palestinian women from villages maintain and make sense of the spaces they inhabit?
2. How do they bargain and get by the double bind of patriarchy and occupation?

I decided to use a qualitative mixed-methods approach to capture the inter-layered spacings of intimacy (I added endurance and joy through my thematic analysis after coding). The data was collected via selective qualitative approaches in a complementary manner, allowing them to speak to each other. As Bryman rightly capture, ‘the qualitative researcher embarks on a voyage of discovery rather than one of verification,’ and I let not only my research questions but also the conditions of the everyday to tweak my data collection process (Alan Bryman, 1984: 84). I considered things like the gendered ways and expectations of mobility, cultural appropriateness and the sense of time to have an intimate grasp of how women inhabit spaces in the village. For example, mostly it was not possible to schedule meetings as women were already overburdened by care duties and gendered norms, so the personal communication that unfolded whenever they had time and headspace and my participant observation played a great role in the data collection. Finally, the selective coding of the data following fieldwork helped me make sense of my material in a relatively systematic fashion by using both margins of my notes and transcriptions (left for underlying words and phrases and right for identifying emerging themes for subsequent analysis) (Jackson, 2001).

I collected a generous amount of visual data that I then used together with my field notes to capture the ways in which the landscape was endured. Especially, the photographs I took at the village helped me analyse the spatial arrangements and different levels of privacy attached to them in the village. In doing so, a mixed-method approach better equipped me to track the messiness of everyday life as well as the affective and intimate registers of it: ‘[...] through combining methods, multifaceted insight is gained, thereby extending our understanding of how complex, contingent and marginalized’ (Meth and McClymont, 2009: 2)

In November 2017, I travelled to Hebron, the West Bank to conduct fieldwork on the relational spaces of gender and the operations of spatial intimacy. In order to answer my two overarching questions, I examine Palestinian women’s space making and solidarity practices

that endure under the settler colonial occupation and patriarchy. At this juncture, intimacy provided a powerful analytical tool (see Interlude 2 for a full development of intimacy as an analytical concept) which could reveal the operations of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity; how Palestinian women made sense of themselves and space (Sehlikoglu and Zengin, 2015). I was very much inspired by anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod writings (1986) where she kept a record of the ethnographer's own positionality as well as the limitations of her position –things that might always remain unknowable, beyond the reach of research for various situated reasons, so a non-directive approach fit my research aims the most. I particularly use the term 'non-directive' to state my unwillingness to conduct structured questionnaires or samplings which could provide the opportunity of studying some matters systematically, yet still bears its own dangers, especially hearing only what we would like to hear as researchers. To capture more affectively the haunting experiences of patriarchy and occupation alongside the gendered geographies of mobility, intimacy and solidarity, I designed a mixed-method approach as non-directive as possible.

Whilst preparing this project, I was alerted to the asymmetrical power relations embedded in the notion of research itself – the questions of who can write about whom, for what purposes and who would benefit from the knowledge produced. Although these questions are more widely and loudly raised among geographers than it was in past, I still do not think much has changed in practising research (cf Johnson, 2020b; Pain, 2004; Smith, 2012). Therefore, I looked for a methodology that could unsettle my position as a researcher in the field, if not turn it upside down.

[...] research was talked about in terms of its absolute worthlessness to us, the indigenous world. It told us things already known, suggested things that would not work, and made careers for people who already had jobs. [...] Taking part in the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively does not help people to improve their current conditions. It provides words, perhaps, an insight that explains certain experiences –but it does not prevent someone from dying (Smith, 2012: 3).

With this sharp sense of reality from Linda Smith's book *Decolonizing Methodologies* in mind, I prepared myself to volunteer for a Palestinian women's embroidery cooperative, *Women in Hebron*. I met with this group of women during my visit to Palestine in 2015 and knew that they were in need of volunteers who could handle the administrative work in the

cooperative, answer the emails, help writing grant proposals and fair trade applications. Through my voluntary work, I learned a lot by doing work with women who already held a great shared sense of making life. I saw volunteering as a field opportunity for participating in the already existing valuable and valid ways of knowing and doing in a way that would be meaningful for the community.⁶

Working with women at a handicraft cooperative served as a medium to re-centre the body of knowledge on Palestine by widening up our perspective on the voices, affective investments and livelihoods of Palestinian women beyond the socially accepted forms of being as mothers or heroes of the nation. That's how I decided to utilize my fieldwork time as a full-time volunteer of the cooperative, a grassroots women's space of gathering and work that is initiated and maintained only by women from villages and self-funded. In that regard, it was not one of the NGOs with international donors and experts mushroomed in the Occupied Territories following the post-Oslo period in order to elevate the social pain without subscribing to any anti-colonial agenda, therefore linked to professionalization and depoliticization of social movements in Palestine (Hammami, 1995, 2000).

For the scope of this project, I was a volunteer of *Women in Hebron* for three months – as long as my Israeli stamped visa let me stay – while I was hosted by one of the co-founders of the cooperative and conducted my ethnographically built research. I chose to look at a woman's cooperative as part of my overarching interest in topological spacings in the occupied geographies that account for affective, emotional and intimate geographies of gender. Therefore, I vigilantly designed a methodology that could help me understand everyday intimate interactions taking place at the intersection of the Israeli settler colonialism and patriarchy. As part of my research methodology, I looked at four specific sites: the cooperative, the homespaces, the village and the market in the Old City of Hebron where the cooperative had a shop. Together, they enabled me to trace some of the inter-spatial intimate geographies in Hebron.

⁶ I consider my research as participatory not necessarily with regard to my chosen methods but as a combination of other things. To me, participatory research grapples with political commitment to co-productive, ethical and grounded research. In that sense, participatory research politically is grounded in a wider framework of self-determination, anti-colonial struggle and racial justice. I would say that it is an orientation more than a methodological tool.

I utilized ethnographic journaling alongside visual documentation and my field observations to capture how occupation mediated the landscape and how patriarchy was endured through daily acts of subversion (spontaneous road trips) and also accommodated (in the moments of silence). My journaling slightly differed from anthropologists who attempt to write down detailed notes on cultures in an objective manner as participant observers (Campbell, 2015). I did take detailed notes, including ‘headnotes’ which included notes in my mind, the memories of my field research, daily interactions, visits and personal communications which helped me build my analysis (Ottenberg, 1990). I do rarely use direct quotations as, in my analysis, I made extensive use of my ethnographic journal including the headnotes.

As a volunteer of the cooperative, I lived together and worked with the co-founders of the cooperative. Throughout the thesis, I benefit from my field notes that are attentive to the affective dimension of space, including the deep breath takings and silences, laughter, bodily (un)movements and all that remain pre-discursive, therefore cannot be captured by interviews (see chapter 3). The ‘intuitiveness’ and ‘sensuality’ of intimacy demanded my vigilance to the co-constitutive and relational nature of gendered spaces at home and beyond. I was, therefore, attentive to objects and the affective (ghostly and haunting) routes they took (see chapter 4). To give some examples, I do write about a disappeared chocolate bar and pyjamas as a kind of allegorical figuration into the site of the unsaid, the unsayable, and yet also of the communicative. I also gave place to clothing practices (expectations) in my analysis, to the distinctions and convergences between the ‘headscarf’ in this instance – a protection of the intimate self under the attack of the occupation (in chapter 3) – and how it functioned later on with Regina’s protest with the keffiyeh as an anxiety-triggering object that marked the contours of public patriarchy (in chapter 4).

Embedding myself in social life as a participant observer, instead of asking interview questions on the effects of the occupation, was a strategic decision as part of the shifting the mainstream lenses of research on Palestine that predominantly examined politics of occupation and/or hyper-resistance to it (see Introduction for a further discussion). To avoid collecting narratives yet again centralising the occupation as the questions/survey etc. would have directed, I kept a detailed ethnographic journal on a daily basis where I noted down daily conversations, neighbourhoods, public and private spaces that I had been to, including the different (im)mobilities that were afforded me and my participants.

Below is table of my interlocutors; it is not an extensive list but includes my frequent contacts to guide reading through my empirical analysis:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Faryal	50	Co-founder of Women in Hebron	Married, 3 kids BA in English
2. Ghassan	55	Works for Palestinian Authority Killed by IDF six months after my fieldwork	Married, 3 kids Graduate
3. Regina	16	Student	Faryal's daughter
4. Ayham	15	Student	Faryal's son
5. Aysa	8	Student	Faryal's daughter
6. Darya	35	Embroidery designer Works from home for the cooperative	Married, 6 kids Grew up in Jordan High school graduate
7. Fatma	55	Shopkeeper for the cooperative	Married, 6 kids High school drop out
8. Lena	32	Works in public sector	Married, 5 kids BA in Management
9. Umm- Ahmed	55	Full time employee for the cooperative	Divorced High school drop out
10. Nevin	30	Full time employee for the cooperative	Married, 2 kids High school drop out
11. Yafa	27	Housewife	Married, 2 kids High school drop out
12. Aunt Nesrin	55	Housewife	Married, 6 kids

13. Sarah	17	Student	Aunt Nesrin's daughter Single
14. Ruba	17	Housewife	Married, pregnant by the time of fieldwork High school drop out
15. Laila	17	Housewife	Married, pregnant by the time of fieldwork High school drop out

Table 1: List of Interlocutors

My analysis of rhymes and spaces of life as they unfolded was amplified by paying attention to the discursive realm, as well. The haunting stories of domestic violence, forced marriages and mothers-in-law, for instance, could not have been solely captured with observations. Therefore, using interviews and oral life stories as part of my mixed-method qualitative approach furthered the depth and complexity of data on how the past hovered in the present, affecting gendered bodies capacity to align and act in unique spatio-temporal moments. Some women were not able to claim supposedly the most private space of home due to past injuries. Others did not feel entitled to an authentic ownership of their world making due to constraints over their life choices (education, work, romantic relationships, mobility to count a few) imposed by the intersecting dominations of patriarchy and occupation. Some were proud to talk about their battles while others may have treated it as difficult chatter over injustices.

I collected oral stories of four women (three co-founders and one part-time employee) asking open-ended questions and listening to women in order to find out what they preferred to speak about (Neyzi and Darici, 2015; Thiranagama, 2013). These were approximately three-hour-long conversations; one took place at the cooperative and the rest at women's houses. Due to my very limited language skills in Arabic, I was only able to speak to the women who spoke English and I had established relations based on trust as the life stories touched upon sensitive issues such as forced marriages, domestic violence and sometimes politics. I decided not to have a translator to collect more life stories as it would affect the quality of how much women could open up. So, the life stories I collected are limited quantity-wise, yet qualitatively they were very fruitful. These conversations were recorded upon verbal consent, transcribed and thematically coded by me following the fieldwork. I also let the conversations flow as much as possible by remaining silent to make sure women

would be able to bring what they felt comfortable to speak about. During my fieldwork, I paid utmost attention not to trigger any traumatic memory mostly by trying to be a good listener and a non-directive researcher, which aligned with my affective witnessing. By the time I conducted my fieldwork, the cooperative had two full-time employees and an American Christian logo consultant who got married to a Palestinian Christian and settled in Bethlehem. With them, I conducted and recorded⁷ semi-structured interviews in English. These were also transcribed and thematically coded by me.

As part of my work for the cooperative, I was asked to help with the fair trade application process that required international monitoring and questioners (among other things) with the women who worked from home. That gave me the opportunity to meet with them at the cooperative in groups of 2-3. They were invited by the director of the cooperative specifically for internal monitoring purposes and told about the content of the questionnaire as well as my role as a researcher/volunteer who explored where the cooperative stood in their life. I completed 24 ‘questionnaires’ (see appendix A) with the women from the different villages of Hebron. It was an instant back and forth translation between the director and them where I took notes and filled the forms. Yet, I find it hard to categorize those gatherings as questionnaire filling sessions because of their fluid nature. They resonated more with qualitative interviews (Mason, 2002). There was an interactional exchange among everyone who participated (including jokes and storytelling) and an informal setting (tea, cooking and sometimes children playing around). Like most qualitative research that ‘[...] operates from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual,’ they ensured that ‘the relevant contexts are brought,’ in this case, what embroidery and cooperative stood for in women’s lives (Mason, 2002: 62).

Some women were illiterate and some were not confident signing any documents, so they gave verbal consent. Some groups stayed for an hour, some longer depending on their availability on the day. They were all friends and/or relatives, so the questionnaire filling sessions tended to quickly turn into women’s reunion followed by tea, cooking, chatter and discussing potential embroidery designs. That enabled me not only to meet women who usually worked from home but also to have a better grasp of how they utilized the cooperative space and the relations they cultivated there.

⁷ Except the consultant who had on-going visa issues with the Israeli state did not want to be recorded but let me take notes during our conversations that took place at a café in Bethlehem.

In Palestine, where control is very much territorialized and immobility is almost always enforced, movement itself (things like being able to go to work, pick up your children from school) becomes central in the struggle between Palestinian survival and Israeli domination (cf Peteet, 2017). My initial thought was to walk around the city and village with women to collect participatory data on how women inhabit and attach to different public spaces. Yet, a few weeks into my fieldwork I realized that this would be too risky for women due to the military and settler presence in the city and difficult to arrange in the village (I talk more about this in chapter 4). It would socially look awkward – hanging around is definitely not one of the culturally accepted forms of movement for women, especially in the village. More importantly, streets – as a mixed-gender space dominated by man – were not really a safe space where they would feel comfortable and encourage rich conversations. Walking as a multi-sensorial and less hierarchical methodological tool – women would decide where to go – that I hoped to use to track women’s everyday coping mechanisms taking place at the intersection of patriarchy and Israeli occupation ironically remained foreclosed for my research due to the exact intersecting power structures (yet another limit to co-production).

I kept observing the social life which was mostly shaped around gender segregation, and the mobility of women was very much restricted by patriarchal social norms, and mostly unexpected moments of which women managed to subvert the constraints. For example, in chapter 3, I draw on car trips as unique temporal spaces of ‘making fun’ intertwined with music, dance and a sense of freedom afforded by undetected movement. In search of imaginary geographies of unrestricted movement, I organized emotional map colouring sessions with 10 women between the ages of 16 to 21. Instead of actually walking in the streets, we sat at home and imagined how we did feel through navigating different places. The map was produced by me and one of the designers for the cooperative, so it was co-produced only by two of us. We matched 8 colours with 8 different feelings and there were also some spare colours in case they would want to add a feeling that we had not thought of and almost all of them did. These colouring sessions worked more smoothly with young/unmarried women than married ones (independent of age as I knew many women under 18 married with kids). The young ladies found it playful; some said it was relaxing whereas the married women got bored and some did not complete it and started chatting with me instead. I briefly dwell on these colouring sessions in chapter 3 where I talk about the ways in which everyday life is endured in Palestine. Yet, the conversation that took place during those sessions alongside my observation gave me insights into how different public

and private spaces (home, courtyards, streets, the village centre, the Hebron city centre and so on) were imagined, felt and habituated by women.

In addition to my full-time work during the week at the cooperative, I frequently visited the cooperative's shop in the old quarter of Hebron where women sold their products. These visits provided me with first-hand experience of everyday life under the settler colonial occupation. Incorporating the cooperative, house visits (in the village) and my trips to the city centre – to help out the shop and also attend two political tours organized for internationals by local Palestinian activist groups – into my analysis as sites of this research allowed me to trace the public recalibrations of intimacy. Building on these insights and my ethnographic journaling, the following chapters integrate the geography of endurance, a rather uncommon take away from the existing literature on the question of Palestine whilst delving into affective and intimate geographies in which gender is sustained. I explore four specific sites: the Old City of Hebron, the village, homespaces and the cooperative. In so doing, I reflect on where they stand in women's lives and what proximities and potentials those spaces cultivate.

Interlude 1 Endurance

We are neither defeated, nor are we successful.
We persevere (Povinelli, 2011: 115).

This interlude and the following chapter examine the specific geography of Hebron and its rural outskirts in an attempt to look at modes of perseverance, social sustenance and continuation of co-endurance under the prolonged occupation and the settler colonial regime. Given the unique spatial layout of Hebron where Palestinians and Jewish settler populations are divided into designated areas (H1 and H2) and the latter occupies the Palestinian urban spaces, the interlude foregrounds endurance as an analytical tool in order to capture affective and emotional registers of space making as well as everyday sustenance: the strategies, decisions, accommodations, negotiations and remakings in rural Palestine. Instead of focusing solely on the hyper-resistance of Palestinians (Abdo, 1991, 2002; Fleischmann, 2000; Long, 2006; Peteet, 1992, 1996, 1997) and/or the Israeli settler colonialism (Abourahme, 2009; Gordon, 2017; Lentin, 2016a, 2016b; Neuman, 2018; Veracini, 2013; Weizman, 2007), as the existing works of literature tend to do, endurance grants some degree of autonomy and permanence to Palestinian gendered spacings whilst acknowledging the effects of the colonial landscape on lived experience. Endurance, in so doing, offers a better understanding of ‘heterogeneity of the ordinary’ as ‘recognising homogenising forces’ (Harker, 2020: 185), including settler colonial violence and patriarchy, whilst recognizing how they create an ‘impasse’ that stretches out the present time, an everydayness in crisis ‘[...] in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on’ (Berlant, 2011: 4).

It is in this spirit that the interlude sets the ground for examining the affective day-to-day geographies of Palestinian inhabitation and tenacity. Endurance, in so doing, gives analytical insights into intimate encounters, including forced intimacies that produce the topological and relational spaces of the settler colonial geography of Palestine. In tune with the shift of lenses that I suggest (see Introduction), the following chapter(s) expand the analysis of gendered lives in Palestine on the places of gossip, dance, leisure, mobility, enjoyment and tacitness. Endurance, for the scope of my analysis, holds the potential to complicate the simple contrasts of the colonizer and the colonized as different positions and dissonant voices inherent in them demand our ethnographic sensitivities (Stoler, 1989). I propose an ethnographically built theoretical move towards the connections between space,

place and gender, i.e. how the occupation is a heterogonous lived reality as much as an intimate encounter with the landscape.

Toward such a critical engagement with the literature on Palestinian resistance and Israeli settler colonialism, this ethnography's emphasis on the topologies of Palestinian space, the ways in which the landscape is endured, allows me to put three strands of scholarship into an eclectic conversation. I care about these emerging clusters of research on affect (Joronen and Griffiths, 2019, 2019; Richter-Devroe and Salih, 2014; Salih, 2016), sumud (Hammami, 2015; Kelly, 2008; Meari, 2014; Quiquivix, 2014; Sinno, 2013) and mobility (Allen, 2008; Bishara, 2015; Harker, 2014b; Marshall, 2015; Peteet, 2017) as they portray the collective stories of endurance and the difficult predicament of life under the occupation. As Allen (2008: 456) eloquently states:

How can we acknowledge the power of violence in Israel's colonial project in the occupied territories without either assuming it to be all-determining of Palestinian experience, or championing every act of Palestinian survival to be heroic resistance? Memorialization that occurs in storytelling, in visual culture, in the naming of places and moving through spaces is one way in which violence becomes routine. When a variety of forms of violence are being mobilized to encourage, if not force, people to leave, the deflection of these measures through adaptation and just getting by becomes crucial.

Yet, the aforementioned works of literature disregard the role of either gender (except Marshall's brief work on the girls' access to public spaces in a refugee camp) and/or landscape in relation to how life gets affirmed (spatially and emotionally) in Palestine. Endurance as such offsets the analytical agenda to explore sentiments and sensibilities, unmakings and remakings that everyday spacings unfold, survival tactics as well as how it feels to cope with a settler colonial landscape (cf. Dolek, 2018). The particular spatio-temporality of endurance foregrounds the modes of agency that are continually harnessed to get by, and occasionally get out, whilst inhabiting gendered and intimate topologies in Palestine.

In his article (2017), Griffiths dwells on the political tours of Old City Hebron organized by Palestinian activists that aim to make Apartheid seen and believed by internationals. As he puts, 'The streets are not yet, however, at the endgame of death, in fact being in and of the city is a profoundly affective experience; life persists in some form' (ibid: 617). In his attempt to capture Palestinian life under the occupation, Griffiths acknowledges

that the negative affects such as fear, threat and humiliation set limits on the forms of political agency. Yet, he insists on potential venues for hope, on the ways in which negative affects can be channelled towards a political agency. In doing so, he puts great emphasis on a quote from the tour guide: '[...] it's been too long but we have to have something of hope.' Based on an account cultivated for an international audience by male Palestinian political activists, he arrives at the conclusion that hope exists in Hebron amidst the dehumanizing negative affects of the occupation.

The following chapter, on the other hand, attempts to (at least) diversify the mapping of affects bearing in mind Divya Tolia-Kelly's (2006) reminder that thinking through lived encounters necessitates turning our scholarly attention to constant historicisation and power geometries. I saliently acknowledge that being hopeful was not part of the affective geographies of everyday life of the women that I had been in contact with. So, I wonder about others, the non-activists, gendered bodies and differently affected bodies due to their positionality. What would be their venues for perseverance that could maintain some form of hope as a capacity to endure? How do they cope with the daily realities of the settler colonial occupation? What about the ones who cannot harness a political hope for a better future and sustain it?

In his work on the fragile yet widespread desire for an ordinary life during the years of the second intifada, Tobias Kelly suggests that the ordinary '[...] is shot through with a residual hope that it still may be possible, and a fear that it may not' (Kelly, 2008: 354). Though I relate to the arguments presented in these works, I do think they are a bit sketchy in the way they combine the attempts to recover the ordinary life under the occupation to find venues for hope as if it is an inherent quality of inhabiting space for Palestinians. Political hope holds a dangerous political slippage of escapism (from conflict, violence and harm) and normalisation, 'producing approximations of normalcy bound with the preservation of power and privilege' (Natanel, 2013: 23), thus complicating ordinary affects, including hopeful ones, through the intersection of gender with hierarchies of class, race and location. Also, the political sufferings and violence of the settler colonial occupation cannot be infantilised to the extent that '[...] the end product is the conceptualization of affect as a short-hand name for a hope that is conceived as a method of resilience producing flexible lives and nomadic feelings' (Yıldırım, 2019: 25).

Ruba Salih's work on Palestinian refugee women's memory and home making, two overshadowed zones of intimacy and co-endurance, stands out in Palestinian studies for centralizing both affect and gender. As Salih points out, 'the body and emotions that evoke

the domestic and the ordinary as primary frameworks of affect and action have not been given significance' (Salih, 2016). Rather, the scholars of Palestinian resistance privileged a nationalist notion of the political, therefore looked for an active resistance for self-determination. They ended up mostly looking at the public context such as demos, attacks, suicide bombers, checkpoints, home demolitions (Griffiths, 2017; Hammami, 2015; Joronen and Griffiths, 2019; Long, 2006). Moving beyond the discussions on Palestinian resistance and resilience (see also chapter 5), I follow Timothy Mitchell's critique on the everyday metaphors of power (and resistance) where a dualistic language encapsulates an autonomous subject position that either resists physical coercion or remains ideologically persuaded. Rather, he suggests an alternative approach called 'enframing' by looking at 'how domination works through actually constructing a seemingly dualistic world' (Mitchell, 1990: 457). Here, I suggest endurance as a convergence of power and resistance as bodies' capacity to act increase in relation to affects.

As hope and hopelessness converge at a certain point where we face the disappointing present and failed pasts (see Duggan and Muñoz, 2009), the dialectical (not oppositional) tension between resistance and resilience (I shall call endurance) does so too. I write about endurance from this vantage point: the convergences of the affirmative (i.e hope, hopefulness) and the negative (i.e stuckness, frustration, exhaustion) that cannot be encapsulated by a subsequent political agenda (Elwakil and El-Nabli, 2019; Povinelli, 2011). At this dialectical junction, endurance not only encapsulates 'labours of hope' embedded in everyday spacings of social sustenance (Ramalho, 2020) but also 'the cruelty of hope' in situations of prolonged precariousness that may delay changing the structural conditions and holds survival over living (Pettit, 2019). Endurance, then, is closely linked to mundane geographies of pleasure (Junka, 2006; Khalili, 2016), familial survival (Harker, 2012; Kuttub, 2006) and mobility (Richter-Devroe, 2011). As the pictures from the *Sumud Project* capture (I will elaborate more on it in the following chapter), endurance may mean 'staying on the land' in joyful moments such as dance and music, or possibly just staying in bed (Nouvet, 2014).

It is not only wars which force people to flee their homes and lands, but also what is called the 'silent transfer'. Restrictions on the freedom of movement, house demolitions, land expropriations, difficulties for youth to find study and work, and becoming a stranger in one's own land, seem all designed to induce young and old to leave their country.



Sumud is supporting people to stay on the land

Sumud Story House www.aeicenter.org

14

Figure 2 Sumud Project, Bethlehem (30/11/2017)

Dance

During a dance party at a celebration, I was sitting at a table with a group of friends. A beautiful girl caught my attention while passing by my table. My heart started pounding, I went and asked my sister if she knew the girl. She said, "I don't know her and even if I did I wouldn't tell you." She added, "Go ahead and introduce yourself." After mustering up enough courage, I went forward toward the girl's table. I approached her father saying, "Uncle, I came to you to ask your permission in order to dance with your daughter." Her father answered me, "I have no objection." At that moment, I became more daring and asked the girl to dance with me. She accepted. We danced together for a long time as if no walls and darkness existed.

By Francis, from Beit Jala

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Youth Media House, www.aeicenter.org

Figure 3 "Dance" Sumud Project, Bethlehem (30/11/2017)

For the sparse scholarship that considers the affective and emotional registers in mapping everyday life in Palestine, one of the enframings within which Palestinian life under the occupation is discussed is *sumud*. Lena Meari (2014) conceptualizes Palestinian *sumud* as ‘a refusal to surrender’ to the Occupation.

Sumud, translated roughly as “steadfastness,” has no fixed meaning; it incarnates a multiplicity of significations and practices. It can only be approximated through an assemblage of the singular practices of Palestinians-in-*sumud*... This steadfastness constitutes a Palestinian relational political-psycho-affective subjectivity. It becomes an indefinable force representing the possibility of political praxis outside the space of normalized forms of politics. Under conditions of oppression it is a constant revolutionary becoming, opening up a possibility for an alternative regime of being, for an ethical-political relational selfhood (Meari, 2014: 549–550).

Her interpretation of *sumud* does not offer a fixed meaning; it can only be approximated through an assemblage of singular acts. In a similar fashion, I propose to take endurance as ‘indefinable forces’ that surround life and fill the air in Palestine, in doing so, captures the mundane affects and collective feelings that co-constitute practices of *sumud*. Given that emotions are what (un)move us (Sara Ahmed, 2004b), I look at the gendered convergent spacings of *sumud*, perseverance, intimacy and joy bounding up with how Palestinian women inhabit the spaces they live in.

Endurance is constant (never finishes), cultivated on a daily basis and inherent to the social reproduction of space and agency. Unlike *sumud*, it may (or may not) lack a political strategy but entails a theoretical significance in as much as it conditions the modes of subjectivity and space making practices that go beyond the binary of victim vs. agent, resistance vs. resilience. Endurance signifies different layers of social, colonial and patriarchal sufferings which condition materiality and landscape, yet does not let any liberal conclusions on individual autonomy that can overcome it. Rather, it relationally converges the ordinary, ‘chronic, cruddy’ suffering as much as the ethical substance of life and thriving (Povinelli, 2011: 3–4).

The last body of work that I would like to dwell on is the geography of ‘managed chaos,’ the modus operandi of daily life in Palestine that which Palestinians create enduring ways to get by the spatial confinement and constrained mobility (Peteet, 2017: 2). The recent scholarship on mobility matters (Allen, 2008; Bishara, 2015; Harker, 2014b; Marshall, 2015;

Peteet, 2017) as it spatializes endurance that is missing in the two clusters of work I've discussed so far. In her book titled *Space and Mobility in Palestine*, Julie Peteet examines the 'enclavization' and the assemblages of im/mobility that exhaust everyday life, wondering how it feels to travel in Palestine at the interplay of uncertainty and anticipation: '[...] caught in a slow-moving vortex of filtering by the permit system and of funnelling through the ubiquitous checkpoints, and to move among spaces with forms of sovereignty and power' (2017 79-70). Chris Harker's (2014b) article, for instance, discusses the role the service (shared taxi) plays for the Palestinian community in the West Bank as the only available means of public transportation, enabling Palestinians to navigate between differently abled and enclosed spaces in a topologic fashion. For something like endurance, which is held together by a particular web of affects, relations and space makings, and the co-constitutive fashion of these relations cannot simply be fully grasped in a topographic mapping of the everyday.

Thinking affect, *sumud* and mobility together to understand the gendered spacings in Palestine, I make use of endurance: the ways in which landscape is mediated and endured in everyday life in relation to the settler colonial occupation and patriarchy. In the spirit of Spinoza who suggests sadness as a stagnation, a decrease in one's capacity to act, the interlude reflects on the theoretical underpinnings of the ways in which colonized spaces fissured by violence are made inhabitable while paying particular attention to gendered lives. This interlude foregrounds endurance as struggle, sustenance and self-maintenance as well as spacings and relations: '[...] modalities of agency that capture both activities of resistance, but also other, often unseen, investments in sensory, affective and physical labours required for everyday activities in which individuals sustain their lives' (Page, 2018: 281). It refers to a constant formation of co-endurance that takes place in the relationality of encounters and spaces (Sara Ahmed, 2004b).

Whether getting by the double bind of occupation and patriarchy or adapting to their disruptions of life can fuel political change remains an indispensable question of critical social theory. In her seminal book on the production of life (ordinary, chronic and cruddy) suffering in late liberalism's economies of abandonment, similar questions resonate with Povinelli: 'Why does a certain strand of critical theory put such hope in potentiality? Does it matter whether they can endure this precipice? And which form of endurance will they find themselves inhabiting, the kind that makes them hardened, calloused, and indifferent to life or strengthens their attachment to life?' (2011: 6). This interlude argues for an expansion of endurance to spatial and gendered ways in which the everyday unfolds and landscape

mediates lived experience. Foregrounding endurance as the convergence of gendered affects, *sumud* and mobility, or as a ‘dissonance’ ‘whose substance is made up of unsettling questions’ does not lead to a hierarchy of affects and ways of resisting (from optimism in the guise of hope towards political defeat and the normalization of occupation) (Yıldırım, 2019: 26). Whether the ordinary crisis of the present is endured or suspended, the violent history of ethnic-cleansing and on-going colonial destruction condition human and more than human lives in Palestine/Israel (see Salih and Corry, 2021).

Endurance is a ‘structure of (un)feeling’ that may or may not point towards a hopeful future that remains foreclosed in the present (Berlant, 2015). An ethnographic grasp of how perseverance is experienced exposes the diverse spectrum of how differently affected bodies heterogeneously live through those homogenising structures. What regenerates the capacity of bodies to act that feels ‘pushed to the limits of what they could take’ remains mysterious;

Their suffering is not strategic; it is not a plan. Nevertheless, it is possible that feeling pain and seeking relief—some food, more rest, less insults, less rain—even when the body is not literally speaking or organizing, speaks to power as it desires, and thus insists another better existence is possible. Such non-discursive, non-strategic carrying on and curling up may hook into more traditional forms of social critique, stirring others to public and collective political action (Nouvet, 2014: 98).

The landscape of Hebron has endured through an affective present in crisis intermingling with the everyday spaces suffocated by the cruelties of occupation and patriarchy. Drawing on the feminist/queer scholarship (Ahmed, 2006, 2017; Berlant, 1998; Natanel, 2016b) and the Spinozian currents (Deleuze, 2001; Spinoza, 1994), the following chapters also think of endurance together with the role of the intimate realm and joyful ethics in undoing the occupation and patriarchy in Palestine. The following chapter examines how gendered bodies take in and leak hardship in joyful, stuck, quiet or confrontational ways.

Chapter 3 Locating a Palestinian Village

[...] there might be a better story than our better story
(Georgis, 2013: 4).

The spatial reordering of the Palestinian city of Hebron (Al-Khalil) does not exactly resonate with the rest of the West Bank, where the regulations that rule Palestinians and Jewish settler populations are divided into designated areas. Hebron, the largest city in the West Bank with a population over 200.000 Palestinians and approximately 800 Jewish settlers located in the Old City, stands out with the on-going colonial settlement projects that have been established at the heart of the Palestinian urban area, granting the city an ‘exceptional’ order of rule termed H1 and H2. ‘While H1 gave control of most of Hebron to Palestinian Authority, H2 kept 20 per cent of the city, including its historic centre, and over thirty thousand Palestinian residents directly under the control of the Israeli military, maintaining the pre-Oslo condition of direct military rule’ (Neuman, 2018: 41).

This chapter examines the ways in which Palestinians endure this landscape of Hebron with a specific focus on gendered lives. Whether it be in the form of struggle for a sense of normality (Kelly, 2008; Richter-Devroe, 2011) or practicing ‘ordinary agency’ (Selimovic, 2019) that may or may not enable getting around the Occupied Territories (Bishara, 2015; Harker, 2014) and getting by life under the settler colonial occupation (Allen, 2008; Hammami, n.d.; Taraki, 2006). Palestinians do cultivate intimacy in the spaces of endurance, including (but not limited to as I further discuss in chapter 8) domestic spaces (Harker, 2010; Kuttub, 2006), mothering (Peteet, 1997; Richter-Devroe, 2012a), home-making (Amrov, 2017; Ruba Salih, 2016) as well as love-making (Marshall, 2014) and hoping for a better future (Griffiths, 2017). This chapter expands the literature on Palestinian *sumud* and mobility (see Interlude 1) by bringing the discussions of affect, gender and landscape together that remain overlooked. As landscape is ‘the first cognitive encounter with a place’ (Mitchell, 2002: x), it surely mediates any human experience inasmuch as the way Palestinians live and move through the enclaves of the West Bank (cf. Taraki, 2008).

In my writing, I treat the settler colonial occupation and patriarchy as a complex set of processes and relations that ‘separate people from their power, their creativity, and their ability to connect with each other and their worlds’ (Montgomery and Bergman, 2017: 48). It is important to note here that I combine settler colonialism, which refers to the historical processes and underlying logic of elimination of the native population, and occupation, which

underlies the daily reality of militarism and enclosure. Throughout this thesis, I will use the term settler colonial occupation in order to capture not only the historical and political restructuring of Palestine that devastates its communities but also to keep in mind the emotional burdenings that Palestinians endure through the landscape. So, the question remains: if we think of the settler colonial occupation as a geography of abandonment (Povinelli, 2011), how would endurance –as the convergence of both negative and positive affects– look like? Can endurance let us tell a better story of unmakings and remakings of everyday life in Hebron?

A Long Way from Tel-Arabia to Al-Khalil

Before delving into the social, spatial and affective entanglements of the interlayered structures of dominance operating over Palestinian women's bodies, the chapter first tackles the (im)possibilities of travelling from an occupying country to a lived village. Departing from my (self) voyage into the peculiar geography of Palestine/Israel (Gallinat and Collins, 2013), I seek to provide a vivid portrait of the gendered and racialized territories that have commonly depicted as occupied.

My travel from Tel-Arabia to Al-Khalil⁸ would have taken three hours if there were no occupation. Instead, it took seven hours of anxiety enmeshed in messiness: four different vehicles, border crossing, military roadblocks and checkpoints. My anxiety was deeply rooted in the gap between my official reasons (as a visiting researcher at a university in Israel) and the actual reasons (to do fieldwork in the Occupied Territories) for my visit to Palestine. I was a visiting scholar in Israel so it would be hard to explain the rationale behind my visit to the Occupied Territories on the second day of my arrival in historical Palestine if I were to identity-checked at one of the checkpoints. My fieldwork could have been interrupted from the beginning. Messiness, however, did not result from my embodied positionality as a researcher or from the ambivalence and uncertainty intrinsic to any research which involves 'difficult' situations (Page, 2017). It was instead a consequence of the logical fallacy inherent to settler colonialism: the constant denial of the very tangible reality that Palestine exists troubled my travels (Veracini, 2013). Because Palestine is not supposed to exist, no one (except Palestinians themselves) has bothered to plan through how to travel from A to B. Despite a necessary degree of predictability, safety and comfort that marks mundane

⁸ The Arabic names for Tel-Aviv and Hebron.

mobilities (Binnie, 2007), Palestine cannot always afford habitual ways of moving across the space due to topographic hollows of the land (Weizman, 2007) as much as topologic endurings (Bishara, 2015; Harker, 2014b; Junka, 2006).

If you ask Google maps as I did when I planned my journey from Tel-Aviv to Hebron (you have to know and use the Hebrew names for places!), Google says: ‘Sorry, we could not calculate transit directions from "Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel" to "Hebron".’ The comma coming after Tel-Aviv refers to a country, yet obviously there is no statement completing Hebron (even though it is a bigger city than Tel-Aviv). Recognizing this need for making a claim on the Palestinian land and exposing Israel’s founding violence, Linda Quiquívix (2014) discusses the subversive relationship between subjugating maps of settler-colonial geography and Palestinian counter-mapping strategies. She examines how Palestinians creatively advance technology such as mapping tools provided Google in order to fight against the erasure of Palestine and the fragmentation of the land (i.e. Occupied Palestinian Territories, Gaza, historical Palestine, refugees).

The project of wiping Palestine off the map, the chronotope of the Palestinian space/time involves ‘the appropriation of land, as clearly materialized in the construction of colonial settlements, walls, highways, fences, nature reserves and checkpoints, further erodes the landscape and ghettoizes Palestinian space’ (AlJahdali, 2014: 221). The result is the lack of infrastructure, timetables and designated terminals that may easily be taken for granted elsewhere:

As mundane space and place-making endeavors, everyday travels rely upon a combination of practical competencies of how to get about—knowledge of bus and train timetables, how to purchase a weekly or monthly bus pass, notions about the best time to travel—and geographical competencies— knowledge about where the shops are and which are the best routes to get to them (Binnie, 2007, p. 166)

Alongside the poor material conditions required for a road trip, there are very physical, tangible manifestations of that ‘vanishing landscape’ (Shehadeh, 2008). The frustrating apartheid wall, checkpoints, off Palestinian roads and settlements are some of the things that complicate planning a journey that reclaims Palestine.

Thankfully, my trip to an Al-Khalil village was not my first encounter with the occupation (Dolek, 2018). I had valuable insights gained through my previous visits to

Palestine and lived experience in other occupied geographies that helped me endure through my long way from Tel-Arabia to Al-Khalil; that is to say, much of the planning is useless in the face of occupation and life. I should instead follow the footsteps of my Palestinian fellows who invent new ways of dwelling on a daily basis (Hammami, n.d.). Abu Nahleh's collection of life stories of six Palestinian families proves how 'Cantonizing the West Bank through the Separation Wall and Bypass Roads' breaks the social fabric:

Currently, hundreds of military checkpoints block Palestinian mobility in the occupied territories. Movement between the occupied territories and Israel is almost totally banned; it is allowed only for restricted categories of people such as medical personnel, employees of diplomatic or international institutions, workers, and business people, all of whom are required to obtain a permit from Israeli authorities. However, even permit holders may or may not pass, depending on the political climate or the mood of the soldiers guarding the checkpoints; permits can be declared invalid without warning (Abu Nahleh, 2006: 107).

Despite the occupation that makes some journeys harder than they are for others, I was determined to get by it. 'The necessities of survival, and the physical and psychological capacities that people have to learn and adapt to sustain themselves in changing circumstances also feed into a kind of agency that is no doubt quite prevalent in situations of ongoing violence [...]' (Allen, 2008: 456).

On a nice and warm autumn day, I set off as early as possible, hoping to arrive at the other side of the apartheid wall before the darkness fell. First, I took a bus to the Tel-Aviv bus terminal where I was to catch another bus to Jerusalem. The 'inside' part of my journey could have been straightforward if I did not pass as Palestinian in my look. When I finally arrived in Jerusalem with two other passengers in a shared minivan, the visibly Jewish driver, wearing a kippah commonly preferred by religious Jewish men, started asking personal questions regarding my origin and destinations in Israel. The forced conversation initiated by the driver very much resembled the border crossing at the Ben-Gurion airport.⁹ The more I was reluctant to engage in a conversation, the more bullishly he questioned the motives behind my visit to Jerusalem. He insisted that he could drop me at my hotel (instead of the final stop for minivans) even though we were in a shared transportation with two more seemingly local passengers. He also did not accept 'Thank you, no need' as a valid answer

⁹ See the recent piece giving advice on what to do during such 'cautionary conversations that are part interrogation, part warning' published in Haaretz, one of the few well-known progressive newspapers in Israel (*Haaretz*, 2018).

and kept ‘recommending’ random hotels although I made it clear that I pre-booked my accommodation. I could neither tell him my final destination (Hebron) nor ask the directions for the Palestinian bus terminal in East Jerusalem. So, I did content my visit with the Old City, which is preferably a touristy and generic reference point in terms of intra-city travels. It could relate to Muslim, Christian or Jewish heritage and touristic sights without getting stuck in the political ‘conflict’.

However, the driver was not convinced of my claim for a neutral ground. I was irritated by this forced conversation to such an extent that I asked him pull over the car. He continued driving for another five minutes or so (it felt like forever!) as I was worried over the possibility of him not letting me go. When the car finally stopped, I hurriedly looked for my suitcase at the back, trying to escape further harassment but could not bypass his final words: ‘Look, I leave you in front of the shawarma¹⁰ place. You Turks like shawarma, don’t you? Go, eat.’ There I was facing both the visible frontiers (the ancient walls of the Old City) and the invisible frontiers (the social fabric that associate Palestinian-ness with something to be washed off)¹¹ of annexed East Jerusalem through which ‘the violent fabric of everyday life of Palestinians in East Jerusalem instead brings forth the inherent contingency of the separation politics’ (Selimovic, 2019: 2).

The forced intimacy between a Jewish driver and a visitor from Turkey unveils the racializing workings of Israeli society (Lentin, 2016a, 2016b). My own entry into the field was marked by an instance of ‘racial Palestinianization’ (Goldberg (2009) cited in Lentin, 2016b) through which dehumanizing categories of citizenships that foreground Jews as ‘white’ are allocated in a similar fashion to the South African Apartheid context.¹² The layers of racial workings in Israeli society descend from the white Jewish at the top to the Mizrahi (non-European) Jewish, the Black Jewish and the non-Jewish in various shades, including

¹⁰ A famed food in Palestine.

¹¹ See Natanel’s brilliant discussion on the ways in which gifts and images from Palestine actively unseen by their intended recipients to the extent that a Jewish woman jokes about the possibility of becoming pro-Palestinian if she were to use the olive soap gifted her (Natanel, 2016b: 97)

¹² Recently, B'Tselem, the largest human rights group in Israel, published their recent report proposing a shift in their language from describing Israel as a ‘prolonged occupation’ to describing it as apartheid (*We Are Israel’s Largest Human Rights Group – and We Are Calling This Apartheid* | Hagai El-Ad, 2021). Many scholars including Rafeef Ziadah, Ronit Lentin and Oren Yiftachel and Palestinian activists have long argued that Israel must be held accountable for the decade long segregation policies and dehumanization of Palestinians (Haaretz, 2016; Mondoweiss, 2019; *The Independent*, 2021).

second class Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories and Gaza (Lentin, 2018).

I take a reflective stand here as the researcher self to give due weight to the structural factors that shape the locations in which Palestinian endurance and forms of solidarity take shape. Jerusalem is not a mixed city as in Jewish and Palestinian communities that occupy the same urban space. Rather, it is a spatially segregated city between these two communities (East and West) that conceals the long term ‘ghettoization of Palestinians’: ‘[...] the majority of Israeli people actually live behind mental and physical walls that keep them apart’ (Kassem, 2013: 14–15). And that is how I found myself standing in front of the Palestinian shawarma place with a giant signboard which was unapologetically Arabic, feeling overwhelmed by the blatant racism. The temporal spacings of togetherness in Jerusalem, a city that carries the sprit/burden of symbolic, political and social capital, elucidates an important tension with regard to the ambiguities of cohabitation in the Palestine/Israel context where ‘it becomes a form of binationalism in which Israel ceases to exist as a Zionist state’ (Harker, 2014a: 355).

The ‘biospatial politics’ in Palestine/Israel did not allow me to be a tourist, as I would like to present myself, but made me an undesired potential ally in the first encounter (Cohen and Gordon, 2018). The driver was pretty upset by my implicit refusal to distance myself from anything ‘Arab’ by not accepting his offer to take me to a hotel owned by Jews and insistence on staying in East Jerusalem. Sensing my hesitancy to confront him, he aligned accordingly my presumed proximity to and sympathy for ‘Arabs’. The categories of the colonizer and the colonized, sustained through encounters to others, objects, scenes etc., show how they become ‘worldly’ and they disappear inasmuch as it is ‘lived as a background to experience’ (Ahmed, 2007: 150). Attempted to move away from his source of discomfort, he dropped me at a shawarma place that he would never visit, let alone dine in, driven by the disgust of anything that stands for Palestinian-ness. Many others followed this first moment of racialization, of ‘noticeability of the arrival of some bodies more than others’ (Ahmed, 2007). My lived experience throughout my fieldwork as a brown Middle Eastern look/accents researcher who could not pass undetected resembled what Fanon has already captured in his writings on Blackness and the politics of racial recognition: ‘I arrive slowly in the world; sudden emergencies are no longer my habit. I crawl along. The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. I am fixed. Once their microtomes are sharpened, the Whites objectively cut sections of my reality’ (Fanon, 2017: 95).

The ‘worldly’ encounter between us was a crystal-clear entry into the daily reproduction of racial hierarchies in historical Palestine that feeds off the constant differentiation and boundary-making between two communities and their small worlds (see Natanel, 2016a). On the other side of the spectrum, I was also left estranged; angry and frustrated due to my experiences of inhabiting a racialized and colonized space as a non-white body. And my desire to speak about encounters in a settler colonial occupied context is not ‘to bypass the risk of reifying categories,’ but to ‘re-locate that risk’ so that those categories do not keep becoming worldly; they no longer pass habitually inhabited (Ahmed, 2007: 150). Settler colonialism unfolds double facedly in Palestine: both a livid crisis of the colonial present as well as a system crisis inherent to settler colonial societies.

Yet, despite all the active efforts to unsee and unfeel Palestine (Natanel, 2016b), it is Palestinians who built this house/country (Israel) according to the master’s design (cf. Ross, 2019). Even this simple fact gives them a claim ownership to their homeland, and there lies the systemic crisis inherent to settler colonial societies (see also geographic impossibility section). Acknowledging that there is far more to social and cultural life of Palestinians and Jews than effects of racism, that everyday life cannot be reduced to the racial politics at play in Palestine/Israel, we cannot deny it is constantly undermined by the chaos of racial antagonisms. A critical analysis of everyday space makings, mindful of racial identification and its merits, remains necessary ‘in a world where racisms continue to proliferate and flourish.’¹³

In the rest of the thesis, I treat the everyday as an ‘animation,’ a lived location where I reflect on theory building whilst practising a feminist tendency shaped by the convictions that the personal is simultaneously both political and theoretical. ‘Theory itself is often assumed to be abstract: something is more theoretical the more abstract it is, the more it is abstracted from everyday life. To abstract is to drag away, detach, pull away, or divert. We might then have to drag theory back, to bring theory back to life’ (Ahmed, 2017: 10). By examining the formation of everyday spacings of gender in rural Palestine, this ethnography critically engages with how the settler colonial occupation is lived through in daily activities and space makings as well as how the landscape is tied to individual and collective endurance. In doing so, this chapter examines the ways in which space shapes attachments to and co-constitutes home/land, village, perseverance and gender. Rather than just dwelling on the pervasiveness of the racialized settler-colonial occupation and patriarchy, I treat the everyday as a lived and

¹³ Here I am moved by Paul Gilroy’s (1993) imaginative discussion on the politics of race for a new map of the world presented in *Small Acts*.

experimental location to explore, connect with and perhaps celebrate secluded ways of inhabiting space in Palestine.

From an occupying city to a lived village

Despite my earlier wishful thinking, I got to the Al-Khalil city centre after darkness fell, the streets were devoid of people and cars and the public transportation was over. As there was no direct (Palestinian) public transportation from Jerusalem (within the wall) to Hebron (outside), I first took a bus to Bethlehem to cross the border. I, then, caught a service once I was 'in' the Occupied Territories. The service that took me to the Al-Khalil city centre left me in front of a terminal and did not go in the giant, five-floor building that served as both a shelter for passengers and cars, and a shopping mall. I was told that the public transportation stops at dark, so I had to find my way out of the city to the village. I joined a group of people gathered before the terminal, trying to arrange a shared cap with the ones going on similar paths. Some of the luckier ones were waiting for an acquaintance to give them a lift. Heated bargains were taking place between the stranded and taxi drivers. Palestinians were good at making the most out of scarcity; alas, it did not work for me. I had to pay for my relatively expensive taxi ride to the village (twenty times more than the public transportation!). I had already spent seven hours on the way, trying to get to the places, so I was fine with the quickest possible solution. Like with everything else, there is a limit to endurance.

Eventually, I made my way through historical Palestine to Al-Khalil, the most crowded piece of Palestinian land in the West Bank surrounded on three sides by the occupation. The ride took fifteen minutes to the village that was to become my home as long as my Israeli stamped visa allowed me to stay in Palestine. On the way, I briefly chatted with the driver, Ghassan, about Istanbul, trading, shoes and textile from Turkey. Ghassan's family involved in business in Turkey, so he had visits to Istanbul several times. Overcoming the geographical distance between our homelands helped us avoid the uncomfortable situation we were in: a male driver and a solo female passenger travelling alone at dark. It was not an issue of safety, but more of crossing gender norms that dictate a male travel companion. It was a perceived (not felt) discomfort rooted in modesty, religion and gender norms as I was okay with the convenience the taxi ride provided. Still, I complained about my seven-hour long journey, seeking an excuse for my belated arrival. I also could not help but remember the conversation/interrogation I had earlier with another driver.

Shortly after our departure from the Al-Khalil city centre, we arrived in the village, which was under utter darkness with tiny, anonymous streets and barely lighted houses. I glanced at the doors hoping for a number or name, something to help us find our way through the dusty, tunnel-like village roads. Realizing the ridiculousness of my enquiry made me laugh up my sleeve; I was given neither a postcode nor a house number. The driver pulled off in front of a shop to get the directions. After all, it was enough to mention the family surname for the shopkeeper to signpost the household that I was expected. We kept driving on the narrow paths for five more minutes passing through cats loitering around uncollected garbage and men gathered here and there. Just before we parked, Ghassan claimed: ‘When you tell them that you are from Turkey, people will love you here. You stand with us.’ His welcoming remarks made me acknowledge the ever-sharpening distance between the two communities in Palestine/Israel. I had my share of both disfavour and a warm welcome as a passenger travelling from an occupying city to a lived village.

Arrival: ‘We do not think of you as *ajnabi*¹⁴ here.’

The taxi stopped by the big courtyard door that gave way to a typical three-floor Palestinian house: a shared courtyard with a single-story extended home. The youngest family member, Aysa (8), ran to the door and hugged me. The oldest sister, Regina (16), the father, Ghassan (55), and the aunt greeted me: ‘Ahlan’ (welcome). As I met with the mother and the co-founder of the cooperative, Faryal (50), before in London, I already knew the family members’ names. She was on tour in the UK advocating for the cooperative and women’s struggle against the occupation when we first met each other in person to discuss my research project and the voluntary work for the cooperative. I leaned on Aysa to hold her hand in return for her welcoming hug and greeted everyone. While we were slowly passing through the courtyard, Regina told me how surprised she felt about the way I looked, that I looked like a Palestinian! ‘Oh, that is why my sister liked you at first sight. She thinks you look like one of our cousins. You know, she usually does not like volunteers and stays away from them, but she liked you. We don’t think of you as *ajnabi* here.’ I was wearied by travelling and did not pay much attention to our first conversation at the time. In retrospect, I realise that Regina revealed one of the most significant aspects of my positionality.

¹⁴ ‘Foreigner’ in Arabic and Turkish (*ecnebi*). See, for instance, Bouquet’s (Bouquet, 2017) article on the historical formations and uses of the term in the Ottoman Empire to determine citizens’ foreignness to the state depending on their religious backgrounds.

I was a volunteer/researcher (from Turkey) who passes as Palestinian, an ‘outsider within’ (Hill Collins, 2009). On the one hand, passing as Palestinian sometimes made things easier for me inasmuch as it appointed me some insider-ness. Yet, it was mostly dangerous in my forced intimacies with the occupation, especially at the border and checkpoint crossings, until I would hand in my (foreign) passport that may or may not have helped the soldiers ease off. Also, my bestowed Palestinian-ness was sometimes tiring as Palestinian community, especially women, would expect me to behave as one of them, that is, according to the honour codes. Unlike myself, all the previous volunteers with a ‘western’ look and identification were granted some flexibility in their mobility because of their outsider-ness.

On the other hand, beyond my look and homeland, religion played a significant role in granting me an insider position contrary to an *ecnebi*. The foreignness of an *ecnebi* does not necessarily come from her lack of knowledge on or unfamiliarity with a context, culture, community and place. Instead, *ecnebi* is an Arabic word that is used to refer outsiders (to the community) whose inclusion would be judged upon their religious background. For example, the Ukrainian women who met with their husbands during their studies abroad and moved to the village after they got married were still called *ecnebis* despite the patrimonial kinship system that one would expect to allow these women partake in their husbands’ heritage/community. Even the oldest Ukrainian doctor who had been settled in the village for over 15 years with two children was referred as *ecnebi*.

Upon my arrival, Regina accompanied me to my room on the third floor while I was still emerging from the puzzle of first times. I dropped my suitcase next to the bed and gazed at the window. It was completely dark outside except the light bounced back from the grocery store at one end of the street. The rubbernecking did not last long as Regina came back to the room to ask me out: ‘We are invited to my aunt Nesrin’s house for tea. They would like to meet you too.’ It had been such a long journey to the other side of the apartheid wall, between places embedded in sharply different, dizzying lived intensities, yet it would have been rude to say no to the welcome tea.

In tune with the genuine level of ‘racial Palestinianization’ that I discussed earlier, the following sections convey fragments of everyday life in rural Palestine with a specific attention to gender and its manifestations. I examine how gender is sustained and lived through in an occupied village without reducing Palestinian women’s lives to racial and gendered categories. I do not claim that my analysis is representative or can stand in for all others although it may convey an intimate familiarity about other regions, lives and experiences. My hope is to portray the complexity and quality of women’s lives that easily

get overlooked or underestimated under the banners of rights (presence or absence of them) and the colonized. Instead, I utilize the convergences of endurance that help me trace the complex realities that move beyond resilience/resistance dichotomy. This thesis, in this respect, shall be interpreted through ethics and politics of *sumud* and joy alongside sadness and stagnation, ‘melodic line of continuous variation constituted by the affect’ (Deleuze, p. 4). Endurance, then, allows me to explore some of the mundane and creative ways in which women generate creative responses to hard situations and carve out intimate spaces.

In the Village

My first days in the village were full of surprises. I found the warmth of the people, especially of the women, mesmerising. They welcomed me into their social circles and we shared many conversations over tea in the kitchens, joked with one another in the courtyards and danced secretly in the living rooms. Soon after the welcome drink in Aunt Nesrin’s house, my host family and I were invited for dinner. A guest from Turkey was a source of excitement, especially for Aunt Nesrin, who had been to Istanbul and loved telling her memories. During my stay in the village, her house became my second home as Aunt Nesrin took me under her wings alongside her unmarried daughter and two newly married daughters-in-law. Very similar to the formalities of greeting followed on my first day, Aunt Nesrin’s big family welcomed us at the courtyard which functioned as a communal garden to four households, all sons with their wives and kids living in separate one-floor houses built in the shared yard.

Two of Aunt Nesrin’s sons recently got married, just a week before my arrival. As we were taking the first sip from our teas, they were telling me how beautiful the wedding was and such a pity that I missed it. In the meantime, the seventeen years old brides were rotating between the living room and kitchen to prepare some dinner. They were both in beautiful feather; their teenage faces were covered by heavy makeup and they were wearing the gold wristlets gifted in the wedding. These grand rituals made me wonder how long the ceremony of dressing up and showing pride as new brides would continue. The girls seemed to enjoy being at the centre of attention, which did not last long. Three months into their marriage, they both got pregnant, which culturally translates as their ‘rite passage’ from brides to wives. Only after that, I got to see their still-too-young-to-be-married faces without makeup. They were just kids to me, reminding me of my cultural outsider-ness: I was not able to feel happy for their ‘successful’ marriages.

Food made us switch the subject from Palestinian weddings to cuisine as *Makluba*, a famed traditional dish meaning upside down, was served. We moved to a bigger room carpeted throughout with many pillows on the floor to sit. We, the female members of the family, were sitting around the floor table while two of Aunt Nesrin's sons and her husband sat at the far corner of the room. Some of the younger males, cousins and children were sitting here and there. It was not an absolute gender segregation but a 'gender mindfulness' was at stake, which required both genders to negotiate the appropriate gender-sensitive behaviour in each context. For example, the only male child of my host family, Ayham (15), who should be considered as an adult male, therefore, *namahrem*¹⁵ by Islamic law, was still allowed to sit, eat and hang around with the female cousins. He was seen as a very close family member, like a brother, so that the female cousins did not necessarily wear their hijab at his presence.

Ayham's case was similar to his father, Ghassan, who served 13 years in Israeli prisons as a well-known political figure for the community and not a firm believer. His respected position and proximity to a more secular fraction of the Palestinian Liberation Movement allowed him to manoeuvre around the Islamic codes. Unlike other male family members, he would usually sit with us. Hence, the gender segregation was never ultimate but subject to a constant negotiation as a dynamic and relational force, aligning bodies depending on one's age, marital status, closeness, religiousness, and so on. At the dinner party, we talked about Istanbul, how beautiful the city was and the food, and compared the similarities and differences between Turkish and Palestinian cuisines. Planning Aunt Nesrin's next visit to Turkey became a reoccurring theme of our conversations later in my frequent visits to her place. She did travel to Turkey six months after my departure from Palestine. She sold some of the gold that was gifted to her, which she probably used to wear sometimes as a source of pride after her wedding ceremony like the new brides.

Driving Away: 'You need to make your fun here!'

An unexpected thing happened after the dinner. The father of my host family let us borrow the car, which led to a ripple of excitement among the girls. Tina (23), a Canadian volunteer, had an internationally valid driving license that allowed her to drive both Palestinian and only Israeli bypass roads. Tina, a blond white woman who did not pass as

¹⁵ Someone who qualifies for marriage (owing to his being a stranger or a distant relation).

Palestinian, was the perfect fit to drive rest of us away from the village. Immediately after Tina and other women got the permission (from men) to go, I found seven of us squashed in one car heading into an unknown journey. The car was filled with loud music and confined yet sophisticated dance moves and singing. Apparently, a respected male family member and a white westerner who could drive in Palestine trouble-free made my first woman-only trip possible in Palestine. We were all mesmerised by this short but intense trip, a momentary exodus from the boringly mundane cycle of life in the village and the restricted mobility as a result of patriarchal publicness (see also chapter 6).

The more we drove further, the more the women were carried away. The younger ones were leaning out of the fully opened windows while the rest kept singing aloud. The music got louder and louder while the car dived into the dark and fusty roads. Given that the nearest settlement to the village was three kilometres away, the women did not feel comfortable enough to go far in the dark, so the car drew circles around the village. Whenever a car passed by, the women were to rush their heads back from the window and lower the music. It was a precaution against being recognised by a villager or, even worse, an extended family member. The moment it was 'safe' to have fun, the music was back! I am not sure of how long it took until one of us got bored of swinging around and suggested going to the Al-Khalil city centre, which led to the biggest wave of excitement. If we were secretly to drive 15-minute away from the village, we could chat over coffee and eat sweets.

As we were halfway into the city, someone's phone rang. The husband of one of the women, who happened to be the brother of another woman in the car, was calling to check on us. We were seven women in the car, I being the oldest one with an average age of 21, and only three of us were single. The music was completely off for the first time, so I could hear the conversations. 'We are alright,' said Yara on the phone, 25 years old housewife and mother of two, 'perhaps we will go to Al-Khalil to eat some kunafa (a traditional Palestinian dessert).' We were asked to go back; Yara passed the message disappointingly. The message was immediately received at our end that took the wind out of our sails; we exceeded the limits of our mobility. The car made a U-turn heading back while the music was on again until we passed the checkpoint at the entrance of the village. The checkpoints were the most visible landmarks bordering the isle-like Palestinian cities from the Israeli controlled areas. The music became the symbol of the comfort and liberty that came with being out of sight, the symbol of fun and enjoyment, of dance and woman-only sentiments that were only shared far from the male gaze. It became a carnivalesque sign of women's spatial, emotional and spiritual distancing from oppressive patriarchal norms.

Driving provides a unique opportunity for both genders living through confinement and restricted mobility.¹⁶ The literature on everyday mobilities of Palestinian women acknowledges the politics of pleasure (Khalili, 2016; Richter-Devroe, 2011) and subaltern knowledges (Bishara, 2015) as well as the hybridization of political subjectivities at the edge of two intifadas (Junka, 2006) that are interwoven with travel, making one's way and access to space in Palestine. Many women I interviewed also associated driving with freedom and being able to go wherever you want, yet only two of them had driving licenses. Even though driving is aspired among women, I am suspicious that female drivers are well received in the community as the number of female drivers I could contact was strikingly few in the village. One would assume that the financial burden of car ownership might play a role in the relative lack of female drivers. Given that many Palestinian families do own cars, it is extraordinary that not many women drive. Still, the idea and possibility of driving (away) remains a source of excitement and affective investment for women. This short-travel became a gateway to future rides of fun and enjoyment for the circle of women I was close to during my stay in the village.

Here, though, rather than driving and mobility per se, I am more interested in what enables women to get away not only spatially but also emotionally. In her article 'Between Complicity and Subversion,' Amal Amireh (2003) analyses the contemporary Palestinian nationalist discourse through the lenses of literature, arguing that it reproduces patriarchal norms that incarcerate women's bodies and sexuality. In this specific context of the capture of the settler colonial occupation and patriarchy that I contemplate on, driving is a means of protection (from patriarchal norms that constrain the female body), invisibility/escape (from the male gaze) and mobility (through enclosures of the occupation). It does afford a particular way of moving through spaces of domination without necessarily being visible to the male public gaze.

In a similar vein, Bishara (2015) talks about subaltern ways of driving in the specific geography of the Occupied Territories as a way of getting by the enclosure of the Israeli governmental technologies. The streets are 'safe' for women to the extent that they are safeguarded by male relatives and the public gaze of the small town where everyone knows each other. That is precisely why women are very likely to avoid the streets, knowing that

¹⁶ See, for example, Chris Harker's (2014b) important notes on the role that the service (shared taxi) plays for the Palestinian community in the West Bank as the only available means of public transportation, enabling Palestinians navigate between differently abled and enclosed spaces.

villagers (both men and women) would gossip and speculate over their presence in public spaces. Women in groups do walk around the village to visit nearby friends/family members and to do shopping during the day. A young single female body would be the highest possible threat to the family honour and must not be left unattended. I would see schoolgirls in uniforms walking in groups, yet seeing one alone would be very unlikely. In any case, almost all forms of mobility granted on varying degrees depending on marital status, age and class would require permission from male family members (this could be a father, brother, or, husband).

On the same day, I gained valuable insights into the micro-politics, the everyday and how the temporary subversive escapes to freedom bare seeds of agential capacity to transcend and transform the oppressive structures despite being precarious and momentary. The collective co-endurance moments of joyful singing and dance temporarily subvert the public male gaze. Women change in those moments; they become noisy, confident, jesting and fun. They become inappropriately unleashed. In the village, women's everyday life is captured by sexual division of labour, daily duties of reproduction, housework, child-rearing responsibilities, cooking and providing care. Still, at the heart of the everyday patriarchy, there lies the ecstasy of dance, music and escape. All we needed was a wander; a musical ride away from the village, from the norms that condition female mobility by the male presence.

When we got home, Mohammed, a 33-year-old Palestinian businessman who called us, was out. I searched around the house willing to ask why he did not let us go to the city, but all the male family members were gone. Only children and Aunt Nesrin was home waiting for us. Feeling resentful over the fact that men could go anywhere anytime without notice whereas we had to stay home, I wondered if my feelings had resonance with the other women. But the women were not ready to call it a night yet. After they advised the kids to stay with their grandmother, we all moved to Yara's (Mohammed's wife) house next door. We were alone in the house; men were gone and children were occupied. I sensed the grooming in the air that something was about to happen. In the blinking of an eye, the women put on new clothes and makeup. One of them managed to corner me to apply a shiny red lipstick: 'You beautiful, Hazal, but you never put on makeup, why?' The mascara followed the lipstick and the loud music was back. It did not take half an hour to turn the house into a women's exclusive dance club, only a disco ball light was missing. We did not get to go to Al-Khalil that night but the women did not sit at home, either. They actively involved in shaping the terms of the 'sexual contract' to allow room for enjoyment (Pateman, 1988). They wanted to have fun, therefore, invented ways of getting it. Although I quickly got tired

and let my body rest on a sofa, the others kept dancing until the midnight. I found the answer to my earlier question: my resentment was shared and home space was appropriated in a way that could relieve it. Here, the simultaneous subversion and affirmation of power relations tell about how endurance takes place as gender norms meet with geopolitical location whilst home '[...]' provides a site of everyday resistance struck through by contradiction as it produces, reflects, and subverts modes of normativity' (Natanel, 2016b: 125). Staring at my shiny puzzled face, Regina laughingly concluded: 'You need to make your own fun here!'

Occupation as an excuse

As days went by, the woman-only gatherings became a unique source of fun that required the absence of males and older women to take place. It is important here to note that driving, or more precisely, being able to drive provided the ultimate means of withdrawing from patriarchal publicness in the village. When Mohammed and I finally ran into each other at another family gathering, I could have asked ask my questions regarding why he did not let his wife and sisters travel to the city that was 15 minutes away, but decided not to. I figured that being called into account by a woman might make him feel irritated. I was concerned about the possible side effects of my words on the fragile male ego; he might get uncomfortable and in return mistreat his wife. Although I did let it go, he did not and jokingly said to me, 'Since you have arrived, these women changed. What is going on with you girls?' referring to our little rebellion. Tina picked up his comment and asked the question that I made myself defer: 'Why didn't you let us go, Mohammed?'

His scratchy reply was not unexpected yet still surprised me: 'I would have let you go, but there was a roadblock there (referring to the nearest settlement to the village). You would not be able to go anyway.' In many other occasions, I did witness men just saying no without bothering themselves to provide a justification. However, Mohammed came up with an excuse (to an *ajnabi*) in such a way that he hoped Tina would relate to. He, thus, used the occupation as an excuse for restricting the mobility of gendered bodies. In her inspiring book on intimate sites where conflict is sustained, Natanel portrays ethnographic insights into everyday life in Palestine/Israel, discussing how the discourse 'what they do to their women' used by leftist Jews as an excuse for apathy and inaction that preserves the status quo (Natanel, 2016b: 67–70). For the maintenance of gendered narratives of moral superiority, '[...]' the space populated by Palestinians, granted neither country nor nation, exists as "backward" and "primitive" in both historical and contemporary times, infused with gender

relations that serve to illustrate the extent to which Israel remains distant and progressively “other” (ibid. p.69).’ When Mohammed called us to ask for our return, we had already passed the nearby settlement which he claimed to have a roadblock. Strikingly, he replaced patriarchy with the occupation to legitimise the women’s confinement and lack of autonomy over their bodies and movement. Seeking for legitimacy, he used the occupation as an excuse in order to sustain the status quo at home.

In the coming days, I continued observing the enduring ways the Palestinian women carved out spaces away from the public gaze. Thus far, I looked at the embedded spaces and encounters that enabled the women to do intimacies, to endure via laughing, dancing, caring, listening, having fun, gossiping and storytelling. In doing so, the sections capture some of the intersecting power structures of Israeli settler occupation and patriarchy, of the domination that disrupts, limits and maintains those spaces out of place. Following the critical scholarship on everyday manifestations of power (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Natanel, 2016b; Navaro-Yashin, 2003; Richter-Devroe, 2011; Mitchell, 1990) I explored the sites and spaces of endurance that make Palestinian lives liveable. Concomitantly, the rest of the chapter spatializes the ways in which occupation and patriarchy is endured in relation to landscape. In the empirical analysis that follows, I map out how the emotional and material reproductions of social perseverance take place, proving how the settler colonial violence is deeply sewed into the everyday geography of Hebron.

The Landscape of Endurance

Before diving into the cultural geography of Palestinian homespaces in a predominantly Muslim village (see the following chapters 4 and 5), the final section elaborates on the landscape of endurance, which conditions the everyday life. This ethnographic study of landscape embraces ‘[...] themes of bodily mobility, temporality, and their relation to biographic narrativity have creatively addressed the way that landscape animates the interconnectivity of environment, movement, history, and personal storytelling’ (Dubow, 2009: 130). As a way of introducing the landscape of the Hebron city centre and the village, I start with retelling a tour of the Old City led by a Palestinian tour guide, showing the ways landscape is endured. I met with our guide from the Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre, Bethlehem, and a Swedish couple that visited Hebron back in 1980s and wanted to know more about the situation at the present. We set off walking from the Sheikh Ali al-Bakkal Mosque in the northern quarter of the Old City, strolling the ancient pathways and

passing by the Old City market (whatever left from it) until we reached the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque (Tombs of Patriarchs).

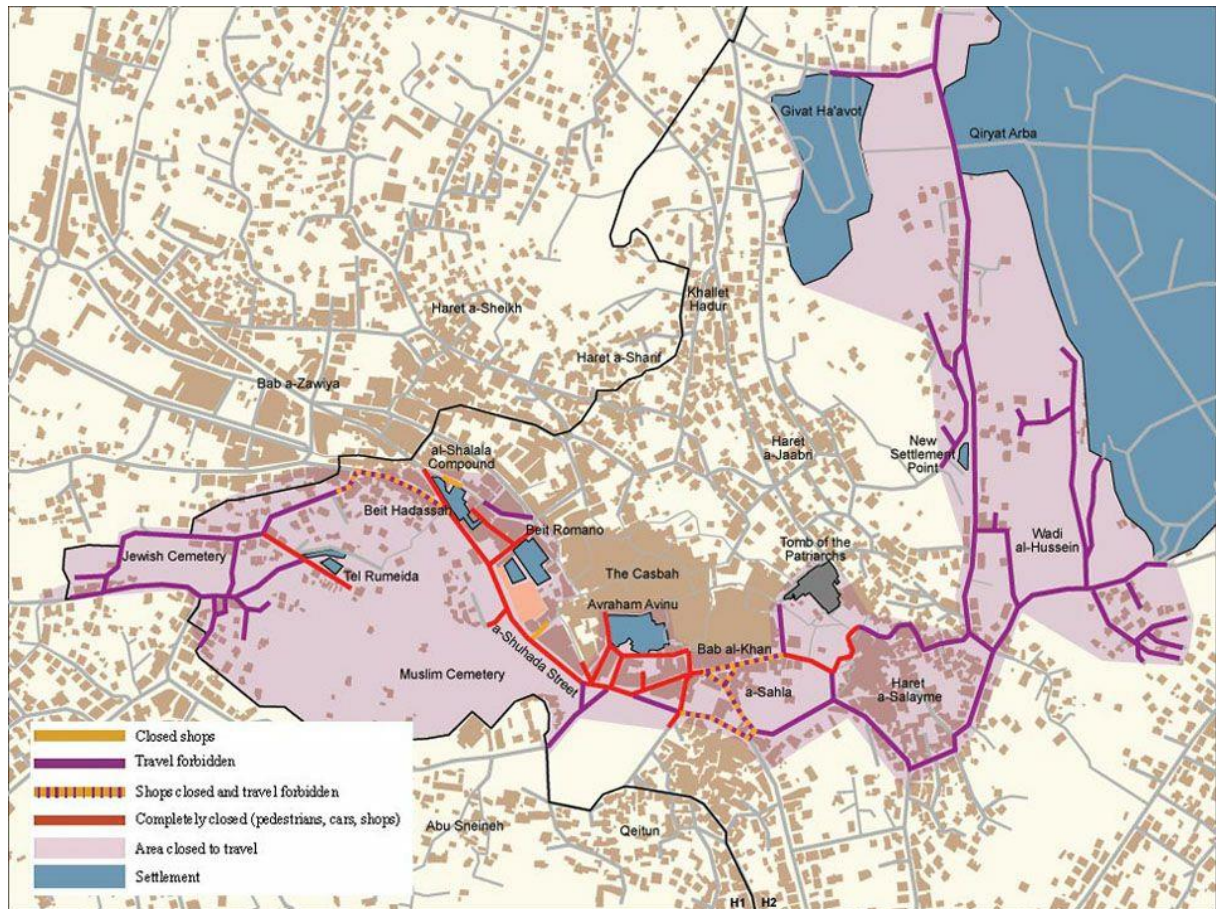


Figure 3 The Map of Old City, Hebron (www.alaslah.org)

The map above gives an idea about the route we took around the tiny, monumental streets of the Old City of Hebron, which used to be one of the vivacious landmarks of not only Al-Khalil but also historical Palestine. It also tells very much about the fragmented space, watchpoints, military zones, areas under control of Palestinian authority and Israeli state, ever-growing settlements, religious sites, soldiers and areas on and off closed to access of Palestinians. The spatial organization of the West Bank took shape after the post-Oslo period, yet Hebron stands out from multicultural Jerusalem and other predominantly Palestinian cities and urban enclaves. Before the beginning of 1997, Israel controlled all the Hebron area until the Hebron Protocol was signed, which was about the partial redeployment of Israeli military forces from the city. The protocol was signed in the following years of a shooting massacre carried out by an American-Israeli settler inside the Ibrahimi Mosque, leaving 29 Palestinian prayers dead and 125 wounded (Sellick, 1994). Under this agreement,

Hebron was divided into two areas: H1 and H2. The control of H1 was shifted to the Palestinian Authority and H2 remained under Israeli military control. ‘The H2 area is inhabited by approximately 35.000 Palestinians and 500 settlers living in four downtown settlements inside the Old City. The Palestinian population in H2 is declining due to the impact of Israeli measures including extended curfews, restrictions on pedestrian movement and the prohibition of vehicle movement and closure of shops and other commercial buildings, all of the above applying only to Palestinian residents. All Palestinians in area H2 are under the military law while Israeli settlers under Israel’s civil law.’¹⁷ Along the way, we passed by the symbolic markers of stubborn though fading Palestinian presence reclaiming an entitlement to the space.



Figure 4 "Fight Ghost Town" Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)

¹⁷ The statistical information is taken from the [hebronapartheid.org](https://www.hebronapartheid.org/), which provides an interactive map to capture the unfolding complex social and militarized spatial relations on the ground. See <https://www.hebronapartheid.org/>



Figure 5 Shuhada Street, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)



Figure 6 "Liberation, Return, Rebuilding" Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)

The figures above capture some of the settler sentiments that meticulously dismiss the 1997 massacre and instead propose the exact year as the time period that Jews lost access to the space. So, reclaiming the land with reference to the sacred texts ('the children have returned to their own border') becomes an act of everyday border making that requires constant violence eliminating any other alternative claims to space and space making in Hebron.

As early as my first days in Hebron, I realized that using walking (as in touring around the city with women) as a multi-sensorial and less hierarchical method –such that women would decide where to go– to temporarily cohabit the landscape might not be possible. Walking affords an embodied mobility intertwined with the politics of place as 'walkers deal with the world as they find it' and become part of the geography and space/time (Sellick, 2019). Hence, Sellick argues that walking could be a creative medium so as to traverse the geography fissured by colonial violence, invalidating the assumptions that there is no Palestinian landscape but conflict –nothing attractive or beautiful to see– by 'thickening Palestinian horizon' (Sellick, 2019: 13). However, my very first attempts of free spirited walking in Hebron (contrary to walking internationally known trails of tourism,

pilgrims and political activism) made me reconsider my methodology.

The first incident was the Jewish holiday of Sarah's Day when thousands of settlers flocked to the city centre from nearby settlements, other parts of historical Palestine and overseas. Unaware of the increased harassment and violence endured especially during the Jewish holidays, I happened to be passing by 'the settler parade'. To understand what was going on, I approached to a Palestinian standby, among many others, watching the cruising settlers accompanied by army forces. His answer/conclusion was short and painful: 'Settlers having fun.'



Figure 7 Sarah's Day, Hebron (25/11/2017)

The spectacle of power diffused in the 'strange hybrid of militancy and festive religiosity' was striking. On her book on the ideology of settling and the everyday spaces of settlement in Hebron, Neuman reflects on the same scenery:

While walking resolutely and socializing, on the few occasions I observed, people avoided making reference to the Palestinians residents they were passing, to the layout of physical space around them, or to any details of the observed landscape. Sometimes a donkey would stray into the road, chased by its Palestinian owner, and the armed settler crowd would momentarily move around

both, continuing to walk without noticing the incident. Indifference was the disposition that allowed settlers to navigate directly through the winding roads of Palestinian areas. With this reduced display of affect, space would be routinely overtaken, a space not literally devoid of its inhabitants, but one in which Palestinians were completely disattended and pushed into the background as if an element of landscape. Coupled with arms, which the state readily distributed to male settlers who live in the West Bank, are a series of curfews applied to Palestinians living in the area. [...] while a settler crowd is moving through and even festively overtaking Palestinian residential space in order to celebrate a religious or national holiday, Palestinians are made into unwilling spectators of this display of domination (2018: 97).

My Palestinian fellow had a point to the extent that settlers performed a great deal of entitlement (to the space) as if they were just having fun in their playground: shouting, throwing things and taunting the other kids. They knew that Palestinians were there and watching, and acted as if they were trying to remove any kind of dignity they might have. It was not a matter of wilful ignorance or indifference, as Neuman argued, but more like an active attempt to make Palestinian lives miserable, what Peteet coined as ‘petty cruelties of occupation’ (2017: 85). It was then I figured that getting around the city with women for research would not worth taking the risk although the risk was always there.

In the following days, I kept observing the social life in the village hoping that we might have walking tours around the village. Yet, the mobility of women (especially unmarried ones) was very much limited by the gender segregation and patriarchal publicness (see also chapter 5). When I mentioned my intention of walking to one of the experienced members of the cooperative, I was convinced that loitering was not a culturally approved form of mobility for gendered bodies. Gender, age and marital status afford different im/mobilities to women, yet the common societal expectation is to be shy and modest and avoid mix-gender publics as much as possible unless they are accompanied by a male family member (cf. Marshall, 2015). It was then to capture some of the emotions that ‘stick’ to landscape (Ahmed, 2015) I had to come up with more creative forms of mapping the embodied and affective mobility of gendered lives. I hoped that abstract spaces (imaginative walks) would enable us to manoeuvre around the double bind of occupation and patriarchy, the two main constraints for women. Instead of walking in the streets, I organized emotional map colouring sessions with

young women (they expressed more interest) where we could sit at home and imagine how it felt to navigate through different places in the village.

In the first drawing session (out of three that produced 12 maps), Aunt Faryal's daughter, Regina, and one of their high school friends gathered in my room, the only place that could grant us some privacy to experiment coloring maps. Before we started, Regina laughed at the representation of the Palestinian man whose hand was pictured up.

R: Why would the person who drew the map imagined Palestinian men as such?

H: It was Fatma and I, we designed it together. I suggested that we draw a man and woman and she drew like this... Not sure of why, though.

Y: Maybe it is because they are always angry.

R: Shrinks. Yes, they are very angry.

We shared a laugh over knowing that men had room and right to express anger. When Regina finished hers, she cried: 'Look! We are not afraid of anything! There is no black color' (which I associated with fear). She was then about to attend her first public protest in a few days, which made her confront with guns and soldiers from the checkpoint at the entrance of the village. Following that incident, she asked me whether she could recolor the map, and when I wondered why she wanted to do another round, she said: 'Now, after today, I know how fear feels like.' I also asked why she colored Jerusalem in yellow (free) and blue (happy), knowing that she had never been and was not allowed to go there. 'The whole Palestine can go to Jerusalem only one day in a year, on a Friday in Ramadan. And everyone tries to go. One day for all Palestine, imagine! From here, Jordan, Gaza... everywhere... It gets so crowded that you cannot pray. And the hospitals fill with people on the same day. But still, I would be happy in Jerusalem.'¹⁸ Here, the traces of the imaginative emotional geography that connected Hebron to the rest of Palestine was captured in the frozen space/time of maps. In return, the freezing allowed us to engage in hope, in the ways in which enduring the colonial landscape maintained the capacity to hope as a contingent

¹⁸ Being aware of the limitations of any static attempt to map emotions, the fact that not every space and emotion can be captured in such an exercise, let alone the fact that spatio-temporalities change as it happens with Regina, I see the drawing sessions as an opportunity to start a discussion, ask question about how they feel across different places at the broad, co-constituted spectrum of public and private.

possibility that she could get to see Jerusalem one day, in another world.¹⁹

For those of us who were privileged enough to walk the walk in Hebron, we reached the Al-Shuhada street, which had been closed off to Palestinians for a decade now. We stopped by the Christian Peace Makers to gain more insights from the Palestine fighting to make a living in the Old City on daily basis. They allowed us to go up to their rooftop to have the whole picture, that is, the living apartheid. I immediately noticed the soldiers pointing their guns at us from the rooftop of a nearby military base. I tried to calm down myself, pondering the idea that although the tour guide and I might look suspicious, we might not get shut this time given the white European look of the other two participants. We were warned in the first place that taking pictures was not welcomed by the soldiers. In the maximum ten minutes that we spent on the rooftop, I managed to capture two settlers passing by. I knew that settlers in the West Bank were given guns by the state, yet it was still shocking to eyewitness them walking around in daylight.



Figure 8 Settlers, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)

¹⁹ For the sake of anonymity and safety, I later on decided not to include the map themselves in the text as the lay out could give an idea of the village.

As we left behind the vegetable market and Palestinian shops that had to be moved further away due to the closure of the Al-Shuhada Street where the square used to be. The more we kept walking towards the inner sites, the more streets were emptied of inhabitants.

Hebron's old city became the target of a plan by Jewish settlers, backed by the Israeli state, to "Judaize" it. Under military occupation-with prolonged closures and curfews and daily harassment by settlers who have occupied buildings by extrajudicial and often violent means -the old city has progressively declined from a bustling market town to a melancholy and deserted place, streets sealed off with cinder block, razor wire, and concrete-filled oil drums. The old city's infrastructure has been deliberately neglected, its buildings allowed to deteriorate. Faced, too, with a worsening economic and physical situation, many of the Palestinian inhabitants of the old city have moved to safer areas. Those remaining are now in desperate need of support to make their homes habitable and to resist the aggressive efforts of the settlers to demolish and replace entire quarters of the old city (Sellick, 1994: 70).



Figure 9 "Open Shuhada Street" Hebron (07/12/2017)



Figure 10 Shuhada Street, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)



Figure 11 Shuhada Street, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)

When we arrived the Shuhada Street, our Palestinian guide had to leave as it was closed to Palestinians and walked up the street alone, crossing the check point to meet us on the front. Currently, this area is the main entrance to the Avraham Avinu settlement, which makes it one of the most highly controlled areas that is completely closed to the Palestinian access, except the ones who live in the area of H2 and whose mobility is monitored by the checkpoints. It is the largest settlement in the Hebron city centre, located in the heart of the Old City between the Al-Shuhada Street and the main street of Casbah. Palestinians endure living under Israeli military control; they are not allowed to have any visitors, including relatives from the H1 part of the city, harassed by settlers and soldiers, and children cross several checkpoints every day to go to school. Several windows from settler houses look out on the street, so the Palestinian municipality installed protective nets to ensure the safety for visitors as well as the shopkeepers exposed to trash thrown out of windows. The metallic protection network covered the sky for us throughout the Palestinian market, materializing the divisions and tensions over space in the Old City.



Figure 12 Old City Market, Hebron (15/11/2017)



Figure 13 Old City Market, Hebron (15/11/2017)



Figure 14 Shuhada Street Checkpoint (15/11/2017)

When I finally passed the last checkpoint of the tour, where I had to explain why I visited the Old City of Hebron, I turned around, still quite dazed and woeful that the settler colonial occupation existed. It was then I saw the Palestinian graffiti on the hard rock barricade ahead: ‘Land and Freedom.’



Figure 15 "Land and Freedom", Shuhada Street Checkpoint (15/11/2017)

With the Old City gradually taken over from Palestinians and made into a ghost town by the Occupation forces, into a designated enclave for the pious settlers backed by the military presence, the presence of Palestinians living in the area under Israeli control is reduced to 10.000 from 40.000 in the last decade (according to our tour guide). The landscape of Hebron is closely knitted to the struggle for free home/land ('land and freedom'). During the walk, we passed by the Turkish baths made during the Ottoman rule which our guide made me notice and added: 'The entrance door is on the Shuhada Street, though, so no longer accessible to us. Palestinians can get in via the back door if they manage to jump over a couple rooftops,' and finished his sentence with a bittersweet smile: 'Palestinians can take a shower if they can access to the baths.'



Figure 16 Ottoman Baths, Old City Hebron (15/11/2017)

Endurance sometimes make you jump over roofs to enjoy a hot bath as well as reclaim the walls and stones of homeland by graffiti (Peteet, 1996). How people endure precarious conditions, which focuses on subversive politics in the sense of the propensity to resist structural inequalities or vault and improvise despite them, has spatial dimension that contain anticolonial sentiments. By enduring the occupied landscape, Palestinians affirm life for land and freedom. It is neither smooth nor free of conflict, yet a profound embodied experience that connects people and spaces in affective ways with the hope for possibilities

of movement and struggle. Here, the *Sumud* Project curated by Palestinian artists where the apartheid wall circles in Bethlehem gives more insight into the emotional aspects of perseverance amidst hardship.



Figure 17 "The Wall is on My Heart" Sumud Project, Bethlehem (30/11/2017)

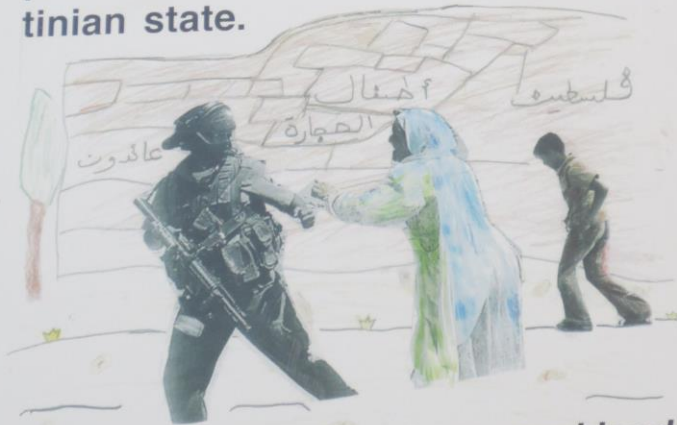


Figure 18 "Open-air Prison" Sumud Project, Betlehem (30/11/2017)

SETTLERS AND SETTLEMENTS



The term 'occupation' suggests temporary presence. However, the Israeli occupation functions as a cover for the building and expansion of settlements. There are now in total some 750.000 settlers in more than 100 illegal settlements. They surround the Palestinian cities, take away lands needed, and prevent the realization of a Palestinian state.



***Sumud is protecting home and land
against occupation and settlers***

Sumud Story House www.aeicenter.org

Figure 19 "Settlers and Settlements" Sumud Project, Bethlehem (30/11/2017)



Figure 20 The Occupation Wall, Bethlehem (30/11/2017)

In addition to the built environment as physical locations of forced intimacy with the colonizer (Repo and Griffiths, n.d.), the interiority of Palestinian homes intermingled the landscape. During my fieldwork, I became friends with Darya, a cooperative member who stitched embroidery from home. As one of the most experienced members who had involved with the cooperative for over a decade, Darya was mother of six, one of whom suffered from a deadly kidney failure and required a permanent caregiver. She was one of the few Jordanian Palestinians that I met, who moved back to the village following her marriage to one of her cousins after completing high school in Amman. Darya’s family had a big, exclusive garden with a hammock, however we never spent time outdoors during my visits except once – when I coincidentally found out that it was possible to see the apartheid wall from the rooftop.

Even though I knew that the apartheid wall was very close to the village and its construction resulted in a major loss in agricultural land and disputes among the villagers, I had almost forgotten about it by the end of my first month. The daily drama of life, trivial things like food preparation, kids, my voluntary work at the cooperative and Turkish TV series –an enthusiastic conversation topic among women– kept me busy (like many others).

Partaking in everyday life let the constant mood of insecurity and confinement gradually fade away in order for us to survive. I pursued a ‘normal life’ whatever it might entail in an occupied context (Allen, 2008; Richter-Devroe, 2008). Darya, three of her children and I climbed up the roof for a better view as we brainstormed potential changes in the garden and the best spot for another birdhouse. No one else in the rooftop seemed to be interested in the view of the occupation wall yet they patiently waited for me as I took some pictures. Perhaps the situation was too obvious to make any verbal comment. Perhaps a ‘flat affect’ where stuckness and stillness translated as tacitness: ‘Multiple forces converge; yet things remain out of joint. History is not adding up to something, but resonates in a hovering, over-determined environment where unresolved effects suture the scene in which plot plays out’ (Berlant, 2015: 192). Even so, Darya’s silence was a bit of a surprise to me given that she came from a politically engaged family and her husband was employed by the Palestinian Authority.



Figure 21 The Occupation Wall, Hebron (12/12/2017)

When we came down the roof, instead of heading to indoors, we waited at the front door, which opened to the garden. For a while, we stood at the intersection of the interior (home) and the exterior (the street) like gatekeepers as Darya told me about the family plans that her husband wanted to improve the garden by extending the porch. Only then they could fit a bigger hammock and a seesaw that the kids had long wished for. Her wishes revealed that the garden as it is, with the lack of high enough walls securing some privacy, was not appropriate for outdoor conviviality even though Darya mostly stayed at home and could have appreciated the fresh air. In the village, the Occupation Wall on the one hand and the ever-growing, greedy settlements on the other physically trapped us. They are the immediate markers of the landscape, embedding the present time in a prolonged enclosure. Contrary to the Hebron city centre where Palestinians and settlers ‘co-habit,’ the village is an enclave, salvaging Palestinian island that can flood at any time. The escalation of violence is just a matter of time; however, peaceful things may seem at times. The time we spent at the rooftop made me think about the occupation less of something to talk about but more to live through and act upon, manoeuvre around and sometimes just ignore to endure one’s surrounding.



Figure 22 Birdhouse, Hebron (12/12/2017)

The second frequent destination of my village days was Aunt Nesrin's extended family house where she shared the courtyard with her three sons who soon after marriage built their own houses on the family land. My visits to her place were full of intimacies, which I dwell on throughout the thesis. Here, I would like to recall a moment when I gained insights into the intimate landscape, the ways in which the everyday spaces of the settler colonial occupation were experienced by women. In my first visit to her house, Aunt Nesrin showed me around, first the interiors and then the balcony. Aunt Nesrin and I looked at the view over the balcony, at the orderly cumulation of lights ahead accompanied by a few random ones here and there, and a mountain that seemed like a giant shadow in the dark. First Regina broke the silence: 'Did you know that Gaza is just behind these mountains. I did not know it. I learnt that when I turned thirteen. It is very close, maybe half-an-hour drive, but we cannot go there.' I moaned instead of, or as a way of saying that 'I know what you mean. It is unbelievable, ridiculous and horrible.' Aunt Nesrin, too, got involved in the non-verbal conversation by signposting the cluster of lights and counted six of them. 'Six,' we heard and immediately understood that she was counting the settlements, the 'modern' and measured lighting of the Jewish colonies juxtaposing the de-developed, chaotic Palestinian infrastructure. In the ethnically stratified, spectacular landscape of the Occupied Territories, there are simple ways to differentiate living arrangements of Palestinians from settlers. In daylight, an attentive eye would catch the giant black water tanks on every Palestinian roof against the lush settlements. At dark, the contrasting aesthetics of lighting in these two asymmetrically built environments would guide your attentiveness to the landscape. Three of us stood in the balcony that night, gazing over the orderly lights of the settlements in silence, wondering what was behind the hills and mountains, and how it would be like to travel there, in another world.

In this section, I treated the landscape of endurance, letting it to be the backdrop against which I analysed the everyday, the 'internal dynamics, stresses, and contradictions of the social groups and communities within which people live out their lives, or the sensibilities and subjectivities of individuals as they negotiate their mundane existence away from the barricades' (Taraki 2006, xi). I unpacked spatial encounters as well as moments of tacet through which the settler colonial landscape became 'worldly' and was endured affectively. I arrived at the conclusion that it would be ethnographically myopic not to attend those (un)moves where tacet did not necessarily translated as normalization or acceptance inasmuch as being hopeful could guarantee change in and of itself. I specifically turned to both underperformed actions (as in keeping quiet) and overperformed moves (as in jumping

over rooftops) as a method for thinking about how those affected by intersecting structures of violence could disclose it affectively. Where is the room for reluctance in theory, for the things that we may not be keen to talk about?

Contrary to the tour in Hebron the Old City which aimed at informing us about the ‘situation on the ground’ and which was initiated by men and predominantly inhabited by internationals, the women from the village was reluctant to speak about the Occupation explicitly. Yet it existed and all my interlocutors knew that it did. They knew that we lived through it as much as I knew. So, no one bothered to explain or try to convince me. Together we avoided talking about it until we could not. On her work on the queer narrative of loss and physic wounds that escape from the dominant representation of the Middle East, Dina Georgis talks about how ‘the work of mourning involves an interminable process of working through difficult experience and trauma, not defending against it by making attachments to available objects. Mourning is not equivalent to forgetting the past but making a different relationship to what is lost. If a new attachment is made, it is the effect of this process not the cause of it’ (Georgis, 2013: 5). My point is not about mourning per se, it is this description very much telling about endurance. I find Georgis’s lines helpful to think about the workings of endurance: how the gendered bodies pushed to their limits sustain attachments not equivalent to forgetting about the occupation but through unfolding convergent affects that stick to the landscape. Whilst setting the wider context for the following chapters, I hope that this chapter also tells a ‘better story’ about the ways in which endurance fills the air, moves bodies and shape the contours of intimate worlds in Palestine.

Interlude 2 Intimacy

Narrative, especially in the form of ethnographic writing, enlivens different layers of intimacy inasmuch as it vividly brings shared situations to the attention of others. It cultivates lived sensitivities and ‘attentiveness to life itself,’ enhancing ‘perceptions with precision of words’ (Narayan, 2012: xi). As Said (1984) have spotted long ago, the permission to narrate the Palestinian experience(s), however fragmented, dislocated and contested it may be, is restricted by the wider socio-political formations of settler colonialism and the ongoing Israeli occupation enforced onto the geography, that is, Palestine (the previous chapter explores the landscape of endurance). ‘They [Palestinian] are there all right, but the narrative of their present actuality – which stems directly from the story of their existence in and displacement from Palestine, later Israel – that narrative is not’ (ibid. 31). This interlude, as part of the ethnographic project presented throughout the thesis, interrogates spatial intimacies that take place in rural Palestine within and beyond the power relations at the axes of occupation and patriarchy. It sets up the theoretical grounding for the following chapters that present intimate topologies of the Palestinian space making, the intensities and life worlds of Palestinian women that live under the prolonged occupation. Whilst discussing the analytical and political underpinnings of intimacy, The interlude and subsequent chapter reflect on two questions:

1. How are colonized spaces fissured by violence made inhabitable?
2. What are the spatial intimacies and doings that enable women to make space, and get by the occupation and patriarchy?

This interlude, then, forefronts the intimate in the analysis of space –the multi-layeredness of intimate boundings and boundaries– as it helps us understand how Palestinian women’s spacings are constituted, maintained and negotiated through multiple social relations, different modes of attaching and dwelling beyond the clear-cut distinction of private/public, inside/outside, home/work spaces. I purposefully use the word ‘spacing’ to underline a topological sense of space that is always becoming. Acknowledging the complexity of spatial relations and bearing in mind that intimacy operates across scales and sites (Wright, 2009; Mountz and Hyndman, 2006; Nagar et al., 2002), this project examines the space making practices of Palestinian women from rural Hebron via intimate lenses that sustain the ‘undoing of binaries’ (Peterson, 2017: 115). I present an empirically grounded analysis, sensitive to the mutually constitutive intimate spatialities at home (and outside).

‘The intimate encompasses not only those entanglements rooted in the everyday, but also the subtlety of their interconnectedness to everyday intimacies in other places and times [...]’ (Mountz and Hyndman, 2006: 447).

Geographies of intimacy is a growing body of work that studies affective structures and intimate relations ‘albeit manifest in increasingly diverse and complex ways’ (Valentine, 2008: 2106). Having said that, it is possible to name three strands of research that advances the study of the intimate: the critical feminist, queer and postcolonial undoings that suggest an intimate turn in theory making. The cluster of research that traces the effects of colonial legacies have looked at the affective grid of colonial politics (Stoler, 2010), the politics of imperial feminism (Legg, 2010) and of anticolonial friendships (Davies, 2017; Gandhi, 2006). There is also a growing body of research that proposes a feminist attentiveness to relational spaces which tackles how intimacy materialize and is lived through the everyday processes which remain global in scope (Duruz, 2011; Hall, 2019; Mountz and Hyndman, 2006; Pratt and Rosner, 2006) and the queer ties that bind beyond the normative settings of family/nation state (Bowlby, 2011; Bunnell et al., 2012; Gorman-Murray, 2006; Morrison et al., 2013; Nash, 2005; Povinelli, 2006). Last but not least, there is also an emerging body of work on modes of relating (Ahmed, 1999; Long, 2014; Shehadeh, 2013) and intimate roots (Long, 2009) in diasporic settings.

Intimacy, as enmeshed in embodied social relations, encapsulates different modes of relating; of belonging, alienation, emotions and bodily encounters. I care about intimacy as an analytical tool imbued in the realm of the experienced, in the felt and lived intensities that its tactile configurations open up space for a feminist envisioning of locality. In my inquiry into feminist localities, I explore three sites –the home, the cooperative and the village– which enable me to trace multiple, dynamic relations operating over space-making, thereby help me examine different modes of attachment/dis-attachment, of bounding and distancing and perhaps of dwelling in rural Palestine. I agree with Mountz and Hyndman on the fact that ‘[f]eminists reclaim and analyze sites, voices, and ways of knowing the world epistemologically and methodologically that produce differences and disparities, among them gender and geographical’ (ibid.). The ‘intuitiveness’ and ‘sensuality’ of intimacy disrupt the binary organizations of space as the feminized domestic/private and the masculine public by knitting gender and place into each other (Pratt and Rosner, 2006: 18).

Importantly, many feminist/queer scholars acknowledge the need to ‘revisit’ intimacy (Berlant and Warner, 1998; Sehlikoglu, 2015; Zengin and Sehlikoglu, 2016) whether it be violently enforced (Zengin, 2016), accommodated (Andrews and Shahrokni, 2014; Hoodfar, 1997) or countered (Pande, 2018) in patriarchal structures. The geographically disperse literature promises that intimacy as an analytical rubric has been travelling in a way that ‘suggests the possibility of actively different locales, sites, situations for theory, without facile universalism or over-general totalizing’ (Said, 2002). Intimacy promises the analytic undoing of sustained binaries. It not only bridges the public/private but also complicates the issues around the debate on the scale. Pratt and Rosner (2006), for instance, call for changing the local with the intimate in order to reconfigure the conventions of scale. To canvas the geographical imaginary beyond binary thinking, Wright (2010) also attempts to bridge the paths enlightened by feminist and queer scholars, suggesting the everyday as a stepping-stone to push the boundaries of the political (see also Rose, 1997).

To that end, feminist/queer scholarship has explored the ways in which the public is mediated by the private (Berlant and Warner, 1998; Sehlikoglu, 2015; Zengin and Sehlikoglu, 2016). Mediation is not just something that merely traverses the distance between the public and the private, it also bridges them relationally. Besides, moving beyond the binary of the public and the private, the recent geographical research conceptualizes home in relation to ‘the mobile geographies of dwelling’ in ‘[...] the ways in which ideas of home invoke a sense of place, belonging or alienation that is ultimately tied to a sense of self’ (Blunt and Varley, 2004: 3). The following chapter draws out the ways public patriarchy sneaks into private homespaces, shaping the contours of publicness and privacy in relation to intimate and embedded physical, emotional, cultural and religious locations. A partial map of intimate topologies of Palestinian homespaces suggests that home is bittersweet inasmuch as the intimacies that take place there contain a mixture of feelings: happiness and sadness, belonging and alienation, attachment and domination. It shows how the alienating (gender norms) and homemaking (dwellings) intersect in the domain of the intimate.

For the scope of this project, intimacy re-works the double bind of patriarchy and occupation relationally. Following the footsteps of the feminist scholars, I introduce the concept of ‘intimate topologies’ to capture some of the spatio-temporally embedded, felt and experienced encounters that traverse home, tracing not only patriarchal gender norms that reside at home but also the joy and laughter that leak out. I not just look ‘inside’ homespaces, but trace the spaces of contact such as courtyards and women’s workplaces, which in case of

a cooperative function as a gathering space. Thinking intimate spaces topologically help me make sense of the new (or not so new) and more complex ways in which Palestinian women from villages make space whilst negotiating patriarchal norms and coping with the occupation.

It is important to note here that this thesis portrays the intimacies that take place within the boundaries of Hebron and the Occupied Territories. Mostly due to the time limit, I neither scaled up my analysis nor followed the transnational circulation of intimate Palestinian objects, embroidered handcrafts or transnational solidarities and friendships that cherish the Palestinian cause. Yet, I hope the project to be one of those intimate acts of solidarity. Also, I believe that stretching out the reproduction of unique localities require profound scholarly attention and of crucial importance for the feminist work of attempting to understand the needs and dynamics structuring the local (see also Doreen Massey and McDowell, 1994). The work on social movements, for example, show that scale is only one of the spatialities that shapes and is also shaped by social action (Leitner et al., 2008). The three chosen sites of this project complicate the autonomy of scale from the privately imagined and feminized spacings of home to the male publicness, the village, proving the relationality of these three. The whole thesis, in that regard, shall be read as the intimate topologies of rural Palestine that the following chapters offer a panorama of.

The works of literature on critical geopolitics (Pain, 2014; Pain and Staeheli, 2014) and geographies of relatedness (Nash, 2005) have demonstrated that intimacy dissolves the already accustomed binaries of global/local, proximate/distant, familial/state. In her article, Kye Askins (Askins, 2014, 2015) links the everyday politics and broader discourses and politics of migration in the UK by drawing upon an unfolding friendship of an Iraqi refugee and a British resident. What makes their friendship possible is the fact that they both bring ‘embodied emotions to their relationship from other places at other times,’ proving the interconnectedness of intimate relationships (Askins, 2014: 354). To put more fully, the possibility of their bodily proximity emerges relationally through the different places and imaginaries they have brought into the present, which are physically distant yet not absent. Askins’ discussion on the possibilities of friendship is a good example of what I call intimate topologies, where we can envision deviated intimacies (from history and biography) in a similar fashion to Lauren Berlant’s call for rethinking intimacy:

Rethinking intimacy calls out not only for redescription but for transformative analyses of the rhetorical and material conditions that enable hegemonic fantasies to thrive in the minds and on the bodies of subjects while, at the same time, attachments are developing that might redirect the different routes taken by history and biography. To rethink intimacy is to appraise how we have been and how we live and how we might imagine lives that make more sense than the ones so many are living (Berlant, 1998: 286).

The scholarship on ‘governing intimacy’ (Oswin and Olund, 2010), both the intensified surveillance of the intimate in colonial legacies (Stoler, 2002) and the nation state’s efforts in social engineering (Zengin, 2016), articulates the governing anxieties surrounding the realm of the intimate very well. Intimacy, on the other hand, is largely unexplored in its relation to resistance to the occupation in Palestine beyond the often-romanticized familial ties and kinship networks. David Marshall’s (2014) exceptional work on the Love Under Apartheid Project in Palestine discusses whether storytelling, especially love stories, can potentially confront the occupation by ‘mobilizing affinities’ and ‘sustaining resilience,’ thus complicating the colonial narratives and categorizations of land and race. He suggests an account of intimacy as a ‘counter-veiling political force.’ As Rachel Pain (2014, 352) states elsewhere, ‘[...] resistance is never in straightforward opposition to violence, but exists in messy and dynamic relation, and may also be an intimate practice.’ Herein, adopting the intimate lenses in analyzing Palestinian topologies offers at least two theoretical advancements; first, it provides an analysis of the affective and intimate realm outside its Eurocentric theorization (see also Gunew, 2009). Secondly, it opens up a theoretical space to meditate on the role affect and emotions might play in the co-habitation in the context of Palestine/Israel (S. Ahmed, 2004; Berlant, 2015; Harker, 2014a; Price, 2013). An intimate topology of Palestine, inasmuch as it enlarges the spatio-temporal assemblage of relations embedded in past histories, can propose ways of seeing/relating beyond nativism (see also Mbembe, 2001).

By questioning the role of intimacy in undoing the occupation, this project engages with spatial intimacies from a critical perspective, hoping to shed light on the alternative ways of inhabiting space, confronting different forms of violence and occupation in the West Bank. A topological sensibility towards intimate spaces refers to the ‘intensive spatial lifting-out and re-embedding’ (Allen, 2011a) of social life which helps to create a habitable present and re-works our basic spatiotemporal coordinates in imagining

differently-abled presents (Latham, 2011). As a somehow ambivalent, messy and always entangled analytical concept, intimate topologies of Palestine can perhaps disrupt our sense of what governing/occupation is by loosening the definition of space as a container of violence.

One point that I would like to emphasize and is important to acknowledge for this project is that the Palestinian family is somewhat idealized as a shock absorber and ‘the privileged symbol of Palestinian resilience;’ ‘the assumption that family networks have historically functioned as a sort of social safety net for Palestinians ignored the issue of what kinds of households or which individuals within households and families bore the brunt of the shocks’ (Taraki, 2006: xviii). Yet, households and families are not free of conflict and the Palestinian family is a gendered place. Although family is a multi-dimensional dynamic site to start tracing the flourished geographies of intimacy, it is not the only one. Recent scholarship proves that intimacy, care and love can take place beyond the family, proving the inter-spatiality of such practice (Berlant, 2011a; Bowlby, 2011; Morrison et al., 2013; Wilkinson, 2014). Therefore, I argue that in order to account for the less vertical and more topological everyday spacings and the ways in which they are produced, imagined, negotiated by Palestinian women, we need to pay attention to affective intimate registers in a broader sense.

Writing this interlude, my hope is to fill the gap of attention to intimate registers and neglect of the relational nature of space in geographical literature on Palestine. I seek to answer the two questions I raised at the beginning via thinking through the politics of intimate topologies, through the ways the world is mediated by feelings such as joy, endurance and friendship.²⁰ By foregrounding an intimate geography of Palestinian homes, I contribute to the scholarship on both critical geographies of home (Blunt, 2005a; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Brickell, 2012; Domosh, 1998, 1998; Gorman-Murray, 2007; McDowell, 2002; Walker, 2002) and topological thinking of space (Allen, 2011a, 2011b; Awan, 2016; Harker, 2014b; Latham, 2011).

At this point, I would like to go back to my overarching question, to what takes my attention the most: can there be a relationship between doing intimacy and undoing occupation? Here, I purposefully use the term doing intimacy, first of all, so as to refer to the intimate geographies, or what Lauren Berlant calls ‘modes of relating’ which involve

²⁰ See, for instance, Bunnell’s (2012) very fruitful discussion on the need for doing more geographies of friendship and paying attention to the forms of intimate non-kin/non-ethnic relationships.

‘proximity, solidarity, collegiality, friendship, the light touch and intermittent ones [...]’ (Berlant, 2011, 687). She uses the term to apprehend ‘a web of affects that connects people and which, through such connection, both creates and allows for an imagination of a different “habitable material present, or world”’ (Salih, 2016: 13). Secondly, I chose to use the word ‘doing’ because as a verb, it implicitly involves an agency that might help us capture some possible coping mechanisms and agential modalities; some mundane ways that enable Palestinian women to endure the occupation. In tracing gendered topologies in rural Palestine, the following chapters look at the joyful intimacies that take place beyond the resistance vs. resilience distinction, complicating the terms of agency. An intimate topology of Palestine accounts for the modes of relating, which can be captured via attentiveness to relational spacings, ambivalent feelings and haunting experiences.

Chapter 4 Bittersweet Homespaces: Beyond the Familial and Resilient

[...] as long as feminists look for women's participation and power in places where they are not, and ignore the less visible, accessible, or 'desirable' places where they are, research is more likely to reflect our own ideological positions than the reality of women's lives and spaces around the world (Christie, 2006: 659).

The previous empirical chapter explored in what ways 'cars,' usually associated with the masculine desire for power and prestige, could serve as a place of subversion for Palestinian women inasmuch as road trips were embedded in laughter and enjoyment. Driving away (from the village and villagers) provided the women with a sense of freedom celebrated with dance and music. Notably, in the absence of public places of conviviality (see chapter 6 for further discussion), road trips temporarily substituted for female publicness. The following section examines the bittersweet homespaces in the village, concerning the broader scope of this project in exploring how Palestinian women make sense of the spaces they inhabit. I will offer a nuanced analysis of home distinguishing its different spatial compartments, including the interior layerings of floors, which evince its own form of topology. This will then enable me to pull out interwoven spacings of patriarchy, endurance and agential capacities of women from the village.

In my three months extended fieldwork in Hebron, I visited fifteen homes for different purposes, including but not limited to dinner invitations, spontaneous gatherings, cooperative related tasks such as collecting embroidery from women working from home, and mostly because women kept inviting me over. In time, in addition to my host family's house, the four of these households became frequented places in my routine where I would often visit, mostly accompanied by the members of my host family. Drawing on my observations and ethnographic journaling, I argue that Palestinian homes need to be theorised less as by-products of the Israeli occupation that are under attack (Joronen and Griffiths, 2019; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2006), or as resilient spaces that absorb the ever-present shocks of colonization (Harker, 2009, 2012; Kuttab, 2006; Taraki and Giacaman, 2006). A simple language of resilience –as it relates to the idea of shock absorption– is insufficient as it presumes to 'be willing to bear more,' or a simple ability that bodies can keep taking more of it in the form of the stress, pain and suffering that go into making life under occupation (Ahmed, 2017: 189). It is against this presumption that bodies can/shall always take more as per the implicit stoic survivalism of resilience that the previous chapter foregrounded the

stretched-out spatio-temporalities of endurance in settler colonial geographies.

Concomitantly, instead of falling into the binary of resistance vs. resilience, I locate the social geography of Palestinian homespaces beyond the familial and resilient, indicating that homes are relational and gendered spaces. This chapter presents an ethnographic exploration of thinking of (bittersweet) Palestinian homespaces topologically.

Towards a Topology of Palestinian Homespaces

The chapter tackles the concept of home that is produced at the intersections of class, gender, ethnicity, religion and rural dynamics²¹ and not fixed and change over time (Walker, 2002). The material, relational, symbolic and imaginative relations of home-making and the intimate relationships that are ‘caught up in’ and ‘productive of’ home cannot be fully grasped without paying attention to the constitutive outside, to the ways in which the private is mediated by the public (Askins, 2014, 2015). In doing so, topology as an analytical tool captures not only vertical spaces and the landscape of occupation (see chapter 3) but also horizontal spacings of the public and the private as well as the relations between the two (see Harker, 2014b). Here, I use the term topology to refer ‘not to surfaces but to the relations and to interactions between relations’ (Murdoch, 2006, 12).²²

Thinking space topologically means accepting indeterminacy, perhaps the messiness of things and the rejection of fixed space, including the public and the private. A relational understanding of Hebron and the Palestinian family requires centring space as ‘always containing possibilities within it that go beyond any simple and fixed enumeration of elements’ (Jacobs and Malpas, 2013). As noted before (chapter 1) scholarly, topology tends to be conceptualized on a very abstract level (2011a, Allen, 2011b, Jacobs and Malpas, 2013, Malpas, 2012, Paasi, 2011), in a way that theoretical possibilities of the term remain unfollowed. By conducting ethnographic research on Palestinian homespaces, this chapter contributes to wider scholarly discussions on topology and intimacy.

²¹ The village where I conducted my fieldwork has a size of town attached to the 2nd largest city in the West Bank, Hebron. Yet, there are several dynamics that give it a rural quality such as the lack of a complete anonym among villagers and any type of business other than small shops of grocery, hairdresser and so on. The population density of the village is rather linked to the arrested urbanism that Palestinian towns suffer due to military occupation and settlements. Villagers told me that agriculture used to be the primary source of income (women also used to work in family land) until the 1980s before the land was lost to the ongoing settlement project and the building of the apartheid wall.

²² For a further discussion on my conceptual take of the term, see Introduction.

The empirical research on the lived experience of Palestinians as well as on the ordinary topologies of Palestine shows that the intensity and complexity of intimate geographies ‘exceed a vertical framing’ and require a more nuanced account of ‘getting by occupation’ and patriarchy in the scope of this project (Allen, 2008; Hammami, 2004; Harker, 2010a, 2010b, 2012, 2014b). Feminist imaginaries have also challenged the conventional geographical assumptions by giving more agency to the domestic, the ordinary, the familiar and the intimate spacings since they bear their own importance as politically charged productive realms (Nash, 2005, Valentine, 2008). In Palestine, in the absence of intrusive public sites and institutions, families and households ‘constitute the nexus within which individual and familial choices are made and the limits of the social horizon set’ (Taraki and Giacaman, 2006: 5).

Yet, the geographical literature on Palestine ignored the role of the intimate and the ordinary due to the dominant use and easiness of words like occupation, colonization and surveillance in explaining different configurations of power operating over space (AlJahdali, 2014; N Gordon, 2008; Halper, 2000; Segal et al., 2003; Veracini, 2013; Weizman, 2007). This research aims to look at Palestinian women’s spacings less through the lens of occupation, therefore challenges the dominant interpretations of Palestinian space. ‘The internal dynamics, stresses, and contradictions of the social groups and communities within which people live out their lives, or the sensibilities and subjectivities of individuals as they negotiate their mundane existence away from the barricades have not received much serious attention from most researchers’ (Taraki, 2006: xi). By acknowledging the affective and intimate registers, I give an empirical account of what difference it makes to grasp space topologically. Importantly, gender ‘once again’ appears as the organising principle of not only publicness (masculine) but also the private (femininity) (Domosh, 1998). Centralising women’s experiences at home reveals how Palestinian homespaces uphold gender norms as ‘infrastructure of intimacy’ (Amrov, 2017).

Complicating Women’s Privacy

My home in the village was a typical three-floor Palestinian house with a big courtyard designated for multi-purposed privacies. Once Faryal and Ghassan got married after thirteen years of imprisonment that tore them apart in their early twenties, they needed a place to ‘make home’ in the hetero-normative sense of the word. They built a shelter on the family land where they could raise their children. Even though they occasionally lived in temporary

rented homes in the past as Faryal wished to have an autonomous nuclear family life away from her abusive mother-in-law, all three of their kids were born in the same house. She did not succeed much in her voyages away from the extended family home/land.

The house was initially designed as a one-floor apartment on the family land. In the following years, the more income the family generated, the more floors were built. The first floor that gave a place to the 'private' family life in the past was refashioned in the present, upgraded to an open-planned living room, kitchen and a restroom exclusively for guests. The second floor was imagined more homely featuring an en-suite bedroom occupied by the parents and two smaller bedrooms for the girls. The oldest child of the family, Regina (16), had her private bathroom as a young adolescent. The second bedroom was decorated for the youngest female child, Aysa (8), however, she preferred sleeping with her parents, so the pinkish room was used by the male child, Ayham (15), in practice. I had a more profound sense of privacy on the 2nd floor as we had never locked the front door; as a result, we had many visitors helping themselves in during the day. 'Guests' (sisters, brothers, cousins etc. whose proximity to the family did not allow for this label) were less likely to go to the upper floors. Regina shared my feelings in this regard; whenever we had our movie treats, which involved watching too many Turkish movies and too much junk food, her first inclination was to have it upstairs. The third floor, on the other hand, felt almost abandoned with its unpainted walls, lack of furniture and order. It was built a long time ago but not finished with the last touches. There were two rooms; one being kept for but not used by the male child, and the other being a storage room that occasionally accommodated the volunteers of the cooperative hosted by the family, including myself. The following sections examine how public patriarchy is mediated at home alongside the geographical, emotional and religious lived locations to understand further how the interiority of homes is constituted topologically which, in return, may (or may not) provide a sense of privacy at home. Paying attention to intimate topologies of home move the analysis beyond the seemingly distinct public and private spaces, enabling an account of the co-productive relations between the lived experience of privacy and material arrangement of private spaces.

Courtyards

Courtyards as privately owned semi-public social space have unique functions in Palestinian villages. A typical village home in Hebron, as the figure below provides an anonymous view, would have a courtyard surrounded by high walls, isolated in one form or

another. A courtyard may or may not be open to the use of extended family members, nonetheless; it remains semi-private as a social gathering space. With the help of some seclusion,²³ the primary aim is to protect both homespaces and family members who are entitled to have access to the courtyard from the male gaze associated with publicness. In that sense, a courtyard is an enclosed public sphere, open to the sky, allowing mostly (not necessarily only) extended family members to enjoy socializing in culturally and religiously accepted ways. Some of the daily activities that might take place in the courtyard include family gatherings, cooking, eating, smoking shisha and playing games. The courtyard functions in two interlocked ways. The sense of privacy that courtyards allow gives them a quality of private gardens. In the meantime, as the social gathering space, the courtyard has a publicness to it where communal rituals such as engagement ceremonies or grieving could take place.



Figure 23 View of the Village (10/11/2017)

During the day, female visitors, neighbours and extended family members who enjoy chatter over a cup of tea might occupy it. Interior spaces secluded from the public (male) gaze and thus promising privacy especially for female members of the household is of crucial

²³ If there are no walls, anything available and affordable to the household could be used such as curtains, fences etc.

importance for many predominantly Muslim communities (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Al-Bishawi et al., 2017; Sehlkoglu, 2016). In the absence of public places for female conviviality such as parks and female-only cafes in the village, courtyards meet the social needs of women. In the meantime, they offer a safe playground for small children loafing around. On hot and dry Mediterranean days, women cook, eat and loiter in the courtyards inasmuch as they are carefully secluded, semi-private places. As the darkness fall over the dusty streets of the village, women gradually go indoors. Their absences fill publicness with male presence while the courtyards, then, gain semi-car park and semi-coffee house quality where, for instance, male extended family members could enjoy smoking shisha. To that effect, intimate topologies are not only embedded in space but in time, thus requiring a back-and-forth analysis of temporal assemblage of relations in places.

Surely, there are occasions where the semi-privacy of the courtyard leading as an extended part to homespace is compromised. For instance, social gatherings dictate less spatial privacy. In the case of cultural rituals of weddings or funerals, a familial courtyard would function as a communal garden of celebration or condolence, proving that homely spaces are fluid and stretchable depending on the needs of their inhabitants. A week before my departure from Palestine, the 90-year-old grandma who had been living in the extended home with her unmarried daughter (the sister of Ghassan) passed away. The ceremonial grieving lasted five days, longer than the usual three-day period upon the daughter's wish, and involved many rituals such as hosting people (almost all the villagers), preparing food, offering coffee and sweets for the guests and reading Quran. Hosting visitors who came to condole with my host family required a bigger place than home. That was how I discovered another collective yet intimate and gendered functioning of courtyards.



Figure 24 The Grieving Ceremony (10/01/2018)

During the five-day-long grieving period, almost all the female community members (hundreds of people) visited our courtyard, some (the close relatives) stayed until midnight. As the figure illustrates, the courtyard looked like a tea garden with dozens of women lined up on white plastic chairs while young females were serving some coffee and sweets. The grieving rituals set for males were different from females who went to the mosque for the funeral prayer followed by a visit to the graveyard. When I enquired about the rituals that males should accomplish, I was told that there was a second males-only gathering space further away in the village.

The second occasion where Palestinian families comprise their privacy would be extended to host family members moving in together to deal with financial hardship by reducing the cost of living. In this case, the spatial arrangement depends on how many people would share the homespace (not just the courtyard). Parents might have to share the bedroom with kids or turn living rooms into bedrooms at night times. Living together with extended male family members such as uncles, cousins, or fathers-in-law would require a different composition of homespace, compromising on women's privacy. In such cases, the use of both courtyards and homes is reconfigured following cultural and religious norms. For example, a room can be divided into two private compartments with the help of a curtain, or male family members pay extra attention while navigating interior spaces. For example, they inform their arrival by shouting or coughing before they enter a room.

Also, the courtyard functions as a space of protection before strangers are allowed into more familial and intimate spaces of home. It is the first place to be hijacked by the Israeli Occupation Soldiers (IDF) in case of a house raid. Given that house raids are frequently put in use for the Israeli psychological warfare targeting Palestinian livelihoods, many Palestinians anticipate such forced intimate encounters with IDF at the courtyards. The soldiers usually arrive after midnight when people are at sleep. Everyone would come out of their room and gather in the courtyard to push back. Even though Palestinians have very little chance of stopping soldiers before they break door into a home, they do make use of the courtyard to confront their dehumanization in their own familial spaces collectively. As Sharoni (1994b) suggests, homefronts are gendered battlefields in the occupied geographies. The courtyards as a space of collective encounter with the enemy are in itself small spaces and acts of re-humanisation amidst the de-humanisation of a home invasion.

During one of my home visits, Darya (35), who lived with her husband and six kids, told me how she tried to prepare her homespace for an anticipated forced encounter with the Occupation Forces by making sure that her headscarf was reachable every night before she went to bed. This is because one time the soldiers did not allow her and her oldest daughter to put on their headscarves before they broke into bedrooms, which Darya found humiliating. Her efforts to protect her privacy at home show how intimate spaces and daily routines are haunted by co-constitutive forces that we tend to think of as outside/public despite their seemingly absence in the present. After enduring the Israeli governmental strategy of house raid that seeks to trouble Palestinians' sense of belonging and of control over their intimate spaces, Darya paid more attention to unexpected visitors, or violent invaders I shall rather say. Here, I do not tend to equate different intensities of alienation and violence (occupation and patriarchy) that (re)shape homes. Rather, I recall these incidents for analytic purposes in order to complicate the relationship between the public and private worlds. The co-constituted spaces and relations of gender that align women's bodies, either privately labouring at home or publicly gathered at courtyards, cannot be captured in the topographic sense of place. To that effect, intimate topologies are not only embedded in space but in time, thus requiring a back-and-forth analysis of the temporal assemblage of relations in places.

Bittersweet Homespaces: in the wake of private patriarchy

As the previous section tackled, the contours of the private are taking shape and shaped by the embedded physical, emotional, cultural and religious locations. From this

viewpoint, patriarchy does not only make space in the public but circulates between imagined public and private worlds, and in doing so, mediates the distinction between the two (Berlant and Warner, 1998; Sehlikoglu, 2015). Home is bittersweet inasmuch as the intimacies that take place there contain a mixture of feelings: happiness and sadness, belonging and alienation, attachment and domination. Homes can shelter creation and destruction. The following sections trace the private footsteps of patriarchy, how women embedded in the bittersweet homespaces live through patriarchal gender norms. It does so by looking at three locations where the public and the private, the alienating and the homemaking intersect in the domain of the intimate.

First, I contemplate the position and power held by mothers-in-law as strong female figures that can embody a form of displaced/internalized patriarchy. Here, it is essential to note that I do not suggest mothers-in-law as stereotypical departure points into 'Palestinian culture,' but as an embodied 'constellation of relations of power' that enables me to track the generational conflict among the women of a family. I aim to unpack some of the configurations of local patriarchy which are crystallized in such matriarchal figures and otherwise would remain unexplored. I, then, draw on some temporal yet analytically fruitful fieldwork encounters that fluidity (bodies in flux) enables me to capture some of the ways public patriarchy haunts private homes. I finally write about kitchens as spaces of contact at home predominantly occupied, maintained and cherished by women.

Geographies of home are a growing body of research that has investigated the gendered (Domosh, 1998; Massey, 1994), sexualized (Gorman-Murray, 2006; Wilkinson, 2014), topological (Jacobs and Malpas, 2013), comforting (Johnson, 2017) and diasporic (Ahmed, 1999; Long, 2014) aspects of home as both sites of belonging (homely, sacred, sanctuary) and alienation (unhomely, heteronormative, patriarchal) by recognizing the symbolic, multi-scalar, imaginative and intimate attachments that home evokes (Blunt, 2005b; Blunt and Varley, 2004). Exploring the topology of the Palestinian home's bittersweet 'dwellings' as a lived location constitutes the core of my analysis on the spatial configurations of the Palestinian house (Hage, 1996; Malpas, 2012).

Feminist scholars have long problematized home as a place of exploitation where women's invisible domestic labour feeds into the reproduction of life (Mies, 2014). They have rightly addressed the gendered division of labour where women do the big portion of domestic work such as cooking, cleaning and childrearing. In the village, the reproduction of life is mostly sustained within the intimate privacy of homes and courtyards. Yet the pervasiveness of gender norms enacted at home does not necessarily invalidate the potential

for the creative, the unexpected and the affirmative that homespaces incorporate. As Massey stressed, the uniqueness of home results ‘precisely from the fact that it had always in one way or another been open; constructed out of the movement, communication, social relations which always stretched beyond it’ (1994: 158).

Women who work from home at jobs such as stitching embroidery complicate the static notions of home as the site of reproduction only by bringing work home (Clancy-Smith, 1999; Oberhauser, 1995). Rural women from villages confront such masculine imaginaries and reinvent their homes in unexpected ways. Here, I follow Mona Domosh’s (1998) insistence on the need to rethink home as a site of reproduction only and scholars who argue for a more relational agenda that could account for materiality (Jacobs and Malpas, 2013), ambiguity (Brickell, 2012) and public-private fluidity (Gorman-Murray, 2006) that make homes.

In my analysis of homespaces in the village, I hope to overcome two prominent limitations of the existing scholarship. On the one hand, the literature of geographies of home offers binary strands –home as a space of patriarchal confinement or belonging, alienation or protection, oppression or comfort– thus very limited attention paid to multi-scalar home makings in the world (Manzo, 2003). On the other hand, in the context of Palestine, homes are researched one-dimensionally concerning political violence and settler colonialism (Basso et al., 2016; Sousa et al., 2014). Even though the recent literature acknowledges the cultural, affective and gendered registers of Palestinian homespaces, it has done so inasmuch as it helps to prove resilience in the face of occupation (Harker, 2009, 2010b, 2012; Joronen and Griffiths, 2019; Long, Joanna, 2018; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2006). To avoid such binary trajectories to home as well as the risk to reduce it to a by-product of political violence, I further develop Brickell’s (2012) critique by combining her insight on ambiguities with an ethnographic approach that centres bittersweetness of homely spaces.

Summarized by Nicole Schroder (2006): It makes much more sense to view home as a site of and for ambiguity since its protective functions are interconnected with its limiting characteristics. Feelings of solidarity, safety, and protection are often achieved by severe acts of exclusion and regulation, which are in turn oppressive (Schroder, 2006: 33) (Brickell, 2012: 226).

Instead of tackling the place of home in the ‘either/or’ paradigm rooted in the feminist tensions between over-romanticizing home and rejecting it as an ideal, I will offer a close examination of the less tangible, insidious ways that public patriarchy sneak into the private

home and how it is endured by women. In doing so, I argue for a ‘bittersweet’ understanding of the concept of home that encompasses different stories: those about the intimate and the everyday that take place at the intersection of the seemingly public and private. Although I agree with the feminist critiques that critical geographies of home should address patriarchy and violence that exist within the walls of the home, I remain sceptical of any analytical account of homespaces, particularly concerning Palestine, that does not acknowledge home as a source of enrichment and belonging that women take pride in. Herein, I foreground a topological approach to home-making in particular and space-making in relation to the overarching questions raised in this project:

1. How do Palestinian women from villages maintain and make sense of the spaces they inhabit?
2. How do they bargain with and get by the double bind of patriarchy and occupation?

Patriarchy takes shape and reshapes the place of home inasmuch as it does the streets (see chapter 5 for a discussion on the public recalibrations of patriarchy). It is not my intention to define patriarchy here, rather I am more interested in what patriarchy does (than what it is) in understanding women’s attachments and inhabitancy as well as different strategies they adopt in ‘bargaining with patriarchy’ (Kandiyoti, 1988). I also foreground a feminist agenda that encompasses both genders in the fight against patriarchy (see hooks, 2000), enabling us to be cautious about women’s unobserved roles in the reproduction of patriarchal and oppressive structures. Whilst analysing ‘the fluidity and tension implied by bargain,’ this section sheds light on the everyday relational workings of patriarchy that make homes (Kandiyoti, 1988: 286). In doing so, it portrays the somewhat secretive and bittersweet ways in which patriarchy hovers in mundane spaces.

Mothers-in-Law

If there is one thing worse than having a bad husband, it is to have a bad mother-in-law (personal communication, 2017).

Unlike other village households well maintained by women who take pride in their big families sheltered in scented homespaces, our house was always a bit chaotic and neglected, not wholeheartedly claimed by Faryal. The past atrocities of her mother-in-law who was in her 90s and bedded next door were very much present, effecting her ‘felt

remembrance of things' at home (Jacobs and Malpas, 2013). During my stay, Faryal disclosed many memories of abuse and psychological violence inflicted by the matriarch of the family. Although I was initially puzzled by the vividness and embeddedness of her memories in the present, after a while I dedicated myself to mapping out the less tangible, ghostly matters shaping the home and could not be measured topographically. My ethnographic self started to sense the ghostly presence, that is, how past atrocities were haunting us in the present. Avery Gordon eloquently takes on what is distinctive about the way social violence makes itself known by haunting:

I used the term haunting to describe those singular yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar when your bearings on the world lose direction, when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what's been in your blind spot comes into view. Haunting raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future. These specters or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view. The ghost, as I understand it, is not the invisible or some ineffable excess. The whole essence, if you can use that word, of a ghost is that it has a real presence and demands its due, your attention (Gordona, 2008: xvi).

The materiality of Palestinian homespaces constituted by generational traumas of dispossession and colonization of home/land (AlJahdali, 2014; Webster, 2016) is open to constant threats of house raids and home demolitions (Joronen and Griffiths, 2019) and fissured by gendered violence (Abu Nahleh, 2006; Naser-Najjab, 2015), thus requiring more attentiveness to affective registers of the experiential modality of haunting as 'the vocabulary that registered and evoked the lived and living meeting' (Gordon, 2008a: xvii). To grasp what makes homespaces unfamiliar, this section traces the haunting matters of some kind, the obscured ways in which patriarchy sneaks into the home and is advanced by intergenerational conflict among women.

During my fieldwork, women kept telling me narratives around marriage (and all that it takes) as the most significant referential status in one's life: a woman leaving her birth family behind to make a new one via the rite of passage of marriage. They shared the statements below in estimating how (un)lucky they have been in life:

"I have a good husband, but my mother-in-law is terrible."

"If I knew his mother was like this, I would have never got married to my husband."

“Only recently, after his mother passed away, my husband started treating the kids and me well. Before that, even though he is a good person in heart, she would not let him look after us.”

The frequency of such references in women’s stories signalling the suffering and mistreatment (by the husband’s family) made me alert to interfamilial relationships and generational conflict among women (Adhikari, 2015; Gangoli and Rew, 2011; Rabho, 2015).

The situation in my host family’s household more or less resonated with the insights offered by the women who work for the cooperative. Even though the 90 years old and bedded mother-in-law was too old and sick to perform her ‘motherly’ duties, her past abuses were still haunting the present. I started collecting the memories of Faryal dating back to her early adulthood and marriage, which took place between the belated dreams of starting her own family due to Ghassan’s imprisonment, 13-year long waiting for their reunion, and the disappointment marked by the early years of marriage. I elaborate more on love and marriage as two prominent sites of emotional investment in women’s lives later in this chapter. Here, I limit my analysis to the figure of mother-in-law in relation to the unique position of power she holds as the matriarch of the community, as the mother and sacred carer of the men.

The old woman’s deathly waiting in her bed dictated a natural end to the abusive relationship that lasted twenty years between Faryal and her mother-in-law. It led Faryal to recall her memories in the pursuit of a spiritual closure and revelation of pain before she died. I believe the ‘outsider within’ quality I held granted me an ideal listener position: far enough to be shared with the intimate, the pain that could easily be judged by a fellow community member as ‘disloyal’ and close enough to be come out to. Due to her poor health, the mother-in-law had been stuck in bed for three years, which Faryal describes:

My life started three years ago. I was able to breathe again. She used to come and go all the time back then. You know, I was newly married and would buy things for the house, let’s say, a new set of plates for the kitchen. She would immediately come and take one pair from the set with her, to her house! I would go to her house the next day, find the missing plate and bring it back, but she would retake it! So I stopped buying things. I abandoned the house. She would not leave me alone even for a minute (personal communication, 2018).

The passage above is very illuminating of how disruptive the outside (of one’s home) and outsider, the presence of others, could be inside, at home, and redefine the attachments of home dwellers to the place. Even though Faryal did not live in the same house with her

mother-in-law and they only shared the courtyard, the lack of boundaries between the two households and the mother-in-law's socially accepted entitlement to the lives and decisions of her son's family members made it impossible for Faryal to feel at home. She continues:

I was going to university, studying English literature, which had always been my dream and had a job when I got married. She is the reason why I had to quit. She was talking badly not only behind my back but also to my face. She was nagging all the time whenever I left home, whenever I went somewhere. I know I would go crazy if I did not do something, so I started this embroidery to keep myself busy so that I would not lose my mind. I do not care even if I do not make any money. I did embroidery for five years from home voluntarily. I was not selling anything, but we (women) were coming together at my place after the kids went to bed. You know Regina and Ayham were very small then. We were gathering to make embroidery at home. I had many ideas in my mind but did not see that it would turn into the cooperative and be Women in Hebron. I just wanted to get away from her (personal communication, 2018).

Faryal expressed many times during our conversations that her primary motivation for doing embroidery at the start was to find a way out of home, to 'escape from her.' She hoped to find solace in work to get by the difficulties waiting for her in the homespaces. Although she was not able to (physically) leave home due to her childcare responsibilities, she still searched for ways to establish connections with the outside and involve with tasks that could be completed at home. She brought the work and colleagues home by hosting women-only embroidery making sessions in the evenings after the children went to bed. The women had continued making embroidered handcrafts for two years without a place to keep, sell or display their hard work. It took three suitcases to be filled with embroidery, according to Faryal, for her to confront her extended family (although she had her husband's support) and to establish the cooperative, which was a damp and dirty rented room at the outskirts of the village.

By the time we met, Faryal had suffered from chronic high blood pressure, for which she blamed her mother-in-law and the distress she endured. 'Women have to fight on many sides. Family, religion, this culture... I am not scared of the occupation or soldiers. Believe me, I don't care about them. But this culture gave me a lot of pain. I got physically and mentally sick' (personal communication, 2018). She also felt resentment toward her husband

for not stepping into the issues between his mum and his wife, and remaining silent whenever she verbally and sometimes physically attacked her. She expressed regret over thirteen years of waiting period before marrying her husband because of his ‘difficult’ mother. She comments on her perseverance to wait until he was released from prison: ‘Not because I loved him so much, but because I resisted my brothers and my father deciding my life. I wanted to be able to choose the person I would marry. If I knew that his mother was like this, I wouldn’t have waited for him’ (ibid).

As much as one would like to imagine Faryal’s mother-in-law as an exception, she was not (see also Rabho, 2015; Sinno, 2013). In my writing, I would like to question the hierarchical position of power many matriarchs occupy in the rural community. Faryal’s life story underpins a valuable insight: how much one belongs to homely spaces is determined by seemingly external factors besides the occupation. In her case, in the aftermath of abusive relationships between family members, Faryal’s attachment to her home was irreversibly damaged, reducing homespace to a mere house that she mostly looked for ways of escape. Patriarchy made her feel uneasy at home, so she created means of building a second home in the idealized sense of the term, a shelter, a safe space. This is how she sees the work of initiating a women’s cooperative. Yet, I am aware of the important critique of ‘flattening out difference’ that is raised from within the discipline of anthropology and very much applies to geography (Abu-Lughod, 1993: 9).

Anthropologists commonly generalize about communities by saying that they are characterized by certain institutions, rules or ways of doing things. For example, we can and often do say things like “The Bongo-Bongo are polygynous.” What if one refused to typify in this way and instead asked how a particular set of individuals – three women and their husband in one community, for example– in fact live the “institution” that we call polygyny? (ibid. 13).

In order not to make difference into ‘culture’ that works for othering, my mode of writing/analysing is somewhat individualized while acknowledging that mothers-in-law can be appreciated for their domestic expertise and child care support at different times/contexts (Shih and Pyke, 2010). A mother-in-law, as the gatekeeper of ‘patrilineal co-residential units,’²⁴ may or may not use her hierarchical powers in decision-making and the enactment of

²⁴ The term is coined to describe the dominant form of household in Palestine ‘consisting of fathers and married sons who own housing and property jointly but live in separate nuclear residential units’ (Johnson, 2006: 92).

patriarchal community norms. However, given that two-thirds of the households in Palestine have family members living in the same neighbourhood or within walking distance, the possibility and threat of mothers-in-law interfering in the nuclear residential units is a common structural condition among Palestinian women (see Johnson, 2006). Therefore, I find it hard to explore homespaces as safe and resilient, but rather ambivalent and bittersweet. Instead, I draw on the cooperative (see chapter 5) as an intergenerational space of female solidarity precisely because women from different age groups can cultivate joyful friendships that remain blocked in the space of home due to the haunting presence of violence inflicted and endured by women at the axes intergenerational and familial power structures.

Bittersweet Encounters

Indeed, it seemed to me that haunting was precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible how up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done (Gordon, 2008a: xvii).

After Faryal's mother-in-law passed away, the grieving period lasted for a week. The ceremonial week involved many rituals that allowed my host family to receive the community's blessing and respond in a way that honoured the memory of the person no longer with the community. It was also the most overwhelming time of my fieldwork as my attachments to home as a space of comfort without outside drama and of an increased sense of ownership over the place were no longer valid. My introvert self felt intimidated by hundreds of female visitors that were accommodated in the homespaces and courtyard. My ethnographic self was stuck between the desire to hide from the crowd in my room and the self-awareness of my responsibility (as a gendered body) to help my host family accommodate such a big number of guests.²⁵ The 16-year-old granddaughter was already exhausted trying to make sure everyone had tea and some sweets. Whenever I attempted to land her a hand, I quickly backed out due to the hyper attention I received as a guest from Turkey.

²⁵ See Katz's (1994) creative use of the comic book for an interesting discussion on how fieldwork creates all kinds of intimate knowledge yet only some of it passes as 'data'.

On the second day of grieving, an incident happened that encouraged me to think further about how patriarchy hovered at homespaces. According to the honour codes that were cherished in the village, males were expected to respect women's needs for 'privacy' and behave accordingly, in other words, to be gender mindful. This, for example, required them to let their arrival be known before they entered homes or not go to upper floors (outside of the designated spaces for the guests) and enter bedrooms unless they were invited. Relying on the codes of privacy, I was hiding in my top floor room from the ever-increasing number of visitors gathered in the courtyard and occasionally using the ground floor kitchen. The curious gaze stuck to me whenever I was publicly visible. Even though I knew that people (mostly women) just wanted to say hi to initiate small talk, the multitude of people made me timid.

On the one hand, it was a great research opportunity to observe the grieving practices and talk to women that I would not get to meet otherwise. On the other hand, as an outsider who felt no attachment whatsoever to the dead person and whose presence was read through the axes of host-guest rather than a researcher, I also tried not to take much space and attention. The cooperative was closed, so I spent my days at home, helped with the preparations and washed the dishes in the late evenings when it was quieter. In one of the brief moments that I was out, I went to the only fancy grocery in the village that sold an imported selection of snacks and treated myself and Regina (16), the daughter of the host family, a pair of chocolates hoping that it might cheer her up. When I got back home, I kept the treats on the writing desk in my room, waiting for the right moment to give it to Regina. Finally, I caught her alone in the kitchen between making and serving tea and kindly asked her to wait for me downstairs while I quickly headed upstairs to grab the chocolate. After I searched everywhere in the room but could not find it, I came back to the kitchen a bit disappointed and puzzled as I knew exactly where I put the shiny red box. After some time, I saw a hint to the mystery behind the disappeared chocolate, yet Regina heatedly refused to believe my explanation that went as follows:

After I returned from the grocery shopping, I stayed in my room except for the one time I came down to the kitchen to grab some water. It was then Mohammed, one of the cousins whom I met before, and I bumped into each other, which left us feeling slightly awkward. He said that he wanted to use the toilet and headed upstairs. As I was in my room the whole time (except that short trip to the kitchen), I didn't think anyone else could grab the chocolate from my desk.

Regina: ‘Oh my god, if he used my toilet, he would have seen my underwear. Why did he do that? He should have used the toilet on the first floor. Guests are only allowed to use that one! This is so embarrassing. Oh, how many times my mum told me not to leave my clothes in my bathroom. She was right, I should have listened to her!’

As each family member has one private toilet in use, Regina was able to have an increased sense of privacy and comfort, knowing that male presence would not bother her. Her sense of comfort was predominantly formed and informed by socio-religiously accepted gender norms in the village. A young girl’s (read as unmarried) relationship to her body is supremely private and not shared with any gender. There were many times she insisted that I use her shower because the hot water did not always reach to the third floor. The fact that she invited me to use her shower signals the embodied though very limited agency she has over space at home. She has the power to invite/disinvite people to her bathroom, which was not the case, for example, for her room as I had seen her siblings using it without her consent. Yet, the bathroom was a sanctum, allowing her to have her home within the house.

When Regina overcame the first shock of the possibility of such an intimate yet unwanted encounter between her clothes and a male relative, she remembered the chocolate: ‘Still, he cannot be the one who took the chocolate. Using the toilet is one thing, but a man would never enter your room. He shouldn’t.’

I tried to repeat that I was at home all day, but Regina did not let me finish my sentence. ‘No, it cannot be him. You probably ate it and don’t remember.’ We were at the intersection of norms vs. practice, should do’s vs. testimony, and I realised that we hit the brick wall made of patriarchal gender norms. I decided to leave the ghost of disappeared chocolate alone. There was no need to explain to a 16-year-old girl the truth that norms do not bite men as much as they do women, and men do transgress because they can.

The second intimate encounter that led me to refigure the homespace was about the dressing codes and how they could set temporal boundaries between women. It was late in the evening when I had my home costume on, basically a pair of winter pyjamas that covered my body which I bought from Turkey and brought here with me. I knew that they were a bit tight, tighter than when I first had them as I recently put on weight. Still, I did not mind wearing them in the evenings for two reasons: first, my host family was not very religious and did not express any concerns over my dress codes. Secondly, they were used to hosting volunteers from the North many of whom did not bother to adjust their lifestyle, including the dress codes, for the time period that they lived in the village. I heard many judgemental stories teasing the ex-volunteers how they had no clue about the ways of living in the

community and Islam. Some of these inappropriate behaviours were, for example, wearing shorts and t-shirts seen as immodest, supporting gay rights or refusing to eat meat. I do reflect more on the ways in which the volunteers from the North were received by the community (see methodology chapter). My point here is to clarify that I had been and made to be (by listening to those stories) aware of my presence at home and in the community, including my dressing as it was mostly the first thing that a female body would be judged upon.

It was already after 10 pm when I was getting ready to go to bed. To my knowledge, we were not expecting anyone, but when the least expected, someone knocked on the door and two people let themselves in without waiting for a 'come in.' Here I was standing in front of them, petrified in my pyjamas. The unexpected visitors were the oldest brother of Ghassan and his wife, who held the privilege of showing up out of the blue as very close family members. I had met with the uncle of my host family before, but not the wife. After a brief introduction, I did catch the wife's curious eyes glancing at my outfit, and it took me seconds to grasp her disapproval. Not sure of how to get out of the situation, I escaped to the kitchen, boiled some water for tea while waiting for the family come down. I thought about quickly changing my outfit for a while and decided that it would be too awkward to do so. I tried to defeat my discomfort by searching for some justifications in my head; many women wore pyjamas at home and in the courtyards, and my body was fully covered. The next day, I went to the Al-Khalil city centre the first thing in the morning and got myself a new pyjama set. This encounter made me reflect on the ways I negotiated my comfort and dressing at home, co-constituted and contested by the relations, norms, people and places physically outside of the home yet experienced within. Two weeks later I was busted in my pyjamas; the same couple visited again. This time I was in the right outfit, loose enough not to show my body curls with long sleeves. The wife showed her approval by whispering to my ear: 'You have nice pyjamas.' It was an act of friendliness and appreciation and she made sure that it stayed between us.

The last moment of intimacy I would like to unpack where patriarchy was enacted at home was when the daughter of the host family attended a public protest. My fieldwork coincided with Donald Trump's visit to historical Palestine to keep his electoral promise and declare Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. It is widely debated among Palestinians that Oslo negotiations were a failure and the Palestinian Authority lost its control over Jerusalem a long

time ago.²⁶ In that regard, Trump's public statement was nothing more than stating the known facts. Regina publicly protested the occupation for the first time in her life. She and some of her friends, a bunch of 15 to 17-year-old high school girls wearing uniforms and holding banners that said 'Free Palestine,' walked to the checkpoint at the entrance of the village.

In occupied geographies, any attempt of the colonised to claim her humanity back can have deadly consequences. The liberal notions of human rights and citizenships do not apply to human subjects living under occupation (see Mbembe, 2003). Herein, it is not my intention to summarize the extended literature on the geographies of occupation. Rather, by closely analysing a high school girl's first public and dangerously intimate encounter with the Occupation Forces in her hometown, I would like to extend the discussion into gendered-ness of not only resistance (Richter-Devroe, 2012b) but also everyday reproductions of the public/private.

On the day, Regina's mum and I were working in the cooperative when she let her out-of-breath body in. I could tell from her threatened face and tearful eyes that something bad had happened. Her mum started asking questions, trying to figure out the reason behind her poor look. Regina told us the story of their attempted and immediately failed protest that was handled by tear gas and gunshots. Between her sentences, she was repeating 'mum, don't be angry.' Although Regina's family used to be politically engaged, her mum was not ready for her little daughter to follow such a risky path. 'This is not a game Regina, you could have been killed.'

Regina and I left the cooperative as she was quite shaken by this experience, realising how costly it was 'even to just say the word out loud, to say Palestine.' I, then, collected more details of the incident, trying both to calm and prepare her for a prospective interrogation. When we reached home, Regina disclosed what happened after the protest, that she could not run very far like her friends due to her asthma and hid in a nearby grocery store. During the protest, she was wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh, a famous chequered black and white scarf that is known as a symbol of Palestinian resistance, which, later on, she had to take out before she left the grocery store to remain anonymous. She was anxious about the possibility of the owner telling others that she took her hijab in his presence. Although I was trying to practice her interrogation skills if the IDF came after her, she was too worried to hear my words. The only thing she was able to think at that moment was that what would happen if the guy told villagers that she took out her headscarf. Her attempted protest very

²⁶ Among Palestinians I know from the Occupied Territories, only two of them were able to travel to Jerusalem as females over 50 are sometimes granted permission.

much revealed the ghostly presence of a co-constitutive outside to the homespaces; how villagers, gender norms, kuffiyehs, worries and the occupation visit homes, affecting the preconditions of how gendered bodies feel, align and stay home.

I had to find different ways of comforting Regina, so I told her that the guy was more likely to respect her for what she did rather than gossiping around the village. Even if he did, that only would prove his ill will, and she did not need to worry about such people. Yet, it was such a big ‘sin,’ bigger than the threat posed by the Occupation Forces. Regina did not mention the headscarf incident to the family, especially to her mum, afraid that her mobility might get restricted as a punishment. She actually struggled to bring her worries home except our conversation at the kitchen once for all. The temporary presence of an outsider within the home enabled her to process her worries as a young, unmarried woman, of ‘what others would think of her in the village’ which were deeply rooted in patriarchal gender norms.

All the bittersweet encounters elaborated so far flash out how Regina, Faryal, others and I bargained with patriarchy at home and also the ways in which everyday relational workings of patriarchy make homes (and outsides). Intimate topologies of homescapes show the ways homes are made to be relational, either revealed in the haunting presence of a disappeared box of chocolate or re-worked by following the appropriate dress codes, whether it be homely pyjamas or symbolically charged kuffiyehs. A public protest, a young woman’s negotiation of her privacy in the bathroom, visitors both male and female, (sanctum) commodities in as much (haunting) memories relate to homespaces, which I argued, can be captured by topological lenses to space making. This section, therefore, pursued the constant flow of objects, bodies and stories at home, reshaping the contours of the public and private (Ahmed, 2006). Besides, it also contributed to the literature on emotional geographies by proving that how we feel at home is very much conditioned and mediated by the intimate topologies of past and present, public and private (Anderson and Smith, 2001; Harding and Pribram, 2002; Manzo, 2003; Nash, 1998; Thien, 2005).

Placing Contact: Kitchenspace

As our kitchen table talk with Regina unfolds, kitchenspace can tell stories about and unearth histories of women’s life worlds. Everyday talk at the kitchen table is a methodological tool and avenue for re-examining the messiness and fluidity of embedded positionalities in space and time (see Kohl and McCutcheon, 2015; McCutcheon and Kohl, 2019). In the Palestinian context, at such intersections of public patriarchy re-constituted at

home, kitchen appears as a *breathing space* where women can forge intimate ties, maintain not only homely duties but also friendships. It is true that the need for breathing comes from gendered burdenings, yet the fact that some women have an intimate space to breathe at home matters. Robson, for instance, examines how the female task of meal preparation ‘give[s] women the ability to exercise power over what is prepared and when, how it is distributed and to whom’ (2006: 672). Yet, her analysis is flattened out with the first conclusion that springs to mind, kitchen as a space of women’s empowerment and resistance, without a thorough examination of spatial contestations and negative affects that occur at the kitchen (and beyond) as the scholars of critical geographies of home pointed out (Blunt, 2006; Brickell, 2012).

The emerging literature on kitchen tackles the material agency of kitchens (Meah, 2016) both as a site of memory (Meah and Jackson, 2016) and search for middle-class modern lifestyles (Fehérváry, 2002), diasporic yearnings (Duruz, 2010) and gendered territories where the knowledge of communal rituals and heritage is passed down to next generations (Christie, 2006; Pérez, 2011). Whilst writing against the simplistic juxtapositions of resilient vs. submissive, familial vs. alienating, shock absorber vs. exploitative, in this section I draw out empirical connections between space, place and gender and how everyday homely spaces are gendered (see also Meah, 2014). As Christie brilliantly reminds, the feminist scholarship cannot and should not be neglected of lived locations of gender: ‘[...] as long as feminists look for women’s participation and power in places where they are not, and ignore the less visible, accessible, or “desirable” places where they are, research is more likely to reflect our own ideological positions than the reality of women’s lives and spaces around the world’ (2006: 659).

With these insights, the chapter argues for a nuanced analysis of how separate compartments of home are used and made sense of by Palestinian women. The following subsections zoom at the kitchenspace and intimate conversations and sharings that take place in the midst of daily (dis)continuities. By reckoning the hours spent in this notorious part of the home associated with servitude, I elaborate on the limitations of a feminist critique that draw on homely activities only as confinement and exploitation. Although radicalizing and nurturing aspects of homespaces are acknowledged (hooks, 1991), the extent to which different compartments of the home has that potential remains less attended. Aiming to move beyond kitchen as a space of empowerment (Robson, 2006) or domination (Bennett, 2006), and building on my ethnographic fieldwork in the village, I explore rural Palestinian kitchens

as breathing spaces where ‘the conceptual act of “breathing” as materially organized and affectively sensed life force’ can take place.²⁷

Breathing in the Kitchen

I am visiting Haifa’s with my host family who is a close friend of Feryal and whom I also became close to during our frequent home visits. Haifa is one of the few working women, or women, I know who does not only work from home in the village. She is a mother of six children in her thirties whose engagement was initiated and agreed upon by her parent when she was still a child. Haifa never approves that she got married to a man ten years older than her when she was only 13. Opposite of what one may expect regarding the acceptance of Allah’s decision on one’s future self, she openly criticizes both her parents and husband for pursuing a child bride as occasion serves. She is determinant and resourceful to the extent that she managed to finish high school via distance learning and continued her higher education. She completed a Business and Management degree with six kids and a ‘difficult’ husband as she used to describe him. She speaks good English and was preparing to apply for an MA degree at the time I met her. She owns a car, drives to work every day and contrary to the widely shared belief in the village, she does not think that her husband’s wealth shall be enough and she does not need to work.

Due to a recent argument took place between Haifa and her husband, following the familial dispute, her already limited mobility was restricted to work, therefore we increased the frequency of our visits. One time, only Feryal and I drove to her house to pick up the girls and Haifa, hoping that we might get permission for a female-only trip, but we couldn’t. Instead, the husband soon left home and we comfortably expanded our territory to the living room making the most of the female alone time at home. The 16-year-old daughters of Haifa and Feryal, who went to the same school, settled in the guest room. We compartmentalized the house according to our ages, that is, the anticipated conversation topics. In the living room, the conversation unfolded around the difficulties Haifa faced at work, how her secretarial position in the municipality was promised to someone else as a result of favouritism after fighting so much and so long to be able to work. Haifa was rightly frustrated and told me that it was not fair. She had been working in the same position for three years. She was experienced and overqualified for the role, therefore she should have been granted a

²⁷ See Umut Yildirim’s profile where she would like to build an anthro/political perspective on breathing: <https://www.ici-berlin.org/people/yildirim/>.

permanent position by now. Haifa was upset the most about how if she lost her job, it would legitimate her in-laws' attitude toward work and she might never be able to work again. While Feryal and I tried to comfort her, the males rang to let us know that they were on their way home and hungry. The mood in the air immediately changed and we set to work. For a short couple of hours, we were the accredited owners of the house until men arrived. Yet, the information they had given on the phone reminded Haifa of her daily responsibilities: preparing food, keeping the house, feeding and raising children, all taking place in and around the kitchen. I helped lay the table and made a salad while we continued the chatter over food preparation and waited for the men.

The village is by no means exceptional. In resonance with other parts of Palestine, homely labour such as cooking, cleaning, childrearing that feeds into the reproduction of life falls onto women's shoulders. Feminist orientations may understandably lead us to interpret kitchens as burdening spaces that constraint women's mobility and creativity. During my fieldwork, every time I wanted to go out with my interlocutors and we could not, I felt a sense of frustration. Yet, I was aware that it was a scholarly dangerous unrest that might trigger my sensibilities of 'saving' women who belonged to a particular ethnic, class and religious background. Such affective states (and discourses) planted in the Western liberal imaginary of agency and freedom are problematic (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Mahmood, 2012). In my enquiry into locating different gendered modalities of agency, I paid utmost attention to the intimate topologies of breathing where I could trace contact, of places that actually mattered to women. I kept an open eye for the homely places which might be scholarly overlooked or underestimated amidst the private recuperations of patriarchy and the disproportionate burden of the reproduction of life between genders.

bell hooks (1991) is one of the pioneering critical thinkers who write about the importance of homeplace in the midst of sexist and racial oppression as a healing space for the black community.

Historically, black women have resisted white supremacist domination by working to establish homeplace. It does not matter that sexism assigned them this role. It is more important that they took this conventional role and expanded it to include caring for one another, for children, for black men, in ways that elevated our spirits, that kept us from despair, that taught some of us to be revolutionaries able to struggle for freedom (ibid, 80).

She also problematizes the devaluation of women's effort in homemaking and crucial recreational role for the black community.

[...] the construction of a safe place where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination. We could not learn to love or respect ourselves in the culture of white supremacy, on the outside; it was there on the inside, in that "homeplace," most often created and kept by black women, that we had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits. This task of making a homeplace, of making home a community of resistance, has been shared by black women globally, especially black women in white supremacist societies.

Assertively, hooks sees a subversive value in homeplace which, she argues, understanding homeplace as a site of patriarchal domination of black women by black men cannot have a grasp of. In this respect, her writings resonate with the literature on gendered resistance in Palestine, where women's homely steadfastness practices and 'resistance economies' are located in the household against the occupation and racial discrimination (see Kuttab, 2006). However, in the concluding remarks of her critical essay, hooks very briefly mentions the contradictions in black home:

'Our lives were not without contradictions, so it is not my intent to create a romanticized portrait. Yet any attempts to critically assess the role of black women in liberation struggle must examine the way political concern about the impact of racism shaped black women's thinking, their sense of home, and their modes of parenting' (hooks, 1991: 84).

Although bell hooks does not empirically investigate the contradictions of homeplace (at least, not in this text), I have attempted to do so in my writing. The conflicts, ambiguities and negative affects that are contained in homeplaces, in other words, the bittersweetness of it, shall not be for revolutionary politics. Raising and looking after subjects of change cannot be let fall onto women's shoulders alone. Therefore, in conversation with bell hooks (and others) who acknowledges the subversive value of homeplace, I would like take a political pause and ask: where can black women, Palestinian women or migrant women who bear the physical and emotional labour of reparation and care nurture themselves?²⁸

With this question in mind, I contemplate on kitchen as a breathing space in relation to the bittersweetness of homespaces at times women feel 'homeless at home' (Brickell,

²⁸ See, for instance, Françoise Vergès' call for decolonial caring/cleaning for reparation.

2012: 234). Kitchens' exclusiveness to women provides a semi-autonomous space that is different from other parts of home. The absence (and lack of interest) of the male gaze makes kitchen unique in domestic reproduction where women can chat, gossip, have fun and relieve, in other words, do what is essential to life, breathe. Kitchenspace is where women's heartbeat, steps, smell and sweat are sensed the most. The matrix of spatial confinement and reproductive burdenings happens alongside the recreational agency and spatial entitlement that women exercise to make space at home and in the world. Also, breathing is relational inasmuch as the cycle of life can only continue at a certain pace and with the harmony of the human and non-human. Therefore, distressed breath matters for a feminist analysis of the situated and political fragments of life. Breath, then, helps me account for trivial things, either rooted in the anxiety over a disappeared chocolate box or a misplaced kufiyeh. Breathing space, as a grounded analytical tool, raises the question of how geographically, materially and affectively regimented movements of Palestinian women could deliver spaces to breathe through intimate acts of yearnings and aligning.

The Intimate Talk at the Kitchen Table (or a Marriage That Fails)

Everyday talk is a method we all use whether we acknowledge it explicitly or not (Kohl and McCutcheon, 2015: 755)

Placing gendered contacts, ways of relating and breathing at home required ethnographic curiosity to the spatial distribution of conversations. It was mostly in the kitchen that I listened to and shared yearnings for (a dreamy) love and complains about frustrating marriages. I was wholeheartedly told intimate stories of women aspiring to find true love, to fall in love and have a movie-like happily ever after. Love as 'deemed always an outcome of fantasy' is an exciting drama in Palestinian women's life, too (Berlant, 2012: 75). In the village, romantic love can only be realized on the basis of marriage (read heterosexual) if one goes after societal acceptance. In a similar vein, in her work on the survival strategies of households in Egypt, Hoodfar points out that '[...] marriage is the only acceptable context for sexual activity and parenthood and provides the primary framework for the expression of masculinity and femininity and the fulfilment of gender roles' (1997: 52). That's why, the yearnings for romantic love are enmeshed in the negative affects such as the fear of being a spinster or the anticipation of unknown sexual intercourse following the marriage.

For women, it is key that the union of souls happens at the right time in a life cycle (not too late) with the right person, for example, someone with a good income who can

support the family. Marriage, and the rituals that it entails, can cause a great deal of distress for women. Firstly, for engagement to happen, a man asks for a woman's hand from her family. In most cases, there is room for women to manoeuvre her way around whether to accept the offer. Marriage is less likely to be merely forced upon a woman, yet the familial influence on the decision process cannot be disregarded. In contrast with the modern conceptualization of love as the exercise of individual freedom against social constraints (see Povinelli, 2006), the question of love knitted to marriage in rural Palestine is lived through more as a matter of familial decision making and the reproduction of heteronormativity.

In Faryal's case, she had to wait twelve years to marry Ghassan as her eldest brother refused their engagement when they were young. The family asserted Ghassan's politically active life as the basis of their refusal, and Faryal could not cross the familial final decision over her future. She kept resisting, though, by refusing to marry others who asked for her hand and stayed single. Only after twelve years, when Ghassan was relieved from Israeli jails and Faryal was in her 30s, which is considered very late to get married, her father approved their marriage and asked the eldest brother to step aside by using his powerful position in the hierarchy among the male family members. The families' approval was essential to proceed with the engagement.

Theoretically, it is possible for a couple to keep seeing each other before the engagement, yet it is strictly not approved and women can be harshly punished for that. Even if we leave the anticipation for a future partner aside and assume a smooth marriage of romantic love, anxieties start to rise from the very first days (perhaps the most on the wedding night). Following the marriage, the intensities of gendered burdenings increase with pregnancy, child rearing, managing the relationship with the husband's family, especially the mother-in-law, housework and economic hardship. The list can go on and on, yet despite the anticipated hardship, love talk as a great source of thrill remain at the centre of conversations, aligning women's emotional investments. It is such emotional density and richness clustered around love and marriage as the primordial intimate tie that give the kitchenspace its affective and analytical gravity. In the kitchenspace, the absence of the male gaze alleviates patriarchal norms, which in return provides an increased sense of entitlement to space. The spatial seclusion of kitchen sometimes opens Pandora's box, littering things around that otherwise would remain unspoken.

Love talk takes place at kitchenspaces while marriage may continue failing women. During my fieldwork, I was used to running into Faryal in the kitchen while she was preparing breakfast for the children after her morning prayer before sending them to the

school. Those were the only times, usually not longer than half an hour before the family woke up, that we could be alone. Still, those brief moments allowed us to have deeper conversations around the issues of politics and gender, which Faryal mostly seemed to be eager to initiate and speak about in such a direct manner that she almost never did in the presence of others. In one of our kitchen talks, something unexpected to me happened and Faryal mentioned sex for the first time without using the word itself. When I asked her a question regarding the tasks I shall do at the cooperative, she told me that one of the two permanent employees was not coming as her father was getting married on the day, so I shall rather do it the next day. Apparently, Fatima's father (75) decided to get married again after his wife died to a 40-year-old widow. Faryal claimed: 'Men here cannot stay alone. Doesn't matter how old they are. Even though they are 75, they get married.' And I nodded, 'Right? They need someone to cook, feed, and clean after them...' Surprisingly, though, she disagreed with me. 'No, it is not just that. They want the relationship!'

The word relationship gave me goosebumps as I discussed many things with Faryal including love, marriage, divorce, politics, affairs, marital problems and many more yet I never heard her using the word relationship. What she actually meant was the sexual relationship. Once again, we dived into the realm of patriarchal normativity, prioritizing men's needs over women that need to be met (by women), including their sexual desires. Relationship stood for the masculine libido which was always assumed to be prevailing and in need of imminent satisfaction. Faryal continued by emphasizing the importance of sexual satisfaction (of men) for a successful marriage. In explaining to me how failure at the 'relationship' could lead to failure at marriage, thus endangering women's wellbeing, she gave the example of Yara, a 25-year-old talented woman who works for the cooperative. Yara is divorced, and according to Faryal, she was too naïve and did not know how to manage the marital relationship. She endured systemic physical and emotional violence for the 2-3 years that she was married until her husband seriously injured her that she needed to be hospitalized. Only after this brutal incident, Yara's family temporarily let her come and stay with them, leaving her two-year-old son as children stay with the father in the village. Faryal, knowing the domestic violence and abuse she faced at home, encouraged Yara and her parents to support the break-up. Still, when Yara was back to the husband only to find out that he married a second wife in the meantime, Faryal expected her to use her sexuality as a mean of re-grounding/securing her position (over the other wife) at home.

Remembering Yara, with whom I met in person and whose artwork via the cooperative, silenced me as I did not approve of the treatment and comment she received

from the community, including Faryal and her mother. Silence became my little feminist protest in the kitchen, a disavowal when I was expected to participate via speech. I knew that Faryal supported her a lot when she was single and even wanted to take her on one of her trip for a collaborative project between Women in Hebron and the London-based artists. Faryal wanted her not to get married, at least not too early, so that her art and talent could flourish, but it was the family's decision. In Yara's life story woven into many intensities of violence – domestic abuse, being separated from her child, no support available to leave her husband and start a new life, being surrounded by occupation and impossibility to travel, among many others– what could there be to blame her? Silence and breathe.

The flourishing literature on the critical geographies of home argues for a more relational agenda that considers the material, affective and gendered registers of homespaces in Palestine and elsewhere (Abu Nahleh, 2006; Amrov, 2017; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Brickell, 2012; Harker, 2009; Joronen and Griffiths, 2019; Long, Joanna, 2018; Malpas, 2012; Manzo, 2003; Wilkinson, 2014; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Jacobs and Malpas, 2013; Massey, 1994). However, different attachments and functions attached to different parts of home remain less explored. I argue that there is still a need for a nuanced analysis of the ways in which different compartments of home are meant for, used and made sense of by Palestinian women. Kitchen, as a 'gendered territory,' emerges as a breathing space, a place where women could open up the issues that either excites (love) or fail (marriage) them the most. A big portion of the intimate conversations I had with women regarding their relationships with their husbands and mothers-in-law, their marital problems alongside the gossip and laughter, dreams and frustrations took place in the kitchen. Kitchen is spatially important, firstly because it is one of the few places women can stay alone (at least during the day). As their being is completely justified there, they feel entitled to space and to speak. Capturing such intimate ties that are co-constitutive of women's space making in the village requires a more topological approach to theorizing space.

Conclusion: 'Family is not friends'

In this chapter, rather than tackling home as a demonized space of confinement and/or as a romanticized place of shelter and protection, I reflected on bittersweet encounters that call for a topology of Palestinian homespaces. My wider project calls for decentering the preoccupation with occupation whilst re-centring Palestinian women's agency that may be located far beyond, as the literature on everyday doings in Palestine has suggested (Allen,

2008; Hammami, 2004; Harel-Shalev et al., 2018; Peteet, 1994, 1997, 2017; Richter-Devroe, 2008, 2011), but more importantly, cannot be contained by a binary proposal of subversion vs. submission. Therefore, in my analysis of homespaces, I accounted for different compartments of home where women have a relative autonomy and can exercise a public persona. Their use of private space for public purposes to socialize, to gather, to have fun, to gossip, to maintain and to be alone showed me how kitchen could be a breathing space at home. The analysis of homespaces marked by the division of labour shows how the deployment of space within homes affirms gendered privacy along the axes of public patriarchy. Hence, I also addressed the ghostly presence of patriarchy and violence that flourishes within the walls of home. Before diving into spaces of contact beyond homespaces that are deemed appropriate for female presence in the following chapters, I would like to recall one last bittersweet moment of relatedness which tells something about other kinds of intimacies, about how ‘intimacy builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation’ (Berlant, 1998: 282).

One night, a fight between Feryal and her son, Ayham (15), broke out due to Ayham involving in a fight in the town with his cousins.²⁹ Following the hue and cry, Feryal left home, as she told me the next day, feeling upset about her son’s aggressive behaviours and wanted to teach him a lesson (by threatening him with abandonment). Feryal had long been accused of being a neglecting mother and putting work and the cooperative over her familial duties, especially by her mother-in-law but also by her community. She was conscious every time Ayham involved in a fight because she was blamed for the reason his misbehaviour as the mother figure appointed for his manners and education. This put Feryal under a lot of pressure to meet the conditions of gendered roles in the village.

I woke up to the rain and quietness the next day; there was no electricity at home. It was Friday (a religious holiday), so I did not have work at the cooperative, and due to the bad weather we had no visitors. The unexpected solitude of home granted Feryal and me some headspace to talk about yesterday’s event, reminding me of our early morning kitchen table talks. Feryal needed to chat as if she was silence/d for a long time. She said: ‘When I left

²⁹ I stayed silent in my room on the top floor and avoided going downstairs as I tried to leave my host family some space to resolve the issue. I was also worried that in the presence of an outsider-insiders, the teenage male son might perform more anger to prove me that he was a true man. Despite the stereotyping representations of ‘angry Arab man,’ it was very much masculinity legitimated by anger management problems in this case. For further discussion, see (Allouche, 2015).

home, I was not sure where to go to, so I went to the cooperative. No electricity, no light, no food... I just sat next to the stove. I was so angry and thought, I will first go to Jordan early in the morning and then catch a flight and leave. I prayed a lot.' She sat there for five hours until her husband found her there late at night and brought her back home.

In the village, everyone knows Faryal. I was surprised to hear that she went to the cooperative instead of an acquaintance's house, so I asked why she went to the cooperative: 'I looked for a place of comfort. There was nowhere I wouldn't have to explain to others why I left home. I know perhaps a thousand people in this village, but family does not always mean friends.' Faryal associates people she knows with familial ties (although she was born in another village and moved to her husband's hometown following their marriage). The village is an intimate habitat where everyone knows each other. Yet, Faryal expresses a need for a different kind of intimacy, an intimate space beyond the family. Amidst the privacy (however superficial) of home for gendered bodies, Faryal claims the cooperative as private privacy, a space of liberation and solitude that is not public. As a woman, she was after less judgmental modes of relating, which she described as not having to 'explain herself.' She, then, found shelter in the cooperative, a space of her own. Drawing on this bittersweet moment of leaving (home), I hope to slide a door towards the utopian spaces and joyful intimacies, whether it be a woman's cooperative or love talk at the kitchen table. The following chapter looks at the quiet ways in which women create spaces of contact where they can cultivate joyful encounters in their struggle for less suffocating home/land.

Interlude 3 Joy: Connecting Spinozan Currents to Palestine

This interlude meditates on joy, in the Spinozan sense of the term, as an increase in one's capacity to affect and be affected, to feel more alive and connected in serendipitous ways (Montgomery and Bergman, 2017; Spinoza, 1994). It interrogates how a women's handicraft cooperative in rural Palestine can be better understood as a joyful space of *contact* (with other women) and *unlearning* (patriarchy). In parallel to this interlude connecting the Spinozan theoretical currents to the research on Palestine, the following chapter dwells on the emergent agential capacities of rural Palestinian women that are rooted in joyful encounters and spaces. In this regard, the interlude (and the chapter) seeks out the ways in which joy, as a capacity to respond, shall be given a space in our theoretical investigations. I care about the affective spectrum of joy and its uplifting power as a revolutionary force for change that remains unattended in the body of work on Palestinian resistance (Abdo, 1991, 1999, 2002; Abu Nahleh, 2006; Fleischmann, 2000; Richter-Devroe, 2008, 2011, 2012a). Herein, I argue that joyful encounters/places enable women to live otherwise, to create spaces for growing powerful together under the stifling infrastructures of the prolonged colonial occupation.

For Spinoza the environment that which humans interact with consists of a field of forces/compositions of affective relations which may diminish/block or increase/affirm our power of acting whether the corresponding passions are sadness or joy (Spinoza, 1994). 'The *Ethics* is necessarily an ethics of joy: only joy is worthwhile, joy remains, bringing us near to action, and to bliss of action' (Deleuze, 2001: 28). The Spinozan geometry of life (see Spinoza, 1994), the constant assemblages of relations and composition of bodies, or the 'melodic line of continuous variation' as Deleuze named it (see n.d.), joy stands out as the driving affective state of living; it is what affirms life and, in doing so, makes us act in new ways that increase our capacity to respond (and change). 'Affect draws attention to what moves us, and thus to what might be registered as change' (Coleman and Ringrose, 2013: 17), there lies the affirmative power of joy to organize socio-spatial relations differently.³⁰

Spinoza is important here because his acknowledgement of joyful potentia and its affective conditions of possibility bear political consequences. His writings offer an inspiring take on the role of affective spectrum (from sadness to joy) in shaping the human condition and capabilities (the following chapter will look at the relationship between agency and politics more extensively). The political potentialities of a women's handicraft cooperative

³⁰ Spinoza (1994) also talks about the role of encounters in human bondage where the collective intensity of affects lie.

and its affective registers can easily be dismissed in a settler colonial context like Palestine, where the everydayness of life is very much imbued with deliberate acts of violence against women and destruction of livelihoods. Yet, as Mahmood rightly states, to ignore the transformative potential of seemingly or self-avowedly apolitical spaces/movements would be to underestimate their power and force in society ‘in the making subjects, in creating life worlds, attachments, and embodied capacities’ (2012: xi). By linking joy to such creation of spaces of contact using a Spinozan approach with Palestine brings fresh lenses to explore political and agential potentials of rural women who endure occupation and patriarchy on a daily basis.

The literature on joyful ways of becoming has expanded our insight into the geographies of affect. Nixon (2017) looked at the affirmative role of laughter and pride in a safe house for women who involved in street level sex work, arguing that the moments of joy in everyday life bare their own political potentiality. In a similar attempt to rethink the political in relation to affective spaces and ontologies (see also Barnett, 2008), the productive (of agency, space and emotion) and counter-actualizing/affirmative power of becoming joyful subjects (even momentarily) has been given theoretical significance (Montgomery and Bergman, 2017; Moss et al., 2018; Ruddick, 2010). The writer Rebecca Solnit’s (2010) work on the upwelling of joyful forms of life in the midst of catastrophe is one of the few examples of empirically profound investigation of joy as an analytical cocoon. Solnit remarks ‘if paradise now arises in hell, it is because in the suspension of the usual order and the failure of most systems, we are free to live and act in another way.’

People seek to find ways of mutual aid, solidarity and sustenance all around the world. Laleh Khalili’s (2016) illuminating essay about Palestinian refugee women in Beirut is one of the few works that tackle the politics of class, access and pleasure in the Middle East. The article traces moments of pleasure as ‘caesuras in the massive apparatus of power’ that binds Palestinian refugee women. It argues against seeing women’s practices of leisure as consumerist acts or betrayal of politics. Rather, Khalili shows how pleasure (of beach going and promenading) is political for the young Palestinian women in Beirut given the privatization of public spaces, national histories of exclusion and local forms of patriarchy. Throughout the article she describes thick moments of joy shared by young women at the beach that allows them to make space, thereby, undo some of the overlapping exclusions that constraint their mobility as gendered and classed refugee bodies in Beirut. Khalili’s ethnographic inquiry into the politics of conviviality proves that joyful encounters are always already relational. The relationality of space making is what separates the Spinozan politics

of affects from liberal individualistic discourses on ‘pleasure’ and ‘happiness’ (Sara Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b). Rather, here, joy is acknowledged as a capacity to respond (and change); an affirmative power to organize socio-spatial relations differently, a momentum to become powerful together.

The previous chapter examined the intimacies, some joyful, some not, that take place within the physical walls of the homespaces. Switching lenses of my analysis into the embroidery cooperative, a semi-public space initiated and maintained by women, allows me to trace public recalibrations of intimacy and joyful encounters that take place there. The first point of entrance into the examination of the cooperative as a space of contact is to foreground joy as an affective capacity behind the material affordances to carve out a relatively autonomous space outside of the home, ‘a wiggle room’ from systems of oppression and their monopoly over life. The raced (settler colonial occupation), gendered (patriarchal), sexualized (female), classed (poorer, rural) axes of domination in the village capture women’s bodies in intersecting ways. Yet, Palestinian women do not passively accept these exclusions and the cooperative stands for what cannot be fully captivated, leaks and grows in cracks.

The cooperative is an experimental space in a settler colonial context where, particularly through re-territorialisations of joy, women can grow powerful together. Unlike many other NGOs and cooperatives run by international donors and initiatives (see Hammami, 1995), the embroidery cooperative in the village is produced by the effect of women, not by a class of professionals, experts or NGO workers. There is no political agenda imposed by parties or regulations by donors. The relative autonomy that comes with self-organizing has a profound consequence; the cooperative remains open to women’s participation from different villages, backgrounds, age groups and skill sets. It can, for example, subvert the intergenerational power relations between women (see the discussion on mothers-in-law, chapter 4). The cooperative provides the material conditions of gathering, a space where women can cherish intergenerational, cross-political, open-ended friendships and collegiality which otherwise remain foreclosed to them (which will be explored in length in the following chapter).

Such publicly visible appropriation of space at the heart of the village proves ‘an act of public intimacy’ (Pande, 2018: 12). Paying attention to those intimate and joyful encounters made me acknowledge the importance of (room for) conviviality and laughter that can nourish contact among women. ‘Conviviality helps clarify that joy is not simply something felt by an individual but also the effect of enabling assemblages of bodies, tools,

gestures, and relationships' (Montgomery and Bergman, 2017: 140). Although the cooperative is not explicitly a feminist space, it bears feminist potential inasmuch as it subverts the normative public/male vs. private/female separation by collapsing them into one space. It nurtures women's bodily autonomy and mobility amidst the colonial and patriarchal gaze that deeply constraints the space making practices of women in the village.

Bearing in mind the limited homespaces deemed appropriate for female presence such as balcony and rooftop (semi-public/open to the male gaze), living room (not while guests are around), courtyard (not always, as long as they are properly secluded) there is not much room for female conviviality in the social organization of space in the village predominantly based on gendered segregation. Women are expected to engage in reproductive domestic activities at home that is in sharp contrast to the vibrant and productive (business) village centre which is seen as the domain of men. Herein, the place of cooperative is very important; it is a work and gathering place for women at the expense of patriarchal publicness in the village. Its convivial nature rooted in contact and unlearning captures the complexities and nuances of public/private dilemma. Attending to topological questions of connectivity, proximity, trust, responsibility, forming durable bonds, remakings, care and nurturing that increase women's capacity to respond requires an empirically grounded analysis that accounts for joyful encounters that open up collective capacities.

Foregrounding joy in the analysis of space making practices of Palestinian women also provides fresh lenses to look at the literature on *sumud*/steadfastness (see Johansson and Vinthagen, 2015; Marie et al., 2018; Ryan, 2015). With regard to the geography of Palestine, the body of work that is gathered around the concept of *sumud* provides some inquiry into the investigation of capacity to respond to horror that I will further discuss in the next chapter. The scholarly work on Palestinian *sumud* has tackled less what gendered agency might mean in the context of rural Palestine, but more fished out 'resilience' in the face of hardships of living under occupation (the intersecting domination of patriarchy is mostly left out). Steadfastness is widely valued and referred to in the literature in order to praise an (almost innate) capacity to strike back to the occupation forces. Yet, it is unfair to put the responsibility of survival in the face of extreme adversity solely on Palestinians whilst leaving the affective conditions of such thriving unexamined (see also Browne, 2018).

The Spinozan currents in thought (Deleuze, 2001; Deleuze and Guattari, 2013; Spinoza, 1994) embrace the ways in which sadness can cause stagnation and joy can increase the momentum in life. For the scope of my ethnography, paying attention to the codes of dressing up, shopping, dancing, food, gossip and fun, in general, brought novelty and

analytical rigour into the analysis of coping mechanisms and everyday sustenance in rural Palestine. Therefore, the following chapter dwells on the politics of joyful agency where I argue that joyful encounters –the creative capacity they grant the subject– are as essential/powerful as the processes of subjection and domination in exploring the intimate modes of dwelling that Palestinian women generate.

Here, I hope my analysis to contribute to McNay's (2000: 4–16) conceptualization of agency as *living through embodied potentialities*, her critique of negative paradigms of the subject (as subjection) and rethinking of agency as a generative process.

The main implication of this generative logic for a theory of agency [...] is that it yields an understanding of a creative or imaginative substrate to action. It is crucial to conceptualize these creative or productive aspects immanent to agency in order to explain how, when faced with complexity and difference, individuals may respond in unanticipated and innovative ways which may hinder, reinforce or catalyse social change (McNay, 2000: 5).

To capture the affirmative and generative aspects of subjecthood, we need to tackle agency as a philosophical question that operates on an affective level 'beyond the broader systems, such as family, nation, religion and state' (Sehlikoglu, 2018: 73). Drawing on the Spinozist approach to understand women's spacings in Palestine opens up a conceptual space to theorize agency as the capacity to endure and maximize joy. In order to understand Palestinian women's struggle and endurance, I insist that we need to go beyond the existing literature on gendered resistance/resilience and consider the role of joy as an affective, generative and uplifting force.³¹

³¹ The existing literature on Palestinian resilience has looked at the household economy (Kuttab, 2006), familial relations (Harker, 2009, 2010a, 2012), cultural and aesthetic production (Peteet, 1996; Richter-Devroe and Salih, 2014), urban space (Allen, 2008; Harker, 2014b). The literature that has centred Palestinian women's experience, on the other hand, has only done so by entangling conventional socio-political forms that usually assumed to be structuring communities. These works have examined the role of kin groups and village networks (Naser-Najjab, 2015), household management as steadfastness (Kuttab, 2006), gendered division of resistance (Peteet, 1994, 1997; Richter-Devroe, 2012b) (Richter-Devroe, 2012), the political subjectification of women and its transformative effects on the already existing gender roles (Peteet, 1992). Julie Peteet (1997), for example, talks about how the nationalist formation of women as the maternal icons of the nation, on the one hand, empowered Palestinian women by validating their political positioning. On the other hand, such gendering of citizenship did not challenge the already existing division of caring labour in Palestinian society, thereby constraining women. What makes a women's embroidery

Alongside the literature on Palestinian steadfastness, feminist scholars written on gender in the Middle East have long attempted to locate resistance and women's agency in confronting social norms (Abu-Lughod, 1990; 2002) and nationalism (Al-Ali and Tas, 2018; Kandiyoti et al., 2000) as well as practising pious Islam (Mahmood, 2012). Engaged with these works, the conceptual challenge of the following chapter (as well as the thesis) remains as how to locate Palestinian women's agency interwoven with the question of how to recognize agency in the absence of active resistance. How to write against reductionist and sensationalistic representations of Muslim and Middle Eastern women who have been stereotyped as in need of saving? An empirically rigorous grounding of joy in relation to its power of generating agential capacities to affect/respond/change is yet to be built upon in MENA studies. In my project on women's space-making practices, endurance and intimate politics in rural Palestine, I forefront joy as an analytical tool to examine women's affective capacities to respond to the troubled double bind of patriarchy and occupation.

Joyful analysis – how does it work?

Joy can be slippery inasmuch as it is implicated in affect: '[...] comes out of thinking and feeling the transformative encounters with our own power and the powers of others' (Montgomery and Bergman, 2017: 163). A joyful analysis can only be held gently; as a kind of analysis flexible and spatio-temporally bounded, its power lies within the relationships and processes it sustains. Yet, I argue to see this volatility and open-endedness of joyful analysis as a strength rather than a limitation. Joy is a conceptual 'brick' that is 'immersed in a changing state of things' (Massumi, 1992: 5). Its force can break windows and 'open new vistas' towards an ethnography on the affective dimensions of everyday life; 'the live surface,' the sensations, intensities and textures through which ordinary life is experienced (see also Stewart, 2007).

Pushing a research agenda that accounts for the politics of joyful agency helps me move beyond the realms of resistance/resilience as predominantly research on Palestine gets stuck. It enables me to capture 'aspects of selfhood that escape from the structures, rules, systems, and discursive limits of life but captures imaginations, aspirations, desires, yearnings, and longings' (Sehlikoglu, 2018: 73). I argue that this is what has been missing in

cooperative worthy of scholarly attention is the fact that it overflows the gendered burden of resistance.

the existing literature on gendered lived experiences in Palestine particularly as well as space making in the Middle East in general. Writing against the simple contrasts of home/work, public/private, and tracking joyful encounters that take place in the cooperative, I draw out empirical connections between gender, space and place.

In the next pages, I explore the cooperative as a joyful space that holds some degree of spatial autonomy and permanence, seldom limited to work, a place that holds the potential to increase women's capacity to respond to the very conditions that constrain their agency. Palestinian women as gendered and colonized bodies are still an agent negotiating their intersectional identity, which requires a nuanced analysis of gender not only AS intimate and embodied BUT ALSO as joyful and endured. Moving beyond home, the following chapter utilizes joy as an analytical concept to tackle the ways in which women carve out spaces for themselves.

Chapter 5 Joyful Encounters at a Palestinian Women's Embroidery Cooperative

Women in Hebron is a Palestinian women's embroidery cooperative in one of Hebron's villages established in 2005, providing income for more than 100 women from eight different villages across the Hebron district. Today, the cooperative maintains its character as the only women-run business in Hebron's historical quarter at the centre of the old city market. In line with the theoretical reorientation of the previous chapters, the overarching question of this project remains whether there is a relationship between doing (joyful) intimacy and undoing colonial occupation. I chose the word 'doing' because as a verb, it implicitly involves an agency that might help me capture some possible coping and resistance mechanisms, some mundane ways that Palestinian women endure patriarchy and occupation. In this spirit, this chapter zooms on a Palestinian women's cooperative, tackling the cooperative as a *space of contact* and *unlearning*, thus enabling us to explore the politics of joyful agency.

Joyful Encounters

For there are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt- of examining what those ideas feel like being lived on [...], while we taste new possibilities and strengths (Lorde, 2019: 28).

Imagining and thinking through the place of joy in life and politics that conditions livelihoods, this chapter explores the joyful encounters that take place in the cooperative intertwined with regenerative practices: generating subsidiary income and emerging forms of life such as solidarity, affinity and friendship that flourish among Palestinian women. I look at the connections, the echoes that transgress the conventional spaces and acts that have shaped and promoted by the Palestinian Liberation Movement. Shifting from mainstream political organizations to a women's embroidery cooperative, my aim is to track somewhat side-lined/ghosted spaces that resist the double bind of patriarchy and occupation in Palestine. By foregrounding the cooperative as a (joyful) space where women can grow more powerful together, I would like to start a conversation that accounts for autonomous spaces of women in Palestine at the intersection of Spinozan joy and Palestinian endurance. The following questions raised by two joyful militants, Nick Montgomery and carla bergman (2017), very much resonates with my inquiry:

- ‘How can we be otherwise?’
- What makes it possible to activate something different?
- How to share experiences of places and spaces where something different is already taking place – where people feel more alive and capable?’

Spinoza’s inquiry (see 1994) dwelling on the affective spectrum (from joy to sorrow) acknowledged the continuous flow of bodies and objects in their capacity to affect and be affected by each other so as to understand the ontology of being (human and non-human) ultimately rooted in ethical consideration of affective bonding. In the Spinozists investigation of encounters, there lies a knotted relationship between joy and empowerment (as an increase in one’s capacity to act). Living an ethical life, then, entails that we organize encounters to maximize joy inasmuch as we avoid sadness as they increase our capacity to act (Ruddick, 2010).

Needless to say, those individual or collective joyful encounters that Spinoza cared about as a remedy for life takes in place; joyful encounters are embodied and spatial (see Moss et al., 2018). In her work on affective geographies in a safe house for women involved in street level sex work, Nixon (2017) elaborates on the role of laughter and pride as the emergent affective forces as the political potentials of the everyday were connected to women’s vulnerability and capacity to ‘persist, resist and find levity’ (ibid. p.36). ‘At its best the house is a communal space to share food, dirty jokes, perfume, scars, clothes, war stories and warnings; a place where one can break, reach out, regroup, fill up, clean up and keep moving.’ An ethnographic grasp of spatial encounters can tell us how women (we) pick each other up, or keep holding onto what diminishes us. Here, I bring forward the Spinozist notion of joy as a lens to explore Palestinian women’s spacings and affective geographies of the everyday. The chapter, in this respect, provides a portrait of women’s cooperative, a relational space of *potentia*, and a space of endurance that allows Palestinian women to cultivate some joyful encounters generating the capacity to act.

As an intentionally collectivized space created and maintained by women, *Women in Hebron* embroidery cooperative enables me to examine geographies of intimacy and spaces of contact in relation and as opposed to the politics of occupation. For the scope of this chapter, my focus will be on tracing the sharing of communal responsibilities and practising *sumud* (steadfastness) by generating subsidiary income and embracing joyful encounters among Palestinian women. Affirming life, in doing so, transgresses the

normative ethical and moral expectations such as participating in the national liberation movement or mothering that is expected from Palestinian women (see Abdo, 1991; Peteet, 1997; Richter-Devroe, 2012b). On the contrary, this chapter pushes the analytical boundaries of the existing literature on Palestinian gendered resistance and resilience.

The Old City Shop: the Portrait of Fatma

The cooperative's shop in the Old Quarter of Hebron is where women sell embroidered handicrafts produced in the cooperative. Once you get off from the service –the shared taxi that is the only available public transportation between villages and Hebron centre– at the terminal, the cooperative's shop is a 15-minute walking distance from Bab-a Zawiya in the Old City surrounded by checkpoints, settler houses, pedestrians, cars and closed streets. In 1997, the Hebron Protocol divided the city into two sectors: H1, controlled by the Palestinian Authority and H2, roughly 20% of the city, administered by Israel that facilitates more Orthodox Jews to settle in the Old City and nearby settlements. Since then, the old quarter that used to be a cultural centre and hub of trade has had 'fight the ghost town' stencils on the ancient city walls under Israeli military domination.



Figure 25 “This is Palestine - Fight the Ghost Town” Graffiti, Hebron (15/11/2017)

Jewellers, shoemakers, craft shops, all were either moved to the new city or shut down. The colourful fruit and vegetable market was moved 200 meters further up to the entrance of the Old City. Today, first, you walk in a crowded and chaotic path for 10 minutes with fresh fruit and vegetable stands on both sides arriving at the narrow, winding and ghostly streets of the Old City. Patriarchy and occupation, in this context, appear as the

prominent intersecting lines of continues source of sadness in Palestinian women’s lives. The moments that women feel stuck, blocked, immobile, choked, limited, incapable, powerless and frazzled, all the different manifestations of sadness in everyday life, require a Spinozist account of how power operates over gendered bodies. To that extend, I pay attention to the shared moments of laughter, joy and yearning in the cooperative (and beyond) as antidotes to gendered exploitation.



Figure 26 Cooperative’s Shop in the Old Quarter of Hebron (21/11/2017)

Every morning, Fatma, the 55-year-old shopkeeper, mother of 6 and grandmother of 3, sets up the *Women in Hebron* shop. Fatma is the only female shopkeeper in the Old City and speaks perfect English. Even though she has been running the shop for almost ten years now and has previous work experience in Jerusalem, she still finds the task very challenging.

In the beginning, it was hard, not many people in the Old City. It was just after the Second Intifada. The shops were broken. It was an empty, scary place. And I have never seen the soldiers and settlers walking 24 hours in front of my face before.

When I come from Bab-a Zawiya, when I turned (showing with her body the direction), my heart starts to beat. The first time I enter the Old City was maybe after 13 years. It is a scary place for us (Interview, 2017).

During my volunteer work for the cooperative, I spent one day a week in the shop, helping Fatma and observing the rhythm of everyday life under ever-increasing settler and military presence and harassment in the Old Quarter. I examine the further conceptual ramifications of enclosure in the settler colonial context, especially in the specific geography of Hebron, in the 3rd chapter. Here, I just reflect on Fatma's lived experience as a female shopkeeper in the Old City of Hebron. The H2 area of the city under Israeli administration is a landscape fragmented by military basements, checkpoints, parachuted up settlements and IDF soldiers and Palestinians that try to make a living under such dehumanizing conditions. Fatma deals with IDF soldiers trotting in the side streets of the Old City on a daily basis. Palestinians are banned from entering many streets, so she follows the same path every day to work, hoping not to get harassed by settlers and soldiers occupying the Old City. The situation gets worse in the days of tension between Palestinian youth and soldiers, and particularly on Jewish holidays when she keeps the shop closed. During the three months I spent in Hebron, the shop remained closed for ten days.

The enclosure of occupation is not the only thing hardening life for Fatma in the Old Quarter. She also suffers from being surrounded by male shopkeepers and construction workers. One day she had a big fight with a construction worker as she asked him to work carefully and not to damage the handcrafted products. The young guy got upset over her warning and started shouting and threatening Fatma. In Palestinian culture, younger generations are expected to show respect to the elderly. That is why the first reaction of Fatma was, 'Am I a man you are acting like this? I am at your grandmother's age.' None of the male shopkeepers involved or attempted to protect Fatma as one would have expected. After the incident, I learnt that the guy was from a big family in Hebron and people were scared of him. When the Palestinian police arrived, Fatma complained to them about the lack of respect for women in the Old City. And when things cooled down, she sadly turned to me and said: 'I am sorry to say this, but I told him, wallah, I hope Allah will give you more settlers in the area because this is what you need; to have more bad people than you.' Fatma, in anger, uses the metaphorical power of the occupation as the means to curse the young man, yet she also refuses to use the occupation as a reason vindicating the young man's aggression.

'I am sorry' was the only thing I could say, followed by a couple of fragmented sentences on how the occupation might contribute to men's aggression. However, Fatma did not want to hear any excuse for a man who almost had beaten her. She said:

I am sorry, but I am not a tissue to clean this. We cannot blame the occupation for this. We need to be stronger as a community in the face of occupation. If he treats

me like this, how can we build a community? It is not easy for me, either. I stay in the shop all day, six days a week, and they [referring to the men] say things like ‘Hi, how are you? What are you doing? Are you married?’ One time, I was sitting with the ISM [referring to international activists] man and woman, mixed. A man entered the shop and sat in front of me. I looked at him and asked him what he wanted. He said, ‘You are sitting with men. I want to sit with you.’ But I told him, ‘Do you think I am like this, very open to sitting with you?’ I kicked him out of the shop, and he started saying bad things to me.

I have many problems with men in the Old City because, first, it is strange for them, women sitting and chatting with men. Also, I speak English, and it is strange for them, a woman speaking English (personal communication, 2017).



Figure 27 Fatma, the Shopkeeper, Hanging Scarves, Hebron (21/11/2017)

As the last task of setting up the shop, just before she has her morning tea, Fatma hangs the scarves outside and puts the signboard ‘handmade crafts made by Palestinian women.’ The cheap and poorly written signboard contrastingly makes me think of how essential and indispensable the cooperative is. The shop indeed functions like the cooperative’s bridge to the outside where the products meet customers and new contacts are made. It is located in a strategic spot, in the heart of the old city where the Palestinianness of

the space is under settler threat and military domination. It does not matter how Hebronites tend to look down on women from villages or how troublesome tour guides ask for a commission; the shop stands for what women from villages are capable of. Before I dive into a women's embroidery cooperative and its socio-political and spatial underlining in settler colonial Palestine, I first examine the gender normative organization of space in the village to stress the everyday public uses of space.

Gendered Publicness in the Village

Within the cooperative, women have managed to carve out a place for themselves outside the domestic and familial life which gets advocated as a space of safety, protection and privacy for the female body in social imaginaries across different geographies (e.g Sethi, 2018). If home ostensibly is a private matter, what constitutes publicness then? Who populates it? Moreover, how do we locate public space in research in non-Western, non-liberal contexts? By portraying how publicness looks like and how it is used and accessed in a Palestinian village –a geographically and imaginarily marginalized place within the marginal– this section attempts to give a time/history/context-bounded answer to these questions.

In the context of liberal democracy, public space has long been imagined in line with the Habermasian terms, as a space accessible to all where social/political participation is enacted through the medium of public discourse (Habermas, 1992). Both feminist/queer (Berlant and Warner, 1998; Pateman, 1989) and Marxist (Fraser, 1990) critiques of the liberal conceptualization of the public sphere showed that the presumably distinct worlds of the public and the private are indeed interrelated and connected by a patriarchal structure. Nancy Fraser's critique has rightly pointed out that Habermas idealized the liberal-bourgeois public sphere as the universal, underestimating its exclusionary nature in all intersecting forms of domination including gender, class and race (Fraser, 1990: 59–62). Pateman (1989, p. 131) stresses the 'ideological mystification of liberal-patriarchal reality' that has long claimed the public and private to be a universal dichotomy. Therefore, the part of the theoretical challenge of developing a feminist agenda is to take into account '[...] the social relationships between women and men in historically specific structures of domination and subordination; and, it might be added, within the context of specific interpretations of the "public" and "private"' (Pateman, 1989: 126). Following such critiques, providing a

historically and geographically grounded theorization of the public/s, especially in non-Western contexts, emerges of crucial importance for a feminist agenda.

The empirically extended literature on women's lived experiences in public space/s in non-Western contexts examines urban middle-class women's perceptions of safety (Parikh, 2018) and consumption-driven leisure practices (Paul, 2017) as well as how they adjust and/or resist to constraints on their mobility and access to public (Andrews and Shahrokni, 2014; Sethi, 2018). In addition to the patriarchal structuring of gendered publicness, scholars working in the MENA region also addressed the role of religion in doing so (Al-Bishawi et al., 2017; Goekariksel and Secor, 2015; Sehlkoglu, 2016). I contribute to this literature by looking at the specific context of the village in the outskirts of Hebron in the following ways. The limited literature on the public space in Palestine examines how the occupation transformed the use of public space during Intifadas (Zawawi et al., 2013) and conflicting perceptions over the organization of public space in Palestinian towns in Israel (Totry-Fakhoury and Alfasi, 2018). It also implicitly discusses different uses of public space by looking at public recalibrations of mourning (Allen, 2008), public expressions of resistance and discontent by graffiti, the struggle over writing on the walls (Petee, 1996) and women's participation in public protests (Abdo, 1991; Hammami, 1990; Richter-Devroe, 2012b). None of these works adequately stressed the interrelated and co-constitutive nature of the public and private. Furthermore, even though some of this literature indirectly addressed the gendered experiences of public space in urban contexts, there is not any research available on lived experiences of Palestinian women in the villages/small towns.

At this point, it is important to note that my interest in publicness does not reside in providing a normative understanding of what public space means in the Palestinian context. I am not going to examine different contested public experiences in the village, either. My interest in the discussion of locating the sense of public, rooted in my broader project, follows from how women navigate through different gendered spaces. Here, I am interested in the public inasmuch as it enables me to further conceptualize the cooperative as a relational space of contact. In this vein, by looking at the village, a marginalized space within the marginal, my overall aim is to disentangle the impacts of inter-familial and intimate relations negotiated and positioned by religious codes on women's access to and experiences of the public.

In the town centre, there are grocery stores, a pizza place and some falafel takeaways, a couple of butchers, many fruit and vegetable shops, a mosque and a couple of more shops selling furniture, souvenirs and cosmetics and some coffee shops, for sure. At first sight, the whole village functions as a social space where people are chatting at every corner, shops are open and the streets are crowded until late. In the evenings when there were hours-long electricity cuts, for example, I was able to see the crowd hanging out in front of the nearby grocery store from my balcony. Because it was the only place with a generator, people used to gather in front of the shop until late, visibly having fun even though the rest of the town was utterly dark. Those people were all men and occasionally small children.

Especially in the villages, but to a certain extent in the Hebron city centre as well, places in which people congregate are gender specific, and women's access to public space regulated by intimate patriarchal norms is mixed up with honour codes. Men come together in public. Public space is for men. They sit at coffee shops, work in *dukkan*, which also functions as a social space open until 12 am, chat in barbershops... For women, the occasions for occupying public space are quite limited and restricted. They prefer to be accompanied by other women or at least by a child in the absence of a male in public. They might visit neighbours or shops in the town centre. Visiting people in their house, on the other hand, is expected to follow up the formalities of hosting such as offering tea, sweets and sometimes food, which of course requires much housework to be done by women during and after the visit. It is less likely to see a young woman walking alone in the streets at any time of the day.

In the absence of any cafes or restaurants, the inner gardens in front houses (could belong to the extended family) and yards function as a buffer zone between the road and surroundings (e.g Totry- Fakhoury and Alfasi, 2018). These semi-private gardens give both the extended family and women the opportunity to gather, sit, and have tea over chat for many hours without worrying about their privacy (see the figures below).



Figure 28 Courtyard, Village (15/12/2017)



Figure 29 Courtyard, Village (15/12/2017)

Here, religion intertwines with honour codes as the dominant markers of privacy (see also Al-Bishawi et al., 2017). According to Islamic values, women shall neither congregate in mix-gender spaces nor be too visible and present without wearing a hijab, especially to a man outside of their extended family, which is seen as *haram* (religiously forbidden). Similar observations apply to research on historical Palestine, as well:

Cultural values of gender separation play a central role in the unwritten rules of these spaces. We observed that young women usually do not walk alone but in groups or accompanied by family members, conservatively dressed and mainly during daytime hours. Leisure places such as coffee shops and restaurants mainly function as “masculine” spaces, although a female coffee shop, the first of its kind in Israel's Palestinian society, recently opened in Sakhnin. The Nissaa' Café excludes unaccompanied men, thus allowing women freedom of entertainment without being judged and overseen. The shop has proved to be a great success for over three years now, allowing women to gather without leaving the town (Totry-Fakhoury and Alfasi, 2018: 437).

Shopping, on the other hand, is one of the most legitimate forms of spending time outside of the house for women. It could be shopping at the food market in the village centre –although almost all the women during the interviews stated that they did not feel comfortable walking around the village– or at the Hebron centre, which is indeed 15 minutes by car. Many women would love to take a journey to the centre, but it is not always easy. It requires extra pocket money for transportation, free time from daily household and child-rearing duties and permission and/or company of a male family member such as father, husband, brother or cousins. During the interviews, I asked the women how often they went to the Hebron centre and almost all of them said at most once a month. Only one woman said that before she started working for the cooperative, she was able to go more often, perhaps every two weeks. Also, all of them stated that they had never travelled to Hebron alone, except an 18-year-old girl who studied at one of the universities in Hebron, therefore, travelled to the city on a daily basis.

In addition to the culturally limited forms of (im)mobility rooted in everyday patriarchy, the prolonged colonial occupation blocks women's movement and achievements in life in every possible way. As the latest UN report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions states: ‘A complex and multilayered system of administrative, bureaucratic and physical constraints impedes the

Palestinians within the West Bank, and is mainly linked to the settlements' (p. 12). I already discussed the landscape of the occupation; the ever-growing numbers of checkpoints, military compounds, roadblocks, settlements and the Apartheid wall as well as how these tangible beasts of military rule can be used as an excuse to block women's desire for mobility in the name of safety and impose patriarchal norms on them (see chapter 3). Here, it is not my intention to dive into the ways in which living under the prolonged occupation shatters life for women in the village (and beyond);³² I just want to reemphasize how it blocks women's access to education, health, leisure, and more importantly, a life lived in dignity.

To give an example, during the semi-structured interviews that I conducted with Lena (32), a mother of five kids who works as a secretary in the public sector. She holds a BA degree in Management and was planning to apply for MA programs by the time we met. She is also a close friend of Faryal and has been involved with the cooperative from the beginning as a member of the board. She says, 'Faryal and I have similar minds. She also always fights, but she is stronger than me in the sense that her husband doesn't care about what other people think. She has a supportive husband. I don't have that. And she started the cooperative from scratch like I did with my life.' Our conversation revolves around the issues of life in the village, the difficulties she faces as women for two hours until I finally ask her how the occupation affects women:

If you ask me, will you let your daughters get marry early, no way. Early marriage is the biggest problem here and the worst thing in the world. I have three sisters; all of them married when they were 13 like me and none completed their education [high school]. All their ambition is what to cook tomorrow. I am the only one and until now, I have a lot of problems with my husband, with my family... because I wanted to study and work. You know the problems with my job. For a year, every minute I fought to be able to go to work. I fought with my family, my uncle, my mother-in-law, my neighbours... Every minute I was hearing bad words, but I didn't give up and I succeeded. Not the good things, but the bad things make you stronger. Today, I am 1000 times stronger than I was in past. If I want to study, I will study. It is my life, not theirs. A woman does not study to study but to be strong. Hazal, you know how big our family is; girls, daughters, cousins... half of the town, and I am the only strong woman among them. I completed my studies, I am working and I have a car. I will not let my

³² For a detailed discussion on the impossibility of moving in dignity in Palestine, see (Peteet, 2017).

daughters go through what I have been through. Here, occupation affects a lot. My mum could not complete her studies during the intifada. She is just 50. If you want to go to a university in another city, it is a big problem. You are afraid of checkpoints and settlements. If you want to involve in politics, it is very dangerous. You will be in prison, a lot of problem for your family. They may destroy your house. In the universities, they arrest students. Talking here is not allowed. We are not allowed to talk about occupation because you will get arrested. You cannot say I don't want this (Interview, 2018).

Lena has three daughters and she does not want them to 'go through what she has been through.' She is wholeheartedly against early marriage and the lack of access to education and career progression that capture women bodies and opportunities in life at the exes of patriarchy and occupation.

Another occasion where a woman would enjoy relative freedom of movement is wedding parties that are the main source of excitement interrupting women's daily routines by bringing dance, music, dressing up and the joy of belief in the spiritual richness of the union of man and woman. One could make the feminist critique of marriage and the varying forms of control over women's bodies and agency that follows it. For the sake of centring my interlocutor's point of view, I will not elaborate on the relationship between patriarchy and marriage. I will merely point out that all of my interlocutors attached some positive and spiritual meaning to marriage and making one's own family. Indeed, being the first married volunteer/researcher visiting the village granted me respect and mobility within the community in which I lived and worked. (I provide a more detailed discussion of my positionality in the methodology chapter). I was many times congratulated for 'completing half of my religion,' a saying in Arabic underlying the importance of marriage as part of religious duty and piety.

Women were never wholly excluded from the public sphere but 'the way in which women are included is grounded, as firmly as their position in the domestic sphere, in patriarchal beliefs and practices' (Pateman, 1989: 132). In the village, normatively accepted jobs are usually a direct extension of women's domestic (expected) tasks such as teaching, cooking or cleaning. Only a few women hired by the local municipality are doing a variety of tasks from urban planning to office duties. However, given that the extended family and clan relations still play a major role over political organizations, those women can be considered (and accepted) as working with their extended family members. In most cases, women would

find themselves in negotiation between mobility and dignity, ‘bargaining with patriarchy’ (Kandiyoti, 1988). To be able to receive and be seen as worthy of protection and respect in the eyes of the community, they would need to make sure that their presence in the public space is following the honour codes and contextually legitimate. This brings about constant daily negotiations over transgressing patriarchal norms and estimation of how much would be too much (the previous chapters did shed more light on the complexity of such bargains). At this point, what is important to note is that this background to gendered publicness and lack of spaces of conviviality for women make it even more evident: that is how the cooperative enables women to breathe in an autonomous space. It demystifies the burden of the intersecting enclosures of Israeli occupation and patriarchy on women’s shoulder. The cooperative and its Old City shop, after all, cultivate Palestinian women’s agency by opening up space that is belonged to them.

Stitches of Embroidery: The Stories of WomenPotentia

Making embroidery is a realistic option of generating income for women from the villages that help them deal with the economic handicaps of the prolonged occupation. During the interviews, sixteen women out of twenty-five said that they would not be working, sitting at home, if they were not employed by the cooperative. Only seven of them had worked before they started embroidering and all were the jobs that could be seen as the extension of their assigned roles as gendered bodies in society, as what Mies (2014) notes based on the same mechanism of ‘housewifization’ in a male dominated economy where women are mostly found in the subsidiary, private, informal sectors that align with the gendered division of labour. These former jobs included selling homemade food, cleaning, selling books for children, working as a beautician and carpet weaving. One woman also stated that she had a piece of land and did farming. Thirteen women concluded that they would rather work from home because it was ‘easier,’ ‘convenient’ and ‘possible.’ Child rearing responsibilities, having a big family, housework and familial responsibilities, caregiving duties such as looking after sick husbands and elderly were all mentioned as the obstacles on leaving home to come to work. Given that they have an average of 5.5 children, it is possible to imagine how a big family looks like. Among the women who were okay with working from home, two of them mentioned how difficult it was to travel between villages in Hebron although they were in very short distances. She was from a village that was an hour

away and found it hard to commute on a daily basis due to the financial cost, time, and lack of security. Here, once again, the lack of Palestinian infrastructures and autonomy over the organisation of social fabric affects women's life opportunities.

Producing handicrafts make women enjoy a sense of creativity and self-esteem that, in return, let them embrace their capacity to manoeuvre in the face of patriarchy. In the previous section, I provided a portrait of the old city shop that endured the economic embargo and isolation due to the precarious political situation in the city (see also chapter 3). On the other hand, Fatma, her sister and many others fight against the male shopkeepers in the old quarter alongside the patriarchal norms that shame them as they work outside of the home. Still, a more detailed and nuanced analysis of social life in the village is required to provide a better grasp of the cooperative as a space of joyful encounters. The following sections explore the interwoven meanings attached to stitching embroidery and the ways in which it enlivens women's lives.

Strikingly, despite the lack of material affordances and societal pressure, seven women insisted that they would come and work full time at the cooperative if they 'could' but could not because 'my husband does not want me to work.' Among the women who would rather not work from home, one was divorced and one's husband was in the prison. So, technically, they did not have to ask for the male breadwinner's consent. In their case, the patriarchal authority to control women's bodies and mobility was handed over to the husband's family who did not approve of them working. Whether it be fathers, husbands or other male family members, women's decision-making processes are constrained by their goodwill and mercy. That said, the status of two current full-time employees of the cooperative was related to their marital status; one was an old, divorced lady whose body was no longer conceived as much sexually attractive as a young woman, therefore not much of a threat to shame her family. The second full-time employee, Nevin, was in her thirties and married to a poor man with a mental health condition who by the time I met her was in prison. As a poor woman from the village who lacks formal education, the cooperative was the only available option for her to make a living and raise her children. Except for one woman who was sixty three years old and said that she was too old, all the women stated that they wanted to attend the trainings offered in the cooperative on traditional food making and carpeting, to learn how to use the sewing machine and knitting. Among the 25 women, more than half already attended one or more trainings and found it useful and enjoyable.

Villagers said that since the 2nd Intifada in October 2000 (Ilan, 2018), the number of people visiting Hebron had drastically dropped. Unlike the central tourist hub Bethlehem or

urban centres in the Occupied Territories, Hebron usually hosts visitors with political motives to understand the situation on the ground or diaspora Palestinians. While bearing in mind the specific context of settler colonial occupation (see chapter 3 for further discussion), this section discusses the place of the cooperative in women's life – an intimate place created and maintained by Palestinian women. In the absence of job opportunities and the gendered division of labour that goes into the reproduction of life, working for embroidery cooperative as a mean of generating subsidiary income is a realistic option for women. In villages, different from the Hebron city centre and other enclave urban centres in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the identification of women with the domestic sphere as economically dependent wives is still the norm. Working for a women's cooperative gives a justified, culturally approved reason to leave the home although mostly once in a while to collect materials, bring finished work, get pay checks, attend trainings or simply chat.

Wafa (60), who stitches embroidery with her daughters and sisters-in-law as a group of six women working from home, suggested, 'Embroidery means being busy as we cannot go out (interview, 2017)'. She laughs while she admits that it is really hard for them to have mobility beyond home (a public persona). The dark humour bridges over the pain of feeling stuck and the joy of making secrets public knowing that you are not alone in your troubles. Darya (35), a mother of six children, disclosed a similar gendered woe of not being able to move freely intertwined with the joy of having something that 'breaks' the routine. 'I would love to work, but my husband is very jealous and my daughter is sick [kidney failure]. Still, embroidery breaks the routine. All day I cook, I clean the house, I take care of the children and embroidery is the only thing that breaks that routine. I learnt how to do it when I was 10 from my mother.' Darya is one of the oldest members of the cooperative who is very talented in embroidery. Faryal (co-founder) mentioned several times how much she would love her to come and work full time. Darya is originally from the village and was raised in Jordan, moved back to the village at the age of seventeen when she married her cousin. During my fieldwork, she also became a good friend to me. In my frequent visits to her house, we talked about life in Jordan, how she used to be free to go wherever she wanted and studied. Darya loved her husband dearly, yet she regretted that she got married at an early age and did not stay in Jordan.

In addition to being a break from domestic duties, the intellectual engagement with embroidery such as designing and receiving trainings helps women boost their self-esteem. Generating income and looking after one's family is a source of pride that usually only men enjoy in the village. Therefore, partaking in the reproduction of life outside of the walls of the

home and earning some money grant women potentia. Yusra (47), a mother of 10 children, lives in a nearby village with her sick husband who cannot work full-time. She is one of the sixteen women who would not be working at all if there were no cooperative. When I asked her what changed since she started working and how it affected her life, she said: 'I do not need to ask for money from my husband. If I want to go somewhere or buy something, I can do it by myself. My income also helps me cover my living expenses. But I have a big family, 10 kids and a husband, so working part-time does not cover everything.' Another woman who worked from home suggested that her personality changed after she started doing embroidery: 'I stopped being dependent on my husband. I have become independent. I don't ask anyone to give me money. If I am sick, I can go to the doctor by myself. It made me strong. Embroidery means improving my personality (interview, 2017).' Aysa (26), who is one of the youngest members of the cooperative and married with two kids, speaks with confidence about her appreciation. Her husband used to work in Israel in the construction sector without legal permission, so he has been jailed like many other men from the village. Since he is in the prison, Aysa first moves in with her in-laws, then moves to her own flat. Her sole income is the embroidery and throughout the interview, she seems so happy to be involved with the cooperative: 'I have not finished high school but I am earning my own money. I recently got carpets for my house,' she said proudly.

Women can use such subsistence income to cover their personal expenses without having to ask men for money. Some of them spend it on their daughters' schooling expenses. Female children usually receive less attention, so it is important that mothers can contribute to their daughters' education and future plans. There was a consensus among the women that they did not want their daughters, the next generations, to share the same fate with them. They want them to do better, have better futures. The day Darya got her pay check, for instance, we went to one of the few clothing shops in the village from where she got clothes for her eldest daughter a few months ago when she started university. To be able to do so, Darya opened a credit account in the shop where she bought things in advance and paid in instalments as she made money. When I asked the women how working for the cooperative affected their life, many stated that they made use of their income to provide a better future for their daughters. 'I started to earn money. Money helps with many things (interview 2017).' 'I helped with my children's university education. I also became independent (ibid).' Among the twenty five employees that I talked to, one woman used the income she generated by embroidery making as a step to start up her own project and was saving to open a bookstore in another village. In rural Hebron where the gender division of labour is almost

absolute and where women remain predominantly dependent on men, stitching embroidery provides an opportunity to generate income, allowing potential to manoeuvre around patriarchy. Such slight subversions in the deeply patriarchal gender norms go against the grain, against the norm that teaches women that their values, needs, skills, desires and dreams are not as important as men's. In the Spinozist sense, it increases Palestinian women's capacity to be affected by each other and to affect, to have a say in their life captured by patriarchy and occupation.

Whilst I was designing this project, I had questions related to the relationship between embroidery (as a cultural product) and the cultural reproduction of Palestinian identity. Findings of the fieldwork suggest that ambivalent meanings get stuck to the embroidered handcraft depending on women's age and political consciousness. The cultural production of Palestinian heritage was a common theme raised during the interviews I conducted with the women in their 50s. Ten women stated that they learnt how to stitch embroidery from their mothers and they saw it as part of Palestinian cultural heritage, an art form symbolizing the richness and resilience of Palestinian traditions. Four of them also mentioned the different meanings attached to the use of different patterns and colours. The figure below shows Aysa, a Bedouin woman invited to the cooperative to give traditional rug-making trainings. During the interview, she said to me:

I am the only one left in my village that knows how to do this. This makes me feel so sad because it is a tradition. It is our culture. I started doing it at my home to keep the tradition alive. I am not from this village, my village is one hour away from here. Women in Hebron heard from people that I know how to do rugs, so they invited me to teach other women (interview 2017).



Figure 30 Handmade Palestinian Rugs, Village, 2018.

As Aysa suggested, older generations are more tempted to link handcrafting to Palestinian heritage, therefore it is important to hand it down to the next generations. All the women I spoke to learnt embroidery from a female family member, from their mothers, grandmother or mothers-in-law. ‘I learnt embroidery from my grandmother. Embroidery is art. We need to protect Palestinian heritage’ (Rauda, 47). ‘Embroidery is like art for me. I am happy that I can earn money by doing art’ (Maryam, 37). ‘Embroidery means income to me first. Also, I like it in the same way that I like the land. Embroidery has roots in our lives (interview 2017)’ (Wafa, 60).

The oldest full-time employee of the cooperative, Umm-Ahmed (Ahmed’s mother), a 55-year-old divorced woman living with his oldest son, Ahmad, and his wife, taught embroidery to her bride, Ruba. Of course, it is not just a tradition but also a convenient opportunity that enables Ruba to generate income alongside her homecare duties. During the interview, Ruba told me that she held a beautician certificate and wanted to open her beauty shop in future. Like Ruba, many other mid-age/young women that work from home see embroidered handcrafts more of a job opportunity than of an intentional act of cultural

resistance/preservation. Four of my interlocutors suggested that embroidery was ‘a hobby and a little income.’

As part of this commodification, they embroidered ‘Make Apartheid History’ tote bags without necessarily knowing what apartheid means. As one interlocutor acknowledged the change over the meanings of stitching embroidery: ‘Embroidery is linked to the heritage of Palestine. In past, there were only embroidered dresses and blankets, but today we are making new designs like bags, purses and so on. It is also an income (interview 2017).’ Whether it be taking roots in Palestine or benefiting from your hobby, there could always be unintended, public consequences of seemingly private acts as the content (and circulation) of the action is not always reducible to the spaces that acts take place (Staeheli, 1996). Women from the villages of Hebron who endure very strict patriarchal norms that confine them home stitch ‘Women can do anything’ on small purses, which is one of those acts with public and political consequences.



Figure 31 "Women Can Do Anything" Purses, Cooperative, (07/01/2018)

For the women from the village, the cooperative is the only everyday public space of contact outside of the home as they cannot go to coffee houses, a favourite gathering space for men.³³ The cooperative indeed provides *a space of contact* where women can socialize and make new friends. Imagining joyful encounters as ‘ripples in the water’ and in the spirit of Sara Ahmed who grounded feminism ‘as the quiet ways we might have of not holding

³³ See ((Reuters, 2011)

onto things that diminish us' in the struggle for more bearable worlds, I elaborate on the cooperative as an affirmative place where women can meet, gather, all in all, exist in relation to other women (2017: 1).

Exploring Spaces of Contact: The Cooperative

As an intentionally collectivized space, the embroidery cooperative in the village provides women with the very much-needed material conditions of contact; a place that they can come together outside of the culturally accepted forms of gathering. I discussed the primary legitimate forms of occupying public space for women (see 1.3). In addition to the gender-segregated public space and limited congruous places especially in the villages of Hebron, the cooperative stands as a *space of contact* in women's lives. It is a place to encounter others, share stories, embrace joy and laughter, cook, work and produce together. In doing so, the cooperative provides a spatial shelter where joyful encounters that increase women's capacity to endure can take place. It is an affirmative rather than a restrictive place unlike the rest of the village.

By the time I volunteered for the cooperative, *Women in Hebron* had two full-time employees; one shopkeeper and several members on the board. The rest of the members, approximately 100 women, work from home by producing embroidered cultural artefacts while generating subsidiary income. During my fieldwork, I interviewed 24 women who work from home alongside the full-time employees, three board members and the founder of the cooperative. Based on the interviews conducted and my field notes, this section attempts to provide contextually and bibliographically situated portraits of the women that make space in the cooperative.



Figure 32 Interview, Cooperative (22/12/2017)

One of the tasks I was asked to help with was the fair trade application process. Part of the application process involved conducting interviews with selected women (by the director), and my job was to prepare, record, transcribe and file up the notes for the application. As women started to come in groups (from the same neighbourhood, relatives or friends), the cooperative became a crowded, cheerful and unexpected place than it usually was. And the more space was filled with the presence of women, the more it communicated the ‘affective inheritance.’ In her inspirational writings on the role of sensation in producing counter feminist knowledge/s, Ahmed suggests that affective inheritance is about ‘how our own struggles to make sense of realities that are difficult to grasp become part of a wider struggle, a struggle to be, to make sense of being’ (2017, 20). Surrounded by a Palestinian flag and embroidered Palestine maps, dresses, pieces of fabric and empty tea glasses, the first round of interviews was a time travel to the good old days when the cooperative did not exist even as an idea, yet women were gathering to stitch embroidery at Faryal’s house, mostly in the evenings after the daily dramas of family life eased off and children were put to sleep. In the evenings, the women who lived nearby Faryal’s house could participate the embroidery-making gatherings. It was a moment of joyful content and nostalgia to remember those days that continued almost a year. They neither were selling products nor knew that their handcrafted work would be part of a larger project and collective work in future. Faryal says:

‘I kept everything we made in suitcases. Everywhere was full of bags at home. I had the idea of a women’s cooperative, but the conditions were not mature enough to initiate a project; my children were too small and I didn’t have a chance to work outside of the home. My mother-in-law was giving me so much pain (interview, 2017).’ As Faryal acknowledges, the cooperative came to life in relation to the material affordances such as child-care, spatial arrangements and intra-familial negotiations especially between the different generations of women who were granted asymmetrical power positions and affective inheritance. Here, by affective inheritance, I refer to the past experiences and lived relations that not only Faryal but also her husband brings to the present. Faryal, during the 1st intifada, was engaged with activism and participated in women’s organizations that delivered vocational and health trainings. As important as her knowledge of grassroots organizing, her husband’s reputation and prestige in the community as an ex-comrade who served 13 years in the Israeli prison for the Palestinian cause give Faryal more room and skills to initiate this project.

In the second round of interviews, I had the chance to gather more insights into the shared history of the cooperative. Not so long, only three years ago, six women in their early twenties used to work for the cooperative on a full-time basis. Learning this struck my attention as it represented a different profile from the employees we had at that moment as well as the women who worked from home and occasionally came to the cooperative. The limited participation of the younger generations (younger than 30) deserves a moment of pause to elaborate in my writing. I wondered where the younger generation of women was, what they did and why they were not more active in the maintenance of this women-only space. I knew many of them personally (mostly through family gatherings). I draw on our intimate encounters and the emotional geography of the village in the previous chapters (see chapters 3&4). Yet, I did not get to spend time with them in the cooperative, so I asked, why are they no longer working with us? A bit surprised by my question perhaps expecting me to guess better, Faryal said, ‘They all quitted when they got married. The husbands don’t want them to work (personal communication, 2017).’

Faryal and Fatma recall those days with nostalgia, with the yearning for the long hours spent at the cooperative, working hard to establish the foundation, cooking and eating meals together and having fun over the daily dramas of life. I was also able to get a sense of the joyful moments when the women came in groups for the interview process, so the cooperative got more crowded than it usually was. Each group, 3-5 women who worked together and/or relatives or friends from the neighbourhood, brought a unique dynamism; different memories, problems and sources of knowledge in life. To give an example, there

was a group of women from another village in their 50s whom Faryal met fifteen years ago when she and Sumayya, let me call her the group leader, shared a hospital room for five days and became friends. Sumayya said to me, ‘Do you know how we met? Faryal had a surgery and I was in the hospital, too. We stayed together in the room. We were really sick but we never got bored. We had so much fun together in the hospital (interview, 2017).’ Then she looked at Faryal for her confirmation, ‘Right?’ The cooperative came to life five years after their first encounter. Faryal knew that Sumayya enjoyed embroidery and called her to see whether she would be interested in participating. After a while, Sumayya invited some friends from her village to join and this was how the group was formed in that village. As Faryal and Sumayya lived in different villages, it would have been difficult for them to keep in touch and meet frequently if there were no cooperative in the first place. The cooperative opens up space where women can cultivate joy, be invited to and invite others, inhabit place and relationships (beyond the family circles) as they form contacts at the cooperative and beyond.

The second group of women I would like to mention is ‘grandmothers.’ By grandmother, I refer to the women over 50s who represent the core members of the cooperative. Among the 25 members that I interviewed, 11 women would classify in this group as gendered bodies acquire more social mobility and decision-making power as they get older. There are several entangled reasons for such autonomy that comes with growing old. The honour codes dictate that a woman must protect her virginity and seclude her sexuality; her virtuous modesty in return protects the family name and dignity.



Figure 33 Grandmothers, from different villages of Hebron (22/12/2017)

I have provided many examples throughout the thesis where the family elders, that is, fathers, brothers and extended male and female relatives including mothers-in-law are responsible for protecting the honour of young female members of the clan.³⁴ There are harsh restrictions on the mobility and socialization of an unmarried woman introduced by her family. Depending on the level of the conservativeness of a given family, schooling (especially after secondary education) and working outside in almost any activity that involves the public presence of a gendered body can be an issue that needs to be negotiated within the family and is subject to the approval of males.

Marriage, on the other hand, is the most remarkable life event, the rite of passage to womanhood. After marriage, the control over women's body and decision-making passes to the husband and his family. A married, mid-aged woman is less of a threat to bring shame on the family name as she is less sexually desired (in the eyes of men). That means a slight

³⁴ There is a certain hierarchy at play here. For instance, if the father of the household were no longer alive, the eldest brother would be in charge. Uncles (from the father side) and elderly female members would share the responsibility.

loosening of the patriarchal norms that restrain women's mobility in public spaces. The grandmothers, therefore, are at the stage of their life where they can afford to work for the cooperative as they have fewer caring duties (their children have grown up) and reproductive tasks at home (daughters and brides are lending a hand) and less social restrictions on their mobility.

In the material absence of and cultural stigma around public congregation places open to women and of potentially 'productive urban conviviality' (Rishbeth and Rogaly, 2018), the cooperative remains peculiarly crucial in women's social life. During the interview I conducted with the logo consultant, a 50-year-old Christian American man married to a local who has volunteered for *Women in Hebron* since 2007, I learned that even at the times of intensified conflict and Israeli closure, the women continued coming to the cooperative.

In 2015, there was tension in the air again, and many people believed that it could be the beginning of a 3rd Intifada. I did one of my usual trips from Bethlehem to visit the coop. We are only allowed to come to the checkpoint at the entrance of the village by public transportation. Then, you would wait at the checkpoint for an unknown period and could catch another car into the village only if you passed the control and granted entry. It was difficult to find a driver to give you a lift. When I finally arrived at the coop, it was full of women inside. The women kept coming even though there was no work. It is because they could share information and check up on each other or people in the village. It was then I realized how important it is in women's social life. The cooperative is a social space if nothing more (interview, 2017).



Figure 34 A day of cooking in the cooperative (15/12/2017)

My observations also run parallel to the logo consultant's remarks. As a collectively maintained gathering space for women, the cooperative is full of storytelling, cooking, joking and laughter. Space is essential to embrace joyful agency, a creative capacity for endurance and action as it provides the material conditions of its emergence. In this regard, the cooperative stands as a space of contact in women's lives; a place to encounter one another, chat, exchange stories and laugh. The chatter sometimes turns into a therapeutic advice-giving session where the problems in women's lives resulting from patriarchal social norms, the difficulty they go through in marriage, especially in their relationship with mothers-in-law and husbands, could openly be discussed. The women try to comfort each other and offer some insightful solutions. During our conversations with the founder, I brought up the social aspect of the cooperative:

H: As I understand, this is also a place to meet and ask for advice. I could not help but realize that the women ask you many questions about their personal lives.

F: Yes, when they need help from me, we speak about problems. There was another woman, for example, beaten by her brother, and I directed her to somewhere she can stay. I have connections with women's organizations as well,

so I can advise them in case of need. Sometimes they just need someone to listen to them. Then you can tell them what to do.

In the cooperative, there are tea making and kitchen facilities open to everyone's use as well as a playroom for kids. The women who are not full-time employees and work from home come to bring the finished embroidery, pick up the order/materials and attend the sewing machine training. They also sometimes stop by the cooperative on the way to somewhere else. Not only the members of the cooperative but also their friends, sisters, daughters do come and spend time together. That social aspect of the space gives women a chance to meet with people beyond their kinship circles and make friends over a cup of tea.

One day, a high school friend of Nevin, the younger full-time employee, stopped by the cooperative after doing the grocery. I was in the office trying to sort out a funding application when I heard two women almost screaming, 'Hey Mecnuna [crazy], how are you?' The excitement of two old friends' reunion was so loud that it urged me to go out to the hallway to check what was going on. At the same speed of sound, I was introduced to a mid-age clamorous visitor whose two boys had already found the way to the playroom, so I could only wave at them. I learnt that she was 32 and married to a well off 60-year-old man, and Lena and she did not get to see each other as often as they would like to. Lena set to make some tea for us while I was trying to catch up with the questions of our unexpected visitor and satisfy her curiosity on the issues of my marital status, my purpose of visiting Palestine and whether I enjoyed it there. Once the tea was ready, Mecnuna and Nevin enjoyed an enthusiastic conversation in the big room in the entrance that I could hear their jokes and laughter from my office in the back of the cooperative. Mecnuna, whose actual name I never got to learn, stayed for over an hour and left saying that she needed to head back home and start preparing the dinner.



Figure 35 Playroom. Cooperative (15/12/2017)

The playroom in the figure above, made possible by international grants, is of crucial importance as women usually bring their kids. In the absence of spaces of sociality outside the home and patriarchal restrictions on mobility, I foregrounded *Women in Hebron* as part of the political struggle over space, making room for women's agency. During the three months I spent in the cooperative, I asked the women questions about work, embroidery, life at home and in general. We talked about if they liked making embroidery and in what ways it empowered them. We also discussed different patterns of embroidery, how the traditional motifs and colours could be applied to contemporary designs. They could easily tell, for example, the difference between embroidered works that were produced in the different parts of Palestine. We drank several cups of tea over hours-long conversation fed by jokes. Those collective moments of joy were the times we felt more capable in life.

Beyond the Resistance vs. Resilience: *Sumud* and Joyful Agency

Alongside the stories of *womenpotentia* stitched to embroidery that I was amazed by throughout my fieldwork, I also listened to many testimonies of how women endured the silencing; the stories that are harder to tell without feeling like a victim yet must be spoken nonetheless. I gained insights into how women's right to education and work got blocked,

early marriages and child brides, the absolute power family elders held on women's mobility and decision-making, violence against women especially after marriage, forced sex, the lack of access to contraceptive and healthcare. Besides the bittersweet ways in which patriarchy captured women's lives, I also witnessed how the occupation was an underlying condition and that the landscape enclosed the intimate (see chapters 3 and 4). Palestinian women's bodies are weaponized against them when they want to put the occupation down; they are beaten at the protests, harassed and imprisoned, dehumanized and humiliated during house raids, stopped to be searched at the checkpoints to the extent that some are forced to give birth there, made unable to reach the hospital on time (Hawari, 2019; see Long, 2006). They remain devoid of land rights and access to daily pleasures of gardening, farming and caring for the historic olive trees 'that have seen it all' as the saying goes.

The list goes on for sure, yet the aim of this chapter is to look at the cooperative as a joyful space opening up collective capacities rather than centring the woeful affects of occupation and patriarchy. In the spirit of connecting the Spinozan currents to Palestine (see Interlude 3 for further discussion), I wonder how we can think about the link between joy, as an increase in one's capacity to affect and be affected, and space making. Embracing the insights offered by Spinoza (1994), Deleuze (2001; 2013) and McNay (2000), this section dwells on the politics of joyful agency in tracing the unexpected ways of affirming life in rural Palestine. I argue that joyful encounters, the creative capacity they grant the subject, are as essential/powerful as the processes of subjection and domination in exploring the intimate modes of dwelling. In order to understand Palestinian women's struggle and endurance, I insist that we need to go beyond the existing literature on gendered resistance/resilience in Palestine.

The existing literature on Palestinian resilience has looked at the household economy (Kuttab, 2006), familial relations (Harker, 2009, 2010a, 2012), cultural and aesthetic production (Peteet, 1996; Richter-Devroe and Salih, 2014) and urban space (Allen, 2008; Harker, 2014b). The literature that has centred Palestinian women's experience, on the other hand, has only done so by entangling conventional socio-political forms that are usually assumed to be structuring communities. These works have examined the role of kin groups and village networks (Naser-Najjab, 2015), household management as steadfastness (Kuttab, 2006), the gendered division of resistance (Peteet, 1994, 1997; Richter-Devroe, 2012b) (Richter-Devroe, 2012), the political subjectification of women and its transformative effects on the already existing gender roles (Peteet, 1992). Julie Peteet (1997), for example, examined how the nationalist formation of women as the maternal icons of the nation, on the

one hand, empowered Palestinian women by validating their political positioning. On the other hand, such gendering of citizenship did not challenge the already existing division of caring labour in Palestinian society, thereby constraining women. What makes a women's embroidery cooperative worthy of scholarly attention is the fact it overflows the gendered burden of resistance.

Alongside the literature on Palestinian steadfastness, feminist scholars written on gender in the Middle East have long attempted to locate resistance and women's agency in confronting social norms (Abu-Lughod, 1990; 2002) and nationalism (Al-Ali and Tas, 2018; Kandiyoti et al., 2000) as well as practising pious Islam (Mahmood, 2012). In line with these discussions, the conceptual challenge of this chapter remains as how to locate Palestinian women's agency interwoven with the question of how to recognize agency in the absence of active resistance. And how to write against reductionist and sensationalistic representations of Muslim and Middle Eastern women who have been stereotyped as in need of to be saved?

Inspired by McNay conceptualization of agency as 'living through embodied potentialities' (2000: 5), I argue that to capture the affirmative and generative aspects of subjecthood, we need to tackle agency as an 'epistemological question,' 'beyond the broader systems, such as family, nation, religion and state' (Sehlikoglu, 2018: 73). Drawing on the Spinozist approach to ethics could provide a conceptual space for us to theorize women's agency as the capacity to endure and maximize joy and, in return, increase their capacity to act. In other words, foregrounding the politics of joyful agency help us move beyond the realms of resistance/resilience and domination (see also Montgomery and Bergman, 2017). It enables us to capture 'aspects of selfhood that escape from the structures, rules, systems, and discursive limits of life but captures imaginations, aspirations, desires, yearnings, and longings' (Sehlikoglu, 2018: 73). I argue that this is what has been missing in the existing literature on gendered lived experiences in Palestine.

In the rest of the section, I will look at the fragments from three women's lives, Aysa (30, divorced), Lena (32, married) and Yara (23, separated) who crossed paths at the cooperative. Aysa was one of the six women who used to work full time at the cooperative when she was in her twenties. As I mentioned earlier, many young women passed by the cooperative after they finished high school/university until they got married, which perhaps stands for a transition period to womanhood. Without meeting Aysa in person, I heard a lot about her life story and personality from others. What made Aysa's story unique was that she refused to quit her job when she got married. Given that her husband promised to let her

work, that was the agreement between them, he unilaterally changed his mind after marriage. Aysa loved the cooperative, and after year-long arguments over her right to work with the husband and his family, she decided to ask for a divorce. Women occasionally brought up her story. Even though many sympathized with her, some also suggested that getting divorced was ‘too much.’ Soon after their break-up, Aysa’s husband got married to another member of the cooperative. I was told that the new wife was ‘okay’ with quitting the job. And just before his second marriage, the husband stopped by the cooperative to tell women there ‘not to cost him a second divorce.’

One day, on my way back to the village from the Hebron city centre, I met with a woman in the service, the shared taxi used only by Palestinians as public transportation (see Harker, 2014b). It was not unusual at all for me to start chatting with the person sitting next to me (mostly women). She left a striking first impression on me as a charming, self-confident woman. We had a brief and entertaining conversation during the twenty-minute ride to the village. By the time, I was quite used to being asked where I was from first. Hearing that I was from Turkey made her smile welcomingly. Like many others, she expressed pleasure to have visitors and wondered whether I liked Palestine. I told her about my voluntary work at the cooperative. She was attending English language courses three times a week in the city. She was not married, therefore, living with her family. She got off the service before me saying that I shall pass her greetings to Faryal, the founder of the cooperative, who apparently was an old friend. I said I would. She insisted that I visit her family’s home and stay for dinner. I said inshallah (if Allah wills). I was alone with my thoughts in the service, thinking that how serendipitous was to meet Aysa finally. More importantly, she seemed happy.

I already introduced Lena earlier who is one of the board members of the cooperative and a mother of six. As Lena described ‘every day for one year she fought for her job.’ Not only her right to work but also her right to education and choose a partner was taken away by her family, therefore, she does not want “her daughters to go through what she has been through” in life. Below is the script from the life story interview that I conducted with her. I decided not to shorten her response as when I told her that I wanted to talk about her life, I did so believing that she could tell her story much better than I could. It was not only her father but also her husband and his family who sabotaged her education:

I was a good student in the school. I was smart. In the summer holiday of 8th grade, I started to have potential grooms, asking for my hand. In the same week, I had eight grooms (suitors). All of the girls that time, you know, used to get engaged and marry at that age. It was normal. My father said you should get married in 1997, when I was 13. I told them, my mum and dad, that I want to continue school, complete my education. My family said, it doesn't work like that, everybody is getting engaged and if you don't get married now, you will lose your chance.

After I married, I wanted to continue my studies but my mother-in-law said no. She said, 'I took you for my son as I wanted you to help me in the house.' Of course, I didn't listen to her. My husband didn't mind me studying at the beginning. He was also leaving for work in the morning and was back very late in the evening so, he didn't mind. In the 10th grade, I had some trouble because of a decision the ministry of education took. The decision said the married girls shouldn't be mixed with unmarried girls in the school as the married ones may open the latter's eyes and encourage them to get married/think about it. So, you are allowed to be married when you are 13 but not allowed to mix with unmarried girls. They didn't say directly no to marriage, but they said, if you get married, you cannot complete your studies.

I finished the 10th grade then, continued with the 11th grade, scientific stream. By the time, I already had my first child, Sama. I remember, once I wanted to take Sama to my mother-in-law's house and she told me: 'The person who wants to go to school takes her kids there.' I would either leave my school or my daughter, so I couldn't study the 11th grade. The headmaster of the school said to me, if you leave, you cannot come back and study the 11th grade again. You can only study the last grade – not allowed to take lessons but study at home and take the final exam to finish high school.

For a year I stayed at home and didn't go to school until my daughter gets a bit older. Then, I decided to go and study the last grade and left Sama with my mother. When I got back to school, I was pregnant to the second one. So, I already didn't study the 11th grade; without any lessons, how am I going pass the

final exam? Some days, I took my books and go to my father's house to study there. Life was hard, a lot of problems. I always remember this day. I never forget:

Once I had a fight with my husband and the next day I had an exam at the school. We fought because he asked for a t-shirt that needed to be cleaned. He needed a t-shirt that was not clean and ready. So, I said, you have other ones to wear. I told him that I had an exam and after that tomorrow I would clean it. He said, no. Now! So, I turned on the washing machine and started washing them as I studied.

When we were both sitting in our bedroom, which is a very small one with a bed, washing machine, TV and table, I studied in the same place. The washing machine was already making a lot of noise, so I asked my husband to turn off the TV. He said, 'if you are studying, it is not my problem. I am watching TV in my bedroom' and he took all my books and put them in the washing machine.

We have the final exam and the trial final exam before the final one. Thank God, I had the trial final exam the next day.

Back then, where was I supposed to get the books again? The ministry used to give only one copy. I felt so sad because I thought I would never be able to find the books again. So, I went out of the house and cried for hours while trying to dry the books by blowing. All the pages stuck to each other, so the pages were ruined, you cannot read anything. I cried a lot but after a while I told myself, I will study even if I lose 10-20 pages. It is ok.

Me: Did you forgive him for doing this?

Lena: No. Not even today (interview, 2018).

Lena mentioned during our conversation that she would fight for her eldest daughter who, by the time, was about to complete high school and take the university entrance exam in a few months. After I left the field, I tried to catch up with the women and learned that Lena's daughter moved to the Northeast part of the West Bank to study pharmaceuticals. She kept her promise and made it possible for her daughter not to go through early marriage and drop the school.

Yara, who is six years older than Lena's daughter, is one of the youngest and most talented members of the cooperative. She suffered physical and emotional abuse during her marriage for six years. Despite her several attempts to leave her husband who repeatedly beat her, she could not as her family, especially her father, refused to provide shelter for her and her son. Yara's family shut their eyes to her suffering to the point that she had a concussion and was hospitalized. Only then, she was allowed to be back at her parental house on the condition that she did not bring her son. By the time I met her, she was not officially divorced but separated, and her husband already married to a second wife. She was trying to get some news about her son from the others in the cooperative whose children went to the same school as her son.

In the surrounding villages, the cooperative is the only everyday space of contact outside of the home as women cannot go to coffee houses, a popular public gathering space for men (see Kreil, 2016). Here, it is important to note that my observations would be more applicable to women from villages in the Hebron district. In the Hebron city centre, things could slightly differ regarding having access to higher education, employment and public space.

Here, I would like to ask some questions in relation to the life stories of Aysa, Lena and Yara; how can we understand the silences, dis/engagements and acceptances, in other words, the patriarchal bargaining of these women without also ignoring the socio-political and economic context of the prolonged occupation? For instance, how can we truly capture Yara's inability to escape violence until she was severely injured and traumatized without taking into consideration the wider context of settler colonialism and Israel's constant cracking down on the feminist anti-colonial women's movements in Palestine?

It is true that for Aysa, Lena, Yara and many others, homespaces are bitter and unsafe but leaving home does not guarantee a place of safety and wellbeing, either. The complex multi-layered oppressions of Israeli settler colonial occupation and patriarchal publicness make women calculate risks as they choose different battles. Given the border surveillance, the fact that women cannot access education and health services safely and the Palestinian economy made dependent on international donors and strictly controlled by Israel, how can Palestinian women leave their homes? The lack of self-determination that Palestinian people have suffered since Nakba cannot be dissociated from Palestinian women's struggle for autonomy over their bodies and futures.

Aysa's decision to ask for a divorce and choosing work over marriage and social acceptance cannot be understood independent of the empowerment she cultivated in the

cooperative as she got to contact with women and generate subsidiary income. Lena, on the other hand, did not consider ending her marriage yet kept fighting for both herself and her daughters' right to work and life-making decisions. Her resistance resulted in years-long cultivation, which was interrupted by extended family members, neighbours and other women in the village, yet also enabled by her willpower and support she received through being a board member of the cooperative. Yara, on the other hand, was not able to escape but endured violence for years. Her family's lack of support and dismissal left her devoid of the material conditions to leave her abusive husband. Palestinians' lack of right to self-determination and Israel's relentless cracking down on feminist activists and organizations remain the biggest obstacles to women's access to support and care beyond the family. Embroidery and making art were the only source of enjoyment that contributed to Yara's self-esteem and healing, and the cooperative was a unique place she could feel safe enough to disclose the violence. She, for the first time, spoke to Faryal about her husband's abusive behaviours, who then took her to the hospital. She was severely hit by the head and needed treatment. Only after this incident where the abuse became public, Yara's father agreed to the separation and let her be back home.

I argue that we cannot fully grasp Yara's silence (not disclosing the domestic violence) and endurance (not leaving her husband) without paying attention to the social isolation, lack of support and economic dependence she had been through. Similarly, Lena never mentioned that she considered leaving her husband yet tried to increase her capacity to act within the existing relations of dominance. Aysa, on the other hand, through the transformation in her sense of self-empowered by the joyful encounters that took place in the cooperative, changed the course of her life. It is hard to imagine that she would have asked for a divorce if she had never involved with the cooperative in the first place. Here, instead of treating these stories as leaving/staying, divorce/housebound, resistance/resilience, docility/freedom, I see them as the continuous lines of increase/decrease in one's capacity to act.

In addition to providing a space of contact where intimacies take place, I further suggest exploring the cooperative as 'a space of unlearning' patriarchy. The patriarchal norms rooted deeply in social life put forward that the primary concern for women should be the household; raising kids, cleaning, cooking and looking after their families (Kandiyoti, 1988). Women's labour and care outside of home/family are devalued as long as there is a male breadwinner in the family. Also, women from villages face great obstacles in access to education for girls. The high unemployment rates and the economic apartheid imposed by the

settler colonial state harden life across the West Bank.³⁵ When I asked Darya whether she would prefer a full-time job instead of working from home, she said: ‘There is not enough jobs even for men, how can I work full time?’ Her answer gives vivid clues about the perceived gender hierarchies in the organization of labour.



Figure 36 Darya is making embroidery at home, Village, 2018.

These hierarchies are sometimes the reason why male family members unwillingly consent to the participation of women in work life. For example, Fatma’s husband used to work as a construction worker, and after an accident, he had to stay at home for six months and could not work. They had already been arguing over Fatma running the shop, and after her husband’s incident, she negotiated her work as something ‘not out of will but a necessity’ as the family was in need of money. She told her husband: ‘Halas [enough], if you go and bring money, I will stop working. Otherwise, you have to stop complaining about this.’

The majority of women work from home primarily for two reasons. First, their husbands do not allow them to work outside. Secondly, they have several kids that require permanent care. Usually, they have both reasons. It is also important to acknowledge Palestinian women’s desire to have a big family and look after the home. Unlike in the liberal feminist discourse, the family is considered as richness and not as a ‘mark of lack of

³⁵ For a discussion on the Israel policies and the logic of economic apartheid, see (Eid and August 27, 2017)

independence.’ Giving up on one’s career for her family/kids does not necessarily get attached to negative connotations. Women from villages are proud of their big clean houses, kids and crowded families. These were the first things they excitedly wanted to share with me during our conversations. The house is not where one gets ‘trapped,’ rather for many of my interlocutors, ‘the house is the most important space and ownership,’ symbolizing spiritual richness. That, of course, does not prevent the violence of ‘public’ patriarchy from spilling into the home.

At this juncture, the cooperative functions as a space of unlearning where the effects of patriarchy are felt and experienced less, the contact/encounter enabling women to become capable in new ways. Women are not supposed to let their hair down in public. They expect to perform modesty and avoid speaking and laughing loudly. The cooperative, on the other hand, is the space where they collectively do all the things that are otherwise troublesome. It is a place of potential where women can cultivate joy, hope and solidarity which otherwise would remain foreclosed.

The process of getting in touch and doing intimacy makes space inhabitable again. Here, I purposefully use the term intimacy, first of all, so as to refer to the intimate geographies or, what Lauren Berlant calls ‘modes of relating’ which involves ‘proximity, solidarity, collegiality, friendship, the light touch and intermittent ones [...]’ (Berlant, 2011a: 687). She uses the term to apprehend ‘a web of affects that connects people and which, through such connection, both creates and allows for imagination of a different “habitable material present, or world’ (Salih, 2016: 3). In doing so, women become more capable in new and unforeseen ways. There is, for example, a woman who decided to ask for a divorce from her abusive husband after five years of working for the coop. Many others attended meetings with consulate members, local governors or travelled abroad as members of *Women in Hebron*. More importantly, generating subsidiary income and producing embroidery help them feel useful, productive and valuable. During the interviews, there was one woman who signposted her heart, cheerfully saying, ‘my money is here’ as some women carried small wallets hanged under their clothes. Many women expressed specific concerns and investment in their daughters’ future saying that ‘it is too late for me, but I wish a better future for my girl.’

Conclusion

I raise the question of in what ways a Spinozist approach to space and life that proposes joyful encounters can help us theorize the cooperative. The concept of *potentia* introduced by Spinoza urges an analysis of affirmative aspects of power and politics. *Potentia* refers to the capacity to endure, ‘[...] carving out favourable space, and to nourish one’s self in the face of hardship’ (Moss et al., 2018: 55). I draw on a Spinozist, affirmative analysis of Palestinian women’s endurance because it helps me track the generative traces of power where subjects may (or may not) take an active role in redirecting the flow and making room for change. We have come to know such ‘stepping into the flow’ as agency in social theory (Moss et al., 2018: 56). In line with these theoretical discussions, this chapter explored the locations and limitations of joyful agency where Palestinian women resisted, negotiated and sometimes accommodated patriarchy and occupation.

Women in Hebron, as a women-initiated counteract of claiming space, moved my analysis beyond the binary of resistance and resilience, and made me pay attention to affirmative and joyful ways of space making in rural Palestine. The cooperative is produced by the effect of people, not by a class of professionals or NGO workers. It is important to note here that unlike many other projects in Palestine mushroomed in the post-Oslo, the cooperative was not enabled or sustained by any foreign aids, only made use of international funding bodies to improve its material conditions, i.e. playroom, computers, years after it was founded (Meari, 2017). Moreover, it stands as a testament to the political potentials of those from below to create a world/place where they can fit in. The fact that it is not a project of a political agenda imposed by political parties allows the cooperative to remain open to the participation of diverse groups of women. It also subverts the intergenerational power relations between women. In the village, home appears as a convenient and mostly the only social-culturally justified space of conviviality that women can gather. Yet, the cooperative subverts the normative public/male vs. private/female divide by collapsing them into one semi-public women-only space of work/contact. In doing so, it bears feminist potential; a feminist becoming where new collective attachments and arrangements can be cultivated to transform human relationships.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

There can be no revolutionary actions [...] where the relations between people and groups are relations of exclusion and segregation. Groups must multiply and connect in ever new ways, freeing up territorialities for the construction of new social arrangements. Theory must therefore be conceived as toolbox, [...] we must learn to construct tools for conviviality through the use of counterfoil research (Seem, 2013: 8).

This thesis contemplates on the possibilities of spatial justice in a settler colonial context (Tuck and McKenzie, 2015), particularly through exploring the topologies and geographies of joy and intimacy in rural Palestine. Following the Spinozian insights on affects and change, I foregrounded a relational approach to understanding Palestinian women's space making practices whilst attending to topological questions of connectivity, proximity, trust and durable bonds (among women), unlearnings (of patriarchy) as well as care and nurturing (amidst the occupation). I not only explored the landscape of endurance (chapter 3) and intimate spaces at home and beyond (chapter 4) but also looked at more experimental spacings initiated by Palestinian women in the form of semi-public autonomous spaces (chapter 5). The thesis follows the suggestion that geography 'should be about creating the space to experiment' and 'critically analys[ing] those experiments' (Pickerill, 2017: 255).

In this spirit, the thesis looked at a women's embroidery cooperative where inter-generational and cross-political relationships can flourish among women. I argue that joyful spaces of contact, in a Spinozist sense, enable women to affirm life, build friendships and increase their capacity to generate empowering responses to intersecting power structures. In doing so, the cooperative and the profound sense of privacy and self-esteem it grants to women undo occupation and patriarchy which otherwise remain foreclosed as a potential. So this thesis shall be read as a reflection on the link between Spinozian approaches, affective encounters and women's effort to inhabit intimate spaces in Palestine. In the following sections, I will highlight the key contributions I provided in each chapter with regard to my overarching questions:

1. How do Palestinian women from villages maintain and make sense of the spaces they inhabit?
2. How do they bargain with and get by the double bind of patriarchy and occupation?

Key Contributions

Geographical studies that have looked at Palestine/Israel have generally done so by focusing on occupation, how it has been infused in every aspect of life, how it had produced and maintained certain relations of power as well as of space (Falah, 2003, Graham, 2002, Halper, 2000, Weizman, 2007). ‘The internal dynamics, stresses, and contradictions of the social groups and communities within which people live out their lives, or the sensibilities and subjectivities of individuals as they negotiate their mundane existence away from the barricades have not received much serious attention from most researchers’ (Taraki, 2006: xi). Throughout the thesis, I situated an ethnographically informed inquiry into political geography in order to challenge stereotypical and dangerously reifying discourses on Palestinian spaces as the container of violence and conflict.

Writing against the simple contrast of the colonizer/the colonized, the public/the private, the geopolitical/the personal, the thesis shifts the lenses of analysis by drawing out empirical and topological connections between space, place and gender. Toward this critical engagement with topographical/geopolitical interpretations of Palestine, I proposed three interrelated analytical concepts (see Interludes 1, 2 and 3) of endurance, intimacy and joy in order to explore the affective and gendered topologies. Before I dive into examining the theoretical advancement that each chapter has afforded, I would first review my take on topology as an analytical concept that helped bridge my relational and interdisciplinary take on gendered spacings in Palestine.

Much of the scholarship on topology conceptualized the term on a very abstract level (2011a, Allen, 2011b, Jacobs and Malpas, 2013, Malpas, 2012, Paasi, 2011) in a way that its theoretical possibilities remain unattended. As Allen suggests, topologic sensibility to space demands us to rethink scale and territory in a less rigid manner, so the power of things is imagined less through shape, size, distance and more through the connections that hold them together (Allen, 2011b: 284–85). ‘In this landscape, the topological twists are exceptional in many respects, a jolt to our settled topographic imaginations, but not so far removed perhaps from a prosaic geography in which relations of presence and absence are routinely reconfigured so that the gap between “here” and “there” is measured [...] more by the social relationships, exchanges and interactions involved’ (ibid: 284).

By conducting ethnographic research on gendered spacings that account for the intimate and affective registers of the political fabric of everyday endurance in Palestine, the thesis contributes to wider scholarly discussions on topology (see also Interlude 2). The four

chosen sites of this project –the Old City of Hebron, village, the cooperative (in the village) and homespaces– complicate the autonomy of scale and vertical geopolitics that are usually associated with Palestinian spaces. From privately imagined and feminized spacings of home to male publicness, the thesis showed that the interwoven spacings of patriarchy, endurance and agential capacities of women from the village could not be fully explored through topographic lenses. Different layers/doings of endurance, intimacy and joy traverse clear-cut topographies, making allowances for relationality, co-constitutiveness and heterogeneity of gendered spacings in Palestine (Paasi, 2011). Topological thinking helps us understand how spatial intimacies are inhabited, maintained and occasionally negotiated by women through cultivating different social relations, modes of attachment and dwelling. The whole thesis, in that regard, shall be read as the intimate topologies of rural Palestine that the chapters provided a portrait of.

This lack of attention to intimate registers and the neglect of the relational nature of space in geographical literature on Palestine oriented my theoretical focus. Within such shifting of lenses toward topologies (see also Introduction and Literature Review that grounds the suggested shift), each chapter weaves the threads of empirical analysis through a unique concept (endurance, intimacy and joy) which the interludes discuss the key terms of and the literature that feed into. In the rest of the chapter, I will dwell on these concepts and their theoretical refreshments for the literature on gender and affect in Palestine alongside the production of space.

Landscape of Endurance

Chapter 3 engages with the landscape of endurance thinking through how spaces fissured by the violence of colonization and patriarchy are made inhabitable by women. In so doing, it looks at the question of spatial and social sustenance and perseverance, the continuation of inhabitancy in a fragmented settler colonial geography. I dwell on the everyday strategies, decisions, accommodations, negotiations, and remakings of life under occupation.

I propose endurance instead of resistance/resilience to acknowledge the ‘impasse’ that stretches out the present time, an everydayness in crisis that demands constant effort to create a mode of living on (Povinelli, 2011). Endurance allowed me to examine the affective and emotional spacings whilst doing the hard empirical work of examining the ways in which

occupation and patriarchy was not only a heterogonous lived reality but also an intimate encounter with the landscape.

Bearing in mind the spaces of endurance, then, I put three clusters of research on affect (Joronen and Griffiths, 2019, 2019; Richter-Devroe and Salih, 2014; Salih, 2016), sumud (Hammami, n.d.; Kelly, 2008; Meari, 2014; Quiquivix, 2014; Sinno, 2013) and mobility (Allen, 2008; Bishara, 2015; Harker, 2014b; Marshall, 2015; Peteet, 2017) into a conversation as they tackle the collective stories of the difficult predicament of life and perseverance. Yet, I expanded these literatures by re-centring the role of gender and landscape in shaping the everyday modes of agency in Palestine.

Chapter 3 shows that Palestinians as a community do not hold an inherent capacity to seek venues for hope which help them recover life under occupation. Rather, I suggested treating endurance as a convergence encapsulating a wider range of agential capacities, including gendered ones. At this entangled merging point of power and resistance, Palestinian women endure the capacity to unsettle, in other words, hang on their capacity to subvert (as in the case of enjoyment, dance and music) or remain silent (as the moment of tacitness have shown) (see also Junka, 2006; Kelly, 2008; Khalili, 2016). Unlike sumud, endurance as the convergence of gendered affects may lack a political strategy yet still holds theoretical forbearance as it conditions the modes of agency and space-making that go beyond the binary of victim vs. agent, resistance vs. resilience. The landscape of endurance treats the occupation less as something to talk about but more as something to live through and act upon, manoeuvre around and sometimes just ignore to endure one's surroundings.

Intimacy of Homespaces

Whilst discussing the analytical and political underpinnings of intimacy (Interlude 2), the following chapter 4 reflects on the intimate topologies of women's spacings that crosscut the contours of public and private sentiments. Forefronting intimacy in the analysis of bittersweet homespaces allowed me to understand how Palestinian women made space across scales and sites (Mountz and Hyndman, 2006; Nagar, 2002; Wright, 2009). I showed that women's spaces were constituted, maintained and negotiated through multiple social relations, different modes of attaching and dwelling beyond the clear-cut distinction of the private/ the public, inside/outside, home/work spaces. Intimacy as an analytical undoing of sustained binaries (Peterson, 2017) encapsulates different modes of relating, belonging, alienation, emotions and bodily encounters. I cared about spatial intimacies that took place at

home as an analytical tool imbued in the realm of the experienced, in the felt and lived intensities, haunting and alignments (Berlant, 1998; A Gordon, 2008b).

Departing from these theoretical contributions, Chapter 4 draws out the ways public patriarchy sneaks into private homespaces, shaping the contours of publicness and privacy in relation to intimate and embedded physical, emotional, cultural and religious locations. In the village, homespaces are deemed appropriate for female presence. At home and beyond, women are expected to engage in reproductive activities in sharp contrast to the vibrant village/city centre, spaces that imagined as public, therefore, the domain of men. In exploring how publicness mediates privacy (Berlant and Warner, 1998), I also examine the relationality of homespaces such as semi-public balconies, rooftops open to the public male gaze, courtyards as spaces of forced intimacy with the occupation forces, living rooms that provide lesser privacy due to unexpected guests and kitchens as breathing spaces amidst the daily burden of reproduction. Then, I argue that home is bittersweet, therefore the intimacies contain a mixture of feelings: happiness and sadness, belonging and alienation, attachment and domination.

My nuanced theorization of Palestinian homespaces embraces the politics of the intimate, and in doing so, contributes to two strands of literature. First, by providing an ethnographic account of the relational nature of Palestinian homes, I expand the limited literature on the cultural geography of Palestine. I argue that Palestinian homes need to be theorised less as by-products of the Israeli occupation that are under attack (Joronen and Griffiths, 2019; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2006) or as resilient spaces that absorb the ever-present shocks of colonization (Harker, 2009, 2012; Kuttab, 2006; Taraki and Giacaman, 2006). Instead, I examined the ways in which the alienating (gender norms) and homemaking (dwellings) intersected in the domain of the intimate.

I also contribute to the scholarship on both critical geographies of home (Blunt, 2005a; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Brickell, 2012; Domosh, 1998, 1998; Gorman-Murray, 2007; McDowell, 2002; Walker, 2002) and the topological thinking of space (Allen, 2011a, 2011b; Awan, 2016; Harker, 2014b; Latham, 2011) by giving an empirically rich account on what difference it makes to grasp gendered spaces in Palestine relationally (Domosh, 1998). Centralising women's experiences at home reveals how Palestinian homespaces uphold gender norms, which may (or may not) provide a sense of privacy. In return, I transgressed the seemingly distinct public and private spaces, which enabled an account of the co-productive relations between the lived experience of privacy and the material arrangement of private spaces.

In understanding the cultural geography of Palestinian homes, intimacy/intimate homespaces fill the gap of attention to affective registers and the neglect of the relational nature of space in the geographical literature on Palestine. Although the emerging literature acknowledged the cultural, affective and gendered registers of Palestinian homespaces, it has only done so in relation to proving resilience in the face of occupation (Harker, 2009, 2010b, 2012; Joronen and Griffiths, 2019; Long, Joanna, 2018; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2006). By offering relational insights into bittersweet homespaces that go beyond the sacred/belonging versus patriarchal confinement, alienation/oppresion versus protection/comfort, I contribute to the critical geographies of home (Blunt, 2005a; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Gorman-Murray, 2006, 2007; Johnson, 2017; Manzo, 2003) that can account for ambiguities of homely spaces (Brickell, 2012).

Joyful Encounters at a Handcraft Cooperative

The literature that has centred the geographies of intimacy shows that family/home is not the only site where care and love flourishes (Berlant, 2011a; Bowlby, 2011; Morrison et al., 2013; Wilkinson, 2014), proving the inter-spatiality of intimate and affective registers. As this project has been attentive to topological everyday spacings and the more complex ways in which Palestinian women from villages make space whilst negotiating patriarchal norms and coping with the occupation, I have traced the spaces of contact beyond home.

In addition to seldom being limited to work, the cooperative functions as a gathering space, an everyday shelter where other types of intimacies such as inter-generational friendship, collegiality and confidentiality can take place. Hence, chapter 5 built upon the *Women in Hebron* cooperative in the village and the ways in which it was produced, imagined, maintained by women. By connecting the Spinozan currents with research on Palestine (see Interlude 3), I asked: What does it mean to cherish joy? What kind of transformations it cultivates, of *womenpotentia* it affords? The chapter interrogates how a women's handicraft cooperative in rural Palestine can be better understood as a joyful space of *contact* (with other women) and *unlearning* (of patriarchy).

Spaces and politics of joyful affinity do transform our relationships here and now by increasing our capacity to affect and be affected (Anderson, 2014; Kern et al., 2014; Montgomery and Bergman, 2017; Moss et al., 2018). Joy refers to the increase in our capacity to act, therefore to create immediate and immanent alternatives to the double bind of

patriarchy and occupation. Here, I formulated joy as the intensification of life, as the increase in bodies' capacity to do and feel new things, to act and respond in thriving ways (Montgomery and Bergman, 2017; Spinoza, 1994). I trace the ways in which the cooperative opens up empowering capacities in unexpected ways as an intentionally constructed collectivized space. Interlude 3 sets up a theoretical understanding of joy as an increase in bodies' capacity whilst Chapter 5 unpacks the spatial entanglements of joyful spaces. I care about *Women in Hebron* as 'spaces of otherwise' (Povinelli, 2011: 6–11) in imagining the source and space of new possibilities of life. The thesis, in that regard, examines the spatial arrangements that afford women joy, conviviality and solidarity to the extent that affirmative affects remain foreclosed in the landscape of endurance (chapter 3) and bittersweet homes (chapter 4).

Drawing on the cooperative as a joyful 'space of otherwise' contributes to the literature on topologies of solidarity (Mott, 2016). As Povinelli eloquently captures the elusive yet persisting nature of those spaces:

The social projects that interest this book may not have the force to act in the sense of making anything like a definitive event occur in the world (becoming a counterpublic is an achievement), but they exist, nevertheless, in the Spinozan sense of persisting in their being. And insofar as they do, these alternative worlds maintain the otherwise that stares back at us without perhaps being able to speak to us (Povinelli, 2011: 10).

A space that makes you more alive and capable where unlearning, a process through which one becomes more alive, can potentially take place. In the absence of spaces of sociality outside the home and patriarchal restrictions on mobility (Al-Bishawi et al., 2017; Marshall, 2015), I argue that *Women in Hebron* deserves our attention in the political struggle over space, making room for women's subtle modes of agency (Mahmood, 2012).

Following the paths into the ordinary and the intimate enlightened by queer feminist scholars (Ahmed, 2017; Sara Ahmed, 2004a; Berlant, 2000, 2011b; Natanel, 2013, 2016a, 2016b; Page, 2018; Povinelli, 2011), the thesis foregrounds the affective spectrum of joy and its uplifting power as a revolutionary force for change that remains unattended in the body of work on Palestinian resistance (Abdo, 1991, 1999, 2002; Abu Nahleh, 2006; Fleischmann, 2000; Richter-Devroe, 2008, 2011, 2012a). The political potentialities of a women's handicraft cooperative and its affective registers can easily be dismissed in a settler colonial context like Palestine, where the everydayness of life is very much imbued with deliberate

acts of violence against women and destruction of livelihoods. Yet, linking joy (and Spinoza, see Interlude 3) to such creations of spaces of contact shifts the lenses of our inquiry, exploring political and agential potentials of rural women who endure occupation and patriarchy on a daily basis. Centring the role of emotions, affects, pleasure and joy to understand women's spacings in Palestine (see also Junka, 2006; Khalili, 2016) helped me move beyond the existing body of work on resistance/resilience which has looked at the household economy (Kuttab, 2006), familial relations (Harker, 2009, 2010a, 2012), cultural and aesthetic production (Peteet, 1996; Richter-Devroe and Salih, 2014), urban space (Allen, 2008; Harker, 2014b) and conventional socio-political forms that sustain gender relations such as the role of kin groups and village networks (Naser-Najjab, 2015), household management as steadfastness (Kuttab, 2006) and gendered division of resistance (Peteet, 1994, 1997; Richter-Devroe, 2012b).

The cooperative provides the material conditions of gathering, a space where women can cherish inter-generational, cross-political, open-ended friendships and collegiality and bears a feminist potential as it subverts the normative public/male vs. private/female separation by collapsing them into one space. I also argue that it cultivates *womenpotentia* and mobility amidst the settler colonial and patriarchal structures that deeply constraint the women's spacings in the village.

Final remarks

What are the paradoxes/shortcomings of joyful spacings? This a question that remains valid given the volatility and open-endedness of accounts that are interested in joy as an emerging capacity 'freeing up territorialities for the construction of new social arrangements' (Seem, 2013: 8). The *Women in Hebron* cooperative as a women-initiated (as much as joyful) counteract of claiming space publicly experiments with autonomy inasmuch as it makes times and spaces for alternative visions and relations among women (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006). It is important to note two vulnerabilities here:

1. In the absence of a collectively organized national liberation movement and a wider grassroots movement, these spaces remain vulnerable to the violence of the settler colonial occupation.
2. Women's access to the cooperative is under constant negotiation (of societal norms) and mostly subject to male consent.

Yet, I argue that these are not necessarily weakness; the conditions to create spaces for a different, convivial kind of politics would need to be negotiated dynamically and with keen attention paid to the contextual and experiential nature of such spaces. This is what helps them remain as realistic (responding to urgent local needs) and less exclusionary (not dominated by one group of party/political agenda) options in the present.

This ethnography underlies the production/inhabitation of gendered spacings that not only co-constitutes the private and the public but also carves out more autonomous, semi-public places. From this departure point, the thesis examined a women's embroidery cooperative as a space of joyful encounters in a Palestinian village at the outskirts of Hebron, tackling relational spaces (seemingly public or private), emotions and assemblages that make an 'autonomous space' im/possible. I tried not to do two things (see methodology chapter for a further discussion):

1. While thinking and writing about the double bind of patriarchy and occupation, I am committed to not reproducing any discourse that victimises, sensationalises and neglects the agency of the people to affirm life and generate the conditions for change (Abu-Lughod, 2001, 2013, 2015; Mahmood, 2012).
2. I am very conscious of and careful not to contribute to the dominant forms of epistemic violence and colonisation through knowledge production that has long been pointed out by Southern feminist scholars and anti-colonial thinkers (Abu-Assab and Nasser-Eddin, 2019; Elia, 2017; Mohanty, 2003; Smith, 2012).

Against this background, in this thesis, I hoped to produce intersectional multidisciplinary feminist knowledge that would be in the service of the communities that I align myself with. In her book *Space and Mobility in Palestine*, anthropologist Julie Peteet raises the question of 'What is the role of the anthropologist in the colonial present?' (2017, 20). This is a question that anyone researching or thinking about Palestine is likely to ask herself. Yet, I would like to take one step further and ask: 'What could be the role of the research/researcher in decolonization?' I believe we, researchers, can do much more than analysing the ever-changing forms of power and collecting everyday stories to challenge official history writing. The need for anti-colonial and anti-racist research projects is still there, waiting for scholarly attention. The success of the Israeli settler colonial project depends on keeping hegemonic ways and narratives of life in circulation. Therefore, re-centring Palestinian women's marginalized ways of being in place and perceiving space is an

important voyage into ‘researching back’ that could help dismantle the stifling infrastructures of colonization.

This project tackles this reframed question in three ways. First, I see research itself as an opportunity to contemplate on different decolonizing strategies as well as the limitations and obstacles on the way. In designing this project, I want to participate in a decolonizing agenda where I can collaborate (more as a volunteer than as a researcher) and share my questions with Palestinian women. This involves building up care and responsibility as key values of our research as well as alliances where we can develop and practice those strategies formulated as ‘care ethics’ (Lawson, 2007), or ‘researching back’ (Smith, 1999). I hope that my project will provide methodological footprints for others who feel the burden of the conventional ways in which research is carried out and the urge for decolonization.

Besides, the theoretical contribution of my project would be the attempt to de-objectify Palestinian space. Bearing in mind that the spatial-political complexities of Palestine necessitate the examination of relational aspects of space-making, I draw on a particular analytical term, topology. Whilst conducting ethnographic research on relations of spatial intimacy, I followed the term’s theoretical feasibility and novelty for thinking through Palestine.

Lastly, I also hope that this research would raise public discussion and awareness on the ‘Palestinian women’s condition’. It is important to acknowledge that many of the Palestinian scholars lack freedom of speech and movement due to Israel’s politics of separation and closure. Therefore, international solidarity, creating platforms that can support the Palestinian struggle and building long-term relationships to support Palestinian endurance are crucial.

Appendix A Fair Trade Monitoring Form

Internal Monitoring System – Questionnaire

Date of the interview:

Interview made by:

Name of the main contact (the leader of the group)	
Telephone:	
Address:	
Group members	-Number of workers: -Main tasks:
Main products	
Total sales in 2017 (in NIS)	

***Creating Opportunities for Women**

1. What other opportunities would you have to work if you were not working here? Where else could you work?
2. Have you ever worked before?
3. What has changed in your life since you started working? How did it affect your life?

***Fair Payment**

4. How and how much are you paid?
5. Can you live and pay your expenses on the money you earn?
6. Do you think what you are paid is fair?

***Non-Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association**

7. Do you get paid the same as men for similar work valued as highly as men`s work?
Yes. Only women are working for the cooperative.

8. Is your views taken note of at work?

***Working Conditions**

9. Do you like working from home? Is it good/safe/comfortable for you? What advantages/disadvantages does it have?

10. Are there drinking water, clean toilets and washing facilities available where you work?

11. How many hours do you work per day on average?

***Capacity Building**

12. How did you learn doing embroidery? What does it mean to you?

13. Have you received any training or learned new skills while working with this workshop?
If so, please explain.

14. What kind of new skills would you like to learn in future?

***Promote Fair Trade Practices**

15. What does Fair Trade mean to you? Do you believe your employee follows fair trade principles?

16. How do you think we can improve our business/ your working conditions?

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