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The Over-research & NGOisation Paradigm of the West Bank

Applied Cultural Analysis on the 'futility of research' and the 'burden of occupation'

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TKAM02 - Spring 2020

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Abstract

The Over-research & NGOisation Paradigm of the West Bank: Applied Cultural Analysis on the *'futility of research'* and the *'burden of occupation'*

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The West Bank attracts countless researchers due to the conflict's *intractable* label. On one hand, these researchers are drawn to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict due to logistical reasons: accessibility to the area, academic prestige, ample funding, grant and networking opportunities. On the other, researchers are allured due to an *Orientalist* fascination with conducting fieldwork in the West Bank. This leads to a surplus of researchers fostering the phenomenon of under/over-research among Palestinian Bedouin communities. While certain communities receive *too* much attention, others do not receive nearly enough scholarly interest. Despite extensive research on over-research, there is a palpable lack of theoretical rigour on the root causes of over-research. Therefore, this thesis utilises applied cultural analysis as a framework to address the principal causes of over-research in the West Bank: the NGOisation of Palestinian civil society. As research informs policy and funding inform research, this makes research inherently political. This entails that research can become abusive and exploitative when fostered by the field's stakeholders acting as gatekeepers. These stakeholders surround the NGO sector which encourages the saturation of researchers in the same area recruiting the same participants and conducting similar projects. Thus, this thesis main aim is to advance the discussion of the professionalization of grassroots and the enabling role of researchers on the issue of under/over-researched communities. It utilizes auto-ethnography and *'studying up'* of the Palestinian NGO elite to discuss the structural inequalities of the sector. Finally, this thesis asks: has research become a form of banality, a colonial continuity, an instrument fomenting the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? Cultural analysis on over-research and NGOisation derived two concepts that address these questions: the *burden of occupation* and the *futility of research* which propel scripted frontstages, fatigated narratives of conflict, and refusal to engage in research. These conceptual analyses are based on the materialization of the burnout attitudes surrounding research in interviews with Bedouins, gatekeepers, and Palestinian fieldworkers.

Keywords: over-research; NGOisation; Palestinian-Israeli conflict; Study Up; research ethics; applied cultural analysis; West Bank; Bedouins; autoethnography; Palestinian civil society; performativity.

Abstracto

El Paradigma de la Sobre-investigación y ONGización de Cisjordania: Análisis cultural aplicado de ‘el peso de la ocupación’ y ‘la inutilidad de la investigación’

Cisjordania atrae a innumerables investigadores debido la etiqueta *intratable* del conflicto. Por un lado, estos investigadores se sienten atraídos por el conflicto Palestino-israelí por razones logísticas: accesibilidad al área, prestigio académico, amplia financiación, subvenciones y oportunidades de ‘networking.’ Por otro lado, se sienten atraídos por la fascinación orientalista por realizar trabajo de campo en Cisjordania. Esto conduce a un exceso de investigadores que fomentan el fenómeno de sub y sobre-investigación entre las comunidades Beduinas Palestinas. Si bien ciertas comunidades reciben demasiada atención, otras no reciben suficiente atención académica. A pesar un extenso estudio sobre la investigación excesiva existe una falta palpable de rigor teórico sobre las causas fundamentales de la sobre-investigación. Por tanto, esta tesis utiliza un análisis cultural aplicado como marco para abordar las principales causas de la sobre-investigación en Cisjordania: la ONGización de la sociedad civil Palestina. Dado que la investigación informa las políticas y la financiación informa la investigación, esto hace que cada investigación sea intrínsecamente política. Esto implica que la investigación pueda volverse abusiva y explotadora cuando la fomentan las partes interesadas del campo que actúan como intermediarios. Estos actores abordan el sector de las ONG, lo que fomenta la saturación de investigadores en una misma área, reclutando a los mismos participantes y realizando proyectos similares. Por lo tanto, el objetivo principal de esta tesis es avanzar en la discusión de la profesionalización de movimientos populares y el papel habilitador de los investigadores en comunidades sub / sobre-investigadas. Esta tesis aplica la autoetnografía y el "estudio" de la élite de las ONG Palestinas para discutir las desigualdades estructurales del sector. Finalmente, esta tesis pregunta: ¿se ha convertido la investigación en una banalidad, una continuidad colonial, un instrumento que fomenta el conflicto Palestino-israelí? El análisis cultural sobre la sobre-investigación y la ONGización ha derivado dos conceptos que abordan estas preguntas: el peso de la ocupación y la inutilidad de la investigación que impulsa etapas delante, narrativas fatigadas del conflicto y la negativa a participar en estudios. Estos análisis conceptuales se basan en la materialización de las actitudes de agotamiento que rodean la investigación en entrevistas con beduinos, intermediarios y trabajadores de campo Palestinos.

Palabras claves: sobre-investigación; ONGización; conflicto Palestino-israelí, estudio de la élite; ética de investigación; análisis cultural aplicado; Cisjordania; Beduinos; sociedad civil Palestina; perfomatividad.

Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and assistance of several people, most of whom put ink to my words.

First, I want to particularly thank my supervisor Rachel Irwin who shared her expertise, time, and efforts with me. I value immensely the guidance you have given me.

Charlotte Hagström, words will not be able to describe how thankful I am for all your help and understanding.

I wish to thank Kristoffer Gravgaard Pedersen, who not only proof-read countless drafts but also kept my spirits high (and sanity) throughout my fieldwork and through the slow writing of this thesis. His critical pointers challenged several of my stubborn ideas and made them stronger.

A. you were my torchlight and inspiration. I will forever be grateful for the resources, time, and confidence you gave me. The pen is mightier than the sword.

Jessica Enevold, I am so appreciative of your support behind my choice of fieldwork and prompt replies to my work placement emails. I doubt I would have stayed as long as I did if it was not for your advice.

Most importantly, I want to thank the Bedouins who demonstrate everyday extreme levels *sumud*. I will always treasure my informants' hospitality and kindness in the face of occupation. This thesis is indebted to you. My ultimate wish is that my analysis is meaningful for you.

I want to extend this appreciation to my mentors and colleagues at the research institute: S, I and J. Thank you for asking about my wellbeing throughout my three-month stay. Though I may not have been vocal of my appreciation before my departure, I truly appreciate your committed work and recognise the immense efforts you do for the Palestinian cause.

Last, but never least in my heart, I want to thank my family who supported me economically and emotionally. *Os quiero*. (¡Mamá, *por fin podemos brindar!*)

Ciudad Ducal, 2020-11-29

Alejandra de Bárcena Myrsep

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Glossary

- ***al-Siyat*** — Bedouin reservations in the Negev.
- **Badawī** (بَدَوِي) — from Arabic, translates to 'desert people' and Bedouins.
- **Balfour declaration (1917)** — British declaration of sympathy for a national home for the Jewish people, signed by British Foreign Secretary A. J. Balfour and approved by the Cabinet.
- **Fatah** (فتح) — Palestinian nationalist social democratic political party that governs the West Bank's Area A and B. The PA's president Mahmoud Abbas belongs to this party.
- **Fellahin** (فلاحين) — plural from Arabic. Signifies peasant or farmer.
- **Hamas** (حماس)— Islamic Resistance Movement. Palestinian Sunni political party who won democratic elections in the Gaza Strip.
- **Iftar** (إفطار) — from Arabic, celebratory dinner at twilight that breaks the day's fasting during Ramadan.
- **Intifada** (انتفاضة) — from Arabic, translates to 'shake off'. In the context of Palestinian Intifadas it refers to public uprising against the Israeli occupation.
- **Mawat** — land designation in the Ottoman Land Code of 1858. Translates as 'dead'. This land was labelled as unused and inhabited.
- **Nakba** (نَكْبَة) — from Arabic, translates to 'catastrophe.' Nakba denotes the Palestinian exodus of 1948 where more than 70,000 Arab Palestinians were expelled or fled from their homes and lands.
- **Naqab** (النقب) — Negev desert in Arabic, today the Negev is inside Israel's borders.
- **PA/PNA** (السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية) — Palestinian National Authority, interim self-government of Areas A and B of the West Bank since 1994 Gaza-Jericho Agreement.
- **PLO** (منظمة التحرير الفلسطينية) — acronym for Palestinian Liberation Organization since 1964.
- **OCAP** — acronym for Ownership, Control, Accessibility, and Possession.
- **oPts** — acronym for occupied Palestinian territories.
- **Sumud** (صمود) — from Arabic, translates to 'steadfastness.' *Sumud* is a political ideology and Palestinian strategy to persevere on the land and resist the Israeli annexation of Palestinian land.
- **Taboon bread** — baked bread typical of the Middle East. It is of fellahin origin. The oven is typically combusted with coal and dried manure.
- **UNRWA** — acronym for United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. A UN agency to aid and support Palestinian refugees and their descendants.
- **Wallahi** (والله) — from Arabic, an interjection that translates to 'I swear to God'.
- **Yanni** (يَعني)— from Arabic, an interjection such as 'um', translates as 'meaning'.

*A book chapter version of this thesis is currently in press.

1. Introduction*

Much ink has been spilt researching the facts of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, to the extent that research becomes a burden and a futile endeavour for the Palestinian researched communities. The West Bank, under Israeli illegal occupation, is a paradigmatic field that continuously entices the attention and fascination of countless researchers through the conflict's *'intractable'* label after more than 70 years of prolonged conflict. Hence, the Palestinian tragedy captivates the researcher's imagination, intriguing their inquisitive, albeit arguably *orientalised*, mindset to document, analyse, and disseminate the Palestinian grievances and hopes, or lack thereof, for the future. This dissemination of findings occurs within closed office meeting rooms, at abroad, and at exclusive academic conferences, or collecting dust in books and academic journals, inaccessible for the research-participants. These findings hardly ever go back to the community, contributing to research fatigue and resistance amongst those who have given their time, efforts, and trust to research. The circulation of knowledge becomes lethargic, until it lays dormant, as the long-overdue findings appear too late, losing all relevance and applicability. Therefore, the Palestinian Bedouins in the West Bank, targeted as an issue-orientated group, feel as if visiting researchers are co-opting their struggle for the sake of career advancement, 'adventure,' and novelty, rather than to help the Palestinian cause.

> And you know, *'I'm sorry and I am in solidarity with you,'* this is not enough anymore. Okay, you are in solidarity with me, *thank you.* You are sorry, okay, but what else? The people have to act for justice. You know, some researchers come here just to live like adventure... experience! (Salman, Bedouin activist, transcribed interview, July 28th, 2019).

Through a reflexive analysis of my enabling position in the knowledge production apparatus, I aim to demonstrate the root causes behind the declaration that the West Bank is an over-researched field; an assessment that is not novel nor secret, rather instead is cemented within a culture of silence. As this thesis will argue, this '*fetishism of conflict'* (Browne & Moffett, 2014, p. 230), inherent in a '*fetishism for authenticity,*' is the driving force behind the researcher's interest in the conflict, fostering an environment of intrusive rather than intervening research.

An over-researched field indicates a saturation of on-site data on a popular case study. It entails the oversupply of research projects concentrated in a particular location, recruiting the same participants, and resorting to the same gatekeepers. The over-research issue, therefore, occurs due to the glut of researchers, supply exceeding demand, who tend to conduct research on similar topics. In the West Bank's case, on the effects of the Israeli occupation onto the Palestinian population. This sustains the phenomenon of perceived over-research among *low income*, *vulnerable* and/or *marginalized* researched communities. To the extent that I will argue that over-researching the West Bank leads to practised and fatigued narratives of conflict, causing resistance to participate in any research project. The researched feel as if the researchers/fieldworkers have taken advantage of their willingness to participate in the past, as exemplified in the previous quote.

Yet, there is a contradiction within over-researched communities in the awareness that, though research does bring few tangible benefits, it does provide an essential survival strategy: advocacy and solidarity. In this thesis, I will describe how the West Bank is an ambivalent field due to two conflicting, yet co-sustained concepts that I derived while conducting cultural analysis: notions of the *'futility of research'* and the *'burden of occupation.'* This is exemplified by the same Bedouin-informant, anonymized as Salman, who exclaimed:

> *Wallahi*, I will be honest with you and advice you. Don't read the books. Why? Just listen to the people who live their experience. You will hear from them many things that are not in the books (transcribed interview, July 28th, 2019).

This quote illustrates a contradiction. On one hand, if there are many things still unwritten on the books, then there is a vacuum for more research to be conducted. However, while the latter may be the case, the West Bank is over-researched at the same time. I will demonstrate that the over-researched issue becomes a problem of recycling the same problems than diversifying the research's scope. I will argue then, that the knowledge production apparatus is complicit in hiding certain structures of power and allocation of resources that those in power do not want to uncover and divulge.

These frustrations with research's inaction extend to Palestinian scholars/fieldworkers working in the NGO sector, whereby the drive towards justice and self-determination is subbed by the realities on the ground of the occupation. This thesis will address the burnout crisis latent in their continual work in the reporting and policymaking on the effects of the occupation, which arguably leads to political apathy. To the extent that on my first day at a

local Palestinian research institute, my Palestinian mentor stated, as a matter of fact, that: *"research has killed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,"* demonstrating a sentiment of inertia embedded in Palestinian research institutions. To this he added: "*everything has already been written. You can read what has already been researched and rewrite it to make it your own"* (personal communication, July 16th, 2019). As a gatekeeper, he was advising me to become an armchair researcher, discouraging immersion in the field and instead advocating to rewrite and recycle secondary sources of what had already been written. A contrasting sentiment expressed by Salman when he advised me to: "just listen to the people who live their experience." It demonstrates a conflict between gatekeepers/fieldworkers and those researched. In this thesis' foci, the Arab Palestinian Bedouins in the West Bank.

When high numbers of researchers concentrate in 'closed contexts' (Koch, 2013), such as in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPts), there is an inherent risk for repetitive, irreverent, and exploitative research to occur. When these research NGOs are driven by competition to attract funding and meet stakeholder expectations, the research aims become disassociated from the realities on the ground, as the needs of those researched, named project beneficiaries or recipients, are pushed to the side-lines. Insofar that research projects become patterns of everyday life intrusions without valuable contribution or pay off to the community. This leads to high levels of research fatigue which disembogues in perceptions of being over-researched as communities are continually exposed to participatory and evidence-based methods. Contrary to what appears at first hand, my Palestinian mentor was merely expressing how the development aid sector's logic function: change and reform will not be funded (INCITE!, 2007/2017).

Underlying these arguments, I position that research in an over-researched field sustains itself through a vicious cycle with its own logic and structures, ultimately promoted by the Global North's neoliberal agenda. This agenda promotes NGOs as mediators (Verma, 2002, p. 150), utilizing their service provision and influence to serve as depoliticising agents. Therefore, this thesis utilizes *NGOisation,* or the professionalization of NGOs (Alvarez, 1999), to theorize the promotion of NGOs as a form of policing, demobilisation, and regulation of resistance movements whereby the institutionalisation and professionalization of NGOs depoliticize civil society. Civil society is understood as the encounter between the private, the public and the state; a forum where popular organization and action is attenable (Lang, 1997, p. 103). It is first important to note that NGOisation serves as a blanket term for PNGOs, charitable organizations and non-profits (NPOs). In the West Bank, these entities though different,

require the same registration demands of the Palestinian Ministry of Interior to operate. This includes following the Palestinian NGO code of conduct that demands, among others, transparency and accountability.

NGOization addresses civil society which I aim to demonstrate, through a critical lens, how over-research is a ramification of the commercialisation of research and commoditisation of researched communities. To the extent that the theory has questioned if NGOs are indeed Trojan horses for global neoliberalism (Wallace, 2004). Therefore, NGOisation is a theoretical framework that critically examines the effects of neoliberalism in its conversion from 'on-the-ground' grassroots movements to impersonal, corporatist, and disengaged NGOs.

Consequently, I will demonstrate that over-research occurs due to the *NGOisation* of Palestinian popular movements of resistance against the Israeli occupation. Through this institutionalisation of Palestinian grassroots, prompted by the global demands of neoliberalism into the Palestinian Authority's (PA) agenda in the 90s, a hyper-competition environment emerged in which NGOs must compete for funding and resources to satisfy the donor's demands and expectations. This has the effect of putting pressure on NGO leaders and fieldworkers to meet quotas, budgets, and delivery (Roy & Asayyad, 2004, pp. 80-81), insofar that grassroots movements are professionalized through a structure that caters forms of vertical-clientelism (Hajjar, 2001, p. 30). This type of top-down structures constructs a class division based around the NGO sector, manufacturing a professionalized NGO class (Verma, 2002, pp. 150-152). Distinctively as Islah Jad (2007) argues, in the West Bank, NGOs open career tracks, networks, and spheres of influence for a Palestinian middle-class elite (p. 626). I aim to bring attention to a provocative question: has research become a form of banality; an instrument fomenting the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

Thus, a latent *'burden of occupation'* emerges in which Palestinian Bedouins must accept that research's demands are a necessary evil in comparison to accepting the relentless Israeli annexation of Palestinian land. The burden entails sustaining high levels of excessive research despite its futile direct contribution to improve their everyday life and perhaps, deter the occupation. As this thesis argues, vast amount of research detailing the occupation has led to bleak dead-ends for the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. Thus, over-research occurs due to an incapacity to refuse research as the alternative is increased levels of vulnerability. Perceptions of being over-researched develop due to this dependence on NGOs,

whose service provision is contingent to demands of conducting research in the community. Due to this lack of decolonizing alternatives, researched communities view the nuisance of excessive research as ultimately having a partial instrumental use in order to attract advocacy and investment opportunities.

Finally, I wish to highlight how the issue of over-research signifies the dismantling of the researchers' quest for authenticity as too much research manufactures a sample bias when communities become overly familiar with research methods. This familiarity, however, does aid communities to protect themselves from exploitative research by diverting the researchers' gaze through concealing intimate details, telling the researcher what they want or expect to hear, or simply by telling straight lies. In this thesis, I intend to analyse how research fatigue, in the form of fatigued narratives of conflict, affects qualitative social research. In itself, over-research is a key issue in cultural analysis as it creates poor research.

1.2 Research aims & Significance

This thesis fits into a critique of both the non-profit industrial complex and the academic industrial complex: why do we have an inclination to study down and not up? This line of enquiry offers a critique of the institutionalization of academia. How does academia promote over-researching certain topics and communities?

The main significant contribution, which anyone familiar with the Palestinian questions knows yet may refuse to accept, is that the West Bank is an over-researched field and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is over-researched case study. This thesis aims to look into the root causes behind the emergence of over-research with the starting point of addressing the NGOisation of the West Bank's civic society and grassroots movements. In evaluating the extent to which NGOisation permeates the knowledge production apparatus, this thesis analyses how NGOisation affects qualitative data, as instead of fostering a collaborative environment, research has become streamlined, offering *express research* where researchers stay one week or barely two months to conduct research (fieldnotes, August 3rd, 2019). In effect, becoming factory-like or as named by feminist radical activist organization INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence INCITE! (2007/2017) as streamlined through non-profit industrial-complex. The NGO sector, as a system, relies in securing the next donor and the next project, and while the project is ongoing, the NGO looks past it, neglecting the present project to focus on their own survival in the next source of funding; even fabricating success stories and pay offs.

Ultimately, this thesis will apply cultural analysis on the conflict of interest between stakeholders to describe the over-researched field dynamics at play, whereby the outcome of research projects differs greatly from what the researched communities, recipients of development projects, wish for or aim for. It aims to advance the discussion of over-researched field and the enabling role of researcher, while also specifically raising a critique of NGOsation of the West Bank.

1.3 Thesis Disposition

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The introductory chapter has outlined the main arguments, building a solid base to understand the goals and ideas of the specific line of arguments exposed in this thesis. The background chapter aims to solidify a basic understanding of the conflict for those unfamiliar with the Bedouin question and Israeli-Palestinian occupation. Consequently, it focuses on three areas: the roots of the conflict, the West Bank, and the Bedouins. A third chapter focuses on the relevant literature on both over-research and NGOisation. The fourth chapter precedes the methods used to derive the findings, namely qualitative methods, '*Studying Up'*, and autoethnography. As described, to *'Study Up'* across the NGO sector is an organizational ethnography opportunity for the ethnographer to look into their privileged positionality and how that same privilege provides them access to certain structures of power. This chapter includes a description of the commissioned project, the limitations of the research, and ethical considerations. Chapter five constitutes an analysis and discussion on the repercussions of NGOisation in the West Bank. Three key arguments will be exposed: 1) foreign encroachment and dependency on external funding, 2) competition between stakeholders, and 3) the top-down hierarchical dynamics inside NGOs. Therefore, it first introduces the relevant stakeholders: the PA, Palestinian NGOs and Palestinian civil society in order to describe the process of NGOisation. It then pays close attention on the effects of neoliberalism such as Palestinian academic burnout, elites, mimicry, social divisions and fetishism for authenticity. Chapter six specifically looks into a cultural analysis of the over-researched phenomenon focusing on a Goffman analysis of performativity on three topics: research refusal and research fatigue, 'practised speech', and 'research savvy'. Finally, the conclusive chapter focuses on the applicability of the findings and indications for further research which ultimately aims to offer insights and solutions to the questions raised. Thus, this thesis' structure intertwines issue with prognosis.

2. Background to the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

"Any struggle contains multiple truths" (Nagar et al., 2006, p. 139)

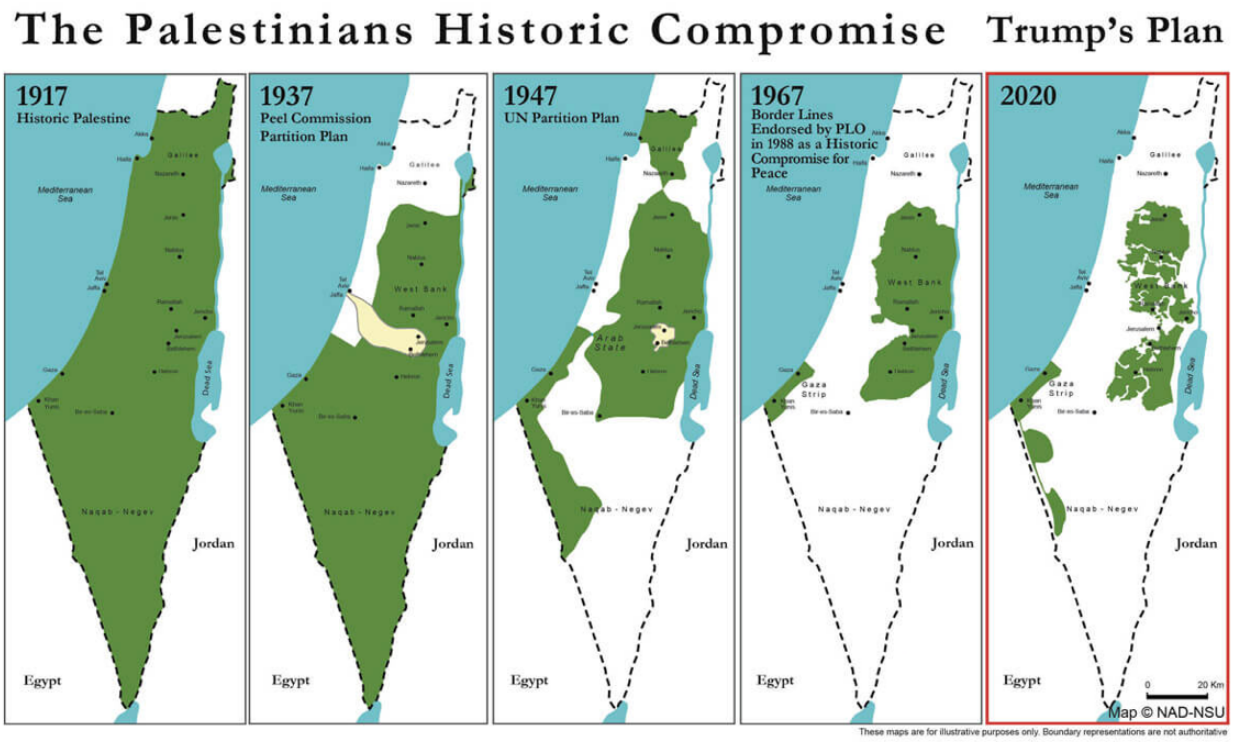

Figure 1.
'The Palestinian Historic Compromise vs. Trump's Plan' (n.d.). Reprinted from NAD-NSU. Retrieved from https://www.nad.ps/sites/default/files/020120.pdf

2.1 The roots of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict

Zionism is the national movement of Jewish self-determination that harks back to the late 19th century and early 20th century. Zionism aimed to locate a suitable homeland for the persecuted Jewish population. Palestine, under the Ottoman Empire, was inhabited by diverse communities of Palestinian Christians, Jews, Muslims, Druze, Circassians, and Bedouins. The Russian pogroms of the late 19th century catalysed Jewish immigration into Palestine as means to return to the Promised land. With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after First World War, the League of Nations granted Palestine to the British as a mandate. The Palestinians felt as if the Allies had sold their sovereignty (Erakat, 2019). As the 1917 infamous letter of the Balfour declaration, signed by the British Cabinet, became proof to Palestinians of Britain's intentions to give Palestine to the Jewish population, as it declared support for the establishment of "a national home for the Jewish people" (British Library, 1917). Theodor Herzl, founding father of Israel and the Zionist political movement, promoted creation of a Jewish state in *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State). In his manifesto, he advocated for a Zionist Congress and the "*restoration* of the Jewish state (…) the rebirth of the Jewish people" (Herzl,

1896, 73). Subsequently across the early 20th century, Jewish immigration increased in Palestine, escalating with the Nazi prosecution during the Second World War.

Much of Zionist discourse entailed lobbying to the European powers to discredit Palestinian's capacity for self-determination and modernisation, insisting on the rationale that Europe would wish to have a European, rather than Arab, outpost in such a strategic territory at the heart of the Middle East (Said, 1979). As such, Zionism imposed Orientalist ideals of a Palestinian deserted territory with a few nomad communities inhabiting the territory. As Britain failed to maintain peace between the growing Jewish immigrants and Palestinian inhabitants, violent encounters escalated until Britain declared their aim to disengage in the disputed territory to the United Nations (UN).

The partition of Palestine (Fig. 1) was first fully prompted by Resolution 18 in which the UN advised a two-state solution to the British Mandate in 1947 to mollify the tensions. Resolution 18 advised the creation of a Jewish state separate to a Palestinian state, with Jerusalem, contested the rightful capital, as an international city (Erakat, 2019). The Palestinian refusal to accept the partition of historic Palestine escalated in the 1947-1949 Palestine War after the British declared their intention to disengage. In May 1948, the Israelis declared their independence and established a Jewish state, referring the war from there on, as the War of Independence. The Palestinians instead refer to it as the *Nakba*, the Catastrophe, as 700,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes and villages.

Consequently, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict emerged due to two people seeking and confronting to attain their right for self-determination, entailing the affirmation and denial for each other's right to exist (Said, 1979, p. 8). This escalated the Palestinian refugee problem, as displaced Palestinians became Diaspora refugees in neighbouring countries or resettled in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, the former under Egyptian rule and the later under Jordanian rule until the Six Day War of 1967. Gaza and the West Bank became two Palestinian territories separate between each other. A portion of Palestinians remained inside Israel's newly acquired borders as IDPs (Internally Displaced Peoples) until 1952 when they granted Israeli citizenship and referred to as Arab Israelis (Pappé, 2006).

Thus, to summarize the Palestinian-Israeli/Zionist conflict, three issues concretise its intractable label: Jerusalem as a contested capital, the expansion of Israeli settlements inside Palestinian occupied territories, and the Right of return of Palestinian refugees and their descendants (for more detail see Khalidi, 1997; Pappé, 2006; Erakat, 2019). The Palestinians

hold the Right of Return under the Geneva Convention (UN, 1949), however, Israel continually opposed to the return of Palestinians to upkeep a Jewish majority inside their borders (INCITE!, 2007/2017, p. 166).

2.2 The West Bank

The West Bank acts as a magnet for researchers due to its "symbolic location" (Neal et al, 2016, p. 497) as a site of conflict, struggle for sovereignty, and geopolitical unrest since the 20th century. The West Bank is attractive due to its status as "the most intractable standing conflict" (UN, 1997) and as the Holy Land of the three main monotheistic religions. Which meant that during my research in the West Bank, it was hard to avoid bumping into another researcher group. As Neal et al. (2015) explain, symbolic locations are imbued in emotionally charged associations due the meaning-making people ascribe to them (p. 497). The West Bank's place attachment has a long-standing history of conflict and peace. Rashid Khalidi (1997) mentions the Crusades as highly influential allure of the conflict due to its historical and national remembrance. He concludes that we interpret historical events such as the Crusades according to what we wish to see (p. 13). This interconnectedness of political history offers high levels of research appeal, especially when contextualized it within the discourse of *'no peace in the Middle East without resolving the Palestinian question.'* The tragedy of the Palestinians, as described by Edward Said (1993), has always been a popular subject in academia ever since the Second World War which in effect, attracted large numbers of voyeuristic Western 'experts' (p. 314). This expertise has found a honey pot in solving the *Palestinian question* with countless debates of, but not limited to, righteousness, justice, resistance, security, foreign intervention, and ultimately, neo-colonialism and settler colonialism. Before 1967, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were meant to become the Palestinian state. Their separation from each other made such an option unlikely. To the extent that today, Palestine is neither one state nor two states (Turner, 2016). Said, writing post-David camp accords, states that the U.S. interference in the conflict will continue (p. 235), fostering an uncertain future, as seen in President Donald Trump's '2020 Peace Plan' (see Fig. 1) announced in 2019. Therefore, the Palestinian cause has played a major factor in 'peace in the Middle East' discussions in the global arena, inferring that Palestinian-centred research receives high level of attention and funding due to its high relevancy in the current global politics.

After the *Nakba*, the Palestinians became "a nation in exile" (Said, 1979, p. 244), a Diaspora of people seeking national recognition. Edward Said, Palestinian author of the critical epistemological and ontological theory of *Orientalism*, wrote a book on *The Question of Palestine.* Applying multiple frameworks encountered in *Orientalism* such as cultural criticism, and writing from personal experience, Said is concerned with the misrepresentation of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Said (1979) describes Palestine as a "historical reality (that no longer exists)" (p. 218) in which the Palestinian struggle can be defined as "a present political cause, a process towards self-determination for Palestinians who have no state or proper national existence" (p. 218). As Said recalls, Palestinians did not have a Palestinian national identity because it was regarded as non-sovereign Arabs. This is because Palestinians had never had a proper state, as part of the Ottoman Empire (1516-1917) and mandated by the British (1920-1948). As Said describes, Zionism co-opted the course of Palestinian existence and identity, especially from 1948 to 1967; creating a binary of Jews and Arabs which would predominate the global politics. Zionism constructed Palestinian political consciousness, its outlook towards self-determination and curated the perception of enemies: the West and Zionism. These binary classifications, a priori simple, should be understood as complex notions of domination *versus* resistance, in which resistance is questioned as a mere survival tactic (Ortner, 1995, pp. 174-175). As such, research in the West Bank aims to decolonize the region from Israel's settler occupation. Shelly Ortner's notions of resistance are useful concepts to delineate forms of power and the subaltern in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I will develop these key concepts in the analysis chapters in my discussion of ethnographic refusal.

Due to the effects of the Madrid and Oslo Accords, by 2020, the West Bank's territory is an ever-shrinking space shaped by social and political fragmentations due to the perfunctory effects of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian communities (Fig. 2). The landlocked territory of the West Bank, sharing borders with Israel and Jordan, is splintered by Israeli bypass roads, checkpoints, segregation walls, security 'buffer' zones, closed-off military zones, military bases and illegal settlements. In effect, Israel is breaching international law under the Geneva Convention (UN, 1949) as the treaties condemn population transfers onto an occupied territory. Land, in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict signifies security (Boyarin, 1993, p. 3). Therefore, confiscating and fragmenting the territory gains an upper hand in the conflict, rendering Palestinians at an insecure position with an uncertain (yet certain) future. Thus, following a logic of 'divide and conquer,' the state of Israel has taken the Palestinian

development and economy as captive. This entails that Palestinian daily life is constricted by lack of mobility, employment opportunities, and access to basic services.

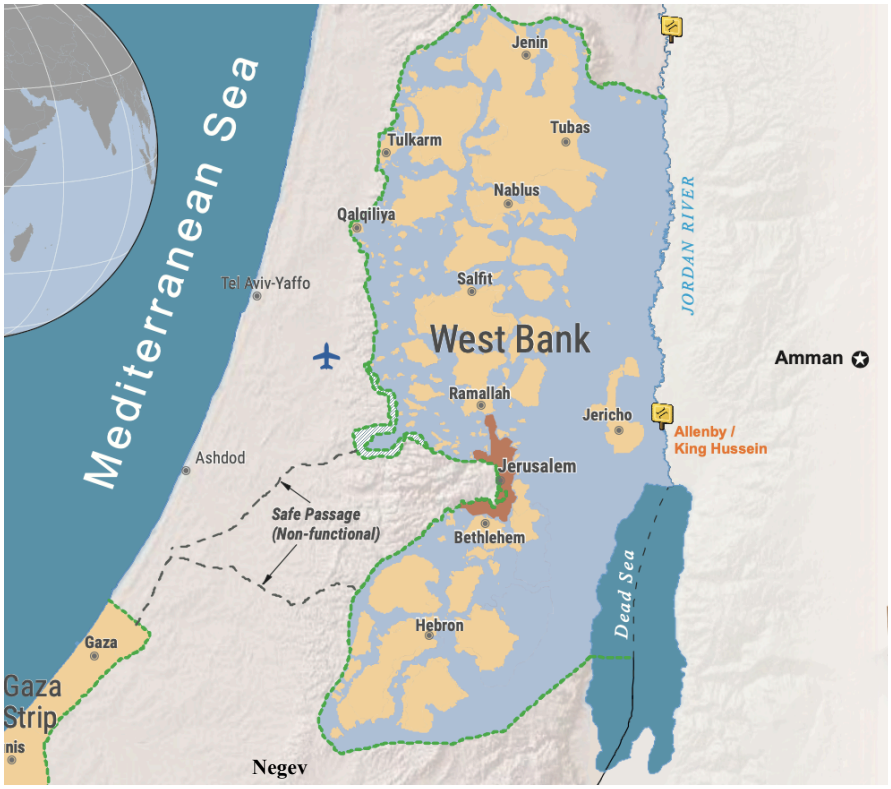

Figure 2.
Adapted map 'Occupied Palestinian Territory: The West Bank including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip' (2019, Jan.) Reprinted from *OCHA*. Retrieved from https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-including-east-jerusalem-and-gaza-strip-january-2019

The West Bank's population is estimated to round the 2,900,000 by July 2020. In 2018, around 418,600 Israeli settlers are recorded to live inside the West Bank's territory, half settled in East Jerusalem (CIA database, 2020). The territory is divided into cantons since the 1995 Oslo II Accords due to 'security reasons' after the first Intifada (public uprising) from 1987-1993 (fig. 1 & 2). Three administrative areas divide the territory: Area A is a shrinking territory constituting 18% of Palestinian urban hubs with cities like Ramallah or Bethlehem. Area B constitutes 10% of Palestinian rural villages. Area B is administered by both the PA and the Israeli government. However, crucially, an extraordinary majority of Area C, a 72%, is under Israeli control. Most Israeli settlements are located in Area C or in Hebron (divided between H1 and H2). The Israeli Civil Administration, in charge of Area C's administration, continuously deny Palestinian building permits, submitting demolition orders to Palestinian homes that breach Israel's security demands. While Israeli settlements expand, the growing Palestinian population is forced into overcrowded urban hubs constricting a natural urban sprawl (Yiftachel, 2009).

2.3 The Bedouins: a historical introduction

> You know, they [the children] are born here, but at the same time, even if we are born here, we will not forget our mainland; our mainland where we came from; from *Naqab* (Salman, Bedouin activist, transcribed interview, July 28th, 2019).

The term '*badawī*' in Arabic translates to *'desert people'*. They are historically recorded to have arrived to the *Naqab* (today part of south Israel and referred to as the Negev) in the 5th and 7th century from the Arabian Peninsula (Ibrahim, 2004, p. 8). Bedouins today hold Ottoman and Mandate era documents that proof their ownership of their land. They traditionally organized in inter-tribal land allocations which often consisted in customary ownership such as spoken upon agreements (Hunaiti, 2008, p. 15). Israeli authorities in the *Naqab* have systematically abused Ottoman-era laws, such as the *mawat* designation that considered the *Naqab* as uninhabited and uncultivated and therefore, state land by the 1858 Tabu Law. The law demanded registration of land in order to recognize private ownership rights. During 1951, as the Israeli forces moved into the Negev, harassment and collective fear lead to the displacement of Bedouins from their lands. During the Nakba, 60% of Bedouins became refugees (Erakat, 2019). Those who remained in the Negev were relocated in enclosed fenced areas called *al-Siyat* (fenced reserves) while those expelled from the Negev became refugees. A large number of Negev Bedouins live in 35 unrecognized villages where they engage in legal battles to keep 640sqm instead of their current 350sqm land ownership. It is estimated they used to own historically 2,000sqm before the Nakba (Noah, 2010).

Those who were displaced to the West Bank, under the Jordanian administration, resettled in land that they did not formerly own. While most Palestinian refugees registered under UNRWA and settled designated refugee camp close to the cities, the Bedouins chose to relocate in rural, remote, semi-arid areas suited to their traditional social lifestyle, and to practice their quarter-nomadic herding and agricultural practices (Hunaiti, 2008, p. 15). As incoming refugees, the Bedouins either leased or bought their new lands from non-Bedouin Palestinians. With the partition of the West Bank into administrational areas during the Oslo Accords, the Bedouins' land fell into Area C classification as it was deemed as rural and depopulated. The Israeli Civil Administration has continually contended the Bedouin's claims of ownership of the land, targeting their relocation as 'voluntary transfer' to advance Israel's illegal settlement (Pappé, 2006). Thus, most Bedouins live in close proximity to Israeli settlements, even side by side, which entails their continual exposure to settler violence and harassment. As Salman explained:

> *Yanni*, in the past, the Bedouins moved from one place to another because they [had] animals. They seek about warm places, they seek about water, grasses, all these things. But today the people will not leave because they do not have other land, and if they will leave, the Israeli government will take their land (Salman, Bedouin activist, transcribed interview, July 28th, 2019).

As Israel transforms the West Bank's demography, the Bedouins are extorted to relocate into inadequate villages in non-Bedouin Palestinian owned land in Area A and B, raising tensions among the rest of the Palestinian population. These 'Bedouin-only' villages do not conform to Bedouin's social and economic viability (for more detail see Heiniti, 2014). In order to prompt the Bedouin's 'voluntary transfer,' Bedouins suffer the continual threat of demolitions, settler and military harassment, and forcible displacement. Israel managed to assist this coercion through a bureaucratic discriminatory system of denial of permits to build appropriate shelter and grant accessibility to water and electricity (for more detail see Berda, 2018):

PNGOs have managed to support Bedouins with service provisions in order to sustain their *sumud* (from Arabic, means steadfastness on the land). However, the lack of deterrence of the everyday life effects of the occupation does not provide enough tangible results. Therefore, Bedouins undergo high levels of exposure to researchers in order to attract advocacy and funding. This attention differs according to the seasons, the media attention, and level of vulnerability to forcible displacement. Isolation is the norm until the threat of demolition is imminent, in which media, politicians, researchers, and activists concentrate at the village in front of bulldozers. Though commendable, Vita Verma (2002) offers a pragmatic view to the attention received by order demolitions in Indian slums in which bulldozers and dramatic encounters converge to showcase a selling tragedy, to be co-opted for marketing. The selling point are statements and images of the demolitions which ultimately ignite solidarity and offense. The bulldozer may retreat, but the slum problem prevails (Verma, 2002, p. 74). This is equally applicable for the Bedouins' plight. As I will argue, sensationalism images, such as an elder Bedouin in front of a bulldozer or an activist roughed up by Israeli soldiers sells an image to donors abroad, tinkling their need to support the *'feel-good'* politics apparatus. As Kaliq, a Bedouin representative, explained in an informal interview, their village was only spared after a European leader threatened to cancel their visit to Israel if the demolitions and displacements proceeded. To this, Kaliq added: "I know they can do more, yet they don't want. If the West wished to stop the Israelis and their demolitions, they would have done so long ago" (Kaliq, Bedouin representative, translated interview, August 29th, 2019).

As demonstrated above, development NGOs are in the business of "moving money" (Ferguson, 2014, p. 70) and so, the Bedouins become the Bedouin problem in the development aid discourse, referred to with barren buzzwords applied to their plight: *displacement, marginality, indigenous, vulnerable*, etc. Nevertheless, the rhetoric foments a discourse aimed to attract funding to the NGOs rather than the Bedouin communities. I will delve into this in Chapter 6 on 'NGOisation.' In its turn, research lays ownership claim of the Palestinian experience. To the extent that Bedouin communities are considered assets to compete for access to. Nonetheless, funnelling large amount of money into an issue, Ferguson (1990) concludes, does not translate into immediate benefits. The Bedouin's participation is deemed as passive, rather than fostering their active agency (Arda & Banerjee, 2019, p. 14). Therefore, Bedouins are considered an *issue-target group* that due to their high vulnerability and high levels of demolition, settler violence, and force displacement, engage in high media attention, leading to their targeting as 'high-revenue funding' communities (Jules, gatekeeper, personal communication, September 29th, 2019).

2.4 Perceptions & misrepresentations on Bedouins

My research project in the West Bank focused on conducting qualitative research with Bedouin communities. My focus attempted to answer the 'Bedouin question' which predominantly centres on the strategic displacement of Bedouins from the oPts. Though my work placement's focus entailed producing a report on their forcible transfer, this thesis deviates from the subject. My concern lies in Bedouins' misconceptions, and sectarian vulnerability. I will argue that NGOisation fosters counterproductive representations with exclusionary group markers such as the label *Bedouin* or *'Bedu'*.

In my fieldnotes I wrote:

> Omran [Palestinian scholar] tells me this today: people don't like Bedouins; not the Israelis, and not the Palestinians. Bedouins don't have ties to anything except where they stand, to the land and to themselves. A little bit like the gypsies in Europe, he compares. If the Palestinians took over, they would deal with them the same way as the Israelis. Bedouins are very rich; a lot of money goes into them. He tells me that he would like to solve the system, not one particular thing (field notes, August 27th, 2019).

As a result, the 'nomad' label posits in the imagination an ownerless wandering figure without a fixed home or formal ownership of the land. This stereotype was corroborated by Jules, who as gatekeeper framed the stereotype as Israel's tactic of 'conquer and divide':

> How the average Palestinians see the Bedouins? Israel again, has done a great job, especially the right-wing settlers. They have done a very nasty… what's the word, pejorative version. And they are like… 'They are nomads.' So, people think they are nomads, they are gypsies, they just wonder, they don't have any rules, coming and squatting on our land or coming and stealing someone's land. Beggars and smugglers! The more you lay those images, the further you go away from the reality of landowners who are semi-nomadic on their land. A tribal system of land ownership that Israel has never recognized. The British did, in the days of the Mandate (Jules, gatekeeper, transcribed interview, August 2nd, 2019).

Both Omran and Jules mention the 'gypsy' comparison which showcase the ingrained stereotypes Bedouins are subjected to. Therefore, this thesis aims to focalize the Bedouin question in terms of how the NGOs may foster these stereotypes. Nomadism, as a label, has led to the systematic dispossession of land rights of indigenous communities (for more detail Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 2008). This has enabled the systematic dispossession of Palestinian land (Pappé, 2006). As Nur, a Palestinian academic, stated:

> All the countries, all the people, they like to see us as the Bedouin, you know why? Because if you are Bedouin, it means you don't have roots, you go from one place to place, it means that you don't have deep roots in this land, that's why I put the Bedouin tent because I feel that they have stolen also that tent in Beer Saba, that's why I also said that it is part of our culture. But our culture is more, more rich than a Bedouin tent." (Nur, Palestinian academic, transcribed interview, August 9th, 2019).

As I kept mentioning casually my research scope among both Israelis and Palestinians, it became evident that Bedouins were an ambivalent in-betweenness. When chatting with an ex-IDF soldier, he recalled his work in the Negev, stating that: "Bedouins do not wish our help to modernise. We came to their village and they spit at our feet" (ex-IDF soldier, personal communication, October 11th, 2019). In opposition, an 'urban' Palestinian once became agitated when I mentioned my topic, exclaiming: "Bedouins? Why not Palestinians? We also need help!" (Bahij, personal communication, August 23rd, 2019). This demonstrated the dynamics of the occupation, where while Palestinians as if they feel in competition with Bedouins for resources (in specific land) while Israelis,' following a colonial presupposition, may feel as if Bedouins need saving. Thus, Bedouins become entangled in issues of land ownership, recognition, and identity politics. As stated before, these target-issues make them marketable for the industrial NGO complex.

3. Previous Research

3.1 Literature Review on Over-research

There is a palpable vacuum within ethnology and crucially, cultural analysis to critically engage with the over-research concept. From conducting the literature review, sociology, health studies, and human geography are the three disciplines who engage directly with encounters of over-research. Their critical standpoint emerges from an ethical and methodological viewpoint, to which this thesis takes inspiration. Concerns with the issue of over-research have recently gained track within the Royal Geography Society-IBS, UK, who organized in 2018 a conference series of talks solely focusing on examples of over-researched fields around the world.

The term *over-research* first emerged at the height of the Cold War in a niche essay titled: "The Dangers of Over-research" (1963) by Urban Whitaker. Most contemporary literature reviews relating to over-researched fail to mention his use of the word, attributing its recent relevance to Tom Clark's essay: "'We are over-researched here!' Exploring accounts of research fatigue within qualitative research engagements" (2008). However, Whitaker's advice on the risks of over-research is still relevant today, especially regarding this thesis' arguments. He identified a crucial error in academia: the creation of ego-celebrity researchers who prioritize publishing over teaching as means of shaking up the world. To this extent, academic prestige can only be achieved through publishing. Whitaker, deeming academia at fault, declared that publishing had become the sole career catalyst for academic success, rendering teaching-driven professors at the lower echelon of scholars. Whitaker argued that researching the popular, yet overdone topic of the nuclear crisis, was an *'overkill emphasis'* and waste of efforts, declaring that enough research has emphasized the facts of the Cold War rather than attempting to offer solutions (Whitaker, 1963, p. 68). Over-research, he declared, is sustained by the refusal to admit "the fact that we already know enough [and] honour least those whose efforts we need most" (Whitaker, 1963, p. 69). This quote encapsulates my argument that over-research is a consequence of the NGOisation of the West Bank, as the donors misdirect their funding to professionalized NGOs, choosing a middleman rather than trusting their funds to grassroots movements. Therefore, I do believe that we already know *enough* about the dynamics of the Israeli settler occupation, and therefore, though the Palestinian-Israeli crisis is critical and prone to unexpected changes (Boyarin, 1996, p. 17), research efforts should hold a proactive stance in refusing to sustain the conflict through

research. As such, following Whitaker's advice, there is a need for researchers to embrace this fact that *we already know enough,* so we can avoid the dangers of over-research, as sometimes admitting that enough research has been conducted is the ethical alternative (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2012, p. 507).

Tom Clark (2008) arguably revived the scholarly attention on the concept of over-research with his concern in the utility of social research and the increasing emergence of forms of research fatigue in qualitative research participation. Most recent literature on over-research mentions his empirical research as he made calls to develop more research on the issue. In his research, he interviewed seven researchers conducting qualitative data. From their accounts, Clark accounted for three factors contributing to the appearance of research fatigue: 1) lack of perceived change or tangible benefits after engaging in the research, 2) indifference to research contributions, and 3) research has deemed high costs such as time, travel expenses, and time management (Clark, 2008, p. 958). His research offers a starting point to understand the research fatigue among Bedouin communities: how they perceive these high costs as research can create frustrations within the community when continuously being sought out as research participants.

Mayssoun Sukarieh & Stuart Tannock's research (2012) focuses on the effects of relentless research conducted on Palestinian refugees in the Palestinian refugee camp of Shantila, Lebanon. Framed through a sociological lens, their analysis on refugees' account of being over-researched makes it as the closest to my research enquiries. Their interviews derive three main issues that research participants continuously experience and that led to their mistrust and reticent to engage: 1) researchers' false pretences and agendas, 2) researchers' misleading of promises to the community members about changes for the better, and 3) the potential harm that research can have on community members, especially as potential surveillance agents (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2012, p. 495). Their article's goal and significance, they outline, is to raise the community's concern in a written account after the community raised their concerns and the camp's gatekeepers failed to address the issue and implement measure to protect their interests and decrease the number of visiting scholars.

Without naming it as an NGOisation process, Elisa Pascucci details critical pointers that inform my analysis on the effects of the professionalization of NGOs on over-researched communities. Pascucci expressed that accessibility, offered by the humanitarian infrastructure, is the major contributing factor to the oversupply of researchers in one

particular area. In her analysis, she pointed to the humanitarian infrastructure as an enabling factor in the over-researched problem as researchers arrive with ease at airports, international hotels, and seeking common comforts found back at their home countries. Calling it an enterprise, she expresses how the infrastructure enables an interlinked "multi-layered network of outsourcing" (Pascucci, 2017, p. 252) which backs up my argument that 'closed contexts' promote close networking that capitalizes on external outsourcing. In other words, the invested capital is redirected outside the camp, offering instead critical jobs to people who do not belong in the beneficiary community.

Pascucci's article coincides on several issues raised in Sukarieh & Tannock's account, though her focus is refugee camps in Egypt and Jordan. This demonstrates that refugees are at the most risk of being over-researched. Bedouins, being too *Nakba* refugees and/or threatened to displacement are at risk of being over-researched. Pascucci notes that researchers choose their fieldwork depending on two factors: first, the security in the region, and second, how popular and trendy a topic is. In her case, the popularity of the Syrian refugee crisis lured in countless of researchers. Sukarieh & Tannock (2012) concurrently state that the over-researched issues go hand in hand with the issue of under-research, which is what Pascucci demonstrates when she connects infrastructure and accessibility with a high influx of researchers in certain refugee camps while avoiding entirely others. In the West Bank's layout (Fig. 2), Bedouin communities close to cities like Bethlehem, Hebron, or Jerusalem, receive more research visit and service provision than those Bedouins living on the side-lines of the border with Israel in remote areas like the Jordan Valley (Area C). This entails that certain Bedouins communities are over-researched while others feel under-researched (Omran, Palestinian scholar, personal communication, August 27th, 2019). Sukarieh & Tannock (2012) draw parallels with Verma Gita's metaphor of the 'goose and the golden eggs', instead, mentioning how Palestinian refugees feel as if researchers are bloodhounds, always on the trail of tragedy (p. 499). As an example of this, they mention Nahr El Bared as an under-researched refugee camp that came into academic focus only after its demolition (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2012, p. 498-499). Sensationalism does drive the academic market and funding, as researchers capitalize on bloody events or sensational stories.

Following Tom Clark's (2008) concern on the concept's wobbly theoretical rigor, Koen et al. (2017) conducted a comprehensive qualitative research on ORCs (acronym for over-researched communities) in the ascribed sense-making of the term within stakeholders in South African HIV prevention sites. Koen et al.'s main concerns lie in the risk-benefit ratio

in research (2017, p. 3). They conclude that assigning the label of ORC to a community can be a dangerous and troubling solution to over-researching as it could terminate the community's participation wellbeing projects such as, in HIV prevention programs. No more engagement with research will mean less intrusive research, but it also entails that HIV could increase within the community. This poses a line of argument that if no more research is conducted on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, does it mean the Israeli occupation will be undeterred? Therefore, they frame the over-research question on a practical level with an ethics analysis. As they reveal, over-research entails a process of complex repercussions, interdependent and oftentimes contradictory. Therefore, over-research claims are problematic, raising ethical tensions and paradigms within academia, predominantly on research's capacity to do better for the researched community, for positive change, and betterment.

Koen et al. (2017) account for the absence of extensive literature on the over-researched issue, including its omission in ethical protocols, due to its conceptual ambiguity. They conclude that the general uneasiness to use the 'over-researched' label is the possibility of its slapdash use on the ground, leading to the concept's abstraction and consequently, to its mystification rather than to its applicability on the field. This, as Koen et al. (2017) express, is imperative to take into account when choosing the label in research's ethical discourse (p. 1). As they note, over-research tends to be a blanket term, an either and neither, which leads to its speculative and reticent use in academia and ethics committee's circles. Particularly, as the appearance of over-research issues come embedded in an ethical miscellany of issues, not halting at its most obvious exploitative connotation (Koen et al. 2017, p. 1). Thus, the term 'over-research' is loaded. It has the capacity to be abused and do harm as it redirects funding and advocacy *away* from communities. However, its omission in ethical protocols can lead to the continual exploitation of vulnerable communities. Hence, opening a line of enquiry becomes critical to safeguard under/over researched communities' wellbeing. Koen et al. (2017) declare that the unclear quicksand of using an over-researched theoretical framework, without backing it up with another theory, is due to the concept's diversity of interpretations.

Thus, my use of NGOisation hopes to navigate around this methodological challenge. This diversity of interpretation, Koen et al. argue, makes concrete analysis hard to pin-point. This is specifically evident in the lack of exemplary examples of ORCs. By choosing the Bedouins, I offer a discernible example of an ORC, the Bedouins in the West Bank. As such, this thesis hopes to open a line of communication and advocacy to conduct research on their *own* terms.

Thus, it becomes clear that debates on over/under-research are underlying topics in most ethical and methodological critiques. It is named but not explicitly dealt with. This is evident in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *'Decolonizing Methodologies'* (2015) book where she takes a contextual understands of the institution of research. She does not refer explicitly to 'over-research', but she implies it in her reference to the knowledge production apparatus' exploitative past and present. Her concern lies in indigenous communities, where she approaches it in a deconstructivist approach, analysing the conscientious of research attitudes, unethical practices and research's inexorable link to power. She quotes an Aboriginal Elder in Australia, who states that Cairn Aboriginals are "the most researched in the world" (quoted in Tuhiwai Smith, 2015, p. 1) which resonates critically with my informant's remark that "research has killed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict." The next quotes recorded by Brian Schnarch (2004) from indigenous First Nation leader in Canada echoes strongly with my Palestinian mentor's quote when they state: "we've been researched to death" (p. 82). These types of sardonic quotes are ever-present in articles on the topic of over-research. Neal et al.'s title 'You can't move in Hackney without bumping into an anthropologist' (2015) describes the London neighbourhood as petri dish to study gentrification, urban contention and unrest in the 80s up to 2011 (p. 497). They conclude that Hackney has become an iconic research area due to external factors outside academia, such as media attention which means that academia is not always at fault for the over-research issue. Thus, Neal et al. offer a more optimistic reconceptualization of over-research, stating that more research exposure means more awareness and familiarity with the research protocols. They state that research can be a constructive endeavour, a *'co-producing process,'* for the participants as it prevents misrepresentation of their home. Therefore, Neal et al. make an identity analysis based on place-making and place attachment, where mistrust in researchers is a defensive mechanism against negative representations. I argue that Pascucci's take on 'research savvy' relies heavily on Neal et al.'s arguments on 'research knowing'.

This 'research knowing' concept is extended to Schnarch's (2004) list the grievances associates with research among First Nation communities, the first one being over-research, research conducted by non-aboriginals for outsider agencies, imposition of research designs without previous collaboration, lack of consent, lack of control and accessibility to research funding, cultural appropriation and commodisation of communities, lack of compensations, extortion in order to persuade participation, backlash to the community from collected information, lack of acknowledgement of aboriginal participation, sensationalisation of

issues, detrimental misrepresentations, and discrediting believes and insulting traditions and sensibilities (pp. 82-83). Schnarch (2004) accounts to the minority status of First Nations and their lack of agency as reasons for their grievances with research. Though "research has tried to right itself" (p. 83) much is left to correct the past and present wrongs.

Recently, Naohito Omata (2019) was able to document the permeating effect of over-research amongst refugee camps in different contexts across Africa, in Kenya and Ethiopia. He described a meeting with the refugee camp's representatives in Kenya, where upon mentioning the lack of financial compensation, the camp representatives were visibly uncomfortable and hostile. They resisted research because without a monetary perk, their participation would be worthless. Upon Omata's explanation that the research project was "aimed to generate a better understanding of refugees in Kakuma among external stakeholders and ultimately to contribute to informing better policies for the refugees in the camp" (Omata, 2019, p. 15), the representatives mentioned how previous research had not granted any tangible change that would improve their current situation. It entailed a repetitive pattern of promises researchers make that are not fulfilled, as sometimes researchers overestimate our capacity to generate change. Rather, we feed into the NGOisation process, generating knowledge that merely is used to attract funding, whether academically or within the NGO sector. As such, those stakeholders will do little with the information at hand.

As described in this section, most literature on over-research concentrates on the experience of those researched. This thesis aims to add to the over-research literature regarding the burnout crisis of Palestinian academics, fieldworkers and gatekeeper working in the NGO sector. A starting point should be to ask: has research fought to end the conflict or is it fomenting it? Is research equipped to deal with the trauma of conflict or is research adamant in opening wounds and not heal? The following literature on NGOisation hopes to encourage inquiry on these questions.

3.2 Literature Review on NGOisation

This thesis overarching argument is that the perceptions of over-research emerge as the consequence of the NGOisation of Palestinian civil society. Alternatively described also as "the professionalization of activism" (Albarez, 1999). In effect, correlating the saturation of NGO researchers in the West Bank, with the co-option of Palestinian resistance (Roy, 2016). NGOisation, first and foremost, has framed the neoliberalist agenda through through critiques.

These critiques steadily transferred from Third World Country development aid (Ferguson 1990) to more recently, LQTBQ+ issues (see Abu-Assab et al. 2020).

It was first conceptualised by James Ferguson (1990), framing the international developmental aid sector as an 'anti-politics machine'. However, NGOisation came into full theoretical form embedded in feminist thought as its critical lens does not underestimate the hierarchical structures grappling our unequal society (see critiques in Latin America Alvarez, 1999; in Indonesia Jellinek, 2003; in India Nagar et al., 2004). Particularly concerning an unequal distribution of power and allocation of resources. Feminist methodology regard the personal as the political, which in turn, calls forward critiques who can embrace personal experience as informing analysis (Abu-Assab et al. 2020, p. 484). Thus, most NGOisation theories stem from criticizing women's empowerment NGOs beginning first with Sabine Lang's coined term in '*The NGOization of Feminism'* (1997) in which she analyses the inadvertent ramifications of the "institutionalization of feminist movements" (Lang, 1997, p. 111) during the reunification transition period of Germany. Lang criticizes this decentralization of women's movements by declaring their demobilising status after rendering it dependent on the state. Overall, leading to a recurring political apathy based on generational rifts (Lang, 1997, p. 111). By relinquishing social mobilization for the sake of unification and stability, women's movements were subdued and made funding-dependent to the state's political agenda. As Lang argues, it left women disenchanted and silenced in the name of public good (Lang, 1997, pp. 101-102). NGOisation, she concludes, leads to lack of collaboration as competition is enhanced. Lang then renames NGOs calling them SGOs, semi-governmental organizations (Lang, 1997, p. 112). She poses a relevant question:

> If NGOs don't want only to engage in social repair work, but actually want to change structural features of a certain political agenda, how successful can they be when they are dependent on exactly the structures that need to be transformed? (Lang, 1997, pp. 112-113).

The literature on NGOisation, therefore, focuses on studying up (Nader, 1969) the structures that rule the NGO sector. NGOisation's theoretical framework was further developed in Gita Verma's *'Slummin' India'* (2002) where she offered an insight into the transformation of grassroots into NGOs:

> the changing role of NGOs— from activism to convergence with government, from identifying problems to becoming partners in state-designed solutions, from giving voice

> to the people to becoming a hand for universalizing global paradigms, from minimal operations to massive fund-raising, from simple folk to celebrity (p. 74).

The latter statement, 'from simple folk to celebrity', is a key idea that I wish to develop in my analysis of gatekeepers and NGO fieldworkers. As it appears again in Lea Jellinek's (2003) use of the word of 'ego-celebrity' to describe the collapse of an Indonesian NGO through a paradigm of success. Jellinek (2003) introduces the concept of *officialdom* to describe the effect of NGOisation on grassroots movements. As Jellinek describes, what was once a collective effort to do good work on a women's micro-bank loan system, was ultimately appropriated by the 'male-controlled' Board of Directors who directed the NGO's efforts from on-the-groundwork to official ceremonies, shiny awards and galas.

NGOisation can take multiple forms and names, merging into other analysis on institutionalisation such as the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) or the academic industrial complex (AIC) ('INCITE!, 2007/2017, p. xii). Their contribution to structural critiques of modes of organising, capitalism, and institutionalisation. The inspiration behind INCITE!'s (2007/2017) critique stemmed from an invitation to India by the US Ford foundation where they "met with unfunded organizations that asked us why we though the system was going to fund any real systemic change" (p. ix). This line of enquiry developed further when the Ford Foundation pulled out their grant after the authors' outspokenly declared their solidarity to Palestine (INCITE!, 2007/2017, pp. ix-x), demonstrating that the institutionalized political plays a crucial when it comes to directing funding. As demonstrated by my discussion on the conflict, no international funder will fund any systemic change for the Palestinian struggle if they could have done 70 years ago so. Thus, INCITE!'s anthology includes a chapter titled: 'The NGOisation of the Palestine Liberation movement' where Bazian et al. point out to the US as root cause of the invisibility and non-action around the Palestinian struggle.

Aziz Choudry & Dip Kapoor's collection of chapters in *'NGOization: complicity, contradictions and prospects'* (2013) offer a comprehensive overview of the NGOisation theory through case studies. These cross-cultural examples focus on the nefarious effects of NGOs' surveillance and demobilizing activities on different contexts such as India and the NGO's complicity in the promotion of Special Economic Zones or the Philippines when NGOs avoiding addressing root causes of poverty and inequality. Particularly, I consider their argument that NGOs prioritize certain communities and value certain knowledges as point of

departure to address how knowledge is colonized for capital in their example of how biodiversity in New Zealand becomes an elite tool to advance colonial practices. As they declare, NGOisation entails a complicity with neoliberalism, as NGOs subvert grassroots movements' efforts when refusing to professionalize and adhere to local and global interests. This leads to their comparison of NGOs acting as Trojan horses to advance capital interests and state agendas (Wallace, 2004; Carmody, 2014, p. 462). Nevertheless, Carmody has criticized Choudry & Kapoor's collection as lacking enough sources to back up their statements, inferring that more thorough research needs to be conducted (Carmody, 2014, p. 462). Their lack of theoretical engagement with the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) region paves way to explore more cases of NGOisation.

Crucial to support this thesis, Islah Jad (2007) and Adam Hanieh (2016) offer rich critiques of neoliberalism and the *NGOisation* of the West Bank. Islah Jad (2007), Palestinian professor of development, makes a call to scrutinize Palestinian NGOs, declaring them to be buzzwords rather than legitimate mobilization agents. She offers a key argument where she remarks how professionalization may hamper the participation of 'target groups', in her case on women's empowerment movements as "project logic pushes towards upward vertical participation and not downward horizontal participation" (p. 627). Islah Jad (2007) argues that that grassroots organizations have become co-opted by educated middle-class NGOs leaders, who established authority through high professionalized use of 'expertise' jargon, adamant in referring to the prestige behind their donor network (p. 625). Jad stresses that this attitude is based on the hypercompetitive environments in which NGOs and IOs must justify their interventions and projects, leading to a system of co-option of movements and achievements.

These arguments are corroborated in Adam Hanieh's statement that the development sector encourages a hollow "empowerment without power" (Hanieh, 2016, p. 33). He demonstrates that the development discourse is shrouded by illusory activism, stating that the force behind the civic empowerment is co-opted by empty promises of radical change. Neoliberalism blurs the Palestinian development struggles and captive economy to Israel's occupation. The development discourse, instead, puts the responsibility on the Palestinians' inability to 'properly' develop, denying in its turn the permeating effects of the Israeli settler-colonialism, intricately entangled with Palestinian building-capacity structures. It denies a civil space while denying the realities on the ground.

4. Methods & Material

4.1 Project overview, material & motivations

All fieldwork and ethnographies are context-dependant. The context of the fieldwork was July 2019 to October 2019, based on a total of three consecutive months conducting qualitative research in the West Bank. The applied cultural analysis belongs to a particular historical moment of *certain-uncertainty* as Israel's Prime minister Netanyahu declared his intention to annex the Red Sea and Jordan Valley to Israel. In the meantime, the take-over of Bedouin land in East Jerusalem was threatening the territorial contiguity of the West Bank. Crucially, newspapers featured UNRWA's misconduct scandal and consecutive pull-out of the funding from several donor countries, threatening the Palestinian refugees' source of aid.

I arrived at the non-profit research institute with the status of a student volunteer, though my role seemed unclear for most of my colleagues. While I may have not been directed to people I could speak to or make my presence 'felt on the field', I was encouraged to sit in my desk and write my report, recycling what has already been written on the Bedouins. Contract-bond, I spent my 9 to 5 studying my surrounding from my desktop job. In the long-term, armchair research became an ethnographic opportunity to study up (Nader, 1969).

I recognise now that I had failed to identify an appropriate gatekeeper as I become blindsided to the grant and donor support, they advertised on their website. This became apparent when my Palestinian client made it clear to my colleagues that I had to be kept busy and happy because I was a networking with Swedish universities (Palestinian client, personal communication, July 16th, 2019). Furthermore, he solely introduced me to a Spanish INGO due to my nationality rather than my work, which showcased my instrumental at the NGO to promote their status and reputation among other stakeholders.

Upon my arrival, I was offered three topics to write a report on the rent inflation in Area A, the territorial fragmentation between Areas A, B, and C, or the ethnic displacement of Bedouins. Naively as a first-time fieldworker, I chose the latter because I assumed that a specific target-group would grant me easier accessibility to recruit participants. Further, I later learned that the Palestinian non-profit had an on-going project on herding which would grant me access to the field with a logistical help of a fieldwork team. To my chagrin, I was only invited to the field twice, to witness and record a Palestinian house demolition and to visit two rural villages in Hebron.

In retrospect, I may have been attracted to the Bedouins due to my familiarity with Lila Abu-Lughod's notorious ethnography: *'Veiled Sentiments'* (1986), most likely sparking my idealized fantasy on doing fieldwork with Bedouins. As Shelly Ortner (1995) commented, Ab-Lughod's Bedouin ethnography provides an "air of romanticism" (p. 177) to research. By noting this drive, I want to infer that researchers tend to lean into familiar topics, which exemplifies a tendency to conduct similar research projects or follow-up past researchers to apply a contemporary analysis. Illustratively, Celia Rothenberg (2016) was attracted to conduct research in the village of Artas, close to Bethlehem, due to previous ethnographic work done there in the early 20th century by Louise Baldensperger and Hilma Granqvist. The latter was still fondly remembered by the village which leads to Rothenberg's belief that her somewhat inconvenient presence would be remembered after she left the field, to the extent that a Palestinian journalist wrote that: "grandparents will tell their children about Celia, the way people talk about Helima [Hilma]" (p. 36). This can cause over-research as researchers aim to confirm the generational rifts and changing developments in the area, choosing certain areas over others due to previous scholarly attention. Thus, due to previous ethnographies, Artas is considered another example of over-research in the West Bank.

Throughout my three months in the West Bank, my intrusive presence at both the research institute and the field became evident when I was denied access to the field. I was bounded to a contract that kept me inside the institute from 9 to 5 where I was encouraged to conduct armchair research, as observed in my Palestinian mentor's suggestion to *"rewrite what has already been written."* Nevertheless, my Palestinian colleagues provided me with a list of key gatekeepers to contact, yet the majority of my emails (closing on hundreds) were ignored. This informs my analysis of researcher competition in an over-researched field as I was the thousand email sender to contact these gatekeepers seeking Bedouin informants. There are numerous NGOs engaged with Bedouins, yet I was unable to contact them due to this surplus of researchers who 'jet in and out' (Abaza 2010) of the field.

Meanwhile, the few interviews I managed to schedule were cancelled or seemed to be, at the time, pointless. By pointless, I refer to interviews where the informant seemed reticent to answer my questions or replied in a scripted manner, a 'practised speech' learned through repetition. Further, I lacked followed up interviews and crucially, when I managed to conduct an interview, the nuances of speech were lost in my reliance on a translator. Thus, my over-research and NGOisation analysis are informed by my experience of poor data collection and

armchair research, as I was encouraged by my PNGO to avoid making my presence 'felt on the field.' Nevertheless, this desktop work led to my practice of organizational ethnography.

Due to logistical reasons, obvious in my lack of accessibility to the field and language skills, I believed at the time that my research sample data was poor, exemplifying a research design failure. Nevertheless, my failure to access the field demonstrated a rejecting field due to the dynamics of over-research, namely research fatigue and resistance. Thus, though I was frustrated and burnout, my retrospective analysis uncovered more than I bargained for. If I had received a curated frontstage, a streamlined research process, I would have been blinded to the underlying issues of NGOisation.

Subsequently, my qualitative data relies upon my insider-outsider, yet arguably enabling, positionality at the Palestinian research institute. A large number of my analysis relies on personal communication as colleagues and acquaintances would disclose discrepancies and double standards of the NGO sector. I have ensured to keep their account anonymous. Consequently, a crucial part of my primary sources relies on participant observation in the form of field notes and diary audio recordings. Besides, my primary material relies on *back-room note-taking* at two focus groups which allowed observing the dynamics of NGOs and networking, two *go-alongs* to Bedouin communities, seven *semi-structured interviews*, spread evenly across different sectors of the Palestinian society (two from urban areas, two from refugee camps and four Bedouins from rural areas), and three *formal interviews* to gatekeepers at an INGO, IO, and NGO engaged with the Bedouin issue.

The nature of the semi-structured interviews allowed a mix of open and closed-ended questions where the informants lead and direct the subject of the conversation. These open-ended discussions extended to the focus groups. The researcher introduces the topic and certain questions, but the informant can direct the scope. Thus, semi-structured interviews allow conversionality (Adams, 2015) to promote trust and reciprocity between researcher and informant which I believe does not apply to an over-researched field as the Bedouins responded to each question, except when transgressing the personal, as if reciting a memorised speech, which I refer to in this thesis as 'practised' or 'savvy' speech. *Go-alongs*, as an ethnographic method, allows similar open-ended dynamics, however, these are characterised by the researchers' flexibility of their positionality and participation. Contrary to participant observation and interviewing, Kusenbach (2003) argues that *go-alongs* give a closer look into the lived experience of informants as they enact bodily reactions and habits

rather than curating an unnatural and static interviewed speech (pp. 458-459). Go-alongs entails following informants as they go on their everyday life, combining participant observation and interviewing in one as they accompany the informant, observing, while asking questions, interviewing. Thus, crucial to my discussion of curated performances in chapter 6, Kusenbach (2003) argues that go-alongs aid the researcher to decipher if the informant is disposed to answer genuinely certain aspects of the research (p. 459). As I will demonstrate in my analysis, *go-alongs* became crucial in observing the dynamics of NGOisation and conducting research at Bedouin villages, where go-along visits became a matter of 'jet in and out', demonstrating the intrusive side of research.

4.2 Limitations of the research I: a troubling positionality

In this section on my materials, I wish to demonstrate how the conflict's events shaped my fieldwork and positionality. As a Spanish, young Western university-level educated woman, I hold both an inherent privilege in my access to the West Bank. This privilege became evident when I mentioned my intentions to visit Jaffa in Israel to my Palestinian mentor, to which he answered: "I wish I could visit and leave the West Bank" (personal communication, September 3rd, 2019). It is at border controls into Israel, however, that the conflict becomes discernible with subtle segregation policies that "naturalize the critical dichotomy between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs (Boyarin, 1996, p. 16) and the ensuing privileging of the 'foreigner tourist.' The Palestinian blue and white buses, contrary to Israeli green ones, are usually full of tourists and Jerusalemite Palestinians, and rarely West Bank Palestinians with special permits. While Palestinians must exit the bus at the checkpoint and queue under the sun in an orderly manner, tourists remain seated, oftentimes confused about the protocol and looking around for directions, unsure to follow the Palestinians or remain seated. Every time, I observed, they did the latter. The Palestinians would be allowed back inside only when the armed Israeli soldiers finished first our security control. As Rashid Khalidi (1997) has described, the Palestinian quintessential experience is that of the border and the proof of identity (p. 1). These activities demonstrate highly routinized interiorization of the demands of the occupation, scripted frontstage performance (Goffman, 1956), which informs our participant observation and interpretation of the field. Though I often wished to exit the bus in solidarity, the forced disguise as a tourist does not offer such an option, which conveys the researcher's compliance on recurrent colonial continuities in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

My own fieldnotes did point out to a very critical conundrum of my researcher-identity on the dominant-subordinate position:

> Nonetheless, my positionally is muddled in the context of who I am: white, privileged. If I fuel my moral indignation, do I fall in the pitfalls of the Ivory tower and 'white women trying to save brown women'? Am I on the verge of Laura Bush's (white woman) preaching saving Afghan women (brown women) that Lila Abu-Lughod spoke about? However, if studying up is a democratic endeavour, do I fall into a forced democratisation of Middle East and Middle Eastern exceptionalism? Moral grounds are quicksand in the Middle East. Ethically speaking, I can do more damage than good with a moral high ground (field notes, September 11, 2019).

Therefore, I argue that research neutrality is deceiving and oftentimes fanciful. Researchers, though able to restraint their political believes cannot avoid an underlying strong political subjectivity in our analysis. I have chose to embrace such a subjectivity in my analysis, as I believe that distance analysis is imaginary. Instead I am to offer an honest and insightful analysis fuelled in our own unavoidable subjectivities. Insofar that moral indignation, though subjective, should fuel our ethnographic accounts.

4. 3 Limitations of Research II: The emotional and the vulnerable

In mid-August, I was scheduled to visit a spring to conduct an interview at a nearby Bedouin village. However, the day before my visit, a bomb went off at the springs' hiking trail, killing an Israeli settler girl. The area was zoned off by the Israeli military and the neighbouring Palestinian village, where I was meant to stay the night, was combed in search of the culprit(s). This experience demonstrated that, as much as we may wish to follow a strict research design, the repercussions of an ongoing conflict affect directly or indirectly the fieldwork. Interviews may be cancelled due to religious holidays, the closing of a checkpoint, imposed curfews or in this case, the bombing of a hiking trail. The bombing's close call left me shaken. Multiple times I had been warned that as a white western woman, though Spanish, I could be confused as an Israeli settler. My Palestinian colleagues advised me above all to be street-smart.

I applied this diligently. Nevertheless, I was once pressed on to get into a car for a free tour at a busy tourist street. At my refusal, the man showed quickly a card, declaring to be secret police and "to get in the car." I kept walking. When I recalled the episode to my Palestinian colleagues, they stated alerted, "good thing you did not get in his car. If not, you would not be here" (personal communication, July 30th, 2019). I wish to note that 'to be street-smart'

was a double-edge sword. While it safeguarded my wellbeing, it also entailed a guarded reserve to strangers that potentially lead to the loss of valuable relationships and data as I refused building rapport with possible informants on the street.

With this introduction on the dangers of fieldwork, I want to elucidate how fieldwork is a confusing, emotional, and indubitable a vulnerable process for both the researcher and researched alike. Browne (2018) states that writing a diary in Palestine, as opposed to sanitised field-notes, is key when engaging in conflict zone research as unfiltered diaries offer a catharsis outlet (p. 195). I titled a fieldwork diary entry: *'when to give up on a field that rejects you'* (fieldwork diary, September 10th, 2019). In my entries one could sense my disconcertment, frustrations, and homesickness as I struggled to gain ground in my research. Though aware of the over-research issue, I lacked the reflexivity that oftentimes occur solely after leaving the field, even months later. That is why reflexivity is a tool that offers an insightful perspective and a processing device on the events, emotions, and unanswered questions that occur during and after the fieldwork.

4.4 Limitations of research III: Reflexivity, language & applicability of research

Those who venture into the conflict are aware of the complexity of writing about Palestine. As Israeli political geography and urban planning professor Oren Yiftachel would elucidate: "the fast events so typical of Israel/Palestine always threatens to make one's work outdated before its even printed" (Yiftachel, 2006, p. ix). However, because of the permanent effects of the neoliberalist agenda onto the oPts combined with reflexive cultural analysis, I believe this analysis holds relevancy and applicability.

I will argue that the main limitations of my research were first, my lack of Arabic or Israeli skills to create a rapport with my informants. This led to a crippling reliance on gatekeepers and translators. To my chagrin, a lot of valuable information was either lost in language or lost in translation. The second limit was my lack of foresight to ask relevant questions that arose on the field that apply to my main thesis, asking directly pressing lines of enquiry such as: *is the conflict over-researched? Have you ever felt exploited by NGOs/researchers? Could you give me a case where you felt like that?* Therefore, this research would be stronger on a solid evidence-basis of qualitative and quantitative fieldwork asking these key questions on the field, rather than taking an interpretative path.

Nevertheless, as a starting point, to take the interpretative path is to offer insights into our perceptions in the field. As Shelly Ortner (1995) describes, ethnographic stances are and should be, moral interpretations (p. 173). As Billy Ehn (2011) has stated: "an explicit discussion of autoethnography and self-narratives should make us more conscious of the subjective aspects of research. How do our own experiences, interests and emotional life affect the interpretations of other people and their behaviour?" (p. 54). Therefore, an assessment of the West Bank being an over-research field can be described as an interpretation of my moral obligations to my Bedouin informants which I aim to display in my next discussion of the benefits of using Study up and autoethnography.

4.5 Methodology I: *'Study Up'*

The term, *Study up*, was coined by Laura Nader (1969). It was a written call for the reinvention of anthropology to redirect research onto power structures, where the elites and authorities consolidate their agency. Relevant to this thesis approach, Crystal Biruk (2016) has applied it to researching within NGO elites, describing herself as an *'NGOisized ethnographer'* (p. 298):

> perhaps the agenda for 'studying up' today is not to seek out whom is on top, but to query how and why certain forms of knowledge and theorizing are immobilized or obscured by others, and to recognize the ideologies that underlie our investment in compartmentalizing 'knowledge worlds' or in critique itself (Biruk, 2016, pp. 301-302).

Thus, I apply Biruk's *NGOisized ethnographer* methodology to argue that *'Study up'* is an ethnographic opportunity to venture into the power structures and structural bias that wrap and permeate expert knowledge practices. Instead of disproportionally targeting vulnerable communities, *Study up* focuses our analytical attention on 'those on top.'

My predominant defence backing up the use of this specific theory is its applicability to unravel issues of agency, accountability, and power relations; crucial in discussions of over-research and NGOisation. Over-research presumably occurs from *studying down* communities that are unable to refuse research because of the necessity for: 1) coverage to denounce a strenuous issue/situation, 2) investment in local economy and infrastructure, or due to 3) lack of protection. Therefore, those 'studied down' are preyed upon by elites because they are unprotected, marginalized, and/or struggling, such as indigenous peoples, minorities, conflict-stricken, and/or low-income communities.

Nader (1969) points to an important reflection: why do we not research elites? Her arguments lie in the fact that power is embedded in the denial of researchers' accessibility and so, the hegemonic powers position themselves out of reach to the researcher's gaze because they do not have the need or desire to be studied. Thus, in contrast to vulnerable communities, elites have an agency of *'research closure'* in which they elude scholarly attention by refusing the researchers' intrusion (Nader, 1969, p. 180). Moreover, elites and authorities are not located solely in one place, contrary to over-researched communities like the Bedouins.

Therefore, '*Studying Up'* is crucial in critical research as it aims to debunker the screen of concealment where power structures hide behind. In criticizing NGOs, in this case, by debunking neoliberalist agendas, foreign encroachment, and 'feel-good' politics, this thesis aims to contextualize the NGO elite in the West Bank. Ultimately, aiming to analyse these established networks of power and systemic inequalities. Consequently, my research stands within a methodology of organizational ethnography and meta-cultural analysis.

Nevertheless, the constraints to study up concur in issues of "access, attitudes, ethics, and methodology" (Nader, 1969, p. 179). Nader asks: how can we reach the power structures without concealing our agenda? How do we avoid condemning and antagonistic attitudes to elites? How can 'studying up' be a methodology? And most importantly, are or should be the same ethical procedures applied to studying up (e.g. to Palestinian senior researchers) as to studying down (e.g. to Bedouins)? *'Studying up'* may be accused of relying on a murky methodology, however, our subjects, whether up, down or horizontal, deserve the ethical attitude of introspection that cultural analysis provides to this critical methodology.

Of course, studying up was and still is a controversial topic. Often misinterpreted, Nader not only makes a call for studying up but likewise down, stating that "we are not dealing with an either/or proposition; we need simply to realize when it is useful or crucial in terms of the problem to extend the domain of study, down or sideways" (Nader, 1969, p. 174). She makes the arguments that anthropology's usefulness is being under-utilised, arguing for studying the elite powers of our own society and community, an aim of applied cultural analysis. This bridges methodology with the discipline. As such, I believe my study up of NGOs in the West Bank will be useful for future first-time researchers who are considering conducting research in this region.

Further, the reasoning for this attempted *'Studying up and horizontally'* of this Palestinian research NGO is due to their political influence in Palestine and outside, and their high

economic influx of funds. Nader (1969) makes an important point, elite study offers insights into power structure mechanisms, accountability, and network analysis (p. 172). Thus, a pivot point from my fieldwork to my thesis is my change from *studying down* Bedouins to studying *up* into research's institutionalisation. As such, I am to "to gauge whether the cards are stacked and in what direction they are stacked" (Nader, 1969, pp. 176). Towards the Bedouins? Or towards the elite NGO?

The cards are stacked towards the Israeli occupation and complicit agendas. Thus, I will not condone nor silence the research institute's dubious attitudes and expert kwowledge practices that were revealed during our personal communications. This is because I believe that it is critical to offer an observation on the backstage of NGOs and research process. As such, I connect the underlying issue of over-research and studying up with a decolonizing methodology. In the foreword, Lisa Tuhiwai Smith (2015) mentions how her book has "'talked back to' and 'talked up to' research as an institution of knowledge that is embedded in a global system of imperialism and power," (p. ix) which coincides with the overall aim of this dissertation's methodology of *'studying up'* research. The notion of colonial continuities in research does bring into sharp focus what research should become: "what if, in reinventing anthropology, anthropologists were to study the colonizers rather than the colonized, the culture of power rather than the culture of the powerless, the culture of the affluence rather than the culture of poverty?" (Nader, 1969, p. 172). Now, we must certain questions: has the researcher's attitudes changed? Does studying up apply to the West Bank? Has there been urgent anthropology done yet? And most importantly, should we aspire to decolonize research in the West Bank? Autoethnography as a methodology attempts to answer these questions.

Ultimately, I chose studying up as a methodology to prevent over-researching vulnerable, marginalized and low-income communities. Therefore, offering a new reconfiguration of what our analytical mindset should set eyes upon.

4.6 Methodology II: Autoethnography

An autoethnography prioritizes the ethnographer's (intrusive) presence on the field. Jonathan Boyarin (1996), who also wrote an ethnography of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, would argue against the belief in academia that the ethnographer is an unsuitable subject of ethnography (p. 18). He pushed to write at the borders of ethnography, of embracing the self as a subject. Consequently, the ethnographer, as an object of attention, answers the void of holisms and essentialisms, of speaking *for* others. Hence, we write about the experience in

relation to a cultural phenomenon to "keep fieldwork dialogically alive (…) instead of speaking about them, one speaks to and with them" (Conquergood, 1996, p 10). This makes autoethnography a crucial tool in cultural analysis which needs more widely acceptance of its legitimate academic rigor (for more detail see Holt, 2003).

Sanitized research is deceptive research as the ethnographer cannot extract themselves from intruding the field. Instead, autoethnography is an instance of honesty devoid of an illusory detachment from the field, a valuable analysis of reflexibility where the ethnographer looks introspectively, even horizontally within their own discipline, which allows to flexible maneuver a traditional ethnography of studying down. As Billy Ehn (2011) stressed, auto-ethnography makes sense through an intimate "dialogue between our experience and those of other people" (p. 54) Autoethnography is a qualitative method that utilizes self-reflection as analytical lens which Adams et al. (2015) describe as a complex two-fold: "to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political" (p. 2); inferring its goal to recognize the complexity of human experience.

Autoethnography according to Adams et al. developed threefold due to an increased interest in identity politics, a disenchantment over research practices and validity of objective scientific knowledge, and a pursuit of ways to explore personal narratives as a methodology (Adams et al., 2015, p. 8). This *crisis of representation,* the break from traditional ethnography, occurred at the end of the 20th century which led to an uneasiness around politics of representation and a rethinking of *'objective'* scientific academic writings (Adams et al, p. 18). Carolyn Ellis called the objective writing as an actively censoring of the self, the "silencing of the voice." (Adams et al., p. 9). We may be able to make reasonable informed guesses when it comes to deciphering and representing social reality, but such endeavors are impaired by a murky, unpredictable and convoluted social reality (Adams et al., 2015, 9). Therefore, the goal of an intentional subjective writing was a more ethical, sensitive, and understanding representations of the convoluted *(emotional)* experiences of the self and 'Other'. Insofar that the autoethnographic turn became the means to convey the outer ungraspable with the graspable inner world. As Adam et al. (2015) express: "social life is messy, uncertain and emotional. If our desire is to research *social* life, then we must embrace a research method that, to the best of its/our ability, acknowledges and accommodates mess and chaos, uncertainty and emotion" (p. 9). A fitting description in cultural analysis.

Though opposition to this research method of intra-reflexive analysis accuse autoethnography of being methodologically weak and an ethnographer's navel-gazing, it is a form of posing and questioning the subjective experience of fieldwork and analysis. As with studying up, it has a social justice aim (Adams et al. 2015, p. 2). As Boyarin (1996) continues, "presenting the ethnographer as a narrative construction, that is, may well help us find room for a fuller presentation of our interlocutors" (p. 18). Therefore, autoethnography is aware of the speaking *for*. It admits the incompleteness of the ethnographer's ability to observe, pushes them out from a shrine of omnipresence, gives them a voice and points to their bias and inherent power to write and *speak.* The crisis of representation paved way to means of exploring comprehensive, vulnerable and emotional research.

Autoethnographies are described by Adams et al. (2015) as "an epistemology of insiderness" (p. 31) which means that an autoethnography uses the insider-outsider perspective we gather on the field to offer an interpretation of a phenomenon. Tony Adams' experience volunteering at an aquarium resonates closely with my experience volunteering at a Palestinian research institute. He describes building trust relationships with his colleagues and how the trust led to colleagues disclosing how volunteer's attendance would deprive them of their paycheck, because they were no longer needed for the day as the volunteers did the same work as paid workers. As Adams expresses: "this example illustrates how insider experiences helps generate insights that other methods might miss or actively discourage" (Adams et al., 2015, p. 31).

Crystal Biruk (2016) calls herself a NGOised ethnographer while realizing her double positionality as an ethnographer working as a fieldworker at a LGTBQ NGO in Malawi. She applies 'studying up' to her involvement and insider perspective in the NGO which informed the local and global dynamics that come into play between local actors and international donor (Biruk, 2016, p. 298). As Biruk (2016) states, it "entails a balancing act between participation and critique, one that troubles our scalar metaphors and hierarchies of knowledge by destabilizing the role of the anthropologist as a critic or knower" (p. 301). I apply the same methodology of studying up into the agendas of NGOs through my insider-outsider position at the research institute. In Goffman terms, Palestinian research institutes construct a fronstage of prestige and professionalism in order to conceal a backstage. The over-research issue would have remained concealed if I had been spoon-fed a curated frontstage where research is non-intrusive and regardless the methods, beneficial. The insider perspective at the research institute entailed a participant observation and interpretation of the NGO system.

Ethnography conducted in NGOs requires a high level of complexity in the ethnographer's maneuvering of their positionality and neutrality.

4.7 Ethical considerations

A preoccupation that ethnographers should focus in *'studying up'* are the possible consequences of their research. Particularly, research in a conflict zone such as the West Bank which could potentially do more damage than good to both the researcher and the researched. A point of discussion that serves to demonstrate the need to study up as well as down is that of ethical inequalities. This question of a "explicit double standard – is there one ethic for studying up and another for studying down?" (Nader, 1969, p. 181) focuses on researcher's qualms to research elites. Nader answers a student's concern to *'pretend'* not researching within elites, asking if elites hold more rights to not be researched than those vulnerable. Like holding a fake role such an assistant to gain trust and access to secrets and elite powers (Nader, 1969, p. 181). Such disguises are undoubtably unethical. However, this accessibility issue is bypassed by being open about research objectives. During my research, I did not pretend to be anything other than a student researcher working towards her MA dissertation. Moreover, I had made clear in my letter of intention that I was trained in organizational ethnography.

During the writing of this dissertation I have purposely avoided identifying the research non-profit I volunteered at, referring solely to it as the research institute. Ethical duties and a confidentiality agreement demand such a measure. To the extent even it does not appear in my LinkedIn profile. The descriptive vagueness of the non-profit and its location may turn away those looking for specifics, however, I had to make a conscious choice in order to be ethically grounded and avoid finger-pointing or claims of mud-racking the organization. It is also a strategic measure in order to be critical and honest about the informal chats and fieldwork observations I made while 'Studying up'. These observations inform the over-research issue, its ambiguity, and ethical tensions of NGOisation.

As cultural geographers, Duncan & Duncan stress, fieldwork ethics are nowhere near smooth sailing, particularly when our informant's beliefs and/or actions conflict with our personal feelings of social justice. Rather, they can propel a blinding criticism, and foment an ethical tension between of own moral stance and ethical duties towards our informants (Duncan & Duncan, 2001, p. 404). Duncan & Duncan's research was conducted in the town of Bedford, New York, with informants constituting friends and family members. Their research focused on privilege groups and the exclusionary methods to restrict development in Bedford.

Nevertheless, Duncan & Duncan (2001) are skeptical of any kind of societal impact of academic writing, stating that most do not receive wide attention (p. 404). This, however, contradicts experience of Carolyn Ellis (1995) when her informants read her ethnography escalating in angry reactions and tensions in the community upon her return to the field as the identity of the anonymized, yet sensitive, accounts were easily distinguishable. Indeed, Ellis had not expected her research to be read and distributed among the fishing village.

Thus, my partial post-fieldwork consent among my Palestinian colleagues is a key ethical dilemma to consider. I gathered informed consent with every Bedouin informant I interviewed as I was conducting commissioned research, however, with my peers and nameless NGO visitors, I am at an ethical standoff. I have only managed to gather partial consent with my colleagues, aware that certain negative and embarrassing passages will not be well received. I refer to these passages as personal communication. Though I have strived to anonymize the autoethnographic passages, and though I am sure the thesis will not attract the research institute's attention, I fear that some informants will read themselves into the analysis. Therefore, as far as it had been possible, I ensured writing impersonal passages and changing distinguishable details. Moreover, I have tried my best to be considerate and to provide a fair interpretation of their words. As Duncan & Duncan (2001) express, "a researcher should not presume to represent accurately other people's interpretations, especially not alleged misinterpretations, without careful consideration of the consequences" (p. 404). Thus, there is an ethical risk associated with writing about certain ethical malpractices my colleagues disclosed to me. Above all, I recognize the extreme efforts Palestinian NGO workers put into their work and therefore, I do not wish to cause harm them or the NGO. Rather instead I want to highlight an overall issue on NGOisation and over/under-research. When discussing the ethics behind my research, a university peer expressed that it would be rather *unethical* for me to avoid writing about the insider experience and dubious practices I encountered.

My exemplification of these ethical considerations is to move forward towards a dialogical approach (Conquergood, 1985, p. 6). A dialogical approach does permit a cross-cultural exchange, appreciating the appearance of difference, and opening paths of self-reflection (Conquergood, 1985, p. 9). Thus, the ethical aspirations of this thesis are to affirm a reciprocal dialogical approach towards those strained under the effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I hope that my critical contribution will foster new reflections of NGOisation and offer a genuine two-way dialogue on the issues of over-research in the West Bank.

5. The NGOisation of the West Bank

> In reality, whenever a group becomes dependent on outside grants for its survival, its dependence triggers a series of new inequalities (…) no funding agencies give funds to carry out a movement! (Nagar et al., 2006, p. 125)

5.1 Palestinian NGOs (PNGOs), the PA and Palestinian civil society

> *After 3, there is nobody in the PA offices* (Zaa'ir, Palestinian driver, October 11th, 2019).

The 1994 Gaza-Jericho Agreement, in the context of the recurring Palestinian-Israeli peace process, provided partial sovereignty of the Gaza Strip and the Areas A and B of the West Bank to the Palestinian National Authority (PA). The PA replaced the PLO's (Palestinian Liberation Organization) representative authority in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPts). Though the Agreement granted Palestinians the hopes for a two state-solution, in reality, the Oslo Accords were its downfall. As Arda & Banerjee (2019) note, the Agreement provided Palestinians with a crippled "quasi state, an area of limited statehood or more accurately an occupied territory" (p. 2). Thus, in the long term, the establishment of the PA led to the diminishing of Palestinian civil society for the sake of achieving Palestinian self-determination. By civil society, this thesis understands it as the social space that enables action and collective organization outside the private and governmental (Lang, 1997, p. 107). In the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian civil society acts as the social space that holds the Israeli occupation accountable, as seen in the unequalled social-self organization of the first and second *Intifadas* (in Arabic, public uprising). If NGOs act as "surrogates for civil society" (Albarez, 1999, p. 186), and if civil society holds the Israeli occupation accountable, then if NGOs do not hold the occupation accountable, I ask, who else will?

Since the British Mandate of Palestine and up until the Oslo Accords, Palestinian civil society was formed by voluntary grassroots and charitable organizations acting as substitutes to a Palestinian state. These grassroots, above all, demonstrated a Palestinian collective front of solidarity and unity in which they were able to self-organize and provide basic necessities to the Palestinians, gaining a historical collective approval. These reliable services were regarded as having high levels of credibility, involvement, and inclusion (Hajjar, 2001, p. 29). As the PA commenced their transition take-over, it led to increasing tensions, as these charitable and grassroots organizations were sidelined from their previous service provider duties. It spun a spiral of insecurity as the PA set to bridge the state and civil society, entailing increasing competition between the PA and Palestinian grassroots to access communities and

attract donor-funding (MAS, 2007, pp. 1-2). Moreover, as Islah Jad (2007) has argued, NGOisation contributed to the Fatah-Hamas split where political and religious agendas were pressured to recede. It particularly pressured Islamic associations to change names. As Jad argues, this was perceived as donor encroachment which contributed to the democratic win of Islamic Hamas political party in Gaza over secular Fatah in 2007. Hamas win halted elections in the oPts since 2005 and rendered the PA-Fatah President Abbas as de facto president (Freedom House, 2020). Consequently, NGOisation, as donor encroachments have crucial effects on the West Bank's political history.

In order to attract external funding and survive the change, Palestinian grassroots were required to professionalize (Hajjar, 2001, p. 29). Thus, after the signing of the Oslo Accords, Palestinian NGOisation snowballed into a transition from Palestinian collective self-organization and voluntary grassroots movements into the promotion of professionalized NGOs (Jad, 2007). A professionalized NGO fits the description of high levels of technicality and expertise among educated and trained professionals. Their technical jargon centered primarily in administrative work catered to pandering donors in the writing of grant proposals, executive summaries, evaluations, and reports (Biruk, 2016, p. 296). Whitaker (1963) has criticized this as counterproductive efforts for peace resolution, "in a language which must be as difficult to manufacture as it is unnecessarily tedious to decipher" (p. 70) which he argues makes the NGO research exclusory rather than inclusive.

Thus, the Palestinian NGO sector became dominated by what Islah Jad (2007) has termed 'project logic' where donors make their funding conditional to NGO's high levels of competency and delivery as to make their investment productive (p. 626). However, when this funding becomes conditional to donors' demands and agenda, research becomes vulnerable to foreign encroachment. Thus, one of the main aims of professionalized NGOs is to upkeep their benchmarks towards their funders which can entail the displacement of previous responsibilities and priorities to their beneficiary communities. In effect, as Arda & Banerjee (2019) conclude, NGOisation led to the transformation of "what was once a vibrant political civil society to a depoliticized civic society [which] normalizes the occupation while constraining forms of resistance" (pp. 27-28). As such, the gripping power of donors prevents mobilization among Palestinians as those working on the NGO sector become dependent on the steady income that donor-funding provides. This means that those fieldworkers who may previously have engaged in resistance movements are currently handcuffed to an NGO sector that demands demobilization and the silencing of activist political agendas (Roy, 2016). This

became evident in the generational rifts between the senior staff members and junior workers, the latter formed mostly by young, Palestinian, trained professionals. My Palestinian mentor, a senior fieldworker, a *dissident* at heart, had engaged actively in the pre-Oslo grassroots and Intifadas. In his burnout attitude, yet subversive and passionate ideals and discussions, he demonstrated a fundamental difference regarding the junior workers' attitudes who arrived at the institute in Jeeps and displaying fashion brands. Their ambitions at the NGO were horned by a desire for stability rather than revolution in contract to the senior staff. The evident generational rift can be traced back to the Oslo Accords and the PA's inclusion of the neoliberalist agenda. This new Palestinian generation working in the NGO sector has set eyes on economic recovery, despite being rather complicit to Israel's demands, as opposed to previous non-cooperative and resistant behaviour.

By demobilizing activism and grassroots movements, Palestinian resistance became co-opted by NGOs who take an issue-specific orientation to the Israeli occupation rather than promoting forms of a public uprising. Above all, the global agenda and donors do not wish for a third Intifada. Therefore, Tariq Dana (2020), highly critical of the PA, has suggested that:

> Donors' substantial influence on the PA institution-building, neoliberal economic policy and securitization of the public sphere has not only led to the demise of a Palestinian state but also contributed to the formation of 'zombie peace' (p. 247).

By 'zombie peace', Dana refers to Mandy Turner's (2016) declaration that the Palestinian two-state solution refuses to die after 20 years of negotiations due to the strategic utility of 'peace' talk to advance the 'neoliberalist colonization' of the oPts. The PNGOs and PA work towards up keeping the ideal that peace talks will resolve the conflict. However, Islah Jad (2007) has gone the length to describe peace and conflict resolution as a day job rather than a vocation. She stated that the deceiving 'projectization of peace' of the NGO elite becomes a springboard to reach the seats of power that are governing, shaping, and policy-making the peace process (p. 626). Further, Turner (2016) declares that the donors are equally at fault as the Palestinian policymakers, as the occupation's peacebuilding policies and development aid are inexorably entangled with the Israeli colonization while advocating to mediate its 'creeping annexation' (pp. 2-3), promoting the peace process' stagnation.

5.2 The PA and the neoliberalist agenda

The NGOisation of Palestinian civil society, promoted by the PA's acceptance of the neoliberalist agenda had crucial implications in the West Bank (for more detail, see the PA's development strategies since 2007). A neoliberalist agenda promotes a free-trade market meant to self-regulate its allocation of capital and resources, thereby allowing equal wealth distribution through a 'trickle-down' economy without state intervention or supervision. In the Palestinian occupied territories, this entailed allocating development aid into the private sector instead of depending on an inefficient government of the PA (Arda & Banarjee, 2019, p. 3). However, the PA's integration of neoliberalism into their development strategies granted gateway into the Palestinian domestic market, giving rise to foreign encroachment. Dana (2020), who is highly critical of the Palestinian Authority, has defined the current economic-political situation in the oPts as *neoliberal colonialism:* a preying system between "aggressive settler-colonialism and neoliberal racial capitalism" (pp. 247-248). This correlates to Choury & Kapoor's (2013) argument that NGOs are "agents of capitalist colonization of material space" (p. 10) which entails the "professionalization of dissident and knowledge colonization for capital" (Choury & Kapoor, 2013, p. 12).

Adam Hanieh (2016) tracks the nefarious effects of the introduction of neoliberalism in the West Bank in the unbalanced distribution of wealth as the development aid agencies promoted the buying of non-necessities with credit among urban middle-class Palestinians. Meanwhile, the overall West Bank's living conditions deteriorated (p. 41). The neoliberalist agenda fostered a chasm of inequality among the Palestinian social classes (Hanieh, 2016, p. 42). As we delve deeper into the NGOisation issue, it will become apparent that the over-research phenomenon is the tip of the iceberg, while underneath macro and micro-politics play a *development top-down structure* game. This thesis will demonstrate how neoliberalism is the enabler of NGOisation and over-research.

Neoliberalism follows the logic of the market, a logic arguably based on materialistic consumption and self-preservation. However, scarcity of resources under occupation leads to competition. This is crucially evident in Palestinian inability to develop healthy urban growth, lack of control of their water and electricity supply as these basic necessities are controlled and restricted by Israel since 1967 (Amnesty International, 2017). Neoliberalism escalated the intra-competition due to the individualistic *laissez-faire* in its agenda for capital again, in which inequality is bound to emerge.

This entailed new reconfigurations of neo-colonialism where Palestinian middle-class became active agents of this colonial continuity (Arda & Banerjee, 2019, p. 2). It set into motion, a structure of power where NGO workers are contingent to donor agendas in order to attract funding into the captive economy of the West Bank. The Palestinian captive economy is dependent on Israel since the PA's signing of the Paris Protocol in 2015 (Turner, 2016, p. 2). Therefore, the implication of an NGOisized Palestinian civil society entails accepting the occupation as inevitability, working around the neoliberalist demands, for the sake of attracting investment and funding into the oPts. It also entailed the interiorization of meritocracy where NGOs' leaders become then, adamant in referring to the prestige behind their donor networks (Jad, 2008, p. 625). Thus, the issue of NGOisation is that it can lead to the middle-class' hoarding of economic growth, but most importantly, *opportunity*. Peace talks became the opportunity to network the global arena and lobby the Palestinian cause. However, the proximity to power, and the opportunity it entailed, led to the emergence of a "globalized elite" (Jad, 2007, p. 628), comprising mainly of Palestinian Diaspora descendants. Thus, this globalised elite became neoliberalist agents in the oPts.

NGOs receive high levels of external financing. De Voir & Tartir (2009) position this surge at the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, when the external aid in the oPts rose over 600% between 1999 and 2008, totalling a US$3.25 billion investment per year. Specifically, Palestinian NGOs in the oPts received over US$48 million in 1999, increasing to US$257 million by 2008. It constituted an unprecedented 500% increase in funding. Europe was amongst the largest external donor constituting 70% (p. x). This high influx of funding illustrates the source of PNGOs' predominance to "roping in of donors" (Biruk, 2016, pp. 295-296) where PNGOs upheld a profit and loss approach to the captive market of the oPts in order to sustain their work. As such, much of the PNGOs time and efforts are directed to securing future donors (Cooley & Ron, 2002, p. 7). Cooley & Ron (2007) describe the transnational NGO sector as one based on 'multiple-principals' problems' in which raising competitive pressures within organizations emerge as the NGOs multiply, competing to raise the increasingly demanded grants and funds, Competition, instead of increasing effectivity, fosters the 'multiple-principals' problem as efforts are redirected in securing contracts instead of solving the core issue that funds the project (p. 7). Tariq Dana (2020) has criticized this profit-making approach as crony capitalism whereby insecurity leads to those in power to seek certainty in political-business enterprises among the PA.

Though arguably, high levels of funding should be considered as beneficial, the issue emerges when there is an uneven distribution of funding across the fragmented territory of the oPts. As De Voir & Tartir (2009) conclude, project distribution is *'disproportionately'* targeted to the Central West Bank areas (p. x). These areas include major Palestinian metropolitan cities such as East Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Ramallah. This unbalanced distribution of funding means that certain areas receive more research than others, causing over-research. On the other hand, those who reside further away from Central West Bank will deem themselves to be under-research as they receive less provision of services. Moreover, certain topics predominate donor agendas which entails a prioritization of 'issue-targets' such as the Bedouins in the Central West Bank. The issues that do not attract funding are side-lined, becoming under-research. The under/over-research paradigm, I have argued becomes co-opted by "popularity-contests in donors' agendas" (De Bárcena Myrsep, in press).

Another issue that emerges and contributes to over-research phenomenon is the steady increase of PNGOs since 2000 (MAS, 2008, p. 12). Every year, more professionalized NGOs register to the Palestinian Ministry of Interior, leading to an indiscriminate increase in organization seeking funding and project beneficiaries. MAS calculates that in 2007, the number of PNGOs in the oPts numbered 1,495 which totals a 61.5% increase since 2000. The increase entails a disproportionate ratio of 2,848 citizens per NGO (MAS, 2007, pp. viii, 9), increasing the chances of perceived over-researched by an over-solicited population. This becomes more obvious when these communities are sought out in a specific are and with high levels of vulnerability.

5.3 Palestinian academic burnout & deceptive neutrality

When engaging in the NGO sector, there is a sense of accomplishment and self-worth relating to *'feel-good'* politics. However, this is hampered by the futility of research which ultimately, leads chronic burnout. Burnout is characterized by exhaustion, disenchantment, and skepticism in the workplace (Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, n.d.). However, how does this burnout apply in the PNGO workplace?

I will argue, that when applied to Palestinians, burnout refers to the exhaustion and cynicism associated with peacebuilding and conflict resolution. I noticed an example of this burnout attitude in my Palestinian mentor. As described previously, he had had high hopes for the first intifada but lost his motivation due to the failures of the peace process. Working in an NGO was the means to gain an income while working towards coalition building and international

solidarity (Palestinian mentor, personal communication, September 3rd, 2019). The stockpile of burdens and emotional strains of the occupation, in the form of bitter disappointments, nevertheless, had taken a toll on his outlook towards possible peace resolutions. Though burnout, he kept his spirits high, laughing and joking in despite of crying at the face of demolitions (field notes, 21st, 2019). In his apparent burnout, my Palestinian mentor demonstrated the NGOisation and over-research downfall: the reliance of data fabrication in the NGO sector. As I struggled to make contact with key gatekeepers and schedule interviews, my Palestinian mentor noticed my increasing distress. To my research design dilemma, he recommended making up my interviews. At my negative, he suggested: "How about you pretend that I am a Bedouin and you interview me? That will enrich your interview sample" (personal communication, September 5th, 2019). Surprised, I repeated my negative, to which he answered: *'You are too ethical.'* This statement, hinting to my ethical naivity of first-time fieldworker, is an anecdote exemplifying how the NGOisation system, as inducing academic burnout, affects the ethics surrounding the research process in the oPts.

Adam Hanieh (2016), utilizing Franz Fanon's work, states that colonialism works through means of affective action against a sense of self-worth (p. 38). Frantz Fanon (1963) analyzed the 'colonial mentality' in his expertise of mental health psychiatry during the North Africa, in particular, the Algerian war of Independence (1954-1962). Fanon analysed the permeating effects of oppression on mental health, constructing a sense of inferiority of the colonized *versus* the superiority of the colonizer. Hanieh (2016) interprets Palestinian experience as one where colonial occupation influences all aspects of Palestinian everyday life: from mobility, to access to healthcare, education, and opportunities, etc. (p. 38). This entails that the Israeli settler colonialization buries itself into the emotional and the quotidian, ultimately affecting the every day, the social, and the sense of self. Oppression then becomes the domination of the self where self-esteem, as a collective spirit, is diminished through the denial of future alternatives (Hanieh, 2016, p. 36). As such, committed Palestinian activist perceive their work as hopeless, a futile endeavor crippled by the burden of the occupation.

Thus, when my Palestinian mentor mentioned that the conflict had been killed by research, he was expressing the complicity of research with this oppressive system, denying him any hope for other alternatives except the gradual acceptance of complete annexation of Palestinian land. These burnout perceptions cement a demoralized collective spirit, defeated by the realities on the ground. The 'creeping apartheid' (Yiftachel, 2009) has left no hope for a two-state solution, evident in Netanyahu's declaration to annex the Red Sea and Jordan

Valley officially into Israel in 2019. Illustratively, Sari Hanafi's (2004) *spacio-cide* theory demonstrates a calculated policy of 'divide and conquer' which entails a persistent agoraphobia in the oPts: the fear of an ever-shrinking space and growing population trapped inside it. Spacio-cide targets *place,* abolishing its use and promoting Palestinians youth to seek out better life opportunities abroad, escalating a brain drain. This is masked as a form of 'voluntary transfer' which merely normalizes coerced displacement (Hanafi 2012, p. 191). As I have argued elsewhere: "My Palestinian mentor, operating in this system of limited political agency and interiorizing defeat, systematically addresses Israel's colonial success as an inevitability" (De Bárcena Myrsep, in press). This is a by-product of settler-colonialism and defeating prospects as NGOisation has weakened any form of civil engagement and so, it inspires "loss of political autonomy" (Roy, 2015). NGOisation is a theory that not only criticizes hierarchical structures, but rather, examines the subduing effects of depoliticizing resistance.

NGOisation has been described as a 'vicious circle' embedded in a "deep contradiction and double standard" (Nagar et al., 2006, p. 113). As hinted previously, NGOs are arguably part of the *'feel-good'* political machine where the promotion of NGOs abroad is viewed as positive contributions. However, when reframing NGOs' broader context of neoliberalism, it is telling how they emerged under what is known now as the 'NGO boom' of the Global South in the 80s and 90s, as states would sponsor NGOs as a form of mediating *policing* (Kithinji, 2007, p. 41). Through this policing approach, funding donors demanded high levels of demobilisation and depoliticization among voluntary grassroots organizations. In the context of the Palestinian struggle for decolonisation and aspirations of self-determination, INGOs' efforts concentrated on depoliticising the conflict due to international pressure to appear neutral. INGOs' neutral approach is a strategic one, as they must appear apolitical in order to continue their work in the region. As Jon stated, this is because Israel can jeopardize their projects at customs (INGO fieldworker, personal communication, august 1st, 2019). Therefore, their international fieldworkers and development aid are at risk of being refused access to the West Bank. This demands complete neutrality from international workers.

Nevertheless, the inability of international NGOs to appear political is the leading reason why Palestinian researched communities view international donors as complicit to the occupation. This silencing of criticism to Israel's agenda is viewed as a form of foreign encroachment. During a conversation with Kaliq, the Bedouin representative, explained how his village was solely saved from demolition and displacement due to the sudden and direct intervention of a

European prime minister. To this he added: "if they [the World leaders] really wanted to stop Israel, they would have done so long ago, they just won't because they want to keep Israel happy" (Kaliq, transcribed interview, August 29th, 2019). What this quotes underline is the ongoing frustrations that Palestinian Bedouins formulate in regards deceiving neutrality. This perspective was confirmed in Jules, who noted how:

> The Dutch built a solar system in [a Bedouin village]. The Dutch, behind the scenes, put enough pressure so they got them back from Israel. And that infuriated me, because they could do more in general (Jules, gatekeeper, transcribed interview, August 2nd, 2019).

Therefore, NGOs and state agencies are perceived as complicit to the occupation through its passivity to address Israel's systematic control of Palestinian development process (Arda & Banerjee, 2019) unless when their interests are at stake. I will argue that over-research develops through a sustained process of disappointments and abuses backed up by the non-profit industry complex (INCITE!, 2007). The non-profit industry complex is a concept related to NGOisation which focuses in criticizing state agencies funding NGOs to encourage stability, but which ultimately demobilizes radical reforms.

5.2 A *go-along* fieldwork visit to rural Palestinian villages: A look into class divisions of the PNGO elite

One of the few times the research institute invited to the field was to two remote villages in the south of the West Bank. The aim of the trip to Area C was to introduce a heavily funded herding project to vulnerable villages. The project was funded by several prestigious INGOs and European agencies. Before departure, my colleagues filled the jeep's boot with boxes of juice bottles. On my lap they placed two boxes with pastries. Once we arrived at the villages, I was requested to follow my female colleagues to conduct a focus group with the village women while the men did the same with our male counterparts. The team would present themselves, the project's objectives, and ask for the attendants to sign a participation sheet with their personal information. I noted down in my field notes how some women would avoid signing the attendance sheet which troubled my colleagues. As I learned later, these attendance sheets are crucial for the professionalization of the research institute as these sheets proved consent but most importantly, demonstrated the interviewed data sample. These numbers will go back to the funders. The larger the number, the more efficiency is demonstrated. In a way, the village women became data and their experiences becomes

transformed into numbers (Khan, 2015, p. 108). Thus, I observed, their 'sample data' worth is measured in quantity, rather than quality.

Once the focus group ended, and the compensation rewards of juice and pastries were distributed, my colleagues left in a surprising hurry. I had hoped for my turn to conduct my questionnaire, however, my colleagues entered the Jeep blasting the AC on. Cheerly, they started looking into their smartphones and discussing Instagram fashion posts. In the back of my mind, I felt like the tokenistic juices and pastries were food in exchange for knowledge. However, this exchange of food for knowledge was not reciprocated back. When we were given taboon baked bread in the next village, I was the only one accepting a typical *'fellahin'* (peasant) piece of bread. My colleagues refused the bread, which seemed to displease their 'cosmopolitan' sensibilities. I was later told by Jon that this bread was predominantly combusted with coal and dried manure (Abu-Rabia, 2001, p. 44). This displayed the social discrepancies between the *fellahin* women who accepted grateful the pastries and juice bottles for their participation and my colleagues, who were able to refuse the *taboon* bread. Thus, the contrast of the summer heat in the community room and the Jeep's AC, the offering of bread and the refusal by my peers to accept it, showcased a division of class rather than culture; a stark division between the rural and the urban; and between the educated Palestinian middle-class trained fieldworkers and the *fellahin* women.

Salman, the Bedouin activist, would later elaborate on the division between the rural and urban, already discernable since the outset of the conflict when the urban wealthy families would leave Palestine to move abroad and the rural *fellahin* would steadfast or flee the Israeli army (Pappé, 2006). Those who were able to leave became the Palestinian Diaspora elite. These class divisions became more pronounced when I enquired about the focus group, to which my female colleagues replied: "it's a bit frustrating because *they* don't know much" (personal communication, August 4th, 2019). This demonstrated a *'Theyification'* (Khan, 2015, p. 108) of research participants where they were deemed commodities rather than agents. *'Theyification'* emerges as a concept that denounces a detrimental yet grounded disassociation of personhood, as an objectification of researched communities (Khan, 2015, p. 108). My colleagues' frustration regarding the knowledge of these rural women concerning herding practices demonstrated a privileged positionaly where their knowledge did not equate to their expected measured standards. Salman framed that this division was stemming from miscommunication or misrepresentation, stating that urban Palestinians living in Area A are accustomed to security and did not recognize the privilege of their area, therefore:

> […] I am telling you, if you didn't suffer, you will not work for peace, you will not feel the meaning of peace. The people in [city in the West Bank]? You think they will work for peace? Some of them?" Salman, taking a breath, would continue: "It doesn't make sense that Area C is 72%. It doesn't make sense that what they are making in Area C will not happen to Area A (transcribed interview, July 28th, 2019).

Thus, the *politics of difference* (Young, 1990) damage collaboration between those researchers and those researched. As Salman explains, this entails that though educated middle-class Palestinians work for peace, they neglect the realities on the ground that foster activism. Though my Palestinian colleagues may be committed to the ideals of the struggle, they are unable to relate to the occupations' everyday hardship. Nevertheless, Salman's remarks could be analyzed as an 'exceptionalist perspective' where his Bedouin experience becomes unprecedented and does not correlate to the rest of the non-Area C Palestinian experience. However, this discrepancy of 'suffering' fosters the stereotypes of politics of difference and identity discussed in the previous chapter 2 on Bedouin perceptions and misrepresentations. Interviews demonstrated that the Bedouins, and Area C residents, feel betrayed by the PLO's acceptance of the Oslo Accords. When Salman states that the city-people do not work for peace, he is disclosing the painful reality of sectarianism that Israel has encouraged through territorial fragmentation. As such, privilege is disclosed as class and location. As Koen et al. (2017) conclude, "socio-economic inequalities between researchers and communities create significant power disparities in their relationship, which in turn foster community vulnerabilities to exploitation" (p. 7). This hopes to demonstrate how social discrepancies, based on power inequalities, in the research process can foster over-research perceptions.

Most NGOisation literature demonstrates that 'empowerment' projects are predominantly empowering those on the top of the corporate ladder (Nagar et al., 2006), especially in the appropriation of civil movements it insists deceivably to be working for. Though a priori specific, these NGOisation analysis build a solid basis that demonstrate a broader utility applicable to the development-focused research institute. Jon, an acquaintance from a prestigious INGO, who also worked with Bedouins, disclosed; my Palestinian institute had the reputation of post-project disengagement. As he explained, the research institute seemed to avoid a follow up with the community once the project was completed (Jon, INGO fieldworker, personal communication, July 25th, 2019). This correlated Cooper and Ron's (2002) statements that NGOs prioritize the next project and the next source of funding over

following up previous ones. This fosters a disassociated prioritization where efforts are prioritized in grant writing are prioritized over work on the ground. As such, the donor-client come first over the project's recipient/beneficiary. Contrarily, Biruk (2017) takes a different interpretation to what she has termed the "pandering to the donors" (p. 297). She analysed it as a loss of translation, meaning: what the people may want is lost in the conversion from the issues on the ground turned into a project outcome, as one must appease or fulfil the donor's requests.

As Nagar et al. (2006) argue, the double standard of NGOs lies in how those in power interact with a lesser power in the social hierarchy. The Nagar et al., the fieldworker Sangtin writers, relate how those directors working above them spoke of equality at rural villages without implementing the same principles at their offices with their village-level fieldworkers.

> As a result, the decision makers who evaluated and measured our work always remained more important than the people with whom we were directly working to bring about social change -literally the people who were making this work happen (Nagar et al., 2006, p. 115).

The go-along demonstrated the corporate ladder of the NGOisation structure. I intend to expand on the NGOisation system further in the next section.

5.3 The mimicry in NGOisation

The professionalisation of NGOs entails higher levels of quality and delivery, which increases the network relations with the international donor community. In its turn, attracting more funding and more projects in which conflict resolution becomes a honey pot subject. Indeed, Palestinian NGOs capitalise their proximity to power within the global agenda, playing the political 'development' game. At the same time, NGOs carefully craft and capitalise interest to gather funding. As an example, as I attempted to recruit Bedouin informants, a man stopped me in the streets of Bethlehem and explained: "I am a Bedouin!" Yet he worked in a refugee camp. It is an eerily similar encounter when Biruk described how the Malawi NGO where he worked had to scrutinize research participants in case any 'fake gays' had infiltrated the group to monetize their participation (Biruk, 2016, p. 300). In a manner, capitalizing 'target studies.'

Within the prestigious NGO offices, this capitalisation occurs when I was deemed by my client as 'a good influence and link to have with Swedish Universities and Sweden,' letting my colleagues know that 'I had to be kept busy and happy' (Palestinian client, staff board

meeting communication, July 16th, 2019). NGOs, therefore, do indeed 'study up' the global interests, as Biruk states, an NGO boss "adeptly 'studies up' and fruitfully garners resources, money, and status from multi-scalar actors by self-consciously engineering his performances to match his perceptions of his audiences' interests." (Biruk, 2016, p. 300). This entailed a learned mimicry to become competitive in the NGO sector of the globalised Palestinian elite.

Jon disclosed how, within research circles, working on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can act as a springboard for a prestigious career (personal communication, August 1st, 2019). This gives rise to an exploitative side of research, where it holds an instrumental role for the researcher's career advancement and not for the benefit of the researched community. This is concretized through the attractive nature of the conflict to draw in potential funding for grants combined with networking opportunities. It becomes apparent, in the possibilities to make influential connections, that the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is a 'closed context' (Koch, 2013) with small urban hubs to network. A simple look into the listed board of directors at any PNGO illustrates this argument, as they predominantly are directors at other PNGOs. Illustratively, this makes the NGO sector a closed, even exclusory, 'context'. Illustratively, most NGOs and NPOs are located in Area A, predominantly in Central West Bank.

NGOisation in the West Bank occurs through the capitalization of the occupation as the 'global' becomes intertwined through the 'local'. To the extent that there is a mimicry of 'colonizing voice' (Bhabha, 1985). This mimicry extends to the NGO sector as Palestinian NGO elite imitate and interiorised the technical jargon. To imitate those in power, Bhabha theorizes, is to attempt to access the power base. I wish to clarify now that I do not deny Palestinians' use a subversive mimicry (Bhabha, 1984). However, what this thesis wants to focus on in this chapter is the mimicry of the neoliberalist agenda onto the NGO and knowledge production apparatus. Thus, to learn how to speak the 'donor's language' becomes a strategy to attract reputation, funding, and praise. A strategic mimicry of the NGO specialised vocabulary to market issues and attract funding. This is arguably a learned practice of policy writing and proposal writing, referred to as Grantsmanship (Deloria, 1989, p. 26).

Grantsmanship is the marketisation of project proposals in order to procure grants to the NGO, regardless of the project's value and necessity to the beneficiaries. Thus, the project does not warrant to be beneficial or successful, as long as it can market itself as such. This fosters an enabling system of meritocracy where NGOs attempt to upkeep their reputation

and funding-income through rhetoric and technical-jargon that turns a mediocre or failing project into a successful story. This process can entail data falsification: omitting failures, manipulating facts, or twisting the narrative. As Cooper & Ron (2002) illustrate, this NGO behavioural question is based on the uncertainty of the NGO sector as competition for grants can be brutal: "these contracts, moreover, are often performance based, renewable, and short term, creating counterproductive incentives and acute principal-agent problems" (Cooley & Ron, 2002, p. 7). When the NGOs' organisational viability is at stake, NGOs fieldworkers feel the pressure to please their bosses and donors. Cooley & Ron (2002) describe how the evaluations lead to fieldworkers to cover up the lack of tangible results as failing the evaluation led to the projects' dismissal and possible termination (p. 15). Perhaps my Palestinian mentor's suggestion to *'make up my interviews'* was based on this commonly accepted practice of evaluation and data falsification.

The issue of mimicry in the NGO sector stems from the beneficiaries' push to the side-lines, as passive receivers rather than having agency (Arda and Banerjee, 2019, p. 14). As Palestinian NGOs embrace neoliberalist principles and apply them to vulnerable communities, these become commodities to compete for. This marketisation pushes NGOs to squeeze in technical jargon to imply solutions, concoct, and sensationalise issues to press donor investment (Ferguson, 1990, p. 72). To the extent that NGOs purposely misrepresent the beneficiaries' interests for the sake of attracting funding. Once this disassociation settles in, the community tends to view themselves as exploited. I encountered this frustration when a Bedouin disclosed how the PA preferred to attend awards and fancy dinners than rebuild their demolished homes (Husam, Bedouin elder, personal communication, August 13th, 2019). This infuriated Husam as he heard how these official ceremonies centred in discussing Bedouin matters. As such, Husam felt as if the NGO elite, in complicity with the PA, is consciously mimicking colonial superiority attitudes to Bedouins. Husam viewed these 'fancy parties' as insulting to the Palestinian cause, he then asked: "tell me, where the money is going?" (transcribed interview, August 13th, 2019).

Where is the money? I wish to refer to this question as the work of the donor-funding's 'invisible hand' which ultimately, directs funding, affects research designs, their scope, and aims. The use of an 'invisible hand', derived from Adam Smith's metaphor of the market, serves to illustrate the donor's control over the Palestinian free market; ultimately controlling the development aid sector and influencing the NGO Palestinian elite. The Palestinian elite benefit from their close relationship with influential donors, gaining prestige, and status to

lead the funded research projects. They are the ones choosing to invest the funding in administration or the beneficiaries. The failure of any meaningful economic 'trickle down' entails that, vulnerable communities, such as the Bedouins in the West Bank, rarely see the full amount of promised economic recovery which ultimately, make them dependent on NGOs as service providers. However, this issue of distribution of funding is not as clear cut as I make it out to be, this is demonstrated from this transcribed interview:

> You know, they had an *iftar* during Ramadan, and the PA told him to organize it and then they put out the pubic invitation, so there was like 350 people and [Bedouin representative] had to provide five sheep, each sheep is 3000 shekels. 15,000 shekels. And the PA didn't pay. And yet the Bedouins know that there was X million from the EU. They use it for something. The Bedouins said they stole it, that's our money, but the EU has auditors, they have bookkeeping. It's very easy for them to say they stole it. The PA used to restore [Bedouin village]. But that's a whole project. That's not necessarily part of the 8 million or whatever money was for the Bedouins. But he has the right to ask the EU, show the report. Probably in English. Show me the audits. Maybe he is right, maybe they did steal it. But it's very easy to say that without knowing. It's like people always like to talk about the corruption of the PA. There is a level of corruption, of course there is. And I found it in very hard ways, more than once. But if you say, they don't do anything, and the world is giving them all the money. Well, I'm sorry; they are doing something because the world is not giving money for free. If it's a one-million-dollar thing and they saying that it costs two and they are forging receipts… who know? (Jules, gatekeeper, transcribed interview August 29th, 2019).

As this quote demonstrates, there is an inherent mistrust between the PA, the Bedouins, and international organizations like the EU. As Khan asks: "funding tends to follow policy, rather than the other way around, and does this not make all research political?" (Khan, 2015, p. 112). This entails that the funding will always be politically motivated. The issue of tracing the audits and receipts becomes crucial in an exclusory manner as Bedouins struggle to access the English and technical jargon reports that delineate the use of money. Nevertheless, as Jules expresses: "what I find very, very worrying… Money, it doesn't come with an identity" (Jules, gatekeeper, transcribed interview, August 29th 2019) as the funding that comes into the West Bank has no identity and therefore, is hard to trace back, specially within a conflict setting.

Crucially, Vanessa Buth (2011) determined that professionalization of NGOs can be at the expense of representation (p. 1). I take this argument and expand it to the issue of Bedouin representation and how NGOisation denies the idea of a self-sufficient Bedouin community. However, while conducting fieldwork, Salman in his role of Bedouin activist, was proud to give me a tour around their community center where they prioritize literacy, and the recently renovated greenhouse and beekeeping (field notes, July 28th, 2019). Thus, the representation that the development aid agencies promote is a vulnerable, incapable Bedouin who depends on aid. Illustrative, Jules mentioned how the EU has a tendency to take credit over 'success stories' to promote their image abroad. Jules described how the EU had taken credit over the building of a Bedouin village and school, yet Jules noted, the Bedouins had already settled there in the 50s in tents.

> They lie so much, and inside there, there is a kernel of truth, so use it (…) [the Bedouins] are waiting for people to solve the problem (Jules, gatekeeper, transcribed interview, August 2nd, 2019).

This quote demonstrates that the EU and the Bedouins have found a common ground where Bedouins accepts the EU's appropriation of their community wins in order to gain assistance. As such, they mimic and perform their vulnerable role for the sake of external aid.

5.4 Ambiguity in NGOisation & stakeholders

The following interview with Jules demonstrates the process of NGOisation through the perspective and experience of a lobbyist activist engaged with the Bedouins. As a gatekeeper, Jules speaks up on the levels of strained miscommunication and frustrations between donors abroad raising funds and those working on the ground.

> I know somebody, and she drives me crazy, she's in [U.S. city]. The people involved in this [Bedouins] issue… and they aren't living here? It's very difficult for them [the Bedouins]… but it's also very difficult for us [the activists] because it puts a bigger burden on us. She has someone working here, a Palestinian, but it puts a bigger burden on us to fill in all the gaps for them. Because she really doesn't understand the mentality or what is happening or the current political situation (Jules, transcribed interview, August 2nd, 2019).

Burden. Jules positions the NGO dilemma onto the issue of external funding: without living in the West Bank, how can the donors really tackle the issues on the ground? Jules' efforts to improve the Bedouins' quality of life is especially daunting when there is a lack of donor

understanding on, firstly, the mentality of the people of the West Bank, and secondly, on the fast and complex developments of the occupation. As Jules points out, this is due to an inherent lack of communication and reasonable expectations between what the Bedouins want, what the gatekeeper/fieldworkers can achieve, and what the funders expect from both. It informs my cultural analysis on the concept of the burden of the occupation by consistently using the word burden, the informant demonstrates how the burden of the occupation is put on the shoulders of those in the field. However, as I will demonstrate in the following excerpt, the issue is neither black nor white, but a consistent spectrum of shades:

> And you get to a point that if you are not careful, they [the funders] are exploiting and abusing. You know what I mean? It's not balanced in any way. It's like… I get a WhatsApp and it says: 'I need you in congress next week; it's the international for older women.' And I am ready, but I cannot afford the ticket. 'Oh, we will find a way' and then she doesn't. And now she is fundraising 700,000 to rebuild [a Bedouin village] and I'm like: 'I think it would be the right thing for you to pay us something, for advocacy, for… you know, whatever.' And she says: 'no, I'm dealing straight with the people, I don't need you now.' And I was like, man, you don't have any… what's the word… moral obligation (Jules, transcribed interview, August 2nd, 2019).

Moral obligation. As this quote demonstrates, the interdependence between stakeholders is not clear cut which entails frustration and mismanagement. The reciprocity is unbalanced. As a middleman, a gatekeeper, Jules expects an exchange, a compensation for their NGO's work. The conversation continued, which puts a question mark on the issue raised: morality and reciprocity in the NGO sector.

> And it's very frustrating because, for example, she gave me an award last year. She said: 'I hope it helps your fundraising,' but first of all, we will invite you and we will fly you over and then when the day came, she said: 'we will do a Skype and maybe we just write something and read it out loud. And I wrote something that helped *her* fundraising. I was thanking all the people there for their support, their wisdom, their funding… And I didn't get any funding from it, not even from all the people at the fundraising, not the fundraising… but the annual gala dinner (Jules, transcribed interview, August 2nd, 2019).

Annual gata dinner… Her fundraising. This quote delineates the issue of officialdom and prestige in a competitive NGO sector. *Officialdom* is described by Lea Jellinek (2003) as the downfall of success, an oxymoron of NGOisation. Officialdom describes the process of grassroots work co-opted by official ceremonies, shiny awards, and galas. As Jellinek

describes what was once a collective effort to do good work on a women's micro-bank loan system was appropriated by the 'male-controlled' Board of Directors. As the NGO tightened relations with government officials, these links with power directed the NGO's funding. The government officials expected *officialdom* in return. As the funding increased, more disassociation from their grassroots work emerged. Fieldworkers efforts were redirected to writing grants and organizing time-consuming 'exclusive events' and visits from government officials. Funding was spent on free snacks, shiny plaques, certificates and trophies with the NGO emblem. Lea Jellinek (2003) described how "everybody seemed to enjoy the dressing-up and the pomp and ceremony" (p. 176) that just added to the illusory image of success. As Jellinek observed, what was considered 'success', prestige and funding, was, in her view, the 'collapse' of their original mission. This critic of officialdom NGOs demonstrates the concern Jules has regarding fundraising. However, there is a lack of self-awareness of what it entails, leading to my questioning behind her motivations in describing the woman from the U.S.:

> You would think she said, here is a thousand dollars or something as well. And when you are fundraising 700,000 dollars, you can't tell me you don't have 10% for your own admin? Come on! It's like she thinks people are there for her to use because we are all in the same campaign which is fine, because you don't have any money and you can't leave the country, etcetera… so the people who do not live here is like… disastrous (Jules, transcribed interview, August 2nd, 2019).

Disastrous. As a gatekeeper, Jules feels exploited. However, this last quote shows a discrepancy in her frustrations in terms of an entitlement on where the funding should be directed. Her discussion on moral obligations and vexation towards the 700,000 dollars that are not shared with her is observed as troublesome. Because if read closely, objectively raising 700,000 directly to the Bedouins should be a matter to celebrate. In Jules' exasperation there is an over-zealous attitude characteristic in West Bank's gatekeepers who must compete against other gatekeepers and stakeholders for funding. Reciprocity, therefore, is a key issue. Its discourse demonstrates a double standard as Jules expects to get something in return.

I would agree with M.C. Khan (2015)'s theoretical standpoints where he negotiates his position as researcher and gatekeeper through a provocative statement; by comparing research with pimping. His heavy argument emerges from autoethnography, as his experience describes research as exploitation as outsider researchers reach out to him as a youth worker to trade in 'the Muslim experience'. How his experience of gatekeeper can entail a problematic position where he must protect his community from researchers' intrusive gaze

and also, choosing who to allow access to them. As he elucidates: “a new type of go-between, extortionist and entrepreneur has emerged living off the ‘exploitation of experience’ and trading on its current hyper-inflated political and academic currency: the researcher” (Khan, 2015, p. 107). In summary, Khan describes research as the sniffing of valuable data outside our own culture until it is swallowed in its entirety, leaving nothing behind. In effect, marking up the transformation of experience to a product to sell, namely the ‘trading of experience’ (Khan, 2015, pp. 106-107).

5.5 A fetishism for authenticity

In this thesis’ introduction, I declared the ‘fetishism of conflict’ (Browne & Moffett, 2014, p. 230) as concealing a ‘fetishism for authenticity’ where research becomes invasive and inconvenient rather than interceding. Broadly speaking, a fetishism for authenticity is the search for sincerity and genuineness, a proximity to reach a semblance of Truth. Therefore, researchers’ fetishism for authenticity is to expect veracity without self-interest or deception behind an informant’s discourse; the giving of candid accounts to the researchers. Nevertheless, I will argue, in an over-researched field, authenticity has become marketable through the academic and NGO industrial complex, a manufactured product, where candidness is eroded by a sample bias.

The key holds a crucial meaning for refugee Palestinians. It is tangible evidence of their ownership of their former houses, destroyed or taken over by arriving Jewish immigrants during the Palestinian exodus, the *Nakba*. Most graffiti or symbols illustrate the key or Palestine’s historical territory as a whole. The Aida refugee camp, for example, has a key on top of a door, indicating the entrance to the camp. Thus, the key symbolises Palestinian rightful ownership. Holding the key, often around their necks close to their hearts, is a symbol of the right of return. Concerning over-research, I will argue that the key symbolises the giving nature of the researched and the taking nature of the researcher. Quite metaphorically, the researchers desire the key to open the lock that conceals the sought-out Truth. This argument is based on Nur, a Palestinian academic and potential gatekeeper, who stated proudly that:

> You know, I have many keys, when I do research, they give me the keys. These are their keys, because this is the sign that they would like to return back” (Nur, Palestinian academic, August 12th, 2019).

This can be taken literal or metaphorical. Nevertheless, the message is clear: researchers sought out keys. These keys can be dangerous. This quote comes from an interview with Nur,

a Palestinian academic and a potential gatekeeper. When I described Nur to my Palestinian client. He labelled Nur as 'narcissistic' as "she likes to take photos with important people" (Palestinian client, personal communication, August 4th, 2020). This was corroborated by the multiple photographs displayed around Nur alongside the keys. Ego-celebrity is a concept derived from Jellinek (2003) where she describes the increasing ego-narcissism in the NGO sector. Nur's implied prestige of the photographs with 'important people' such as PLO president Yasir Arafat demonstrated a need to immortalise and boast elite connections.

At a first-hand, it seemed as if Nur sold a brand representing academic activism through the collection of Palestinian cultural knowledge and traditions. However, as this quote intends to illustrate, there is a slight dynamic of exploitation in the giving of the keys. To give the key is to give a central part of being Palestinian, the last evidence of the lost homeland. Analysing the discourse behind the statement: *"when I do research, they give me the keys"* indicates that to do research is to take. The keys are yet to be returned to their owners, which closely illustrates the dynamics of truth/authenticity and exploitation in the act of collecting or "trading of experience" (Khan, 2015, pp. 106-107). As Palestinian confide their keys to Nur, in the name of research and posteriority, there is evidence that scholarship holds enough credibility to take away our most precious. This is critically described by the Sangtin writers:

> We realise acutely that in today's aggressive world, where everyone is competing to produce ideas and knowledge, it is not just our work, insights, and labor but also our private griefs and sorrows that become tools or toys in the hands of the more prosperous, educated, and established people to advance their own names and reputations (Nagar et al., 2006, p. 123).

Thus, despite having the opportunity to fake these keys, the researcher wishes to display the authentic regardless the exploitative nature of the transaction. The keys may be tools but the private griefs and sorrows that symbolise the keys becomes tools of the appropriation of experience.

In conclusion, this NGOisation chapter has aimed to demystify the NGO sector of the West Bank. The main aim has been to 'break the silence' surrounding research in conflict zones (Browne & Moffet, 2014). This culture of silence enables the NGO enterprise to thrive, as researchers continually arrive to the West Bank in search of first-hand expertise to advance their careers in peace-resolution. The culture of silence is fostered by the NGO sector as they hide the neoliberalist business model of the NGO sector, in effect, concealing the under/over-research phenomenon.

6. Entanglements of over-research

6.1 Research fatigue and research resistance

Most Bedouins have a bitter relationship with research, as a necessity and a burden. Palestinians have been the constant predilection of researchers, to the extent that I have previously argued that: "there were instances of shared honesty where we would question the usefulness of research to deter the occupation, and conjecture that the West Bank and the Gaza strip are an experimental petri dish of settler colonialism, positioning Palestinians as the 'natural objects' of conflict research" (De Bárcena Myrsep, in press). This predilection to seek them out as research participants have propelled several ramifications based on opportunity and profiteering. The issue of the fly on the wall entails, first of all, a lack of reciprocity. Thus, when researchers continually interact with a community without giving back, their presence leaves a dent in their everyday life in the expectation that the next research project will be a waste of time. These negative encounters with researchers manifest in research fatigue and resistance, practised speech and research savvy communities. Thus, future research will be affected and even deterred by previous experiences with research (Clark, 2008, p. 956).

A distinction must be made between research fatigue and research resistance as the former does not always entail in the latter. Each individual concept has differing effects on the quality of social research. Research fatigue is the exhaustion or reluctance that occurs after continual exposure to the research process. The main factors that affect communities' perception on research and contribute to research fatigue are, firstly, a breach of trust, second, a lack of dissemination of findings and third, a lack of tangible or worthwhile results or changes (Clark, 2007; Omata, 2019). Research resistance is primarily the by-product of research fatigue as communities refuse to participate in any more research. The research fatigue of Bedouins became evident after I finished an interview, laying aside my notebook and recorder, Husam noted: "*yanni*, there is no appreciation for our time wasted in these types of researches" (Husam, Bedouin elder, personal communication, August 13th, 2019). Before I was able to enquire further, the conversation was interrupted by my driver who asked about the new mobility requisites passed by the Israeli Civil Administration. As it was my first week in the West Bank, I had not realized how Zaa'ir, the driver/shopkeeper, was a gatekeeper himself. Nevertheless, I noted in my fieldwork diary:

> Today, I was driven by a local shopkeeper to a Bedouin community. Before we arrived, he started describing how he is used to researchers, the way we speak, the questions, and

> the answers. He said, 'I once brought another Finnish woman here before. I promise you. I can guess your questions' which only added to my uneasiness. I know for a fact that the constant recruitment of the same participants disembogues in research fatigue (fieldwork diary, July 27th, 2019).

Therefore, the emergence of research fatigue in the field is the manifestation of the futility of research and the burden of occupation in those continually targeted as research participants. According to Jules, the Bedouin activist, their NGO is unable to access all Bedouin villages because certain ones have a hostile attitude to researchers that often ends in rejection (Jules, personal communication, August 29th, 2019). This is often due to the seeming complicity of researchers with Israel's agenda as previously described in their strategic neutrality. It becomes evident then, that over-research perceptions emerge due to fears of surveillance (Tannock & Sukarieh, 2012, p. 497; Biruk, 2016, p. 300; Karooma, 2019, p. 18). Consequently, neutrality is associated with a breach of trust. This surveillance matter is of high importance to Bedouins as their issues stem from land confiscation which could lead to their misplaced loyalty to Palestine and be considered traitors. The PA's have a hardliner policy regarding selling or giving up land due to Israel's negotiations, which ultimately can lead to capital punishment. This substantiated fear predominantly emerges due to undisclosed use of the research's purpose and the possibility that the research outcome will be detrimental for the Bedouins.

Research fatigue is verified in Naohito Omata's (2019) conclusion that over-research causes scepticism, exhaustion, and avoidance of projects. This reduces the sample data as there is a lack of recruited participants inclined to genuinely engage in the research project. Nevertheless, in an over-researched field, willing participants can entail poor quality of research as over-researched communities lack 'authentic responses', which Omata calls lack of 'candidness'. Overall, denying a researchers' inquisitive fetishism of authenticity. Omata maintains that the lack of honesty stems from 'high expectations' and bitter disappointments, leading to high levels of mistrust on researchers (Omata, 2019, p. 15). However, Omata states that this disappointment is due to a misplaced trust from communities on research's capacity to have an impact. He states:

> This is an unfortunate result of the limited capacity of academic research to feed into policy actions, or at least of the unlikelihood that research will result in immediate policy changes in refugees' surrounding environment (Omata, 2019, p. 15).

Vine Deloria (1969) in his influential Indian manifesto, as activist and academic, offers a provocative, yet sarcastically humorous perspective where he describes the negative expectations North American Indian communities have of researchers, in specific, anthropologists. Similar to Palestinian cantons and the search of sovereignty and indigenous land rights, Deloria describes the detrimental influence of researchers at Indian reservations, arguably too 'closed contexts':

> You may be curious as to why the anthropologist never carries a writing instrument. He never makes a mark because he already knows what he is going to find. He need not record anything except his daily expenses for the audit, for the anthro found his answer in the books he read the winter before. No, the anthropologist is only out on the reservations to verify what he has suspected all along (Deloria, 1989, p. 80).

Deloria was among the most critical of both 'pure research' and 'applied research' in their formulation of what he describes as 'useless knowledge' (Deloria, 1969, pp. 80-81). He states that theorizing Indian networks leads to their invisibility and misrepresentation, fostering the imagined community of a 'tribal nomadic people'. In his chapter on 'Anthropologists and Other Friends,' he recommends the termination of any research participation with anthropologists as long as there is inequality, stating that anthropologists only research Indian communities to gather academic acclaim. Declaring that what Indians need is less "experts" on Indians, a "cultural leave-us-alone agreement, in spirit and in fact" (p. 27). Concluding that researchers should get down from their *Ivory towers*, relinquish their make-believe of any authority of expertise on Indians and so, exchange preying on them to assisting them in their search for recognition of their rights (Deloria, 1969, p. 100). Therefore, negative encounters with researchers, Koen et al. account, often amount to neglect, misunderstandings and unsuccessful boundaries during the consent process, particularly when misrepresenting Bedouins with quotes taken out of context to serve an argument, which breach the trust and confidentiality between researcher and informant, escalating in "disenchantment and cynicism" (Koen et al., 2017, p. 5) to research.

The appearance of researchers —notebook, camera and recorder in hand— leads to the accustomed researched community to apply their previous experience. In itself, making 'informed' inferences from previous encounters. The researched community applies stereotypes onto them, as seen in Deloria's depiction of anthropologists. If previous researchers have broken the sensibilities and trust in their consent, the applied expectation will be of guarded reserve or plain rejection. Therefore, past experiences inform future

interactions. As Karooma quotes in an over-researched informant: “we think researchers take pride in our increasing problems in order to research more... We are still facing the same problems despite the numbers of researchers we have met” (Karooma, 2019, p. 18). This entails that researched communities expect research to capitalize on issues. Instead of relating research to a problem-solver, they see research as a problem-enabler where research NGOs take complicity. This expectation is accentuated when NGOs’ research is primarily commissioned to inform governments. As Khan delineates, research informs policy and funding accompanies policy which makes research inherently political (Khan, 2015, p. 112).

The over-focus of research concerned to the violations of the occupation entails that, though Palestinians *can speak* and *continue to speak* despite Israel’s very active lobbying and silencing of ‘truth-claims’, Palestinians are asked to solely speak on their suffering and pain rather than their agency and *sumud*. Which which Abu-Assab et al. (2020) described as a market-based on an “economy of victimhood” (2020) where victimhood becomes marketable and profitable. To the *orientalised* Palestinians, Zionist research has continuously denied their right for self-determination and right to exist as a people (Said, 1978). However, though this narrative of an imaginary people has enabled Israel’s settler colonialism, research becomes an encroaching practice, rather than an intervening solution. As Tuck & Yang (2014) insist, we must first acknowledge that research has a limit (p. 224). It is up for the researchers to recognize where the limit is and respect those who are subjected to research.

Therefore, research fatigue and research resistance go hand in hand with previous experiences and expectations. To refuse research, in a manner is to “preventing disruption of projected definitions” (Goffman, 1956, p. 7). This ‘prevention of disruptions’ became evident in Salman’s elderly mother refusal to participate in my interview. Though present throughout the interview, serving us tea, she preferred to stay silent. When I enquired, Salman stated: “if I will translate it to her and ask her what’s peace, what’s justice, she will kick you and me out” (Salman, Bedouin activist, transcribed interview, July 28th, 2019). This leads me to analyse her refusal as an emotional safeguard. This is because research can become the intrusion and probing of emotional responses to questions of peace and justice. Thus, in Salman’s elderly mother there was an evident display of research refusal. Thus, the older Palestinian generations convey a tired attitude to the never-ending peace process of the Palestinian-Israel conflict. Salman’s statement, that his mother is tired of peace-talk, to the extent that she would ‘kick us out’, entails a reactionary fatigue to the peace-talk. It demonstrates a research fatigue to barren words and the empty promises that researchers

recurrently bring up in their interviews. This illustrated how research can engage in high levels of emotional stress factors. However, it also demonstrates how research communities do hold some agency to deny the access of researchers into their communities (Pascucci, 2017, p. 250). As I bid farewell, Salman stated: "to speak of justice, when nothing is done for justice, is to speak in barren words" (fieldnotes, July 28th, 2019). It becomes increasingly crucial to understand the dynamics of vulnerability-levels and over-research. Despite having agency, the Bedouin increasing vulnerability to the occupation entails that they may be unable to establish limits into the researchers' questions. Thus, Bedouins enact agency through impression management (Goffman, 1956) and scripted answers to interviews. In an over-research field, precautions must be taken to respect the limits imposed by our informants, and so avoid the mishandling of knowledge-information. When I emailed Salman to thank him, he politely let me know his stance regarding the futility of research: "it was a good interview, but I'm looking behind the interviews, we want to get more people here and let them know the situation. You are welcome to come visit us again." (Salman, personal communication, July 29th, 2019). This revealed his own beliefs towards interviews in which he implied that international advocacy is appreciated, however, only direct engagement can lead to improvement.

6.2 Encounters of 'practised speech'

A practised speech is a form of repetition and scripted answers. It constitutes an upfront performance to the researcher's intrusion. The practised speech of Bedouins became evident when I diverged from the standardized survey Palestinians are used to. Examples of these routine questions could be: *How do you feel about the occupation? How has the occupation affected your everyday life? What are your thoughts about the two-state solution? Do you hope for peace?* While conducting research among Bedouins in Area C, there was an obvious pattern and repetition of discourse. I asked similar questionnaires to five different Bedouins in different villages' and the answers only diverged in numbers and dates, not in content. Even the manner of speaking was similar, incorporating key words of justice and solidarity. I then questioned if the occupation was a common experience, so permeating it became patterns or, its disclosure, a learned manner of speech? In Goffman's terms, is it a cultural system that sustains itself through performativity?

This leads to my second analytical argument. I will argue that the phenomenon of practised speech is a consequence of an over-interviewed community. As stated before, research fatigue can lead to the erasure of candidness. This is supported by Koen et al.'s study:

> Research fatigue could potentially create distorted, invalid results because either the participants respond in a learned way, or in ways that misrepresent reality because they no longer take the study seriously (Koen et al., 2017, p. 4)

I analysed forms of practised speech among Bedouin communities as a form of scripted frontstage performances (Goffman, 1956). I expostulate that practised speeches are forms of fatigued narratives of conflict where the researched community repeat their learned script as if reciting from an over-rehearsed performance. These scripts are catered to the researcher in order to conceal the personal.

I will then, assert that forms of practised speech belong to what Goffman (1956) calls 'defensive practices' or 'protective practices' (p. 7) that are internalized as cultural norms due to the Bedouins' high exposure to research methods. These subtle displays of practised speech are forms of preventive practices to avoid embarrassment or misrepresentation. Through these tactics, Bedouins attempt to conceal and safeguard their inner circle from the intrusive gaze of the researchers. The Bedouins, through trial and error, have developed a corrective practice that veils everyday life which is an attempt to control the narrative surrounding the Bedouin question. It somewhat compensates the invested time put into social research as the Bedouins strive to take ownership of the projection's researchers insert into their analysis. This is what Goffman named *impression management* (Goffman, 1956, p. 8) in the manner which individuals curate their performance to fit a specific impression or audience. The individual seeks to manage the projection of self onto others, in such a way that is a tactical choice in communicating with researchers to manage these impressions.

While conducting the interview with Salman, the Bedouin activist, I digressed in asking about herding intra-competition as I had read a footnote on the matter. Taken by surprise, Salman stammered for the first time: "*yanni*, I don't understand this question, this question seems… weird" (Salman, transcribed interview, July 28th, 2019). This unveiled a backstage where Salman was intentionally over-communicating certain facts —Israel's breech of human rights— while under-communicating others —Palestinian sectarianism— (Goffman, 1956, p. 87). His taken aback reaction demonstrated that Salman had curated a convincing frontstage performance to researchers which, when interrupted by the fact, was deemed 'destructive

information' (Goffman, 1956, p. 87). In his sudden interruption of speech, as he fumbled for words, there was a detectable deviation from the script. My sudden intrusion into the backstage contradicted his projection of Palestinian unity. This aligns well with what Goffman (1956) described as in: "when these disruptive events occur, the interaction itself may come to a confused and embarrassed halt" (p. 6). As Goffman states, people engage in the backstage when the audience, in this case, the researchers, are not present. Therefore, in his reluctance to admit any Palestinian sectarianism, it became evident that Salman, in his role of Bedouin activist, was performing a role in front of me in order to upkeep his 'strategic secret' and 'inside secret' (Goffman, 1956, pp. 87-88)

On one hand, it showcased an ethnographic limit, which Audra Simpson (2007) has described as the fear of losing the image of unity and recognition that Palestinian have fought for so long, which could jeopardize a representational territory (p. 77). In Salman's under-communication on intra-conflict and deviating the attention in his vague answer, he was practicing 'information control' which aims to conceal and misdirect from the 'strategic secret' (Goffman, 1956, p. 87). On the other hand, it also demonstrates how over-research, as poor data, occurs due to an ethnographic thinness inherent in resistance studies. Shelly Ortner (1995) described this thinness as emerging due to the researchers' tiptoeing around intra-conflict in resistance movements and the unquestioned "cultural authenticity" in ethnographies (p. 190). To this, Ortner adds a question on multiplicity of social interactions. However, how does this multiplicity is affected by an over-researched community who learns a script?

As Goffman notes, we engage in lip-service as a way to hide our agendas behind pleasantries and common ground, as a way to construct harmonious consensus (Goffman, 1956, p. 4). The Bedouins, by showcasing high levels of hospitality according to their social norms, demonstrate a construction of a frontstage that aims to engage others into its curation. As we continued the interview, it became obvious in Salman's charismatic descriptions, that he was well-accustomed to the standardized questions. It demonstrated a practised speech learned by heart through expected questions in front of multiple enquiring visitors. As Salman stated: "when you go back to your country, tell your people, your family about what you saw and heard. That will help. You know, even sharing a post on Facebook, it is helping" (transcribed interview, July 28th, 2019). As such, Bedouins are aware that visitors are outside ambassadors which can carry the word of the Israeli occupation.

In my field notes, even when I was unaware of my own on-the-field analysis, I was well aware of the phenomenon of practised speech:

> I am told by a friend that when it comes to researchers, the informants tend to exaggerate in what I will refer to as practised speech. In everyday life, they are used to researchers coming and going and researching, and most of the times, they answer mechanically to the researchers' questions. This comes from an example of a survey on energy use from organization X. In hopes of receiving more humanitarian help and grants, they conceal the correct answer, and often, organization X interviews children because they answer more truthfully about their households than their parents. We discuss our position as researchers as an awkward encounter, where we can see how research is overdone; a business transaction most of the times. In some ways, humanitarian aid poses this dilemma: you can come and try to help, but at the end of the day, what is achieved with research? How will my research help me and how will it affect the Bedouins in the future? (field notes, August 2nd, 2019).

In my inner dialogue, I am troubled by my encounters in the field. As Goffman elucidates, when we interact with others there is an exchange of information of the self. Through inquiring on my positionality, I raise the issue of over-research and how over-research fosters unethical practices. My friend, working at an INGO, admitted to seeking out children over adults to conduct surveys. This seemed highly unethical, as the children were unaware of what the effects the research might take. This could create tensions in the community and even put the children at risk. Goffman (1956) states that past experiences largely affect the social interactions of the group. This early exposure to research will have consequences in their future engagements, fostering, as I have argued, a learned social script that could aim to mislead researchers or showcase a curated reality. These experiences are projected as cautionary tales, anecdotes that illustrate disruptions of everyday life, such as the intrusion of researchers on the private sphere, which will inform future interactions (p. 7). Thus, practice speech can lead to defrauding, which Goffman (1956) describes as the means of the presenter of the self to "get rid of, confuse, mislead, antagonize, or insult them" (p. 2).

Therefore, I understand that *practised speech* are strategies of refusal and protection: an ethnographic refusal to modalities of knowing (among others, monolithic categorizations, binaries, the making of *difference*, and ethnographies) (Simpson, 2007, p. 67). Ortner (1995) described ethnographic refusal to entailing resisting a 'thick description' by sanitizing the political and asserting the invisibility of the subject (p. 174). As Audra Simpson would

describe, ethnographic refusal is a tactic that understands the dissonance of what matters to research participants and what was is actually written (Simpson, 2007, p. 72). As Simpson analyses, informants are aware that these narrations are constructed through the collective dissemination of shared lived experiences (p. 78). This would explain why there was consensus in each narrative of conflict, as the collective predicament becomes communally internalized.

With the researchers' understanding of the limits of research, ethnographic refusal can become a reciprocal practice that develops into a decolonizing methodology. Ethnographic refusal is a possible solution to over-research, as it entails the mutual understandings between researchers and researched, in which both decide what is considered valuable, publishable, and ethical to enquire. Vis a vis to ethnographic refusal and practised speech is the emergence of research savvy communities which exploit their previous experiences and apply them onto the upcoming researchers.

6.3 'Research savvy' Bedouins

As I have demonstrated, interactions have consequences and purposes, even subconsciously or unintentionally. Social interaction informs behaviour and shapes cultural norms. How we present ourselves to others defines how they will perceive us. Power dynamics are defined by these critical formulations of the self. Bedouins enact their agency by projecting their victimhood while demonstrating steadfastness in front of adversity to raise the admiration of the audience. These co-producing projections are purposeful to convey their interests: raise advocacy and solidarity. This is a learned social script that emerged through the constant denial of Palestinian as a people during the establishment of the Israeli state (Said, 1979). To denounce to Israel's breach of international law is a survival tactic. This entails that Bedouins prioritize their own survival as an "interactional *modus vivendi*" (Goffman, 1956, p. 4) that I refer to as *interactional* advocacy. After more than 70 years of conflict, young people like Salman have interiorized their role as engaged activists. This leads to a reconfiguration of the 'traditional role' of provider in Bedouins' commitment to activism to bring security and advocacy against forcible transfer.

The constant influx of researchers into a specific community fosters a close relationship with the knowledge production apparatus. It shapes expectation and corrects past *'mistakes.'* Neal et al. (2016) and later Elisa Pascucci (2017) have labelled the continual exposure of the research process as catalysing 'research savvy' communities. These research-familiar

communities are able to capitalize their involvement to their favour and fit their interests. A research savvy response, which includes forms of practised speech, manages the impression given to the researcher in the hopes to gather assistance and receive benefits in return. It also protects the researched, likewise becoming a 'defensive practice' or a camouflage. Thus, a research savvy response aims to reduce the exploitative side of research. Though similar, yet differing, a research savvy response can be considered, in Homi Bhabha's (1984) terms, a form of mimicry where the mirroring of similarity aims to produce an "identity effect" which can mock, divert, and lead on researchers 'fetishism for authenticity' (p. 131): "for the fetish mimes the forms of authority at which it deauthorizes" (pp. 131-132). It subverts expectations, particularly the colonial representation. Thus, articulations of research savvy, albeit ambivalent, subvert while mimicking representations the researcher expects to encounter.

Contrastively, I will demonstrate that in an over-researched field, research savvy occurrences can turn against researchers. This ties up with my previous chapter on NGOisation, as competition and demand participants generate opportunities to scam unknowing researchers.

After unfruitful weeks of unanswered emails from relevant gatekeepers, one particular NGO invited me to spend ten days in the Jordan Valley conducting research at remote Bedouin villages. Relieved at the thought of having a tangible fieldwork experience, I immediately accepted. However, the previous weeks before going to the Jordan Valley, I introduced myself to Jules. Upon mentioning the NGOs' name, Jules immediately mentioned the man in charge of the NGO, letting me know that the whole trip would be a research scam. The subsidized accommodation was not as free as they advertised, and strategically, the meals and jeep transport fee of 200NIS per day would increase each day. Due to the remoteness of the Bedouin villages, the researcher would be obliged to pay the fee as there would be limited alternatives to return from the Jordan Valley. Once I was aware of the scheme, I noticed the subtle urgencies in the email reminders to *'make sure to have the means to pay each day'* or *'to make sure to have spare change in case of emergency'* (email exchange, August 15th, 2019). Therefore, in an over-researched field, the surplus of researchers into the West Bank becomes a profit opportunity, so far that these kinds of dubious NGOs find means to take advantage of the incoming research grants and high demand for research participants. In an over-research field, demand and necessity lead to exploitation. This demonstrates how gatekeepers likewise can take advantage of both the researcher and researched communities. Therefore, the need to be research savvy goes two-ways, where researchers must first familiarize themselves in the field and find reliable gatekeepers to guide them.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Conclusive remarks

This thesis' main aim has been to break the culture of silence on the West Bank as an over-researched field, with Palestinians continually being recruited as reticent, yet advocacy-driven, research participants. Over-research emerges when the system in place is continually unaddressed in literature, falsifying a seemingly free-stream fieldwork, consequently, sanitising the ethical dilemmas that organically emerge throughout the fieldwork.

Though ethically loaded, the statement of an over-researched West Bank has demonstrated structural and social issues that hope to demystify the double standards of the knowledge production apparatus and NGO sector. It had hinted to the colonial continuities mimicked in NGOisation. As I step back from the field, taking a reflexive stance, it becomes evident that too much research can be detrimental and should be limited.

Returning back to Urban Whitaker's statements on the *'Dangers of over-research'* (1963), I agree that "the basic problem of war and peace is not that we do not *know*, but that we do not *do* what needs to be done" (p. 68). As such, this thesis has addressed the *knowing* incapacity of the NGO and complicit research in the West Bank. We do *know* what has to be done yet, as demonstrated in the NGOisation chapter, we do not do enough to deter the Israeli occupation. Thus, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been sustained by pillars of *knowing* and *theorizing*, to the extent that Palestinian experience has become *invisible* and *abstracted*, transformed into data and numbers. Research, in a sense, becomes a chronicle of Palestinians' occupation instead of catalyzing a solution-based approach. Consequently, I will argue that we do not need more research on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, rather instead we should apply what we have already uncovered through 70 years of an over-researched conflict.

Through critical first-hand accounts, I have concluded that the process of NGOisation in the West Bank has indubitably sustained the perception of over-research amongst Palestinians. I have argued that over-research emerges due to the NGO's embrace of the neoliberalist agenda, fostering associations of 'crony capitalism' (Dana, 2020) and research complicity to promote Palestinian struggles for the sake of career advancement. Thus, NGOisation fosters class divisions, meritocracy, data falsification, and hidden political agendas through donor-funding, among others. This leads to communities' fatigue and refusal to engage in the research process. Through a Goffman analysis of performativity, we can observe how Bedouins enact agency through the curation of a frontstage and the concealing of a backstage

from the invasive gaze of researchers. Thus, I have theorised through an *impression management* analysis that Bedouins practice defensive practices in order to project a narrative to the researcher-audience and so, lessen the intrusions of research.

Through the conceptual introduction of two terms: the '*futility of research'* and *'the burden of occupation'*, I have aimed to exemplify the feelings of inertia, frustration, and burnout that research and settler-colonialism can generate. At what point do you say enough research is enough? As I have argued, the emotions associated with the *futility of research* emerge due to the institutionalisation, depoliticization, and demobilisation of Palestinian civil society. Thus, this thesis has argued that the NGO sector is fostering a generation of disengaged, corporate, and disassociated fieldworkers. In effect, rendering a banality, an instrument fomenting the Palestinian-Israeli conflict instead of resolving or addressing the conflict's root causes. By promoting studying down, the donor funding agencies hide their agendas behind 'feel-good' politics, project benchmarks, and 'success stories'. Academia benefits equally through the neoliberalist agendas by its promotion of NGOs and grants as a means to fund their research and access gatekeepers.

Though arguably NGOization can benefit countries, as the marketing of NGOs' work has the capability to attract much-needed development aids, this thesis has demonstrated the detrimental effects on vulnerable communities like the Bedouins. This enables a system where research is deemed as futile, yet due to the burden of the occupation, such inconveniences and intrusions must be endured. In order to reduce the drawbacks of NGOisation, a primary approach would be to relieve the funding of donor pressures on NGOs. First, by alleviating foreign intervention on NGOs' agendas so that the investment remains grounded in local knowledge, instead of disassociated western perceptions of 'what is best and needed'. Second, at the expense of depoliticization, to promote grassroots movements instead of top-down hierarchical systems that foster ego-celebrity attitudes. Thirdly, regulating the concentration of projects and gatekeepers in certain areas. This would ultimately expand NGO's outreach so that certain issues or communities are not side-lined due to donor's ignorance or lack of interest. Finally, though tricky in the context of the oPts, to promote the PA's universal service provisions. This could only be achieved with democratic elections in the West Bank.

The appearance of over-researched topics demonstrates an inherent issue within competitive academia where trendy 'topics' such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are more likely to receive praise, funding, and interest. In summary, we should be paying for the relevant issues

that we need most. In the case of Whitaker, to pay for university teachers who will shape the next generation of academics, in the focusing of ethics on the field, rather than fostering an environment of 'celebrity-academics.' Thus, we should be looking inwardly towards our own culture or looking up and horizontally rather than downwards in order to free the clutches of inequality intertwined and embedded within own hierarchical society.

In conclusion, this thesis has tackled key issues predominant in cultural analysis such as authenticity, narration, and performativity (Fredriksson & Jönsson, 2008, p. 10). By deriving two graspable and provoking concepts, the *futility of research* and the *burden of occupation*, this thesis has aimed to provide a new perspective on over-research and NGOisation theory while offering first-hand advice, linking issue with root-cause. As Fredriksson & Jönsson (2008) have demonstrated: "applied research in ethnography, in reality, means dealing with very different problems in very different arenas and among very different groups" (Fredriksson & Jönsson, 2008, p. 92). Thus, I believe this thesis is a valuable and worthy addition to the discipline as it has tackled different problems, over-research and NGOisation, through different theoretical standpoints. This leads me to add that cultural analysis can add methodological and theoretical rigour to regulate high levels of incoming researchers. Following the decolonising concept of 'ethnographic refusal' (Ortner, 1995) we should address the ethics behind refusing to conduct more research, as less *express research* would increase the quality behind our sample data and increase the quality of our understanding when approaching to potentially over/sub-researched communities.

As such, cultural analysis can uncover mistrust issues between actors with different agendas (Fredriksson & Jönsson, 2008, p. 82). This is what this thesis has aimed to analyse in the critique of NGOisation. Cultural analysis can aid in providing better alternatives and possibilities to Bedouins in the development of research protection tactics. Therefore, cultural analysis can aid in "lobbying for sustainable development projects, and in linking academia with the public and private sectors in co-operative projects" (Fredriksson & Jönsson, 2008, p. 82). These are strategies to take into consideration when considering adding research to an over-researched field.

7.2 Indications for further research

It would be a paradox to recommend further research in a conflict that I have declared to be over-researched. Yet, within this incongruity, that no more research is needed, there is a kernel

of hope that more ethical, self-aware, and generous research will aid Palestinian efforts for decolonisation and self-determination. If we were to take research as an active exercise instead of a passive one, accept that the 'fly on the wall' is rather the elephant in the room, then perhaps we can shed the past injustices committed for the sake of research. Rather than accepting research as a self-advancing exercise to practise our university-education privilege, our *taught gaze*, research should be addressed as inherently political. This entails that research should be recognized as inherently activist, even when that activism is shrouded as passivity. In a way, to do nothing is ethically dubious too. In the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, neutral, depoliticised, and passive instances, are complicit with the mechanism of structural inequality that the Israeli settler enterprise promotes. Further research into the NGOisation process should offer answers to coalition building and international solidarity, to address what has gone wrong with the neoliberalist agenda in the NGO sector.

Thus, though I have demonstrated how research can be intrusive, it is important to emphasize how research can be a gateway for advocacy. Bedouins, in their efforts to *sumud* the occupation, demonstrate so. Their engagement show how research can open critical lines of communication. It is crucial, then, to analyse the role of researchers in the conflict, which under/over-research offers a starting point. Is the role of researchers merely to collect data, analyse it, and produce knowledge? The end seems to over-rule the means. However, within these means we can apply reform and lay the foundations for future researchers as 'responsible researchers', taken from Noam Chomsky's "responsible intellectuals" (Chomsky, 2016, pp. 9, 17). As Chomsky notes, a responsible intellectual must upheld a moral responsibility in our shared universal humanity. Thus, a responsible intellectual take responsibility for the ripples of time, action, and reaction that emerge from producing knowledge. A responsible researcher then would understand the negative effects of under/over-research projected onto communities as the responsibility within these researchers is to defend universal notions of justice and freedom while acknowledge their privilege and status to do better.

Thus, this thesis aims to motivate reform and social change. Consequently, this thesis has deemed crucial to list the following principles based on OCAP (Ownership, Control, Ownership, Access, Possession) to reduce the perceptions of over-research (Schnarch, 2004):

- To *regulate* the influx of researchers and donor-funding into over-researched areas.
- To *mediate* our promises and expectations to our informants.
- To *set* realistic methods and goals. Good-faith objectives attitudes are not always enough.

- To *foster* trust through consent forms and reciprocity.
- To *maintain* reciprocity after leaving the field. If you promise to come back, fulfil the promise. Not for the sake of research but because of the relationships forged with your informants.
- To *disseminate* findings back to the community.
- To *set* limits to your own curiosity and probing, e.g. accept that participants can refuse to answer questions or simply, waste your time.
- To always *prioritise* the wellbeing of the participants and your own.
- To *believe* in meliorism and reform. Research can be a positive contribution to solidarity, coalition building, and engaged activism.

In summary, my indication for further research, though paradoxically loaded, would be to include cultural analysis as a mediator for over-researched communities. I will argue that an applied cultural analysis is perhaps the answer to the under/over-research issue as it can raise interest and attention within state institutions, donors, private corporations, and NGOs. While building theoretical frameworks and analysing gaps in the literature, cultural analysis offers a gateway into the patterns of over-research and the behaviours behind it (as seen in Goffman's analysis). Thus, cultural analysis aims to bridge the mindsets behind NGOs, researchers, and the researched. It can implement a theoretical and applied push to similar ethical protocols such as OCAP. I believe this thesis is an important contribution to the applicability of the discipline as it offers critical standpoints useful for the West Bank's stakeholders. It can hopefully advise future researchers, especially those early-career researchers, on what to expect in an over-research field like the West Bank.

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