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The Art of Resistance: “Sumud,” Graffiti, and the Palestinian Contestation of the Apartheid Wall in the West Bank

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at George Mason University

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the people of Palestine and the Palestinian diaspora.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks go out to so many people, most notably my family, friends, and committee members. It has been a long road, but such a small effort compared to the Palestinian struggle.
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ABSTRACT


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George Mason University, 2018
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The local and transnational dimensions of the role that street art and graffiti play in challenging the apartheid conditions within the West Bank (Palestine) are an important piece of what is happening today in Palestine. By analyzing tensions in the Apartheid Wall as both an object to resist and a subject made to ‘speak’ through graffiti, social spaces and structures of social relations are revealed to be both enabled and constrained via this wall of separation. Based on interviews I conducted with Palestinians living within the Occupied Territories, as well as others among the Palestinian diasporic community living in exile, this thesis identifies and illustrates the significance of sumud, a distinct form of Palestinian cultural resistance, and graffiti’s place within it. Through research and first-hand experience, I find that spaces for Palestinian dissent, independent representation, and democratic politics taking place inside the Apartheid Wall are becoming increasingly circumscribed by the Israeli State’s methods of surveillance and
censorship, which have been undermining Palestinian human security in the name of advancing Israel’s national security. Nevertheless, I argue that graffiti inside the Apartheid Wall continues to serve both to contest the meaning of space, and as a powerful, public practice, for reclaiming contested space. Furthermore, it serves as a potential resource (e.g., through what is often called conflict tourism) for Palestinian efforts to raise awareness within, and forge transnational ties of solidarity to, new audiences who are not directly embedded in the conflict.
INTRODUCTION

It is a hot, sunny day during the Summer of 2013, and the narrow streets of Bethlehem are bustling with pedestrians and cars. Families stroll past low-built walls with symbols of love and Arabic text scrolled across them while religious pilgrims pass through the graffitied Apartheid Wall on their way to the Church of the Nativity, where Jesus Christ was born. Taxi drivers assure tourists they know where all of the international English street artist, Banksy’s, works are, while commuters returning from work in Jerusalem pass under signs evoking peace between the world’s major religions. On the outskirts of the West Bank, protestors in the town of Nabi Saleh, demonstrating against settler encroachment, gather around a wall display of an olive tree and a painted key, symbolizing cultural rootedness and the right of return. Nearly every façade is adorned with a local political factions’ message of support for continued resistance, the expression of transnational solidarity and alliances, or ironic images suggesting the illegality of Israel’s ongoing and expanding occupation. Graffiti in Bethlehem is not a sporadic occurrence, an expression of juvenile angst and rebellion against the state; it comprises a resplendent canvas, difficult to ignore, that magnifies the political culture of the urban space and the creativity of resistance.

The political potential of art, even graffiti, is often debated, with scholars contesting a range of interpretations. The production and dissemination of artwork
requires the participation of an audience, who hold substantial power in determining the legitimacy or significance of the art. Generally, “street art in authoritarian regimes,” as Lyman Chaffee observes, “is one way to break the complicity of silence [often imposed by the state or its apparati]; to mobilize against the demobilization attempts; to inspire and motivate; and to manifest…that there is an organized opposition to the government. In essence, this forum circulates a critique of dictatorial regimes and keeps the resistance alive” (1993: 16). While graffiti in the contemporary Palestinian context is less indicative of a formal, organized resistance, it is undoubtedly a form of political protest. Therefore, the significance of the myriad types of graffiti on and around the Israeli Apartheid Wall should be understood within a local (e.g. Palestinian) perspective, to ascertain whether these images and messages possess any political potential or force.

Beyond mere artistic expression, beautification of a cityscape, or disorganized outbursts aimed at an oppressive military occupation, the graffiti on the Apartheid Wall is more widely symbolic of the culture of Palestinian resistance, colloquially referred to as *sumud*, or ‘steadfastness,’ and the transnational networks successfully established through the management of local Palestinian experiences on a world stage. The street art, regardless of its contemporary origin, has comprised an integral part of Palestinian resistance tactics since the first Intifada in 1987, and has adapted to new political and popular demands presented by the evolution of communications technologies and Israeli policies and tactics of occupation and control. Within a context of physical and spatial violence and restriction, these images and texts represent connections and communications with a global and transnational community, the surmounting of imposed
isolation, the contestation over the meaning of space, and, in the words of Israeli architect Eyal Weizman, the “un-walling of the wall” (2007).

Recognition of street art’s role in politics, and the culture of politics, validates the alternative and often subversive nature of the act of graffiti generally recognized within academia. For Palestinian resistance, it is indicative of another creative manifestation of effective political agency, and recognizes their own cultural resilience, or sumud, as a legitimate and powerful tactic against Israeli apartheid. The significance of this approach can be found in Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ *Epistemologies of the South*, a text that pursues justice in knowledge as the first necessary step toward equal opportunity and understanding:

“[I]f social practices and collective actors resort to different kinds of knowledge, an adequate evaluation of their value for social emancipation must be premised upon a new epistemology, which, contrary to hegemonic epistemologies in the West, does not grant a priori supremacy to scientific knowledge…It must allow for a more just relationship among different kinds of knowledge” (de Sousa Santos 2014: 42).

If the artwork on the wall is widely perceived to represent *sumud* by the Palestinian population, and *sumud* is recognized as a legitimate form of resistance, or resilience, then such symbolism and meaning-making must in turn be recognized as valid and politically significant. Affective response to artwork, or even emotional impetus to the production of art, are thus important aspects of political discourse vis-à-vis Palestinian resistance.
The following section of this paper begins with a literature review covering the various perspectives on the nature and structure of the Israeli occupation (especially regarding its physical and spatial dimensions), the consequences of the Apartheid Wall and various forms of resistance to it (specifically, as well as the occupation in general), and the sociological significance of the graffiti found there. Beginning with the concept of Derek Gregory’s ‘spatialization’ and the social construction of space, this paper will then discuss the politics of architecture, or the contextual co-optation of Israeli civilian employments into the political-military policy apparatus of surveillance and control. The contemporary result of such state planning manifests itself within the Apartheid Wall which, as of 2002, has been the most invasive and recognizable image of the Israeli occupation. The dynamism of Israeli tactics will be mirrored by the diversity in Palestinian tactics of resistance, most notably the concept of *sumud*, representing the vibrant political and cultural life emerging as a direct result of Israeli domination. Finally, a synthesis between Palestinian tactics of resistance within the confines of these physical and spatial dimensions to the occupation and the utilization of the Apartheid Wall (and other instruments of control) as a site of this resistance will be explored as a vital and creative response to the current political situation on the ground.

In the second section of this paper, I discuss the methods that I used to explore the meaning of the Apartheid Wall graffiti. Since a primary concern within this paper is to discover and represent Palestinian perspectives toward the Apartheid Wall graffiti, it was necessary to obtain first-hand accounts from interviews reflecting these opinions and insights. Most important for this study were respondents’ definitions of *sumud*, as well as
the artwork found on the Apartheid Wall and its’ relative significance for sumud. The responses given to these interview questions will be analyzed in the final section, as we explore the significance and meaning behind a general Palestinian understanding.
The politics of resistance need not take the form of rebellion, insurrection, or even less violent forms of vocal protest, as they are also reflected in the quiet, taken-for-granted acts of everyday life. In the perhaps unremarkable expressions of art, reproduction, object utilization and story-telling, exist inherently political acts loaded with meaning -- not just for the removed scholar, but, more importantly, for the very people making the actions (Barghouti 2011; Scott 1984; Kanaaneh 2002; de Sousa Santos 2014; Papadapoulos, et al 2008). Indeed, the significance of these acts is often overlooked by the researcher, neglected as unconscious behavior embedded with little to no meaning, on the one hand, or embellished with so much “Grand Theory” and academic jargon as to render the agency of the individual moot, on the other. But within what context does such mundane activity occur, and how is its political potential realized?

Nothing happens in a vacuum, and our actions and perceptions are reinforced and recreated daily, dependent on a plethora of variables, embedded in ‘location.’ This “spatialization thus refers to those ways in which social life literally ‘takes place’: to the opening and occupation of different sites of human action and to the differences and integrations that are socially inscribed through the production of place, space, and landscapes” (Gregory 1994: 104). The geographic images which this statement conjures
are important to our comprehension of the modern-historical meaning behind space: its architecture, utility, symbolism and power. For Kevin Lynch, one such significance is not the buildings or structures that occupy a space themselves, but rather the edges that delineate boundaries:

“Edges are the linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer. They are the boundaries between two phases, linear breaks in continuity…Such edges may be barriers, more or less penetrable, which close one region off from another; or they may be seams, lines along which two regions are related and joined together. These edge elements, although probably not as dominant as paths, are for many people important organizing features, particularly in the role of holding together generalized areas, as in the outline of a city by water or wall” (1960: 47).

The role an edge plays in “holding together generalized areas” as a “more or less penetrable” wall is one such way we will recognize Israel’s Apartheid Wall, especially in relation to the real and imagined extent of Israel’s power over the land and the people. In a sense, it attempts to alienate, de facto, Palestinians from their ancestral land, while simultaneously ghettoizing their remaining populated areas. Checkpoints, especially the ‘roving’ checkpoints that move and emerge seemingly at random, further this notion of alienation and separation from the land, compounded by the authoritative positioning of Israeli soldiers controlling the otherwise free flow of movement. As political justification, “Israel has been using the Intifada [Al-Aqsa 2000] within its geography of imagination to
dismantle the public and private Palestinian space vital for building any fabric of territorial contiguity and effective sovereignty” (Falah 2005: 1342).

There is, however, a less literal meaning to space explored here: the production of ‘space’ and ‘place’ also constitute “the frontier between the public and the hidden transcripts” which is “a zone of constant struggle between dominant and subordinate—not a solid wall” (Scott 1990: 14). The porousness of these “frontier” zones brings competing narratives and social perceptions into direct contact (in this case, much more explicitly public than ‘hidden’), effectively becoming zones of contestation over politicized definitions of meaning, space, place and autonomy. “Spatial partitions clearly divide more than just space. The lines that mark off supposedly insular chunks of space often represent the invisible lines that separate purely mental entities such as nations or ethnic groups from one another, and crossing them serves to articulate passage through such mental partitions” (Zerubavel 1991: 7). This duality between physical, resolute boundaries and flexible, fungible zones of conflict and creativity is significant for both our understanding of the functionality—literal and symbolic—of the Apartheid Wall and of the Palestinian and Israeli struggle over the possession and definition of space.

For Murray Edelman, built space is as much a variable in social relations as are colloquial expressions and symbols, capable of expressing and embodying different meanings and affections. Whether states and their architects use landscaping to reflect a more European landscape, or government buildings to evoke ancient Rome and the epistemic history of the ‘West,’ spaces are designed to simultaneously support and encourage the privileged in their connections to authority and the state while enhancing
the alienation observed and felt by the disenfranchised communities. “Public spaces contribute to social integration generally, but do so by strengthening particular connotations of specific spaces. Each such space evokes a number of different meanings, but with the striking characteristic that the meanings of a structure for different people and for different situations complement one another so as to reinforce established inequalities” (Edelman 1995: 76). For example, where one side may relate military bases, checkpoints, and other occupational sites to security and control out of chaos, the other side associates them with oppression, humiliation, and violence.

In conjunction with the styling and forms of specific spaces, the relative size of such spaces is equally impactful. “The scale of the structure reminds the mass of political spectators that they enter the precincts of power as clients or as suppliants, susceptible to arbitrary rebuffs and favors, and that they are subject to remote authorities they only dimly know or understand” (Edelman 1995: 76). Since the Apartheid Wall is practically all-encompassing, the notion of “susceptibility” becomes much more prevalent, as the “remoteness” of authority perhaps diminishes, akin to the controlling functions of prisons and constant surveillance. Although spaces reflect some level of understanding to observers, such knowledges and affections are not universal or shared across political spectrums; order may be facilitated vis-à-vis such structures, but it is often an order devoid of justice or equality.

Spaces and structures are not responsible for creating self-perceptions or ideas of one’s social roles, but they are powerful symbols for the reification of such conceptualizations, often disseminated top-down, in a hierarchical fashion. In other
words, they often serve to “simplify and intensify beliefs and perceptions that already exist” (Edelman 1995: 86). Lynch, Gregory, and Edelman approach architecture and space from a more fundamental level, without dealing explicitly with a structural abomination such as the Apartheid Wall. However, if such significance is rightly gleaned from the mundane and ordinary, then the weight and social force of something extraordinary is only compounded. It is within the context of living in the shadow of such an oppressive force that we seek to understand both the effects and consequences of space, and the potential the contestation of such space entails.
In an Israeli-Palestinian context, Eyal Weizman and Rafi Segal portray thoroughly the collusion between professional, civilian architects with the colonizing, imperialist, and segregationist ideologies fueling the Zionist project for the construction of a national home for the Jewish people. The first edition of their book, *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture* (2003), was banned within Israel. The book, comprising numerous aerial photographs and topographic charts, may prove more evocative first hand (similarly to witnessing the wall art), but the interviews and insights included within are invaluable for illustrating the implicitly political functions of civilian occupations and academic positions. Their introduction is most revealing:

“The mundane elements of planning and architecture have been conscripted as tactical tools in Israel’s state strategy, which has sought to further national and geopolitical objectives in the organization of space and redistribution of its population. The landscape has become the battlefield on which power and state control confront both subversive and direct resistance” (2003: 19).

The significance of physical (and imagined) space, as well as the demographics of the population that exists within it, are vital for the reification of a Jewish and democratic state. The acquisition of land without its inhabitants is a staple of settler colonialism, and entails the militarization of civilians and their professions as vanguard forces to both
claim space, *de facto*, and to justify further militarization in defense of these “civilian” outposts. Furthermore, since the settlers and occupational forces comprise such an integral force of Israeli state building, the extent of architectural complicity (including, obviously, the Apartheid Wall) in these acts of segregation and violence appears paramount. The abundance of military-grade bulldozers, the IDF’s Caterpillar D9, is indicative of the mutual relationship between architecture and occupation, construction and destruction.

Segal and Weizman provide further evidence of this notion by demonstrating the standard endgame of Israeli architecture:

“In an environment where architecture and planning are systematically instrumentalized as the executive arms of the Israeli state, planning decisions do not often follow criteria of economic sustainability, ecology or efficiency of services, but are rather employed to serve strategic and political agendas. Space becomes the material embodiment of a matrix of forces, manifested across the landscape in the construction of roads, hilltop settlements, development towns and garden suburbs” (Segal, Weizman: 19).

Since more professional and civilian concerns for architectural development take a clear backseat to “strategic and political agendas,” it becomes obvious that the primary objective for architecture in Israel, especially within the occupied West Bank, is expansion and control. Such complicity is not necessarily surprising, though it is significant to better understand the conflict and occupation. Since “state strategy is a

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profoundly spatial affair and as such reserves a primary role for the people who effect political goals with actual changes on the ground,” the involvement of professional and civilian architects seems expected (Segal and Weizman 2003: 20). As Head of the Government’s settlement committee, Ariel Sharon ensured that “architecture and planning were presented as a continuation of war by other means. The civilianization of military terms was to lead in turn to the militarization of all other spheres of life. War was only over because it was now everywhere” (Weizman: 85).

Suggestive of the state-driven policies behind settlement building, aside from their existence beyond internationally recognized borders, is the fact that many remain empty. Segal and Weizman include photographs by Efrat Shvily from 1993 illustrating as much, and, “according to Peace Now, there are thousands of uninhabited dwellings in the West Bank. The civilian occupation relies on the presence of civilian architecture to demonstrate a Jewish presence across the landscape. In Shvily’s photographs, architecture replaces human presence. The questions of whether there are a pair of eyes looking out of the windows of settlement homes becomes irrelevant as the effect of domination is achieved by the mere presence of these buildings” (2003: 22-23). The goal of disturbing, blocking, and moving the Palestinian communities is “self-proclaimed,” so private architectural firms willingly sign on to play an important role in the ghettoization of said communities.

Such tactics, referred to as enclavization, intrinsically segregate communities from one another, in an Israeli-Palestinian sense, but also sever all physical ties between Palestinian towns. According to Falah, “enclaving means cutting of spatial interflow and
heightening control” (2005: 1344), forcing Palestinians to submit to Israeli checkpoint control and inquiry, meaning that even fundamental notions of movement and association are greatly diminished and even destroyed. “It also has the effect of sundering enclosed space from other spatial areas, thus confining and drastically weakening the population economically, politically and socially—in effect ‘neutralizing’ its challenge as a potential opponent” (Falah 2005: 1344). The enclavization of neighborhoods completes the civilian occupation by co-opting the settlers as “plain-clothes security personnel” (Segal and Weizman 2003: 24), watching and observing from their hilltop fortresses the movements and activities within the Palestinian enclaves down in the valleys.

The mere possibility of observation, as noted, is enough to suggest control and encourage submission. The additional role-playing of settlers as occupational police forces furthers the notion of domination, recalling Foucault’s panopticon, where surveillance is absolute, and trust is non-existent. Since space often conjures different meanings for different peoples, it stands to reason that the Israeli population would receive some benefit from this scenario at the expense of the Palestinian. “The panoptic arrangement of sight-lines therefore serves two contradictory agendas: supervision and a self-imposed scotoma” (Segal and Weizman 2003: 92). In other words, “[s]ettlers can thus see only other settlements, avoid those of the Palestinian towns and villages, and feel that they have truly arrived ‘as the people without land to the land without people” (Segal and Weizman 2003: 92), a fundamental belief to the Zionist project being that Palestine was and is uninhabited, waiting to be colonized and made fallow.
The architectural and political history of Zionism and Israel lay the groundwork for the eventual construction of the Apartheid Wall in 2002. With segregation of the population and control of the land being two basic principles, an expansionist, segregating wall that could be justified as a means of security fit perfectly within the preexisting rhetoric and ideology. For example, Matityahu Drobles, the Jewish Agency’s Land Settlement Division head in 1978, issued a declaration that “[s]ettlement throughout the whole Land of Israel is for security and by right. A belt of settlements in strategic locations increases both internal and external security…” (Segal and Weizman 2003: 84). The whole “Land of Israel” included Jerusalem and the West Bank (land west of the Jordan River), and security rhetoric was being employed to justify the continuation and intensification of the occupation, despite winning their most recent war in 6 days, and the fact that neither Intifada had taken place yet. Drobles’ intentions become even more clear in a separate statement: “Being bisected by Jewish settlements, the minority population will find it hard to create unification and territorial contiguity” (Segal and Weizman 2003: 84). A nod towards apartheid, the explicit goal is to Judaize the land while intentionally obstructing the possibility of establishing, maintaining, or extending community, solidarity, or political integrity by the Palestinian population. The Apartheid
Wall is merely the latest manifestation of a decades-old policy toward the native inhabitants of Palestine.

The significance of architecture in Israel, especially its political dimension, is increased via the dynamics and requirements of settler colonialism. The militarization of civilian arenas politicizes them in new ways, making every construction project and architectural design a Zionist action, whether consciously or unconsciously undertaken, as subjects literally ‘build the Land of Israel.’ Indeed, the “political realities” and facts on the ground created by the Israeli construction of space “are often more dominant and conclusive than any stylistic, aesthetic, experiential or sensual impact they may have” (Rotbard in Segal and Weizman 2003: 40). Thus, the Apartheid Wall is the political realization that the settlement projects have incorporated the occupied territories (successfully), albeit with the indigenous population largely intact (accidentally); subsequently, a means was required to separate and control an undesired population, hemming them in with the dressings of minor autonomy, while technically, officially, and realistically remaining under the direct supervision and control of the State of Israel.

The contradictory meanings of the Wall demonstrate the dominance of one side and perspective over the other, as the disenfranchised are subjected to acceptance of the rules and standards: porous and impermanent, for the Israelis, yet permanent and concrete for the Palestinians. “As long as the Wall is seen as constantly permeable and transparent from one side only, Israel should still be considered sovereign in Palestinian territories, if only because it is Israel itself that can declare the exception that would allow it to annul the legal status of this ‘border’” (Weizman 2007: 218). This practice of permeability
correlates to the Israeli military’s practice of ‘walking through walls,’ in which scenario a wall designating a private residence is destroyed to allow the passage of soldiers from house to house, utilizing holes in the walls instead of streets and avenues. Just as the Apartheid Wall allegedly designates ‘Palestinian’ land, the Israeli military regularly and freely passes this ‘border’ to inflict their domination upon Palestinians.

The duality of the wall continues when we consider tactics of surveillance and state/military observation, especially in a colonial context. Such a structure “ensures that the lives of the colonized are closely monitored,” but it also “aims to enhance their invisibility,” in this case, through “the adoption of racialized zoning laws that keep the colonizer and the colonized separate” and to “remove the colonized from view” (Zureik 2016: 28). The micromanagement and control of even mundane movements recalls Foucault’s “microphysics of power” by revealing the disciplinary effects the wall has on Palestinian residents, an overt reminder of their dictated place in Israeli society. (Not to overlook the agency discipline’s subjects are capable of, as Foucault is often criticized of doing in his discourses on power, we will address acts of subversion and resistance in later sections). For Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, surveillance is “one of the most powerful strategies of imperial dominance…because it implies a viewer with an elevated vantage point, it suggests the power to process and understand that which is seen, and it objectifies and interpellates the colonized subject in a way that fixes its identity in relation to the surveyor” (Zureik 2016: 95). The cameras and guard towers built along the wall serve this purpose nicely, constantly reminding those interred that their confinement
is monitored, situating surveillance as a primary form of Israeli control to be resisted and overcome via Palestinian struggles for self-determination.

Descriptions such as these may conjure images and feelings of carceral structures, and the comparison is indeed often made. Gaza, for example, is often referred to as the world’s largest open-air prison. Azmi Bishara, a Palestinian resident, describes life in parts of the West Bank and its “maze of walls, barriers, gates, observation towers, barbed wire, and electrical wires slicing through villages and other inhabited areas…as tantamount to the ‘recreation of the detention camp where the exception becomes the rule…and the state of emergency becomes permanent’” (Zureik 2016: 168). This is perhaps especially true in the numerous refugee camps around the West Bank, comprised of a population that remains seven decades internally displaced. All Palestinian communities are subjected to discriminatory policies that bar construction and expansion, despite the rapid growth of the average Palestinian family, ensuring that any building developments designed to alleviate the stresses of the on-going and encroaching occupation can be seized or destroyed as illegal projects, without any entitlement to state services. Such methods are even heavily practiced within the Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem, seized by Israel in the 1967 war. The structure of the Apartheid Wall is located squarely within this matrix of control as the physical manifestation of the culmination of Israeli segregationist policies. “The erection of the Israeli version of the Berlin Wall complements this process [of occupation] and functions to limit population movement, stifle the economy, and deprive Palestinians of access to their land. Altogether, Palestinian society is subjected to cultural, economic, and social
strangulation” (Zureik 2016: 173). Israeli security can therefore be defined as Palestinian insecurity, where control by the former nullifies many attempts at autonomy and self-determination by the latter.

Clearly, despite the multifaceted symbolism and utility of the Apartheid Wall, enclavization—which entails territorial expansion for those beyond the enclaves—is undoubtedly its primary function. Zureik tells us that, as of 2016, “the wall itself has resulted in the expropriation of 10 percent of Palestinian lands.” Collectively, the West Bank and Gaza comprised “28 percent of the area of Mandate Palestine,” and “land expropriation for roads, the wall, and above all new settlements, is expected to reduce the size of the Palestinian enclaves to no more than 45 percent of the area of the West Bank, which is almost 15 percent of the area of historical Palestine” (2016: 99). He concludes the presentation of this data by echoing the words of former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon: “the larger effect of quarantining the Palestinians is to make life socially and economically unbearable and to cause their emigration, mainly to Jordan” (2016: 99). Not only do we find intentionally isolated and severed Palestinian communities dotting territorial maps of Israel/Palestine, but the conglomeration of Palestinian land (divided into zones A, B, and C,) makes up less than a quarter of the total mass, demonstrating both the infeasibility and insignificance of a prospective Palestinian state. Furthermore, Zone A is the only area under ‘full’ control by the Palestinian Authority, while Zone B is shared, and Zone C is under direct Israeli military control (all Palestinians are subject to military, not civilian, courts).
Victory in the 1967 war brought the West Bank into the fold of Israeli control, along with a population of 670,000 Palestinians—a demographic ‘bomb’ threatening the Jewish nature of the Israeli state. “To establish Jewish settlements in the midst of this population would have placed into question the principle of the pure colony that had been guiding the Zionist movement since its first steps in Palestine” (Sand 2012: 244). Enclavization became the answer, and the construction of the Wall was vital in facilitating this outcome. In this way, settlements could be established and maintained without integration or technical ‘absorption’ of Palestinian communities into the prospective Israeli state expansion. Further supplementing this expansion, aside from the militarized projects, was state assistance: “with the help of generous government funding, the quality of the pedagogical, medical, and welfare services provided in the pioneering settlements is vastly higher than within Green Line Israel,” (Sand 2012: 248) in other words, within the borders of 1967. It is undeniable, therefore, that the policy of enclavization is a state initiative that receives full rhetorical, political, financial, and military support vis-à-vis settlement construction.

Even the justification that the Apartheid Wall—or in Israeli parlance, the ‘security fence’—was built to address security concerns does not hold up to even the barest scrutiny. It was not “erected along the 1967 border, but rather cut through Palestinian territory so as to encircle a large number of the settlements” (Sand 2012: 250-251), simultaneously further bisecting Palestinian towns and villages, and restricting movements while adding more territory to Israeli control. The existence of illegal settlements within the West Bank, beyond the Green Line for Israel, guarantee the
continued presence and reliance on military control and jurisdiction due to the extreme proximity of settler activity to ‘the enemy.’ Admittedly, the wall does serve as a funnel, dictating the location of permanent checkpoints and points of entry/exit, increasing the efficiency and efficacy of military control, though such factors do not benefit ‘security’ from a protective, or defensive, perspective. Indeed, “the occupation appears to be paving a territorial path for the evolution of a binational state, as the increasing penetration of Israeli settlers into densely populated Palestinian areas seems to hinder every attempt at future political separation” (Sand 2012: 251). At this stage, Israeli settlements and jurisdictional control have become so intertwined with Palestinian towns and fates that Israeli policy has, de facto, created an apartheid state, the nature of which is the subject for much Palestinian resistance.

Sharon Rotbard, in Segal and Weizman’s edited work, describes accurately this multi-layered, chimerical sharing of the land: “Thus in the Occupied Territories today we find two countries superimposed one on the other: on top, ‘Judea and Samaria’, the land of settlements and military outposts, bypass roads and tunnels; and underneath, ‘Palestine’, the land of villages and towns, dirt roads and paths” (2003: 52-53). The wall comprises just one very important part of this geographic drama, cutting horizontally across the land on top of which Israel superimposes itself. This bifurcation creates Palestinian ‘Bantustans’ inside of, and below, Israeli neighborhoods, and necessitates obvious jurisdictional and legal paradoxes for Palestinian inhabitants. Denial of Israeli citizenship rights via the relegation of these communities to the semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority allows the Israeli state to claim democracy with a Jewish ethnic
majority, while avoiding the full realization of a politically synthesized Palestinian state in their midst. “It is disengagement from within, coupled with iron control from without: *dynamic enclavization*. There is no exit or entry into this cage without proper Israeli permission” (Falah 2005: 1350). As noted earlier, the same concrete and absolute aspects of occupation and control over Palestinians are permeable and dynamic for Israelis.
Palestinian resistance against the occupation and segregation takes on many shapes and forms, however one type is most culturally and contextually significant: *sumud*. Accentuating the activities of day-to-day life, *sumud* asserts Palestinian historical and cultural identities and maintains their claims to the land, effectively cultivating social characteristics in the face of isolation, censorship, and relocation. In an article titled *Everyday Resilience as Resistance: Palestinian Women Practicing Sumud*, which appeared in the 2015 edition of *International Political Sociology*, Caitlyn Ryan thoroughly describes a notion of “steadfastness,” or *sumud*, especially its significance to Palestinian resistance under overtly hostile conditions towards everyday life, let alone any form of political subversion. In her words, “Palestinians, especially Palestinian women, frequently speak of *sumud* as a uniquely Palestinian tactic that allows them to maintain dignity, honor, and a physical presence on the land despite adversity and hardship, and as a form of resistance to the occupation that helps them to cope with daily life” (2015: 300). Such a tactic imbues the activities of day-to-day life with enormous political, cultural, and social importance.

Since the occupation and segregationist policies form part of an ongoing process, an adaptable, flexible form of resistance that can be applied easily to ordinary and extraordinary practices becomes vital to the continuation of the struggle for basic rights.
and dignity. *Sumud* should not be mistaken as a coping mechanism that passively allows for the increase or maintenance of occupational policies, or as a means to normalize the carceral, racialized experience of the Palestinians. Instead, the practice of *sumud* represents defiance and resilience in the face of imposed precarity that, rather than normalizing oppressive conditions and policies, challenges them through a refusal to acquiesce. As Ryan states, “*sumud* is a form of resilient resistance because it does not reflect living *with* uncertainty but, rather, living *despite* uncertainty” (2015: 300). Indeed, it represents a conscious decision to persevere in the face of extremely adverse conditions—conditions which ultimately and intentionally serve to ‘encourage’ emigration. Israel’s former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon explains the methods behind this induced emigration strategy: “to enclose the Palestinians in a number of enclaves that are practically isolated from each other and at the mercy of Israel. In the long run the aim is to make life intolerable for the Palestinian population and cause it to leave altogether” (Falah 2005: 1348). Against such professed designs, the decision to remain at home becomes politically charged and thwarts Israeli designs for further expansion without a demographic ‘bomb’ in their midst.

Ryan, quoting Van Teefelen, states: “…when the home itself becomes a place of oppression, even a prison, staying does become a choice—an extraordinary choice to preserve an ordinary life” (2015: 306). Another example of a spatial privilege easily taken for granted, the privacy and security often associated with the home, in this context, comes into direct conflict with occupational forces and their tactics of control. As discussed, walls represent two entirely different realities to Palestinians and Israelis, and
the possibility of having one’s home in the West Bank raided, occupied, or destroyed is all too common. Such a matrix has the consequences of serious terror, precarity and isolation, further defining the existence of a powerful minority population superimposed above a disenfranchised majority. Segregated housing, forms of movement, and legal structures represent the near-absolute control Israel exerts over all facets of life in the West Bank. *Sumud*, significantly, “helps to foster enduring relationships between Palestinians through its cultural intelligibility and focus on community-building practices” (Ryan 2015: 303), maintaining spaces and networks of communication in common to alleviate the alienation and isolation imposed upon their communities.

The idea of community is a crucial aspect of the occupation on both sides: for Israelis, who wish to maintain the ‘Jewish’ character of the state, and for Palestinians, who decidedly have no territorial state, and rely on their enclave communities for the strength and perseverance to continue resisting the conditions imposed upon them.

“Threatened by land confiscation and displacement, Palestinians invested tremendous effort into maintaining their society intact… “steadfastness” proposed to thwart Israeli depopulation schemes and retain the basis for a future state through the preservation of existing Palestinian institutions” (Younis 2000: 166). The preservation of social cohesion in the face of spatial severance is no mean feat, yet necessary for prolonged existence on ancestral land. A disunified archipelago of homes, villages, towns, and peoples would quickly and, likely, ‘quietly’ succumb to the external and internal occupational forces; arguably, the presence of strong cultural ties is the foundation of resolute social connections and the progenitor of resistance.
Since the occupation “stalls, interrupts, and prevents simple tasks such as turning on one’s water, going to the market, visiting friends, or seeking medical treatment” (Ryan 2015: 304), a tactic of resilience that accentuates these same mundane activities positively instills a sense of pride and hope in what would otherwise be suffocating oppression. Accompanying the personal day-to-day activities are other colonial practices that alter the seemingly benign notions of place (as in one’s place within the rhetoric and symbolism of oppressive architecture) and geography, as it impacts access and transforms knowledges and histories. While researching Maori villages, Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains the significance of conceptions of space for indigenous peoples:

“Renaming the land was probably as powerful ideologically as changing the land. Indigenous children in schools, for example, were taught the new names for places that they and their parents had lived in for generations…This newly named land became increasingly disconnected [from their own histories]” (Smith: 53-54).

Thus, the alterations of place names, as well as the dissemination of these new conceptions, dissociates the Palestinians, within the Israeli State, and those under its military control, from the land, and illustrates further the colonial characteristics of European Jewish settlement in Palestine at the direct expense of the native, pre-existent population. As Hebrew and Arabic are both Semitic languages, renaming often is as basic as translating the original Arabic name to Hebrew (e.g. The Naqab desert, in Hebrew, is the Negev). As with Maori villages, Palestinian communities are subjected to the
renaming of sites, yet those in the West Bank (and arguably those in Gaza) still feel the colonial presence through changes in geography and restrictions to movement.

Though the name-changes may appear subtle, and linguistically often are, they represent a much more serious assault. “The negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly such views were regarded as clearly ‘primitive’ and ‘incorrect’ and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization” (Smith: 31). Thus, imposing the Hebrew names upon the Palestinians reminds them of their position in the social hierarchy as well as attempting to remake historical facts on the ground, alienating the indigenous population further from the land and naturalizing the presence of the colonizer. All Palestinian communities—from within the Green Line, the open-air prison of Gaza, and the enclaves of the West Bank—participate in the remembrance of villages, towns, names, and people ethnically cleansed during the Nakba, or “catastrophe,” of Israel’s violent birth. “These private memorializations are replicated in the public realm by displaying maps or the names of villages within refugee camps or in other public places throughout the territories” (Ryan: 308), fostering collective memories of Palestine and of being Palestinian. Symbolizing creative appropriation of colonial tools, the artistic and public renderings of historical Palestine, including the Arabic names accompanying the landscape, reproduce a history largely lost during the creation of Israel, that anticipated the official seizure and erasure of many Palestinian sites. “In the history of colonial invasion, maps are always first drawn by the victors, since maps are always instruments of conquest; once projected, they are then implemented. Geography is therefore the art of war but can also be the art
of resistance if there is a counter-map and a counter-strategy” (Said 1994: 416). Another example of *sumud*, this refusal to accept or acknowledge the colonial names of places, or the restructuring of spaces, keeps alive an ethnic and cultural identity, which in turn sustains direct resistance to the occupation.

Resistance in general, and *sumud* particularly, is an admirable pursuit that demands respect and dignity in the face of violent adversity, representing an overt refusal to acquiesce to the pressures of malevolent forces. As Edward Said put it, “[t]hat the Palestinians struggle against and resist this state of affairs is a function of how injustice and suffers do not defeat a people, nor compel it into submission, but rather drive that people to resist more, and to struggle further for political justice and rights” (Said 1994: 157). In a scenario where the international community of states—when it is not implicitly involved in the occupation and violence, falls miserably short at exerting any real pressure upon the Israeli government for its policies and actions—a tactic of self-actualization and turning inward, to the self and the community, sustains hope and mutual assistance where this is none forthcoming.
**UN-WALLING THE WALL**

The legal/law connotations of the Apartheid Wall are realized very differently between Israeli and Palestinian understandings and realities, with the porosity of the Wall, from an Israeli perspective, illustrative of the extra-legal and extra-judicial interpretations that impose a strict definition of space upon Palestinians.

“According to Arendt, the political realm is guaranteed by two kinds of walls (or wall-like laws): the wall surrounding the city, which defined the zone of the political; and the walls separating private space from the public domain, ensuring the autonomy of the domestic realm” (Weizman 2007: 210).

The Apartheid Wall infringes directly upon the private space of Palestinians, in some cases ‘requiring’ the destruction of homes and whole villages; the Wall slices through towns and imposes alternative routes, invariably via an Israeli checkpoint, for any communal interaction, violently restructuring any semblance of a public domain, as well. Furthermore, the relationship between the Apartheid Wall and occupational policy, especially the legal/judicial grounds for justifying common Israeli practices, implicates the symbolism the Wall bears for the overall injustices suffered by the Palestinians, making it an ideal subject/object of resistance and protest. “The almost palindromic linguistic structure of law/wall helps to further bind these two structures in an interdependency that equates built and legal fabric. The un-walling of the wall invariably
becomes the undoing of the law” (Weizman 2007: 210). I contend that the use of graffiti challenges, from a Palestinian perspective, the intended political and structural consequences of the Apartheid Wall, emancipating a population from social control, censorship and isolation through culturally significant messages and imagery. Graffiti, then, is an equivalent means to redefining an overtly oppressive space—contesting politicized perceptions and narratives—creatively and imaginatively un-walling the wall.

Far from comprising a benign or apolitical act, then, the typically anonymous act of graffiti represents a form of everyday, perhaps mundane, resistance—what James Scott might consider “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985). Inherently posing a challenge to neo-liberal notions of private property and ownership, juxtaposed with the poverty, repression, and overall disenfranchisement of many urban communities, graffiti serves as a glaring contrast between the mythical concepts of both the State and Capitalist ideals with local/global realities. Indeed, “[c]ontemporary street art, or graffiti, has come increasingly to be used by practitioners to foreground the structural and state violence that is inscribed into, and perpetuated by, the infrastructural layouts [of] the twenty first century’s increasingly global cities” (Davies 2017: 6). Arguably, no structure is currently more emblematic of structural and state violence than the ongoing project of Israel’s Apartheid Wall. Street arts’ prevalence on the Wall, most notably around Bethlehem and Jerusalem, thus composes a real and direct challenge to the existing law/wall and relationships of power, simultaneously transforming this oppressive architecture into an alternative democratic forum and public space, in the hope of engendering the liberation of Palestinians.
Uniquely, “graffiti can resist structural violence as it is shaped and exacerbated by—even embedded within—the physical walls of city spaces, ricocheting off into alternative, occasionally more democratic, modes of urban habitation” (Davies 2017: 6). This is accomplished via the transformative effect street art has over physical space, inverting the established realities of infrastructural forms of violence into message-boards and forums calling for liberation and democratic engagement. If walls generally serve to maintain conditions of disengagement and separation, literal and metaphorical destruction or alteration of walled space (and the walls themselves) would necessarily break the political isolation found within urban spaces during an age of representational politics. In the case of the Apartheid Wall, this perceived lack of order—which Israel strives to dominate—translates into collective political actions designed to cultivate a public representational space amongst Palestinians and direct confrontation with the occupying power. Since graffiti is widely considered a subversive and illegal act, when “breaking the law, graffiti also breaks—or at least resists—the state hegemony that the wall both symbolically signifies and materially endeavors to implement” (Davies 2017: 7). The literal and metaphorical effects of graffiti on established notions of control are mirrored by the multifarious reinterpretations the site of graffiti undergoes, as well; this democratization of space transforms the original motivations behind its construction and subsequent perception. Significantly, as Judith Butler iterates during a lecture, “material environments [such as the Apartheid Wall] are part of the action, and they themselves act when they become the support for action” (2011). Beyond utilizing the Wall for
democratic and political means it was never intended for, the artists transform a structure
designed to oppress and silence into a mouthpiece for freedom and creative agency.

This transformation manifests as local and global realizations, as the Wall itself—and
the artwork upon it—are inherently situated in a physical space (entailing one set of
ramifications) that is transcended and trans-nationalized through virtual dissemination.
The volume of transnational travelers through Bethlehem, and the subsequent
concentration of graffiti around the city, results in a non-virtual globalization of the
graffiti, as well. Through use of the internet, images of graffiti become situated within a
global space, as an invitation to join a transnational public, simultaneously redefining the
(nationalist/representational) public domain and reinterpreting the meanings of the
graffiti themselves. Referencing the multifarious efficacy of street art for generating
solidarity, amplifying voice, and challenging the law/wall relationship during the
Egyptian Revolution, Davies pries open these interstices:

“Here we find graffiti at another crucial interface: not only residing between an
irreverent disregard for walling infrastructure and a strategic re-appropriation of
it, as already identified; but also between a local, physical presence in the city and
the photogenic snapshot ready to circulate virally online, that latter of which
lingers long after its physical eradication” (Davies 2017: 15).

With this relationship in mind, graffiti artists often intentionally utilize a localized space
for a transnational message, realizing that their works may resonate with both the local
population and a transnational public. Graffiti not only “invites citizens to actively
participate in public debate about how to live together and declare their rights under
authoritarian structures of power” (Elias 2014: 90), it engages these same citizens with an international community, allowing for new, global networks and forms of solidarity. This engagement with a transnational public certainly may distort or negatively de-localize the Palestinian struggle, however, and will be explored further during the data analysis.

A precursor to an approach that targets a transnational audience and that recognizes U.S. complicity in the occupation, along with the provocative power of art, can be found in Palestinian cartoonist Naji al Ali’s famous character, Handhala. His hands are “always clasped behind his back as a sign of rejection at a time when solutions are presented to us the American way,” in the words of the artist, and his back is always to the viewer as recognition of the denied right of return for Palestinians (Gould 2014: 10-11). Naji al Ali was assassinated in 1987, the same year as the First Intifada, for his controversial artistic renderings, a testament to the power and potential of art.

Graffiti would indeed be prominently utilized by Palestinians during the First Intifada, fifteen years prior to the construction of the Apartheid Wall, and almost twenty years before Banksy’s arrival to the West Bank. During this period, graffiti was used to declare collective acts of resistance, such as strikes and demonstrations, and was an efficacious communicative tool to oppose Israeli stifling of media and news circulation pertinent to Palestinian national politics. Heightened surveillance and military presence made physical gatherings difficult and dangerous, but graffiti would visually symbolize the existence of political opposition and mobilize general support for the struggle against Israeli occupation and control. “The abundant Palestinian graffiti sprawled throughout the
occupied territories symbolized that the territories belonged to the Palestinians and could not be controlled by the Israelis” (Chaffee 1993: 19), foreshadowing the intensified role graffiti and street art would play in contesting the definition of space following burgeoning settlement construction and the advent of the Apartheid Wall. Beyond stated nationalistic claims or organizational necessity, this graffiti, as I contend, was significant to encouraging and inspiring a continuation of the struggle, as can be gleaned through graffiti’s prevalence in other historical parallels. As Chaffee also notes, “[i]n the Warsaw ghetto during WWII, one survivor explained that graffiti by the resistance kept his spirit alive because it indicated there was an active resistance and all was not lost” (1993: 20). (This idea of cultivating future resistance will be explored further in the analysis section, where we will decode interviews of first-hand ‘witnesses’ to the graffiti).

Julie Peteet’s summary of the power of graffiti utilized by the Palestinians during the first intifada is worth quoting at length:

“For Palestinians, graffiti were an intervention in a relationship of power. As cultural artifacts, graffiti were a critical component of a complex and diffuse attempt to overthrow hierarchy; they were Palestinian voices, archival and interventionist. They were not monolithic voices for sure, but polysemic ones that acted to record history and to form and transform relationships. While they represented they also intervened. For Palestinians as a readership, graffiti simultaneously affirmed community and resistance, debated tradition, envisioned competing futures, indexed historical events and processes, and inscribed memory. They provided political commentary as well as issuing directives both
for confronting occupation and transforming oneself in the process…In short, as a form of cultural production, they were self-reflective and self-critical…The Palestinian community thought “out loud” in graffiti” (1996: 140-141).

Not only was graffiti used for local, civic engagement to encourage resistance to the occupation, it also directly opposed Israeli matrices of control. As an adaptive alternative form of media and communication, graffiti forged a counter-narrative to the hegemonic U.S./Israeli perspective, directly confronted Israeli attempts at censorship, community isolation, and political suffocation.

Furthermore, the mere presence of street art was indicative of a lack of panoptic control by the Israeli’s, despite attempts at ‘absolute’ surveillance and control. This is not to suggest Israeli acquiescence to Palestinian challenges to domination, of course, but rather the dynamic development of tactics and reciprocating actions. Soldiers often enforced the cover-up of graffiti by coercing Palestinian youths at gunpoint to paint over the varying political slogans and calls to resistance. “Erasure and its accompanying violence indexed fear both of a community producing and circulating knowledge and of an experience and sentiment being inscribed and shared among people not in actual face-to-face contact” (Peteet 1996: 146). Israeli attempts at public isolation of Palestinians were being thwarted. Obviously, such a loss of control was unacceptable, and erasure featured so prominently because graffiti were recognized as tools for the establishment of alternative public spaces—subversive ones much more difficult to directly control. Such a response by the occupying forces is indicative of their concern over the potential
political ramifications of graffiti, an acknowledgement of its potency to contest and resist domination.

One of the more insidious aspects of the occupation, the control and claiming of space (which would eventually culminate in the Apartheid Wall) was a preferred tactic of the Israeli state. Not only was there no such thing as a Palestinian, but there would also be no space for the creation of a Palestinian state. Ergo, “[o]ccupation policy and practices categorized Palestinians as moveable, not in need of permanency and continuity of place” (Peteet 1996: 148). However, the Palestinian use of graffiti represented Palestinian claims to the land, and symbolized a physical presence, even under imposed absence—a direct confrontation with Israeli efforts to Judaize and cleanse the land of an unwanted ethnic majority, especially as Arabic language graffiti is identifiably not Hebrew and suggests the existence of an alternative identity and population. A relatively easy and accessible method of contesting space, graffiti created Palestinian space for public and political engagement while subverting and distorting Israeli space of control and isolation. The unquestioned dominance of Israeli occupational forces, as well as their hegemonic territorial assertions, were thus effectively challenged by non-violent, often youthful, actors with paint.

Palestinian resistance may be epitomized in the proliferation of graffiti, beginning during the first Intifada, which transformed and challenged the dynamics of Israeli control while addressing the Palestinian desire for state-building and the establishment of a public national forum. “More than simply a response to prolonged occupation, graffiti indicated a society in the throes of reconstituting itself, trying to establish a set of
conditions that would endow it with the capacity to guide an internal dynamic of change and in doing so resist occupation” (Peteet 1996: 152). The efficacy, significance, and utilization of graffiti for Palestinian development and resistance carried on through the Intifada years, and found new expressive objects and subjects during the construction of the Apartheid Wall and the evolution of the Israeli occupation.

With the first Intifada setting a precedent, graffiti can be seen to embody James C. Scott’s notion of ‘infrapolitics’ discussed in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*: “Spontaneity, anonymity and lack of formal organization then become the enabling modes of protest rather than a reflection of the slender political tactics of the popular classes” (Scott 1988:151). This understanding grants legitimacy to street art by locating it within efficacious tactics of resistance by disenfranchised and politically ‘weak’ actors that is more indicative of an adaptive and creative subversion to dominant policy and control than a feeble act of desperation. “By using the wall as a canvas and bulletin board, as well as a site of resistance, Palestinians have found ways in which to establish agency against the wall—to ‘use’ it”:

“The fact of the graffiti, as well as the content of the graffiti, sometimes expressing solidarity, sometimes linking the wall and the occupation to the US (a reference to the US’ abundant foreign aid to Israel) both indicate that the act of producing graffiti on the wall is an act which inscribes a new meaning into the wall…It becomes both a thing and a place where people and ideas meet in opposition to the wall and to the occupation” (Toenjes 2014: 9).
The transformative power of graffiti is thus realized locally and transnationally, serving as a bridge between isolated enclaves of Palestinians, and between Palestinians and solidarity networks outside of the immediate conflict zone.
METHODS

In order to establish some semblance of ‘cognitive justice’—recognizing the significance and validity of the culture(s) of knowledge that shape our understanding of experience—it was necessary to construct a set of questions that favored, at minimum, a ‘first-hand’ experience of the Apartheid Wall and the artwork upon it and, maximally, a Palestinian empiricism. The goal was to determine the significance, if any, of the Apartheid Wall graffiti for Palestinians along the lines of sumud—a particular, local concept of resistance/resilience to the occupation, as well as the realization of global solidarity networks facilitated vis-à-vis the artwork and its dissemination/observance.

I constructed a set of interview questions, approved by the GMU IRB, that addressed a range of issues, from the respondents understanding of sumud; effects/affects of the physical Apartheid Wall and the graffiti upon it; whether or not the graffiti could be considered a form of sumud; the possible implications of foreign-produced art on political/cultural significance; the concept of “conflict tourism,” or the rise of, and investiture in, tourists traveling specifically to “see the wall” or “experience the occupation;” the artwork as a device to establish networks locally or transnationally; the artwork as alienating or distracting from the local experience of the conflict; whether the graffiti can challenge claims or contestations of space; and if any specific
experiences/pieces of the artwork resonated with the respondent. Designed for face-to-face interactions, phone interviews, or to be completed as a “survey” via email, this set of questions could generate a broad empirical understanding of the graffiti upon the Apartheid Wall and its potential implications for continued resistance. The respondents are all Palestinian, four comprising a part of the vast diaspora found in the U.S. and elsewhere, and six current residents of the Bethlehem area and West Bank. Each person interviewed has had first-hand experience with the Apartheid Wall and the graffiti—a large amount of which exists on the Wall surrounding Bethlehem, in part due to the high levels of tourists and international visitors. Bethlehem also happens to be the area with the highest level of contacts accessible to the researcher.

Difficulty in establishing contacts through third-party friends and acquaintances, as well as language barriers that limited the amount of direct interaction, resulted in a very small total number of respondents (ten). If one contact had not been able to translate my questionnaire, and the subsequent responses, my sources from inside the West Bank would probably have gone unheard. Though the small sample size suggests difficulty in making any sweeping generalizations (perhaps best avoided, anyway), the responses acquired do prove an illuminating peak behind the curtain of censorship and indicate a complex and provocative relationship between street art, culture, and politics.

Initially, one-on-one interviews or group discussions were the targeted procedural method, and the Diasporic respondents could be approached in this way; four of my respondents participated together in a conversational-style interview. Geographical distance, time differences, and equal difficulty for the researcher and respondents to
converse in Arabic or English respectively made this approach impractical for data collection within the West Bank; the six remaining interviews were conducted via e-mail, with most of the questions and answers translated by a third party. However, since most of the data was collected via an interview-turned-questionnaire, responses readily reflected the topic at hand, making overarching themes more apparent and coding easier, even though the dynamism and flexibility granted to respondents within the matrix of a dialogue suffered. The most diversity in opinions seemed to stem from either generational or geographic conditions: Diasporic respondents were more hesitant in their recognition of the Apartheid Wall graffiti, though they also tended to be of a greater age than those living in the West Bank, who were generally younger and more outspoken in their opinions regarding the street art.

The interviews specifically did not deal with the composition of art, and only loosely its’ production, because the political action of graffiti and its repercussions was the focus of this study. Similarly, I did not wish to focus on individual works of art (unless the interviews referenced specific meaningful cases) to avoid the origins of a singular piece, or to be mired down in a parochial, decontextualized space. If the interviews reflected a broadly recognized political and cultural significance to the street art, especially vis-à-vis resistance to the occupation and the establishment of local and global networks of solidarity for political engagement, then the importance of understanding the Apartheid Wall graffiti sociologically would be established. Local acknowledgement of any political potential behind the street art is indicative of the arts’ contextual relevance for understanding the occupation and the Palestinian experience.
under Israeli control, despite any existence of Western dismissal or oversight, and other external modes of interpretation. Indeed, graffiti’s political potential and importance has often been overlooked in various urban settings by scholars, and recognition of the utility of the action and the content by academics reveals new approaches and methods to understanding social movements, alternative medias, networks, and forms of non-violent resistance.

The favor granted to the Palestinian experience is designed to represent the voices and perspectives of a historically censored community. To study an action used politically for over 30 years in Palestine, without discussing the meaning it holds with those directly affected/effect ed by the occupation and the subsequent street art, would be arrogant at best, and would undermine local forms of resistance, production, representation, and, ultimately, existence, in Palestine. The avoidance of co-optation, misrepresentation, and over-simplification were critical to the conduction of this study, and it is my sincere hope that my voice takes as much of a “back seat” as possible, as reflected by the structure of the interview questions and the data analysis that is to follow.
By focusing on the responses of Palestinians, both within the occupied territories and the diaspora, it was my intention to avoid as much speculation as possible, and instead to highlight the affective and empirical perspectives of the community most directly impacted by the existence of the Apartheid Wall and the continuation of the Israeli occupation. Several variables for comparison were included in the interviews to help find any common factors that may help in understanding the responses and insights expressed therein. These include: gender, age, ethnicity, country of residence, citizenship, and political background. How the respondents answered these qualifiers illuminates their self-identification to a degree, as well. Noticeably absent is any explicit religious identifier, though any expansive future studies including this category may prove interesting.

**Sumud:**

The information gleaned from the interviews supports the significance and creativity inherent to resistance in the Palestinian context, or *sumud*, as elaborated upon vis-à-vis the intricacies and dynamism of the Israeli occupation and methods of control. As one diasporic respondent states, “Sumud in specific means for us as Palestinians means you don’t do what we did, you don’t leave the country, you stay there, you take the harsh conditions and situation but you don’t leave and you try to resist [sic.]” Since

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“sumud has a political implication that means you are resisting by staying” and “to represent who you are,” it is important to understand what tactics, both mundane and extraordinary, assist in making “staying” and “representing” viable options.

Definitions of *sumud* within the occupied territories reflect similar themes, such as “to stay in a place where it’s hard to live and try to have a life and protect the things that belong to you even if there is a stronger force that is making this more impossible every day;” “not giving up on something such as an idea or a land;” and “sticking to your ideals, principles and roots, not giving in to political oppression and violence.” Such tactics contextually require the preservation of culture, the assertion of a connection to the land, and a historical understanding that supports these claims, especially in the face of extreme censorship and a hegemonic narrative that serves to sever these identities. This form of cultural resistance “can have lots of meanings, but it’s basically preserving the identity and the land from theft. It can also mean not giving up, facing oppression, countering the occupation, and rejecting apartheid; all of which are rightful struggles within the Palestinian context.”

Refusing to recognize local cultural and political beliefs and actions is itself a form of oppression and trivializes the experiences and knowledges of those peoples. In de Sousa Santos’ words, “there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice” (de Sousa Santos 2014: 42). The fact that *sumud* can be cultivated within the mundane, personal experiences and activities of individual Palestinians should not count against its efficacy and, indeed, local perceptions of its power and utility should take priority over external speculation and (mis)understanding. “The notion that resistance has to be
centralized, organized, or calculated reflects a state-centric, Western, liberal understanding of resistance” (Ryan: 310), and in accord with de Sousa Santos’ *Epistemologies of the South*, is an act of cognitive injustice that subverts indigenous resistance instead of strengthening it. While mass demonstrations and violent acts conducted by Palestinian organizations are widely understood as forms of resistance, informal or spontaneous actions, such as graffiti production, are typically ignored or devalued. Furthermore, actors in mass demonstrations and violence connote male agency or politicization, subverting spaces and arenas of legitimate political activity commonly recognized as feminine domains, such as the household. Individual acts of *sumud* serve to strengthen the collective efforts of all Palestinians engaging in resistance, as each member of a household or family who chooses to remain in their home and on their land for as long as possible grants credence and righteousness to the common cause, politicizing the raising, or even the establishment, of a family and private, familial space. The legitimacy of *sumud* therefore also challenges dominant conceptions of effective resistance and political organization. “Hence the accentuated importance of the Palestinian today, for he/she is being pragmatically forced to create his/her identity in accordance with real impingements upon it” (Said 1994: 12). Failure to (re)create oneself in real time in the face of processual structural violence in the form of the occupation is tantamount to losing the war for one’s self and one’s homeland, and there is no formality, centralization, nor overt organizational qualities to this act—it is a very individual act compounded by the vulnerability and sentiment of the community.
The Wall:
The centrality of the Apartheid Wall in the realization of “theft,” and its role in cementing the establishment of enclaves or Bantustans, establishes the Wall as a concrete and symbolic construct to be countered by Palestinian resistance. When asked to share their thoughts and feelings provoked by the presence of the Apartheid Wall, responses ranged from outrage and disbelief to complex understandings of internal politics (“internal” referring to the inextricable relationship between Israelis and Palestinians), and in some instances, global and historical connections to locate the Wall amongst other condemnable historical actions. One diasporic respondent ties their answer to sumud, expressing the belief that “it’s a way to make the Palestinians live harder and unbearable which will force them to leave. It’s like a grip shocking you down.” Such an answer hermeneutically links contemporary Palestinian forms of resistance to the existence of the Apartheid Wall, as a representational force of the Israeli policy to coerce Palestinian exodus from the land. These carceral characteristics are reflected by a resident of the occupied territories, as the Wall is “preventing the freedom of movement—putting a big number of people in a big prison and humiliating them on a daily basis.”

Further expository remarks from within Palestine demonstrate more explicitly political views: “The Israelis wall purpose is evident, it demolishes the idea of a two-state solution, which is the only solution left after Israel declined a single state solution, making the issue even more complicated.” This interpretation places the Apartheid Wall centrally within the continuing conflict, as a direct obstacle to peace, and explicitly
references the destructive qualities of Israeli construction. The loss of the two-state solution is most likely an allusion to the snake-like path of the Wall that encroaches beyond the 1967 Green-line (borders between Israel and Palestine), severing more land from any prospective Palestinian state, as well as the Wall’s role in enclavization—the discontinuity and isolation resultant between Palestinian towns and cities.

Reiterating the Wall-as-obstruction theme, another respondent describes it thus:

“Restriction of movement and the prevention of trading and peacemaking. When both peoples are separated, there shall be no room for confrontation and reconciliation. It serves both sides wrong more than it does them any good. However, and taking the bigger picture into account, it clearly sheds light on the apartheid state and the oppressions it enforces on the smaller Palestinian population and the use of their land.”

Significant here are allusions to the freedom of movement, but also the inability to develop an autonomous economy. Indeed, Palestine is the number one importer of Israeli goods, they use the same currency, and income from taxation and aid programs is held by Israeli authorities to be released according to ‘good behavior.’ Separation of ethnicities with, if not integration, then direct control of the Palestinian economy, are strong indicators of apartheid, as noted by the respondent, and the wall is simply a means to this end.

Another intricate response to the Wall in need of dissecting follows:

“It is used as a way to separate and conquer Palestine, bring hardships to people living on both sides of the wall, and separate families. It also reminds me that
when people are treated with cruelty, it teaches them how to become cruel when
given power, the Separation Wall is only a bigger version of the Berlin Wall with
the same intentions.”

It is unclear whether the respondent, in referring to those “living on both sides of the
wall,” means the non-Arab Israelis, or the Palestinian Israelis who, in relatively small
numbers, were brought into the folds of the Israeli state. Palestinian families are often
separated by the Wall, and those not under occupation enjoy third-class citizenship (with
Arab Jews comprising the second-class), disenfranchisement, and discrimination within
the Israeli state (a demographic and dynamic this study does not discuss in detail). The
cruel treatment of people mentioned acknowledges both the suffering and ethnic
cleansing European Jews endured, especially prior to the creation of the Israeli state, and
the subsequent misery (and ethnic cleansing) imposed upon Palestinians by Israelis. The
allusion to the Berlin Wall is remarkable, too, mostly by its rhetorical absence in the
international arena. It seems that Palestinians and their transnational solidarity networks
are the only groups drawing parallels between the two walls. Furthermore, not only has
the United States been hypocritically silent, with not a single edict to “tear down” the
Wall, but they remain the largest contributor to, and enabler of, the Israeli occupation
politically and financially (as evidenced by some Apartheid Wall graffiti).

**Graffiti:**

The significance of these graffiti—a primary concern for this study—to
Palestinians and Palestinian resistance will need to be explored at length. Only one
respondent declared that the Apartheid Wall art did not represent anything to them, going on to state that they “don’t support the idea of making it into a large canvas to paint on.” While the dissenting opinion is important, it must be noted that this view was an outlier compared to the rest of the data gathered. Furthermore, the same respondent stated that “art can be a form of resistance in so many ways,” suggesting their discomfort with the Wall art stems from the object itself—the Apartheid Wall—rather than the subject of resistance found in the graffiti addressing the Wall. There assuredly exists the belief that the Wall needs to be torn down, and that the paintings do nothing to accelerate this process.

Overwhelmingly, however, the significance of graffiti was reflected within both the diasporic and ‘internal’ Palestinian communities. From the diaspora, “it represent an epoch of the Palestinian and the conflict. This art on the walls is not new, the place to paint is. During the first Intifada, Palestinians used the wall all over to indicate their presence and story [sic.].” Recognition of graffiti’s utility to Palestinian resistance, and its derivation from earlier experience, is notable in that it establishes the action as politically and culturally relevant before the emergence of Western artists’ work on the Apartheid Wall. Another diasporic member asserts that one should “forget about any political meaning, it’s about you as a Palestinian going in front of this wall every day, it’s nice to see something bright.” Steering clear of any debate around local political significance, the positivity exists, at the very least, through the arts’ “beautifying” qualities. If the Wall exists, it might as well be decorative. Addressing transnational politics, however, the same respondent finds it “a positive thing…I think from a political
standpoint the majority of Americans, for example, don’t know there is a Wall, and if
ey they do know there is a Wall, they see it as for security reasons to protect the Israeli’s
from the Palestinians. But seeing such an image at least it will raise questions that maybe
there is something else there [sic.].” Thus, the role played by the art to potentially
influence transnational politics is significant, even if its local effect towards
Palestinian/Israeli politics is seen as negligible.

**Alternative Media:**

This sentiment is shared by residents of Palestine, as well: “Yeah, but that thing is
that’s like people to people communication, that’s not people to government or
government to government so that’s one of the things.” Alluding to apathy and frustration
toward the internal and local political situation, the respondent recognizes the
transnational implications of the art and the existence of an affected touristic component,
as well as a desire for a non-state-oriented approach to combatting Israeli control.
Another Palestinian resident combines the ideas of local representation and global
politics by asserting that the art “turns the wall from a disgusting piece of rocks and
metals to something meaningful,” recognizing that “[a]rtists from Palestine and all
around the world are now seeing this wall as a chance to express this feelings and
frustration towards it and toward other global events [sic.].”

Access to an international audience is represented in the transition from script-
heavy graffiti to a more image-based format:
“Just like they did in Germany prior to the Fall of the Wall, ‘Mauerfall,’ they aim to deliver a message to those who pass by it. The way I see it as a resident of Bethlehem is that thousands of tourists pass by the wall and they come from different backgrounds, have different religions and affiliations, and speak of course various languages. Therefore, the easiest way to approach them is through art, because it reflects the message and the culture without the use of language and can be understood by nearly every by-passer. It does the job better than any advocacy campaign or media.”

The prevalence of graffiti on the Apartheid Wall around Bethlehem panders directly to the influx of international tourists, by playing with religious themes recognizable to pilgrims and the muralistic renderings of political messages. Graffiti’s efficacy is even seen as more powerful than news media coverage and non-profit or humanitarian efforts to raise awareness. Another reference to the Berlin Wall couches the existence of the Apartheid Wall in recent history relevant to Western notions of the dichotomy between freedom and tyranny, ‘good’ versus ‘evil,’ the use of graffiti by allies of the former, and construction of the Wall as methods of the latter.

**Graffiti as Sumud:**

Historical uses of graffiti as a form of resistance, whether cited from examples of the Berlin Wall or the first Intifada in Palestine, establish precedence for its contemporary utility. In a conflict rife with control, surveillance, and the restriction of movement, graffiti “does take courage. People are really scared to write on the wall. People are
scared to even walk beside the wall.” Relating the production of art on the Apartheid Wall to a form of resistance, in this case *sumud*, was common during the interviews. Ranging from simple expressions to indirect influence, all participants recognized some degree of a relationship between the two. From the diaspora, one respondent saw the art “as an expression of sumud, like here is something bad that is ugly and we are making the best of it,” living day-to-day despite obvious obstacles and restrictions [sic.]. Furthermore, it is “[r]aising the morale for *sumud* and giving you positive encouragement.” In a similar light, another diasporic respondent thought “if other people come in, famous or not famous, and as they work on this [artwork] the young generation are working with them then they will be able to see something beyond the normal. So, from that perspective that is good.” Interaction with a transnational community, and involvement with the production of the graffiti, challenges the status quo, reinvigorates struggling youth, and encourages resistance by cultivating hope and connectivity, even though the art itself may not explicitly be understood as *sumud*. The dissociation of the graffiti from *sumud* was framed by an understanding that related the act of painting on the Wall with transnational actors, rather than viewing it commonly as a local practice. “[Y]ou may think that nobody cares and we are dying and nobody cares and to see an artist come and spend time there, I’m not saying it’s going to change the conflict, but it will help [sic.].” Statements such as these reflect a perception, more prevalent in the diasporic community, that graffiti is an external phenomenon, but still acknowledge the potential implications of a transnational action and its encouraging effects.
When asked whether they considered the art to be a form of *sumud*, a respondent from within Palestine declared:

“I totally agree that it does represent resilience. For more than two decades, the world has been fed lies and misinformation about the Palestinian people. Palestinians have been portrayed as violent savages who only seek to destroy Israel based on religious affiliations. However, art manages to deliver the actual message through simple drawings. We can now easily reach the world with our message that we are indeed fighters, but not because the State is Jewish, but rather because it’s unjust, built on land theft, and is an apartheid. It delivers the message that our fight is not a religious fight. We have lived on this land for thousands of years as Christians, Muslims, and Jews…The world no more understands violence as a means to regain what has been taken by force. Therefore, art shows the world the true face of the occupation and the occupying state, it documents events, reflects the culture, portrays creativity, and relates to stories that support our cause internationally rather than portraying us as low and uncivilized population that seeks only the destruction of Israel [sic.].”

This loaded response demonstrates the efficacy of graffiti in providing a counter-narrative to hegemonic discourses via powerful representations and images that reflect the shared and dynamic cultural and religious history of Palestine and that directly challenge Israeli and Western portrayals of Palestinians, specifically, and Arabs, generally. Responsible for porosity in the Apartheid Wall for Palestinians, their messages and local struggles can be made evident to an international community complicit in
Palestinian suffering at least through their silence, and non-violently illustrate the violence inherent to the Israeli occupation, and the Israeli state, as well. Beyond a local manifestation of *sumud*, graffiti on the Wall has launched the Palestinian struggle into international space, independent of state involvement, directly to the people.

**Outsiders:**

Interpretations of graffiti within international spaces, especially as a virtual image relatively removed from its context, are one way in which distortions and de-localizations of the Palestinian struggle may occur. Artists’ pandering to a transnational audience also may obfuscate the historical aspects of the Palestinian struggle, and powerful, “focalized” (locally focused) critique can be lost amidst the global milieu. Since the Apartheid Wall has developed into a canvas and democratic forum, in parts, that illustrates the emancipatory aims of the Palestinian struggle and circumvents Israeli censorship, it becomes necessary to “question whether such practices may inadvertently reify the wall’s presence and permanence, and equally, whether they encourage Western graffiti artists and international peace activists to further the physical and discursive colonization of Palestinian space” (Larkin 2014: 135-136). Though Larkin’s study focuses on the Palestinian Jerusalemite community (it is unclear which towns and populations this demarcates, but he seems to deal directly with East Jerusalem towns the Israeli wall has severed from the metropolis and/or West Bank), Palestinian opinions surrounding graffiti in the context of the Apartheid Wall are far from homogenous: “Some accuse artists of beautifying the wall,” as in Banksy’s personal anecdote, “and creating artistic tourism
that actually helps legitimate its presence. Others worry that such murals do not actually challenge Israeli authority” (Larkin 2014: 144). While graffiti is perceived heterogeneously within Palestine, and concerns regarding the neo-colonization of Palestinian space by Westerner’s are valid, the proliferation or attention paid to Western artists’ murals and messages on the Apartheid Wall should be understood more as western triumphalism suggestive of an external origination to Palestinian graffiti, rather than explicit co-optation or cultural interference with Palestinian resistance and art.

Banksy’s foray has certainly encouraged other international graffiti artists to follow suit, raising funds through their artwork for Palestinians (Larkin 2014), and the Western media coverage these individuals and events elicit typically credit international artists for developing new forms of expression, solidarity, and protest, or focusing on the artists’ intended meanings behind their works that may or may not reflect any significance for Palestinians (Krohn and Lagerweij 2010). While photographic documentation by Mia Grondahl of graffiti in Gaza illustrates the myriad Palestinian artists, techniques, and messages (2009), it took approximately another five years, following Banksy’s visit after the most recent leveling of the Gaza enclave by Israeli forces, before graffiti was discussed by the news media, and the coverage still focused only on Banksy’s work. International pandering to international artists does not equate to an absence or neutralization of Palestinian art, meaning-making, production, or political significance, though it certainly obfuscates and ignores the local struggle and violent context of daily Palestinian life, most obviously demonstrated by the Apartheid Wall itself.
The focus on international involvement and neglect of Palestinian voice (whether intentional or not) recalls Edward Said’s definition of Orientalism which, in short, refers to a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient…because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action” (1978: 3). As Ashley Toenjes notes, this “process of focusing on Western artists’ art on the separation wall bares the painful familiarity of Orientalism, where the realities of the wall and its impact on Palestinian lives become not the focus, but the objectified backgrounds in the stories of named and important Western actors” (2015: 64). The implications that Palestinian actions and voices do not exist or carry weight until Western actors comment or act upon them is alarming, and arguably helps explain the longevity of the Palestinian struggle against a seemingly acceptable Israeli occupation. This conscious recognition by Western actors on Western actors threatens cognitive and social justice, but does not preclude Palestinian involvement within the production of the artwork. Indeed, graffiti embodies a communitive form of artistic production, and it would be a tremendous error to assume the street art on the Apartheid Wall was produced without the consent or input of the Palestinian community, though we must not also assume these relationships are equal. Neither does the use of the English language represent the external or ‘foreign’ origins of the artists/artwork (another example of Orientalist assumptions). “English is increasingly the ‘language of protest’ for those seeking to address Israel, the United States, and the international community” (Larkin 2014: 151), as it is a globally utilized language, especially for commerce and trade.
Recognizing the foreign origins of some of the graffiti, none of the respondents thought the work of international artists and activists jeopardized the political or social potential of the artwork outright. Generally, the involvement of external actors was perceived as a positive thing, though some concern regarding future works, or a few pieces that appeared to have no contextual relevance, were cited. Several respondents expressed unequivocally that the foreign origins behind some graffiti served to enhance exposure, which they viewed positively. In fact, some of this prevalence was justified when the conditions and context of the occupation were considered. Referring to the fears surrounding the Apartheid Wall itself, let alone the law-breaking inherent to graffiti, one respondent suggested the presence of soldiers and guard towers as a likely deterrent for Palestinian artists, but possibly a non-factor for international artists. “In Bethlehem, the tower is, like, above you, so that’s why in Bethlehem you see foreigners. The [Palestinian] guy who did the Mohammed Ali thing, had like ten foreigners around him so he wouldn’t get shot or arrested.” Here, the presence of external actors was utilized by a local artist to protect against Israeli reprisal.

Another respondent believed most of the images had meaning, but some “paintings don’t hold political, emotional, or social meaning to [them]. The world needs to be reminded daily that this wall is an act of discrimination and those paintings are the Palestinians way to protest its existence.” Since so many of the images painted illustrate the local struggle against the occupation, it is important that any artists’ involvement does not distract from the conflict at hand. So long as foreigner’s express solidarity or Palestinian ideals in a representational manner that makes sense to the local population,
as well, then the origins of the art are inconsequential. A similar view attests that international involvement “only shows that there are other people in the world believing in the cause and understanding the struggle of Palestinians, their art as foreigners builds a bridge and helps other foreigners know and understand the conflict and the issue at hand.” In other words, international artists may be able to reach their home audiences more effectively, through imagery and script, than Palestinian artists.

As far as famous street artists’ association with the Apartheid Wall goes, “[h]aving a famous artist painting on the wall will give it more publicity and will drive people to learn more about the story of these paintings.” Similarly, “Banksy’s name had brought more attention to the idea that this Wall is causing a big crisis to human rights of movement.” Such exposure, after decades of negative representation and censorship, is welcome as a means to educate and pique the interest of a global community that may only hear of the Apartheid Wall through these references, exposing them to a political situation that has historically been downplayed or misrepresented. One respondent discussed foreign involvement in the production of graffiti in Palestine as evolutionary, stating:

“On the one hand, and to be fair, the Art on the Wall started off by Palestinians writing freedom slogans, drawing recent martyrs to commemorate their names, or emphasizing on a certain event that they want the population to be aware of, which include the signing of agreements that does them bad, etc. On the other hand, Banksy and other renowned artists made a revolution in terms of how the Art on the Wall should look like, and how a message can be better conveyed
using it. Moreover, international supporters have always been reaching the world and advocating others about our situation. So instead of doing this on their own, they found a way to reach the Palestinian audience with means to reach the world all by themselves. It’s ironic because the wall separates us from the rest of the world, but now the wall serves as a portal to reach the rest of the world with our message [sic.].”

Rather than a practice with foreign origins, or crediting international artists and activists with graffiti as a form of resistance, we have the arrival and sharing of external techniques that were adapted to, and adopted by, the Palestinian context and Palestinian artists. Such a synthesis has further enabled international outreach and raised awareness of the plight of the Palestinians, and has served only to benefit the local resistance by trans-nationalizing it.

**Transnational Networks:**

Raising awareness to international complicity creates further channels of resistance as activists and citizens of foreign states can bring boycotts, protests, and policy changes home to either alleviate or increase pressure on Palestinians and Israelis, respectively. As Toenjes argues, “based on the content of the graffiti, Palestinians seek to create a transnational will that opposes the wall (and the occupation) and targets the power structures and governments (in particular the American government) that Palestinians see as complicit in the wall and its effects on their lives” (2014: 10). This desire for will-formation is a direct challenge to the hegemonic Israeli position and
narrative that utilizes classic orientalism to portray Palestinians as animals, terrorists, and otherwise unworthy partners in dialogues for peace. Indeed, the prevalence of religiously-minded graffiti around Bethlehem and Jerusalem plays precisely to international religious communities that often preach love and acceptance over separation and annihilation, and can be interpreted as a direct appeal to the conscience of these communities whose perspectives are often shaped unilaterally via media tropes and one-dimensional representations of the conflict.

Following decades of international isolation and condemnation, utilization of the Apartheid Wall as a “global canvas” has engendered people-to-people connections that intentionally bypass state actors in search of broader connections and civil networks of solidarity: “This process creates opportunities for Palestinians to circumvent the contemporary censorship of stunted economic development—a consequence of longstanding Israeli control of Palestinian borders and movement of people, ideas, and goods—and participate in transnational space” (Toenjes 2015: 57). Global and local realizations of the efficacy of street art are often found simultaneously vis-à-vis the establishment of democratic public space, or forums, for political debate and civic engagement, as part of a dialectic relationship between the local and the global. “Wall graffiti takes key Palestinian debates from cafes and offices to public streets, communities, and international media. For many Jerusalemites, this form of resistance remains the only viable option, given how vulnerable they are to the Israeli state and the PA and to the inertia of Palestinian politics” (Larkin 2014: 160). Significant again is the
relevance of circumventing both the Israeli state and ‘national authority’ of Palestine in
the cultivation of political attitudes and positions.

Indeed, the changing dynamics of the Israeli occupation and oppression of
Palestinians is reflected in the graffiti itself, in both its content and the surface on which it
is painted, as it “attests to the many transformations undergone by the Palestinian
resistance, together with its objects and subjects, since the first intifada” (Gould 2014: 8):
the introduction of the Apartheid Wall and the subsequent inclusion and utilization of the
Wall as a means and cause of protest. This concept is expanded upon in an article by
Craig Larkin:

“Wall artists attest to the paradoxical predicaments of Palestinians and the
different audiences they hope to address. The local commercial advertisements
reflect the struggle to maintain a viable livelihood in fractured neighborhoods,
while the English-language protest murals and slogans points to a growing belief
that only international awareness, solidarity, and global pressure will influence
Israel’s current policies” (2014: 161-162).

The concentration of graffiti on the Wall surrounding Bethlehem illustrates this increased
awareness and attempts to reach a global community, as the city is relatively highly
trafficked by tourists, religious pilgrims, and activists. Thus, it is to Bethlehem we have
turned to account for first-hand experiences of this barrier and the artwork upon it in our
exploration of the “un-walling” of the Apartheid Wall.

**Conflict Tourism:**
Inseparable, however, from the increased involvement of internationals is the possibility—or already established existence—of conflict tourism. Defined one way as travel and experience-seeking based primarily upon the existence of a recent or current violent conflict without any inherent intent to alleviate the suffering or difficulties created by the conflict, tourism of this type may have positive or negative consequences. Rather than assume or speculate on the potential ramifications of conflict tourism, those interviewed were asked their opinions regarding the subject. Only months prior to the conduction of these interviews, a new project in Bethlehem, the Banksy Hotel, was established, increasing the pertinence for this question. Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants were divided in their thoughts, though a majority expressed either optimism or open excitement.

For those opposed to the advent of conflict tourism, shared themes behind their hostility included the profits made from the violence and oppression, and the notion of becoming ‘entertainment’:

“In general, I am absolutely against the idea of conflict tourism especially regarding Banksy Hotel. I see that there is a lot of use of the political situation for a business thing especially that now that are taking money from the tourist to paint on the wall. That idea was repelling for me. On the other hand, it has secured some jobs for some people in Bethlehem area, but it stays only for certain people, it hasn’t helped the art in general in Palestine or helped the economy of the Palestinian in any sense or did it change the political situation in any sense. So, I am skeptical about this initiative and will still be like that [sic.].”
Any economic gains from conflict tourism are thus seen as temporary and insignificant when compared to the overall financial struggles of Palestinians due to the continuing occupation. Importantly, the respondent does not see any boon for the arts in Palestine or for Palestinians, as segments of the Wall appear to be ‘sold’ for the novelty of having some inane or pointless message painted thereupon. The establishment of the Banksy Hotel, named for its creator, is the more insidious for its foreign origins and pandering.

Another direct reference to the Banksy Hotel appears to be the cause for discontent, as the very existence and name of such a structure, seems to imply. While the building does showcase local Palestinian artists’ work, it seemingly has yet to contribute enough meaning to the community at large:

“I think that the intentions behind the project have been of a kind nature, but using the violent schemes that cause much suffering to Palestinians as a tourist destination is quite disturbing; knowing that many people will only come to these tourist attractions as an exotic location with devastating story, but not truly experiencing the conflict. They stay in fancy rooms that look at the conflict from the outside, rather than staying in camps or experiencing a moment of conflict [sic.]”

Beyond the Banksy Hotel, coming to ‘experience’ the Wall, or any other facet of the occupation, only to quickly leave, is a disquieting prospect arising from the popularity garnered by the artwork and rising awareness of the conflict. Ostensibly, however, a rising sense of security or a lowered fear of danger likely accounts for some of the increase in tourism. Bethlehem being a Holy Site explains some of the visitations.
The reasons given for optimism or excitement towards increased tourism, conflict or otherwise, also focus on the artwork, whether international or local, that appear on the Apartheid Wall. One respondent could “see how tourists love to see this art on the wall and they feel that it’s an interesting adventure for them. They are not afraid to come and see it.” This current lack of fear suggests that concerns existed once, at least more prevalently, but some recent change on the ground has assuaged these worries. Incidentally, an exploration of what factors or perceptions have changed for tourists and internationals that allow for this increase in tourism would be interesting, especially if a causal relationship behind growing solidarity networks or changing international diplomatic relations with Israel or the Palestinians exist (this is, however, beyond the scope of this study). In connection to the Banksy Hotel, and his previous appearances in the West Bank, one participant stated that, “I feel it’s quite interesting, hopefully that will be a portal for other Palestinian artists, as well.” Thus, an increase of exposure related directly to Banksy’s artistic experimentations in the occupied territories, and the related rise in conflict tourism, will hopefully provide a broader stage and outlet to international communities for local, Palestinian artists. The cultural and economic potential for this censored artistic community is expressed optimistically as it relates to the rise in tourism, especially when it centers around the Wall art.

Remarking on the ignorance towards Palestine amongst European friends, one West Bank resident blamed this lack of knowledge on perceived levels of violence, especially one-dimensional explanations that put the blame squarely on Palestinians:
“Many rejected the idea of visiting the West Bank or Israel because they feared for their lives, but with variety and creativity of conflict tourism, the number of tourists are growing at a rapidly increasing rate. More people are able to overview the situation closely and they end up supporting the Palestinian cause and their right to self-determination. In fact, the number of tourists visiting the West Bank in the past two years exceeds the total number of those who visited in the past ten years [sic.].”

Since the Holy Sites within Palestine have existed for thousands of years, this spike in tourism can only be related to either the occupation being the subject of tourism or changing perceptions of violence and instability in Israel and Palestine. In either case, the first-hand experience for international visitors tends to increase sympathy and solidarity toward the Palestinian struggle, as an effective means to counteract Israeli/Western discourse and propaganda that has censored their plight for decades. Indeed, “[a]ny way that gets a tourist to Palestine is a good way, as this will help the tourism industry which many families depend on. Now it is on the burden of the Palestinian locals to talk to those tourists and describe the suffering and difficulties created by the wall and the conflict.”

Given the context of the Israeli occupation, the only substantial interaction Palestinians have with an international community—thanks to restrictions on the freedom of movement, travel and trade—comes from tourism. Obviously, not every Palestinian is employed in hospitality, but the forcibly repressed local economy benefits significantly from international visits, especially in the religious and historical city of Bethlehem. Indeed, many cab drivers, with alternative methods of access to the occupied territories
and Israeli-controlled sites, often serve as ad hoc tour guides with a wealth of local knowledges and histories. The Apartheid Wall—given its repurposing as a ‘canvas’ in the city—is a popular topic and, ironically, an accessible means to explain Palestinian struggles against Israeli oppression. The opportunity for Palestinians to share their non-hegemonic narrative with visitors and tourists is a vital life-line to the international community and represents direct local involvement toward establishing transnational solidarity networks. These exchanges are people-to-people circumventions of Israeli censorship, isolation and control.

**Reflections of the Local Experience:**

Most respondents felt the graffiti represented messages strengthening solidarity locally—through common cultural expressions and images and the reflection of a shared experience—or transnationally, by building bridges and networks beyond the confines of Israeli-dominated Palestinian space. A characteristic inherent to street art is its’ democratic production and means of existence: the ability for one individual or group to paint a space freely, with an equal opportunity for another individual or group to cover it up, often with a different image or message. “We always debate, especially through social media, such incidents where people would spray out an art because they think it’s religiously or culturally improper, but we try to reach both them and the artist in order to limit those incidents and stay on the same track [sic.].” Thus, the production of graffiti is itself a method of unification and consensus-building, not only between the local population, but also directly between the Palestinians and an international artist interested
in painting the Apartheid Wall. When successful, these efforts result in the collective ownership of the art, and a shared significance behind its meaning. These informal acts of participation help mitigate the appropriation or co-optation of the Wall space or the Palestinian resistance by international actors, ensuring the local struggle remains the focus for artistic advocacy. Despite these efforts, alienating graffiti does end up on the wall, though respondents believe the majority of the Wall art reflects the local experience, by directly confronting the Apartheid Wall or some other aspect of the occupation, and by conveying the suffering of Palestinians.

**Reclamation of Space:**

Whether or not the artwork served to reclaim space was contentious and misunderstood amongst participants, in large part due to an inadequate explanation of the question. One respondent thought the graffiti could “be considered a way for falsely reclaiming space,” suggesting that any sense of ownership or control exerted over the Apartheid Wall failed to alter the reality of the barrier and its obstruction to day-to-day life. A sense of danger lurks behind this answer, as well, as misguided ideas of success may ultimately result in greater harms to Palestinian resistance, especially as the Wall continues to expand, isolating and destroying more Palestinian communities. Alternatively, the isolating and discouraging designs behind the construction of the Apartheid Wall were also seen as being directly challenged by the graffiti:

“[The artwork on the Wall] serves to deliver a message that this space belongs to us and we can do whatever we would like to using it. It also serves to remove the
idea of a pale concrete wall that sits there and sucks the life out of the living. Therefore, some areas of the wall are covered in paintings of green fields, running water, clear skies, playing kids, etc. They mean to deliver the message that we are normal people seeking normal lives [sic.].”

While the space the Wall occupies is not directly reclaimed, in the sense that it still fulfills many of its oppressive functions for the Israeli’s building it, it does succeed in appropriating an oppressive space for the generation of hope, inspiration, resistance, culture, history, and political representation, challenging, at least, the \textit{definition} of space interpreted and imposed by Israel.

These interviews reflect a variety of perspectives towards the graffiti on the Apartheid Wall that, far from being homogenous, do broadly demonstrate the efficacy of street art for socio-political purposes. One notable variable impacting the opinions of respondents was age, with those interviewed over the age of forty expressing higher levels of doubt regarding the potential power of graffiti and its recognition as resistance \textit{(sumud)}. While almost all participants under the age of forty expressed dissenting views, espousing the contemporary utility of graffiti and its’ empowering capabilities as an important piece of Palestinian resistance and solidarity-building, this distinction could also be drawn between the diasporic community and Palestinians living in the West Bank. Though some of the diasporic respondents were under the age of 40, and their opinions regarding the art on the Apartheid Wall largely fall in line with their compatriots in the occupied territories, regrettably, none of the interviews conducted with residents of Palestine represent an older demographic. It is therefore difficult to draw a conclusion,
broadly speaking, between generational or residential categories that would causally link them to their conceptions of the graffiti. Speculatively, however, the younger generation appears to more readily or optimistically accept the vitality of street art for the contemporary continuation of Palestinian resistance, with tremendous repercussions locally and globally.
CONCLUSION

In this thesis, we have raised a number of questions: What is the political potential of street art and graffiti? Does *sumud* have any relevance as an active form of resistance, and how is the recognition of its legitimacy a form of cognitive justice? What is the context of physical/spatial violence within Palestine, and how are these impositions contested? The process of settling unsettles others and contributes to unsettling ourselves by producing inequality. The diverse and flexible responses to these injustices demonstrates the agency of those otherwise condemned to be demonized or victimized, as they craft their own narratives and understanding. Stemming from individual actions, every-day resistance coalesces into collective significance and illustrates the profound effects of culturally understood forms of resistance. Indeed, the transnationalization of *sumud* via graffiti is indicative of the adaptability of resistance to an apartheid situation, as well as the transnationalization of the culture and politics of disenfranchised communities.

The Palestinian experience with graffiti on the Apartheid Wall represents alternative, informal modes of political participation and engagement with a transnational community, subverting explicitly antagonistic views and the implications of silence found in many academic perspectives. The belief that “the lack of attention paid to graffiti by political sociologists reinforces perceived illegitimacy further alienating those
that turn to this medium” (Waldner and Dobratz 2013: 377) echoes the sentiments of de Sousa Santos (2014), particularly his concern for the “cognitive injustice” we commit when we fail to take seriously the validity and creativity behind street art as a political tool. Recognizing graffiti as a form of *sumud*, and its political relevance in particular for Palestinian resistance, represents a first step toward cognitive justice in this ongoing struggle. Asserting a strong claim for graffiti’s efficacy for socio-political community-building, even across state borders, helps those of us living outside the Wall to better understand our own relationship to this struggle. The potential graffiti holds for challenging apartheid, enclavization, ghettoization, segregation, and discrimination, especially in urban settings, locally and globally, can be extrapolated from the Palestinian experience, liberating new and subversive tactics to combat forms of oppression and spatial violence. However, since “[k]nowing the geographic location of the graffiti writing and the history of contested space contributes to understanding the political message” (Waldner and Dobratz 2013), a thorough exploration of the dynamics of Israeli control is required to encourage a full appreciation of creative Palestinian resistance to apartheid. This is what I hope to have taken a small step toward providing here.

The social construction of space entails an arena rife with contestation, meaning-making, and identity-inventing—especially when one considers the imagined nature of the ‘nation’ as a community (Anderson [1983], 1991). The struggle for the physical and imaginative control over space is exemplified by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the land of historical Palestine, while the establishment of a settler-colonial state draws upon diverse and pervasive methods to define communities and their boundaries of inclusivity.
and exclusivity. The cultural structures—both material and non-material—constructed within contested spaces serve to define the social relationship within that space. They remind groups, especially subordinated ones, of the hierarchical place they hold within the (nation-)state. To better understand the dynamics behind “spatialization”—the ways in which “life literally takes place” (Gregory 1994: 104)—the architecture, utility, symbolism and power embedded within contested space must be explored, with minds wide open. Indeed, they require, if only temporarily, a suspension of hard-held beliefs—long enough to create spaces of possibility for taking an imaginative (yet serious and meaningful) stance. How else can we begin to perceive the reality of “the Other”? Thus, a tension emerges: resistance in the name of beliefs (sumud) also requires, for its successful resolution of conflict, a space of mutually suspended disbelief. It requires an orientation (beyond Orientalism) toward the Other’s imagined community that permits a space of non-violent political self-expression. While graffiti on the Apartheid Wall ironically attempts to manifest such a space, cognitive injustice has persisted.

Perhaps the most recognizable and exemplary object of Israeli control, the Apartheid Wall is contextually an ideal subject/object of resistance. Designed to alienate Palestinians from the land, and to segregate them from their Israeli neighbors, its use as a public forum and global message board acutely illustrates the diversity in the contestation and use of space. The Apartheid Wall’s existence reifies the extreme “Otherness” of Palestinians and contributes to cognitive and social injustices via its’ censorship and restrictions. Creatively turning this dynamic on its head opens an otherwise totally
oppressive space to the voices and activities of a people who have not given up hopes for self-determination.

A more recent factor in the conflict, the Apartheid Wall has quickly become the most easily targeted and condemnable Israeli action, aside from the administrative detention (confinement without trial or legal justification beyond a perceived security threat) or murder of Palestinian youths. Taller and longer than the Berlin Wall, and technically under perpetual construction to this day, the Apartheid Wall disrupts Palestinian communal contiguity by bisecting the land into “Israeli” and “Palestinian.” It obstructs trade and commerce while imprisoning, enclaving and ghettoizing Palestinian cities, towns and villages, and reifies Israeli impressions that disregard an entire nation as criminals, terrorists, and animals. Personifying construction through destruction, or vice versa, the Israeli Apartheid Wall represents, for its producers, the realization of the control and definition of contested space.

As Weizman declares ([2007] 2012), all architectural projects in Israel/Palestine represent Zionism, and many civilian occupations—like those in construction and design—are co-opted for political purposes of the state. Indeed, the explicitly spatial dynamics of Israeli state policy (e.g. the occupation itself) grants favor to those professions capable of establishing ‘facts on the ground,’ or the realization of tangible control over space. Beyond the obvious involvement of the military, it is the construction of settlements within the West Bank and Greater Jerusalem that prove the most
contentious obstacles to peace, at least within the parlance of the dead and soon-to-be buried two-state solution².

The topographical layout of these settlements consists of hilltop construction—relegating the valleys for Palestinian towns, and subsequently, Israeli settlement waste disposal—and the exclusive Judaization of Jerusalem. Again, the establishment of ‘facts on the ground’ in the case of Jerusalem serve to impose its’ recognition as the eternal and undivided capital of Israel by eliminating as much of the Palestinian population in and around the city. The militarization of civilian populations and professions is evident, but an unintended consequence is the ever-increasing deniability of an apartheid situation within Israel/Palestine. Settlement expansion and land grabs, as much as they sever and isolate Palestinian communities from Israeli and other Palestinian towns, result in an inextricable geography between Palestinian and Israeli lands. This ‘super-imposition’ makes separation via two states practically impossible, and politically improbable, as it would now require the abandonment of certain Israeli settlements and towns (which would be unamenable to domestic politics within Israel). While the inclusion of civilians as architects and settlers may diminish immediate military roles, with settlers serving as a vanguard security force in many instances, the militarization of all spheres of Israeli life increases later levels of direct military involvement. Whether to ‘protect’ newly

² Settlers receive the largest amount of financial support from the state, as a means to encourage relocation to these ‘outposts,’ but it is primarily immigrant groups, most recently from Russia, and the most messianic of Jewish faith groups, believing in the unequivocal control of Greater Israel (including all of historical Palestine, the East Bank of the Jordan River, and parts of Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt) that comprise settler populations.
established settlements or to monitor and control the perpetually transitional borders of the Israeli state, Israeli policy invites their use—and threatens—of overt force.³

While incentives to “toe the line” certainly exist, refusal to participate or be co-opted within the political/ideological goals of the Israeli state or their supporters, such as the U.S., becomes tantamount to resistance and independence from their pernicious apparatuses and control. As has become clear, a lack of civilian support, whether voluntary, unconscious, or coerced, renders state policy—in this case, apartheid—unsustainable.⁴

*Sumud*, locally embodying perhaps mundane action politicized by the nature of Israeli control, combats the imposition of precarious living conditions and lack of

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³ The politically co-opted civilian class includes academics, too, as an integral part of this process. Even disengagement with a conflict, ‘sitting the fence’ or expressing objective neutrality, only serve to reproduce the status quo, as no tangible objections or challenges are issued. While some Israeli academics, such as the New Historians like Ilan Pappe and Shlomo Sand, explore the historical-ideological roots of Zionism within European political philosophy (eugenics, national purity, rationalism, etc.) and its inherent racial/ethnic exclusivity, these exemplars are typically socially or violently ostracized for their unpopular beliefs, and their colleagues complicit in settlement, state, and military policy generation and defense vastly outnumber them.

Beyond the localized borders of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, academics in the United States and many European countries also face discrimination and ‘discipline’ by the political and educational apparatuses for expressing open support for the Palestinian struggle, or for suggestions of Israeli apartheid. In Edward Said’s passionate prose:

> “Nothing in my mind is more reprehensible than those habits of mind in the intellectual that induce avoidance, that characteristic turning away from a difficult and principled position which you know to be the right one, but which you decide not to take. You do not want to appear too political; you are afraid of seeming controversial; you need the approval of a boss or an authority figure; you want to keep a reputation for being balanced, objective, moderate; your hope is to be asked back, to consult, to be on a board or prestigious committee, and so to remain within the responsible mainstream; someday you hope to get an honorary degree, a big prize, perhaps even an ambassadorship... Personally I have encountered them in one of the toughest of all contemporary issues, Palestine, where fear of speaking out about one of the greatest injustices in modern history has hobbled, blinkered, muzzled many who know the truth and are in a position to serve it. For despite the abuse and vilification that any outspoken supporter of Palestinian rights and self-determination earns for him or herself, the truth deserves to be spoken, represented by an unafraid and compassionate intellectual (Barghouti 2011: 34).”

⁴ It was, after all, civilian engagement as a counter-power that predominantly brought about the end of apartheid in South Africa, as boycotts and divestment made state support of the South African government unprofitable, which in turn made their system of apartheid unprofitable (Younis 2000). Indeed, “[t]he BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] campaign is among the most important forms of such “resolute struggle” by the great majority of Palestinians,” and is the direct result of the transnationalization of the Palestinian struggle for “self-determination, freedom, justice, and unmitigated equality” (Barghouti 2011: 6). Since Palestine comprises a captive market for Israeli goods, it is difficult to implement local boycotts and divestments, and historical attempts like the local production of milk during the First Intifada, resulted in eighteen cows being classified as threats to Israeli national security (The Wanted 18, 2014). The BDS movement largely consists, then, of transnational activists that are able to pressure their own states and corporations into relinquishing aid to Israel, but advocacy and support for this movement still manifests locally.
This method of Palestinian resistance is a direct challenge to ethnic cleansing attempts, asserting the individualized replication of culture, history, and identity as inhabitants of a land in the face of communal destruction. In the Israeli/Palestinian context, where both public and private space is politicized, controlled, and monitored, any decision to individually or collectively remain in these spaces reaffirms nationalistic or representational claims for inclusion within a land and a state. Contrary to hegemonic notions of resistance, that widely favor centralized, formal organizations in direct confrontation with an oppressive force, *sumud* returns power and agency to the informal, decentralized, often individualized or isolated forms of resistance through existence that are overlooked or ignored by studies on effective, tangible challenges to coercive authority.

Understood by some Palestinians as *sumud*, graffiti is another political tool whose efficacy has not been properly included within academic literature, generally, or political sociology, specifically, negating an understanding of alternative politics, forms of resistance, media, and transnational networks. Similarly, too, graffiti is often perceived as solely an individual act. This ignores the democratic and communal processes behind its production, erasure, and sustainability, just as the collective consequences to individual acts of *sumud* may get overlooked due to its comparable informality. With architecture, most notably the Apartheid Wall, utilized to control and define space, the significance of the timeliness and eloquence of graffiti in contesting dominant spatial perceptions is evident. “They signaled a refusal to acquiesce, a refusal to normalize the abnormal. They were an open challenge to Israel’s monopoly on the circulation of
information and knowledge” (Peteet 1996: 155). The Israeli narrative, and censorship of a Palestinian alternative, is thus challenged via graffiti, and has been since the First Intifada in 1987. For three decades, then, graffiti has proved efficacious for the construction of Palestinian networks, locally and transnationally, and the continuation of their struggle within nationalistic, globalizational, humanitarian, legal-judicial, and transnational contexts.

The younger generation, who did not live through the first Intifada, widely recognize graffiti’s political power, especially in the context of transnational solidarity. For these Palestinians, little faith seems to exist within local politics and bureaucratic structures such as the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the various Israeli security forces, as well as the judicial system (which grants Israeli authorities the power to try and detain Palestinians based upon military codes of occupation). Rather than amounting to civic apathy or a lack of resistance, this frustration is channeled outwards toward a transnational community, where hope, inspiration, and alternative forms of engagement are cultivated in order to circumvent the diplomatic and rhetorical gridlock that has become a mainstay feature of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The artwork on the Apartheid Wall helps transform an oppressive structure by using it as the object/subject of protest, inverting in many ways the Walls’ structurally violent designs. To avoid speculation or discursive colonization, the interview questions—tailored to the Palestinian community inside and out of the West Bank—sought to establish a broad understanding of local sentiments toward the Apartheid Wall graffiti.
Avoiding esoteric language, the interviews produced a more approachable, yet sociologically relevant, collection of data pertaining to the contestation of space, local conceptions of resistance to the extraordinary conditions of Israeli control and their impact on the day-to-day activities (perhaps often taken for granted by those of us living outside of occupation). Illustrating the significance of these activities—such as the notion of ‘staying’ in place, sharing one’s history, culture and traditions, and maintaining a family and a life under apartheid—*sumud* and its expression artistically embody creative and adaptive tactics for a sustainable counter-power to Israeli/hegemonic narrative, censorship, and economic, social, and political isolation. In a world where the policies and practices of one state—such as the use of the occupied territories as a laboratory for ‘non-lethal’ instruments and extra-judicial murders and detainments—are disseminated across national boundaries in a global financial and political market, effective forms of resistance toward monopolies on violence become paramount. The ongoing occupation and its international support (most notably from the U.S.) have a causal relationship with other state policies, especially surrounding the censorship of dissent and the militarization of police forces as forms of domestic repression (Davis 2016).

Alternatively, social forms of counter-power, established along transnational networks of solidarity, permeate these normalized borders as a means to combat the concentration of state power and control. From one urban environment, such as Chicago, to another in Palestine, creative and artistic methods are utilized for disenfranchised community-building and contesting norms of spatialization. An urban mural project in 1960s Chicago for black cultural and social empowerment, the Wall of Respect
represents a similar manifestation of political voice, history, and story-telling as seen on
the Apartheid Wall and within the culture of graffiti in Palestine. “It is interesting how
many of the contributors to the Wall of Respect took something traditional about the
word a “wall,” which is used sometimes as a boundary to keep things in, or keep things
out. And kind of switched that around into a monument that was there for kind of
encouraging the community” (Alkalimat 2017: 328). The near-palindromic relationship
between law/wall again surfaces, and the use of this architectural space as the
subject/object for strengthening solidarity while challenging hegemonic norms is an
almost identical parallel to contemporary artistic expressions found on the Apartheid
Wall.

Alkalimat’s process of memorializing the Wall of Respect through references to
its significance from within the Black power movement and black community in the U.S.
pools from the same ethnographic methods used to establish the legitimacy of graffiti on
the Apartheid Wall. By interviewing those involved in its production (which includes the
local community) as well as those directly impacted by the cityscape and the art, whether
it is a less overt form of domestic segregation found in the U.S., or a more explicitly
racist policy of violent and militarized separation found in Israel/Palestine, the
significance of the artwork is grounded within the interpretations and perceptions of the
communities directly impacted. While these methods may be dismissed as biased or
political, the knowledge gained and respected by focusing on the affects/effects of state
power as perceived by disenfranchised and discriminated populations encourages both
cognitive and social justice and liberates alternative and creative forms of resistance from
the annals of illegitimacy. “Graffiti is the unseen making itself, seen; making sure that you know they are present and accounted for (Alkalimat 2017: 337),” granting voices to the voiceless. Perhaps it is this explicit challenge to the policies of the state—private property, censorship, surveillance, and control—found inherently within graffiti and street art that has relegated its research and understanding to low priorities.

Increased interconnectivity and communication between disenfranchised polities and communities establishes relationships of mutual understanding, advocacy, and solidarity, inextricably tying injustices anywhere to injustices everywhere, and is one of graffiti’s many political potentialities.

“By raising public awareness of structural forms of violence that otherwise remain latently inscribed into the walled infrastructure of contemporary urban environments, graffiti functions to give the global city’s most marginalized populations a voice. Indeed, it is the global platform offered by the contemporary city which connects these local acts of creative resistance and alternative practice together, as they develop in interaction with and yet in refutation of the global city’s violent urban infrastructures…This can be extended to understand the increasing efficacy of graffiti and street art as a mode of urban resistance, one that exploits processes of walling to create local interventions that affiliate themselves with wider global resistance movements, even as these originate in other walled spaces” (Davies 2017: 16).

A direct contestation over the meaning of space, graffiti, especially on the Israeli Apartheid Wall, challenges prevailing notions of legality and the use of law as a defense
for a State engaged in overt acts of violence and oppression. Circumventing attempts at censorship, disruption, and isolation, a subversive democratic space manifests on and through architecture and the structure of the city, inverting their intended political ramifications and designs by appropriating these oppressive structures for the liberation of the mind and the spirit.

Tension surrounding the existence and utility of the Apartheid Wall abounds; its abdominal characteristics are noted by all Palestinians, though some choose to live in spite of the Wall through its incorporation. The alternative forms of media embedded within the Apartheid Wall intentionally engages with publics—both local and transnational—assisting in the creation and maintenance of a civil society under the harsh conditions of apartheid. Some local shop owner’s have used the Wall to project World Cup matches to residents, or to advertise their sales, promotions, and goods within an economy suffocated by the occupation and location of the Apartheid Wall itself. Such diversity should not be mistaken for compliance or acquiescence to the horrible conditions of apartheid (and they certainly do not reflect homogenous attitudes regarding the ‘use’ of the Wall in such ways); rather, these creative actions represent the refusal to accept conditions of alienation and separation imposed upon Palestinian residents as they continue to find new ways to participate with a public that is their own.

The use of the Apartheid Wall as an object of resistance is perhaps more easily understood and justified when the actions are representative of local experience and utility. The phenomenon of conflict tourism, emanating, in this context, from the proliferation and dissemination of graffiti, introduces the precarious nature of political
tactics and the threat of their cooptation, especially by external actors. Addressing one manifestation of this reality, a recent Al Jazeera news article (December 27, 2017) discusses the Banksy Hotel and its commodification of graffiti for tourists. Not only does the price of a stay in the Hotel include spray paint and access to the Apartheid Wall for ‘artistic’ purposes, it also sponsors the work of international street artists. The Hotel gift shop, which includes replica Walls and souvenirs of tourists’ or other artists’ work, adds to the cheapening of this political device. Significantly, however, the local population is not passive or silent. Instead, the recent activities of the Banksy Hotel have resulted in direct artistic combativeness aimed at the erasure of offensive pieces and a growing discontent toward Banksy and other international artists that have publicity more in mind than activism.

Notably, too, these local artists have created a social media movement, #Mam7on37tilal (Horny for the occupation), that they have painted around the Banksy Hotel and over offensive, foreign-produced graffiti. The hashtag-cum-graffiti was written “in Latin letters so that Arabs wouldn’t read it and foreigners wouldn’t understand it” (Ashly 2017), creating a message that pertains to a very specific, more transnational demographic with comprehensive knowledge of the English language and local Palestinian dialects. Furthermore, the target of this particular graffiti is the Banksy Hotel’s “promotion of ‘conflict fetishization,’ in which Palestinians and their suffering are reduced to celebrated symbols, devoid of the larger political realities shaping their lives” (Ashly 2017). While more extensive research behind conflict tourism and its apparent existence and growth in the West Bank is merited, this brief example illustrates
clearly the active role Palestinians and Palestinian artists play in determining the context of the Apartheid Wall graffiti, their international image, and their ability to actively participate within a transnational community.

This news article’s publication following the submittal of this thesis’ first draft illustrates the perpetual changes to the Apartheid struggle, the perhaps inevitable co-optation of subversive political tools for the shallow enjoyment of tourists and thrill-seekers, and the action and adaptability of a local population bombarded by repression, spatial and narrative colonization, and censorship. I do not wish to downplay the potential dangers of rising conflict tourism for Palestinian self-determination, but the responses to this “fetishization” of the conflict by local artists and residents is encouraging. The imbrication of the local and the transnational vis-à-vis this street art seems to be fully comprehended and appreciated by West Bank residents. Similarly, the tension evident between possible transnational ‘disneyification’ through graffiti commodification and the utilization of art on the Apartheid Wall to extend local agency remains. The democratic processes underlying the preservation or erasure of particular pieces, however, reflects the desire for the maintenance of local significance and the communicative messages of solidarity.

This commensurability is illustrated thoroughly through an analysis of the art itself and its far-reaching ramifications. The graffiti on the Apartheid Wall are not contained to a localized space, but rather possess a myriad of transnational aspects. From its electronic dissemination and physical imposition, to its ability to build solidarity networks engaged with the Palestinian struggle, its translatability for other repressed
communities in varying local and global contexts is far-reaching. Graffiti’s utility in the West Bank has impacted its’ pervasiveness within Egyptian politics during and after the Egyptian Revolution and has opened a growing and pertinent body of research across academic disciplines, evidencing its efficacy (Awad 2017: 167). Any potential institutionalization of graffiti, however, may negatively impact its subversive and socio-political qualities, while urban zones legalizing street art may imply restrictions and bureaucratic controls. Hopefully, graffiti will avoid any loss to its democratic production and representation and remain a weapon of the weak.

Indeed, “[g]raffiti, like social media, are tools in the hand [sic.] of people who oppose dominant representations, practices and institutions; in order to fully understand their roles, we need to consider how and what they are meant to accomplish—in other words, the kinds of change they inspire, facilitate and ultimately bring forth” (Awad 2017: 179). The contextual history of the Palestinian struggle, especially the more contemporary dynamics to the occupation and enclavization of a people, demonstrate the significance of graffiti as a powerful means of contestation and resistance, while the interviews directly involving Palestinian voices contribute to an understanding of street arts’ meaning for the local and diasporic communities—an attempt to avoid further colonizing Palestinian space and narrative. Graffiti’s implications for solidarity, politics, representation, community and liberation, for Palestinians and the world of disenfranchised groups, are unequivocally clear. When forms of resistance creatively adapt themselves to contest normalized aspects of confinement and domination, the very
instruments of state control are reclaimed as both the subject and object of protest, rendering them unsustainable. The writing is on the Wall.
REFERENCES


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