Jo Everly

Between Localised Practices and Global Imaginaries of Boycott and Peace
Decolonial Reflections on BDS in Palestine

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ABSTRACT

Since its formal inception in 2005, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) has been a central tactic of the global struggle against the Israeli occupation of Palestine and its normalisation. It has also been at the forefront of numerous controversies around the world, especially with its recent nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. After more than 10 years, the BDS has gained recent support from the PLO Central Council, while at the same time becoming a 'strategic threat' for Israel, which has introduced new legislation to ban its support. Some argue that the boycott has in fact become central to Palestinian politics.[1] This increasingly vocal role in stirring the debate raises the question of what role the BDS is playing as a driver of change within local, Palestinian politics and how this affects the internationally-led project of 'conflict resolution' and democratisation. Within the context of the post-Oslo era of political and social division, what is the role of the boycott movement in re-defining the terms of the 'conflict' and as part of the wider resistance on the ground? By looking at the debates arising around the academic and cultural boycott within the Palestinian community, this thesis will analyse how the BDS movement is helping to re-frame both the global and local discourse around conflict and peace from a grassroots and indigenous perspective, while shaping its own identity as a rights-based movement for justice. Conceptualisations of BDS as both a "critique" and "dialogue",[2] as a transgression of social, political and discursive boundaries,[3] and as a tool to reclaim collective identity[4] will frame the discussion of BDS to understand it as part of the "Palestine analytic":[5] not as an exception but as the result of a global history of colonialism and relative anti-colonial struggle.

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[1] S. Salaita, Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

[2] S.F. McMahon, 'The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Campaign: Contradictions and Challenges', Race & Class, vol. 55, no.4, 2014, pp. 65-81.

[3] H. Jamjoum, 'The Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel', in M.C. Hallward and J.M. Norman (eds.), Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp. 133-151.

[4] L. Qutami, 'Rethinking the Single Story: BDS, Transnational Cross Movement Building and the Palestine Analytic', Social Text, 2014. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/rethinking-the-single-story-bds-transnational-cross-movement-building-and-the-palestine-analytic/

[5] L. Qutami, 'Rethinking the Single Story: BDS, Transnational Cross Movement Building and the Palestine Analytic', Social Text, 2014. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/rethinking-the-single-story-bds-transnational-cross-movement-building-and-the-palestine-analytic/

To all the dreamers in the world engaged every day in re-imagining a better world,
devoid of divisions, categorisations, and oppression,
where all humans co-exist in peace and justice.

ACKWNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDS	Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions
BNC	Palestinian BDS National Committee
BU	Birzeit University
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICNP	International Coordinating Network for Palestine
MFA	Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories (West Bank and Gaza)
PA (or PNA)	Palestinian (National) Authority
PACBI	Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Council
WWI	World War I

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INTRODUCTION

We are doing more than boycott; we are resisting
BDS member (Ramallah, March 2018)

Since its formal inception in 2005, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) has been a central tactic of the global struggle against the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and its normalisation. Transnational in its character, the movement benefits from large support amongst the Palestinian civil society, as more than 170 groups and organisations have signed the call. After more than 10 years, the BDS has gained recent support from both Fatah's officials[6] and the PLO Central Council[7] and was allegedly recognised even by Hamas.[8] Hassan argues that the boycott has in fact become central to Palestinian politics.[9] However, the movement has also been at the forefront of numerous controversies and critiques. It has become a central target of the Israeli securitisation program after being reported as a "first-rate strategic threat"[10] by the Israeli government, which has introduced

[6] A. Kane, 'Palestinian officials come out in support of BDS movement after Abbas' disavowal', *Mondoweiss*, 20 December 2013, http://mondoweiss.net/2013/12/palestinian-officials-remarks/
[7] BNC, 'PLO Endorses BDS, Makes Unprecedented Call for Sanctions : Update', *BDS Website*, 17 January 2018, https://bdsmovement.net/news/plo-endorses-bds%C2%A0makes-unprecedented-call-sanctions
[8] JPost, 'Hamas on Twitter: We Support BDS', *The Jerusalem Post*, 05 July 2017, https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Hamas-on-Twitter-We-support-BDS-498877
[9] S. Hassan, 'Historicizing Palestinian Boycott Politics', *Social Text*, 2014, https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/historicizing-palestinian-boycott-politics/
[10] Rivlin in D. Bernstein, 'Rivlin: Academic Boycott a Major Threat to Israel', *The Times of Israel*, 28 May 2015, https://www.timesofisrael.com/rivlin-academic-boycott-a-major-threat-to-israel/

new legislation and funding to ban its support.[11] Globally, the BDS has become part of the conversation around the 'Palestinian-Israeli conflict' with contrasting controversies arising as a result of claims of 'anti-Semitism',[12] as well as others, through its recent nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize.[13] The local, regional, and global representations of BDS have caused renewed discussion on both their role and legitimacy as movements, as well as on their impact on common perceptions of the wider situation on the ground. These representations and debates around the BDS portray a picture of a deep disconnect between discourse and practice, academic theory and social reality, local and global arenas.

This increasingly vocal position in/is stirring debate and warrants the question of what role the BDS is playing as a driver of change within local politics and global imaginaries. Researchers have answered the question in multiple ways, by analysing its politics,[14] rhetoric,[15] and identity.[16] However, most remain entangled in a binary of success vs. failure or the gap between discourse and action without delving into the more detailed practices that construct the movement. Such studies locate BDS within the latest history of passivity of the Palestinian resistance since the Second Intifada but ignore the resurgence of local interest in BDS and anti-normalisation.[17] Even in Gaza, BDS groups have in fact rapidly spread, despite the seemingly evident impossibility of practising the boycott. As one interviewee said, "we don't even have electricity for constructing [a local factory], so how can we boycott Israel?".

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[11] Knesset, 'Entry into Israel Law (Amendment - Not granting a visa or residency permit to any person who calls for a boycott of Israel), 5775-2015', Proposed Legislation, 2015. Available online: <https://www.adalah.org/uploads/Prevention_Of_Entry_BDS_English.pdf>

[12] C. Nelson and G.N. Brahm (eds.), *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, Chicago, Wayne State University Press, 2015.

[13] B. Moxnes, 'Why we Nominated the BDS Campaign for the Nobel Peace Prize', *The Jerusalem Post*, 20 February 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Why-we-nominated-the-BDS-campaign-for-the-Nobel-Peace-Prize-543188

[14] S. Ananth, 'The Politics of the Palestinian BDS Movement', *Socialism and Democracy,* vol. 27, no.3, 2013, pp. 129-143.

[15] J. Hitchcock, 'Social Media Rhetoric of the Transnational Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement', *Social Media + Society*, vol. 2, no.1, 2016, pp. 1–12.

[16] H. Jamjoum, 'The Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel', in M.C. Hallward and J.M. Norman (eds.), *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp. 133-151.

[17] A. Abu Sarah, 'What is Normal about Normalization?', *+972 Magazine*, 26 December 2011. https://972mag.com/what-is-normal-about-normalization/31262/ ; O.H. Rahman, 'Co-Existence vs. Co-Resistance: A Case Against Normalization', *+972 Magazine*, 3 January 2012. https://972mag.com/co-existence-vs-co-resistance-a-case-against-normalization/32076/

In fact, the BDS has been analysed more for its relevance abroad than for its meaning within the Palestinian territories, driven by the conception that the economic boycott from within the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) has limited impact on Israel. Jasmin, an academic involved in the local committee, emphasised the BDS' function as a call for international solidarity rather than an internal driver of change; however, the movement has a local role in that it actively expresses an identity of resistance, and frames a political debate on strategies and future possibilities. What is missing from the academic literature is the rich production of debates within such groups, which are at the heart of local activism. In fact, focusing on the 'local' does not mean only to study the BDS as the local manifestations of a social movement, but also its less tangible expressions within sets of discourses, practices, and spaces of debate. The aim of this research is therefore to look at some of the debates that arise specifically within the academic and cultural boycott in the Palestinian community, including issues of definition and practice of normalisation.

By attempting to de-legitimise the 'normality' of Israel's settler-colonial system and military occupation, BDS is targeting both its image as 'the only (real) democracy in the Middle East'[18] and its diplomatic position in international relations. How do such discourses and practices promoted by the BDS affect the overall understandings of the political reality on the ground? The question is relevant because it addresses several distortions within the Palestinian-Israeli 'discourse': that it is a 'conflict' in need of 'peace' and that the 'two parties' are engaged in 'dialogue' to achieve a 'two-state solution'. Going beyond the existing literature on social movements, the need is to dissect the actions and discourses that produce the movement, its identity and daily routines, irrespective of their effectiveness. The question is not whether the movement is achieving its goals, but what it is producing on its way there. Ultimately, the research concentrates on the production of localised logics and ethics of boycott and how these influence the discourses and practices of the larger movement for peace and justice and their respective academic disciplines. It will show how the BDS movement is helping to re-frame both the global and local discourse around conflict and peace studies from a grassroots and indigenous perspective.

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[18]   M. Oren, 'Israel's Resilient Democracy', *Foreign Policy*, 05 April 2012. http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/04/05/israels-resilient-democracy/

This paper argues that as a social and political, anti-colonial movement, the BDS embeds localised practices of democracy and peace-building that are based on the ethics and logics of boycott. These include the creation of a morality of the boycott and of a unifying political consciousness; the logics of rejection of any Israeli collaboration and of the Western framework of conflict resolution; and a language that transforms them into an imaginable reality. These ethics and logics are not relocated to the discursive realm only – they re-imagine the language, nodes of connections, and structural basis that shape the practices of the movement. As a result, such everyday practices shift existing boundaries of knowledge and representation. It is this active production of new imaginaries and practices that is largely neglected in the literature as well as in practice by activist groups and organisations. The issue is even more relevant considering its potential to review and contribute to teachings on processes of democratisation and decolonisation. By pointing to this potential, the paper examines how the production of specific, localised ethics and logics of boycott as a tactic of resistance contribute to and transform global imaginaries of 'conflict', 'indigenous politics', 'democratisation' and 'human rights'. I do not claim that these processes are unique to BDS – further comparisons with the wider resistance might reveal their affinities and peculiarities. At the same time, the people interviewed for this research are also part of – and reflect their allegiances to – broader coalitions, partnerships, and institutions. Hence, the views they express cannot be separated from those of the larger networks of resistance they represent.

It is common as a researcher to overestimate the importance of the topic under study. In fact, an analysis of the boycott as a tactic of resistance goes much beyond the BDS movement. Therefore, it cannot be understood simply as a tool but as an expression of the historical development of a resistance culture within a specific trajectory of history. The issue of rejection of any collaboration with Israel, for example, has always been part of both violent and non-violent resistance. Hence, it is essential to recognise that this is an ethnographic example of only one, current trajectory that resistance has taken and does not embed all its varied forms. At the same time, it is exactly in its local and specific dimension that the examination of BDS' debates and practices becomes relevant: it is the daily actions that trigger the 'unpredictability' of their results.[19]

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[19] P. Sztompka, *Society in Action: The Theory of Social Becoming*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991

For the same reason, it is reductionist to view the emergence of BDS as simply a reaction to the colonial system and political failures of the PA;[20] there were many different reactions to a 70-year (and older) struggle. So, the question is: why BDS, why now?

While highlighting the local dimension, identifying BDS within the overarching strategies of Palestinian activism shows that its uniqueness lies in the connections it creates between the Palestinian and the global struggle against colonialism, including other indigenous struggles, not only the South African anti-apartheid movement but also the black civil rights movement in the US, etc.[21] Tabar and Desai suggested that this correlation is important because it brought recognition to these struggles as well as producing unique conversations.[22] What I take from their argument is the importance of studying the local and global contexts in their dynamic interactions. Therefore, I approach BDS as part of the "Palestine analytic"[23]: not as an exception but as the result of a global history of colonialism and relative anti-colonial struggle. At the same time, it will be shown how the local context plays a powerful role within global dynamics; analysing the local practices of the movement not only sheds light on how the local influences the global, but how it actively takes part in it. Therefore, this paper explores how the Palestinian local movement supporting a boycott enriches the understanding of a global movement for justice everywhere. Conceptualisations of BDS as both a "critique" and "dialogue",[24] as transgression of social, political and discursive boundaries,[25] and as a tool to reclaim collective identity[26]

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[20] S. Wolf, 'What's Behind the Rise of BDS?', *International Socialist Review*, vol. 93, 2014. https://isreview.org/issue/93/whats-behind-rise-bds

[21] S. Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016 ; M. Krebs and D. Olwan, '«From Jerusalem to the Grand River, our Struggles are One»: Challenging Canadian and Israeli Settler Colonialism', *Settler Colonial Studies*, vol. 2, 2012, pp. 138-164.

[22] L. Tabar and C. Desai, 'Decolonization is a Global Project: From Palestine to the Americas', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 6, no.1, 2017, p.iii.

[23] L. Qutami, 'Rethinking the Single Story: BDS, Transnational Cross Movement Building and the Palestine Analytic', *Social Text*, 2014. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/rethinking-the-single-story-bds-transnational-cross-movement-building-and-the-palestine-analytic/

[24] S. Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

[25] S.F. McMahon, 'The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Campaign: Contradictions and Challenges', *Race & Class*, vol. 55, no.4, 2014, pp. 65-81.

[26] H. Jamjoum, 'The Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel', in M.C. Hallward and J.M. Norman (eds.), *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp. 133-151.

will frame the discussion. A contextualisation of the movement within the framework of settler-colonialism is not an argumentative point – it is a description of the power relations on the ground, as many have discussed and witnessed.[27]

To write about Palestine is no easy task – plenty has been written from a foreign eye, which demystifies the place and its inhabitants and supports the 'Western, Zionist narrative' of Palestine as a place to be managed within a 'protracted', unsolvable conflict, with decades-long attempts at finding unmanageable 'dialogue'. Even those admitting the abuses of the occupation denigrate Palestinians as merely victims, devoid of any political choice or action. In joining the discussion, I – the researcher – am wary of entering a debate, which is heavy in judgement, over-analysis, and extreme ideological stubbornness. I do so with a 'humanist' approach – departing from peoples' voices, from the humbleness of studying human life, and a commitment to justice – based on equality as human beings. In fact, looking at BDS reveals a complex and understudied, multiple layer of complexity, confused identities and debated allegiances, but nonetheless a debate, which is very much alive and active. It is this dynamism – with all its implications – that I wish to address, within the generally static, academic intellectualisation that paralyses a phenomenon in time and place. Therefore, going beyond the rhetoric, I am looking at how boundaries are challenged, controversies are lived, and debates are built in their everyday. This is ultimately an inquiry into how activist groups can build a practice that is really directed from the grassroots while also being connected to global dynamics without being corrupted or diluted by them. The analysis is linked to the broader questions of how a movement like BDS, and many others, can help to reformulate terms of peace, democracy, and justice that are productive, in the sense that they don't just *speak* about peace, but they *produce* it by practising it. The objective is therefore to reflect and build on decolonial knowledge and practices that are both constructive and empowering, while encompassing both discourse and action.

[27] L.L. Grinberg, *Politics and Violence in Israel/Palestine: Democracy versus Military Rule*, London, Routledge, 2010 ; C. Malek and M. Hoke, *Palestine Speaks: Narratives of Life under Occupation*, San Francisco, McSweeney's Books and Voice of Witness, 2014.

The Outline

After a summary of the methodological and theoretical frameworks of the research, *Chapter One* will analyse the logics of the boycott as based on a rejection and critique of the peace-building process initiated by Oslo in 1993. The chapter will address a series of confused imaginaries and tensions that this process has led to and show how they originate from a colonial discourse and structure that constitute a specific narrative of conflict and securitisation to conceal the colonial foundations of oppression. *Chapter Two* will present the ethnographic case study of how local, Palestinian organisations, cultural groups, and academics engage in and debate the academic and cultural boycott in Palestine. It will show how the logics of the boycott are based on a vision of anti-normalisation and collaboration and a morality, which are constantly and dynamically re-produced when moral dilemmas arise and question the boundaries of existing practice. Finally, *Chapter Three* will analyse how this morality and logics create localised practices of solidarity-building that transform conceptions of democracy and peace-building by re-centring them on justice and human rights. These new practices embed principles of democratisation and decolonisation.

Some Notes on the Research Design

By utilising a series of interviews with civil society actors involved in discussions on BDS, the thesis reports Palestinian voices with the aim of engaging with them, rather than simply narrating 'them' as a separate object of study. The issue of access is one that I deal with extensively in the next chapter, together with other methodological reflections; however, some preliminary remarks are due. Around 170 civil society organisations have signed the initial BDS call in 2005; of these, many are coalitions and networks that include many other members. The figure does not include the huge number of organisations that got involved in the movement after 2005 nor those that have been practising the boycott without being active members of BDS. The research includes interviews with organisations that are active members of BDS, some who have signed the call but do not participate in discussions, and those who have not openly signed the call but engage in the boycott, nevertheless. These variances are interesting to approach the BDS not simply as a movement but also as a tactic. However, as numbers show, it would have been impossible to account for all the variations within this wide network. Therefore, a selection had to take place. Researching

BDS in a context where its support is criminalised inevitably raises some challenges. Accessing registered organisations was easier than accessing more radical groups, including youth networks: suspicion and my position as an outsider often prevented any contact. The potential threat of any political repercussions affected also the way I represent people within this paper: anonymously and as independent, social actors.

The research was conducted in the West Bank, as it displays specific characteristics and challenges different from Jerusalem and the rest of historical Palestine, Gaza, or even Palestinian refugees abroad. Therefore, it doesn't represent all Palestinians engaged in the boycott but sets an ethnographic example of some of the conversations and debates within a specific community. Further research is needed on other groups and populations to shed new light on such processes, including comparative analysis with BDS networks in other countries. What is missing from the research is in fact an in-depth understanding of variance amongst organisations and the effect of material factors on the (lack of) unity and organising strategies. The BDS targets three main 'populations': Palestinians in the OPT, in Israel, and Palestinian refugees, who all face unique difficulties in practising the boycott. What is not known is how these groups adapt the boycott to the local conditions and therefore how they radicalise or rather normalise the criteria and tactical role of the boycott. Further exploration of BDS understandings between refugee communities and Palestinian organisations working in Jerusalem and in Israel would add to this work. These are topics for further academic inquiry.

Views represented are not necessarily the official views of BNC or PACBI, but the views of individuals and organisations who support the boycott, but do not speak on behalf of the whole movement. The point is to gather a general feeling for the meaning of BDS locally starting from those who support it.

How you engage with terms has a critical dimension when approaching a topic so fraught in that it automatically creates the grounds for conscious or involuntary misinterpretation and controversy. As the paper has a large focus on discourse, several of the terms used demand explanation of their uses in order to avoid misunderstanding. Such terms are therefore explained when found. The premises that lie at the basis of this work are an understanding of the Israeli state and its military occupation over the Palestinian Territories as a system of

colonial rule, as exposed in several exposés.[28] Moreover, it assumes that the colonial nature of the regime constitutes institutional and state violence.[29] Hence, these are not the object of this study, as they have already been explored extensively.

1. In Conversation with Palestinian Voices: Methodological Reflections

I cannot accept a system/institution for which this experience does not have the same value as a theory . . . [...]
There has to be a place HERE for the fear I felt and the risks I took! [...]
There has to be a place HERE for my fragmented/ing voice and whole body
There has to be a place HERE for those oppressed people whose lives have helped to build many academic careers
There has to be a place HERE for you.
Only, and only if you wish to . . .[30]

Research is a 'dirty' word in the vocabulary of indigenous studies.[31] The distinctions between subjects and objects,[32] theory and practice, purpose, standing, and representation question its ethics and methods in studying people's lives. Researching Palestine implies a greater pressure of delving into a complex situation faced with practical safety concerns as much as Orientalist colonialist tropes: who you are and represent, how you represent and access, why you access and for what purpose, what you will do with it and who you will benefit are vital question marks. Social sciences dictate several norms to cope with such questions while conducting 'ethical' and 'scientific' research. My view[33] is that you cannot

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[28] M. Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* New York, Pathfinder Press, 1973 ; L.L. Grinberg, *Politics and Violence in Israel/Palestine: Democracy versus Military Rule*, London, Routledge, 2010 ; C. Malek and M. Hoke, *Palestine Speaks: Narratives of Life under Occupation*, San Francisco, McSweeney's Books and Voice of Witness, 2014.

[29] F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p.48.

[30] M. Diversi and C. Moreira, *Betweener Talk: Decolonizing Knowledge Production, Pedagogy, and Praxis*, Walnut Creek, West Coast Press, 2009, p.48.

[31] L.T. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, Second Edition, London, Zed Books, 2012, p xi.

[32] For a critique of the objectification of the 'other' of research, see A. Hinterberger, 'Feminism and the Politics of Representation: Towards a Critical and Ethical Encounter with "Others"', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 8, no.2, 2007, pp. 74-83.

[33] And that of many other social scientists of the post-modern, 'reflexive' tradition; see J. Clifford and G.E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986.

encapsulate a cohesive social reality within a text – biases of perspective, intellectual orientation, gender, colour, class, and standing within an imperialistic framework prevent a real, human objectivity. Therefore, it would be scientifically inaccurate to describe this work as such. Rather, this paper acts as a series of reflections born in conversation with Palestinian voices. 'In conversation' reflects the main methodology of the research, that of interviews and exchanges with those whose views I wish to reflect. It implies to reflect their voices while engaging with them from one's own, specific perspective, incorporating theories and experiences. It surely entails a violent process of selection, censorship, and modification, but one that I cannot avoid and therefore engage with critically. The question of how to account for the effects of the movement as a driver of change is driven by both practical and ethical concerns as it is impossible to control all the variables within a complex situation in which several factors might be contributing. In a context where critical voices are either victimised, stigmatised, or even criminalised, some key ethical and methodological reflections are in order. I will here discuss the practical details and ethical dilemmas that arose by conducting research in such a context.

The research is based on a series of in-depth interviews with Palestinian BDS founders, academics, experts, as well as heads and representatives of organisations and groups adopting BDS as a strategy in their work. It was conducted over five months in 2018 in the West Bank, part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). A total of 20 individuals where interviewed. These included 8 academics from 2 universities in the West Bank, 4 representatives of cultural associations in Ramallah and Bethlehem, 4 NGOs and human rights groups in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron, and Qalqilya, including 2 located in refugee camps, and 1 student group. Of these, 4 are or have been coordinating members of either the BNC or PACBI. In addition, a member of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) and an independent activist offered their perspectives. Finally, I was lucky to have the input of an interview about the situation in Gaza. The organisations that were interviewed provided the views of different sections of the society: women, refugees, students, university staff, artists and human rights workers. In one way or another, all are 'activists'[34]: active

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[34]   Activist is here understood in the most radical – its 'root' – meaning of the term, as that who acts. This view takes Butler's perspective of language as active and productive, and therefore, indicating those who create both discourse and practices. See J. Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, New York, Routledge, 1997.

in re-imagining, re-defining, or enacting a vision of the resistance to the Israeli colonial project in theory and practice.

Temporal and spatial boundaries automatically limited the practical possibilities of targeting respondents beyond the West Bank and outside of their involvement in the academic and cultural boycott. However, the rationale behind the geographical constriction is also due to the specific, territorial, political, and social conditions that make its uniqueness not generalisable without sufficient examination. Examples drawn from the cases of BDS practices in Jerusalem, Israel, Gaza, and abroad informed however the research, despite not providing extensive material to write about. Through what sociological jargon calls 'semi-structured interviews', I aimed to explore how my interlocutors understood and conceptualised the BDS movement in Palestine and how they lived the debates around it. The questions focused on their views on the local relevance of BDS within their circles, the differences compared to other groups worldwide, and the ways the criteria for the boycott were discussed, including points of contestation. The informality of the 'interviews' stemmed both from the rationale of easing interaction within the 'conversation' and avoiding any remnants of 'official' narratives rehearsed for funders and media sources.

The interviews were supported by material gained through participant-observation of events, tours, or other activities of such groups. A relevant place in the research is the result of an event called by BDS in Ramallah on 14 March 2018, which is used as an ethnographic example of how the boycott's guidelines are discussed. The conference "Teaching Palestine: Pedagogical Praxis and the Indivisibility of Justice" at Birzeit University on 20 March 2018 also shed light on some of these debates and theoretical frameworks of analysis. In addition, relevant material was also collected during informal, daily conversations with activists or people involved in BDS, as well as some presentations, political tours, and activities conducted by individuals or organisations. Document review and discourse analysis of other published interviews of Palestinian BDS members, related news, and written publications produced by these organisations further revealed the common terms and controversies that engaged the public – including academic – discourse around the boycott. Specifically, PACBI's criteria of the boycott were analysed with its latest edits.

The research suffered from unavoidable shortcomings due in the first instance to the complexity and embeddedness of the security apparatus.

News of arrests,[35] intimidation,[36] and a ban[37] of BDS activists and supporters inevitably called for a fundamental need for confidentiality. This explains the choice of maintaining the full anonymity of sources, despite some giving their consent to publishing the information provided. Interviews were not recorded not only for reasons of confidentiality and trust, but also to protect informants when travelling through checkpoints with personal information. This pervasive 'security' apparatus was also the reason for a simultaneous suspicion amongst groups which meant that I was unable to interview all the individuals I had initially planned to. As a result, the research lacks adequate representation especially from youth groups and radical activist networks. Their refusal to take part should be understood within the same paradigm of their refusal to engage and being dictated to – both physically and intellectually – by imperial modes of subjectification to white, Western supremacy, oppression, and classification promoted by the academia as much as by territorial conquest. The mistrust and cynicism towards my studies were the same as those told by Allen[38] towards the saturation of Western-led human rights projects that promote, rather than attack, the power imbalances created by the military occupation. This background will hopefully explain the 'conscious self-censorship' that I have had to submit to. This unavoidably imposes a violent intervention of selection, translation, and modification of both sources and content, while resisting the urge to 'anesthetise' the "horrors of political violence" through "theoretical abstractions and rhetorical figures of speech"[39] which minimize and deny the implicit suffering of a people.

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[35] S. Khalel, 'BDS Co-founder: Israel's Arrest and Interrogation of Omar Barghouti Next Step in «War against BDS Movement»', *Mondoweiss*, 23 March 2017. http://mondoweiss.net/2017/03/interrogation-barghouti-movement/

[36] Amnesty International, 'Israeli Government Must Cease Intimidation of Human Rights Defenders, Protect them from Attacks', *Amnesty International Statement*, 12 April 2016. https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/israeli-government-must-cease-intimidation-of-human-rights-defenders-protect-them-from-attacks/ ; D. Palumbo-Liu, 'The Anti-BDS Smear Campaign Escalates', *The Jacobin*, 2018. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/04/mccarthyism-canary-mission-bds-palestine-blacklist

[37] M. Bachner, 'Israel to Expel Human Rights Watch Director for «Actively Supporting» BDS', *The Times of Israel*, 9 May 2018. https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-to-expel-human-rights-watch-director-for-actively-supporting-bds/ ; L. Gravé-Lazi, 'Israel Lists International Pro-BDS Organizations to be Banned from Country', *The Jerusalem Post*, 7 January 2018. https://www.jpost.com/BDS-THREAT/Israel-lists-international-pro-BDS-organizations-to-be-banned-from-country-533031

[38] L. Allen, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013.

[39] N. Scheper-Hughes, 'The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 36, no.3, 1995, p.417.

The epistemic violence[40] of translation is also literal. Can you reflect indigenous voices while translating them into academic English? As Ghandehari highlights, translation with its inaccuracies "complicates already constructed ethnic, racial, and national identities while at the same time decentring identity as a defining concept of social struggle and emphasising intergroup linkages".[41] However, the choice of English also assumes an interesting analytical perspective as it comes to represent a section of the movement that tries to engage with the outside world through English. As English embodies the 'official' human rights language used by NGOs, international agencies and even governments, does it automatically preconceive the common narrative, or does it allow members to express their individual identity and the voices of Arabic speakers? This is one of the many questions that remain partly unanswered.

This violence of translating people's stories and social life into text raises key questions of representation. What people told me in our conversations was not just their informed opinions about the validity or challenges of a tactic. They also narrated the sufferings, the frustrations, and the hopes of life under a colonial system of oppression. The director of one of the organisations repeated, in one of the interviews, "as mothers and fathers, we want to start living for Palestine, not dying for it". Such experiences are not only the heart of life as we 'study' it but are also key in the process of reframing models of justice, peace, and politics itself. To portray the 'theoretical knowledge' gained in the research, while incorporating the lived experience of everyday struggle was and remains a challenge. Such a dilemma incorporates a further question of recognising the singularity within the collective. How do you convey the feelings of people within the seemingly homogeneous entity of a 'movement'? How do you analyse the small actions, exchanges, ideas, and disparate social interactions that shape the 'coming together' of the movement in the form of a cohesive whole of a single program, a single identity, and unified practices? Describing a movement as a homogeneous mix neglects the uncountable series of disparate opinions, details, discussions, and experiences that it is composed of.

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[40] For a description of the term, see Spivak (1988).
[41] A. Ghandehari, 'Struggle and the Politics of Translation: Martin Luther King Jr.,Omar Khayyam, and the Persian Translation of Intersectionality', *Journal of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association*, vol. 3, no.1, 2017, pp. 23-47.

It is by tapping into this 'chaos' that social theory can be understood within its lived dimension to enrich its perspectives. The ethnographic approach of 'one discussion on cultural boycott' narrated in *Chapter Two* is an attempt to take these reflections into account and focus not just on the macro- but the everyday processes that make up the struggle. Within this broad focus, Palestinian intellectuals and academics had, indeed, a strong influence in supporting the development of the theoretical framework that lies at the foundation of this paper. In fact, the analysis I provide is actually a narration of the analysis that intellectuals and activists conducted themselves. My role has been to simply gather them within a sociological frame that attempts to reflect on their concepts through available academic theories. The terms used in this paper are, for the sake of honesty and academic integrity, the same terms used by those whose views I seek to portray. This does not imply any judgement on their righteousness but a representation into their own narratives.

At the same time, the thesis does come from a specific, mostly Western (although postcolonial), sociological tradition of studying human rights and power. Within this framework, how you narrate the 'indigenous other' of research without objectifying them becomes a crucial question that Diversi and Moreira address by focusing on 'conscientisation' and inclusivity.[42] The issue of standing is key. How do you write, ethically, about Palestine as a white European, illiterate in Arabic? On a personal level, I was in fact aware of this, as I met with people, of my identity as an 'English-speaker', 'student' and 'researcher'. Rabab Abdulhadi's question, "Who speaks for the Palestinians?" (Birzeit, March 2018) echoed loudly in my ears. The personal interest I had in resistance practices was met by the remarks of the 'Western obsession' of "problematising the indigenous".[43] My commitment to Scheper-Hughes' call for "a politically committed and morally engaged" social practice[44] resonated with Daud's question, "Who benefits from the research?". As I approached Palestine with the responsibility to

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[42] M. Diversi and C. Moreira, *Betweener Talk: Decolonizing Knowledge Production, Pedagogy, and Praxis*, Walnut Creek, West Coast Press, 2009.

[43] L.T. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, Second Edition, London, Zed Books, 2012, p.95.

[44] N. Scheper-Hughes, 'The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 36, no.3, 1995, p.410.

'speak truth to power',[45] I was made deeply aware of the dangers of entering a minefield of Orientalist and (post-)colonialist traps. From a social sciences perspective, such research can be considered as a 'subjective enterprise' of the researcher, within one's role as an engaged and bias observer, which offers therefore only fragments rather than a full and cohesive whole. Therefore, the research is more of a series of reflections than a coherent analysis of a social movement in Palestine. Beyond the self-reflexive exercise, it is also necessary to recognise where it is located within the material inequality of institutional power relations and knowledge production. It is about conducting research while maintaining an ethical drive to benefit the general struggle against imperialism and oppression without aiding the oppressor itself and hence reproducing the conditions for its defiance of justice.

Therefore, the approach utilised is that of departing from the human – before academic – question of how to understand (and counter) injustice as well as how to approach writing about it in an academically-suitable way while accounting for the struggles that people face. As such, critical ethnic studies give a new framework for studying such conversations, by learning from the local, indigenous perspective to understand Western privilege and supremacy and their role in laying the foundations of a racialised system. Incorporating different perspectives within an interdisciplinary approach adds value to the research and is what would benefit the study of political science – in fact, what I found in the literature largely matched what people described. Academia should therefore help in laying the foundations for a decolonial practice that deconstructs colonised discourse and material relations of oppression. Ultimately, this research will not end the oppression in the academia or in the field. Decolonising theory is thus just a push, a motivation to inspire, the anger to set facts straight by not ignoring or neglecting the sufferings and hardships of people living the struggle in their daily lives. It is to push people to act – ethically – and build solidarity based on a common humanity rather than individual interest.

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[45] Following Chomsky's definition: "You don't speak truth to anybody, that's too arrogant. What you do is join with people and try to find the truth, so you listen to them and tell them what you think and so on, and you try to encourage people to think for themselves". N. Chomsky, 'Noam Chomsky: Speaking of Truth and Power. Noam Chomsky Interviewed by David Tresilian', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 2010. https://chomsky.info/20100603/

2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN PALESTINE

> *...Creating ways of seeing across colonial ideologies and the racialized, sexualized logics that sanction dominance and state terror, is part of a necessary internationalist decolonial project to transform systems of power.*[46]

The BDS movement has received substantial academic attention as a global campaign and therefore is not a new topic of research. Studies on its identity,[47] its effectiveness[48] as well as the controversies surrounding/emerging around its group's practices,[49] convey a contradictory picture of BDS as both a form of non-violence,[50] and as an inducer of hostility.[51] In fact, the literature on BDS incorporates the highly politicised public debate on the 'Palestinian-Israeli conflict',[52] which, as will be shown in *Chapter One*, is saturated with distortions and misunderstandings that favour the Western (and therefore Israeli) narration of events. Even those that describe the movement as 'legitimate resistance' fail to identify it within the wider regional and global contexts or within the daily practices that shape their identities. As such, studies on the role of BDS, peace, and conflict resolution demonstrate a disconnect between their theoretical argumentations, the terminologies they use and the grassroots contexts they wish to theorise.

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[46] L. Tabar and C. Desai, 'Decolonization is a Global Project: From Palestine to the Americas', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 6, no.1, 2017, pp.iii-iv.

[47] H. Jamjoum, 'The Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel', in M.C. Hallward and J.M. Norman (eds.), *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp. 133-151.

[48] G.W. Falah, 'Does a Boycott of Academic Israeli Institutions Help in Ending Israel's Military Occupation of Palestinian Territories', *Geographical Review*, vol. 106, no.2, 2016, pp. 288–293.

[49] S. Ananth, 'The Politics of the Palestinian BDS Movement', *Socialism and Democracy*, vol. 27, no.3, 2013, pp. 129-143 ; M.D. Garasic and S. Keinan, 'Boycotting Israeli Academia: Is its Implementation Anti-Semitic?', *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, vol. 15, no.3, 2015, pp. 189-199.

[50] M.C. Hallward and P. Shaver, '«War by Other Means» or Nonviolent Resistance? Examining the Discourses Surrounding Berkeley's Divestment Bill', *Peace and Change*, vol. 37, no.3, 2012, pp. 389-412.

[51] I.M. Sheskin and E. Felson, 'Is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement Tainted by Anti-Semitism?', *Geographical Review*, vol. 106, no.2, 2016, pp. 270-275.

[52] J. Chaitin, S., Steinberg and S. Steinberg, '«BDS – it's complicated»: Israeli, Jewish, and others' views on the boycott of Israel', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 21, no.7, 2017a, pp. 889-907 ; J. Chaitin, S., Steinberg and S. Steinberg, 'Polarized words: discourse on the boycott of Israel, social justice and conflict resolution', *International Journal of Conflict Management*, vol. 28, no.3, 2017b, pp. 270-294.

70 years after the foundation of the State of Israel on Palestinian lands, and 25 years after the failures of the Oslo 'Peace' Accords between Israel and the PLO, it is time to ask the question is there more than a 'political solution' required and is there really a need for a critical re-examination of the whole concept and framework of 'peace' itself. BDS becomes then a useful case study because of its growing significance as a driver of change within Palestinian politics,[53] Israeli's 'defense' mechanisms,[54] and global public imaginaries[55] of the situation on the ground. The aim of this work is to address not simply its role or impact, but the ways in which the localised ethics and logics produced by a movement can potentially transform the networks, conceptualisations, and practices that define and delimit the political dynamics on the ground. This section will therefore assess the conceptual role of BDS' localised practices of academic and cultural boycott in producing new ethical and political imaginaries through 'critique' and 'dialogue'[56] as both concepts and practices. It first provides a review of some of the specific literature on the BDS in Palestine and how they are useful to understand the movement beyond its rhetoric and within the wider context of colonial oppression.[57] It will then consider the role of language and re-imagination to explore how the local dimension of the BDS is breaking social and political boundaries[58] and contributing to the global sphere, by building

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[53] S. Hassan, 'Historicizing Palestinian Boycott Politics', *Social Text*, 2014 https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/historicizing-palestinian-boycott-politics/ ; O.H. Rahman, 'Co-Existence vs. Co-Resistance: A Case Against Normalization', *+972 Magazine*, 3 January 2012. https://972mag.com/co-existence-vs-co-resistance-a-case-against-normalization/32076/

[54] In light of the Israeli government's increased repression of the movement; see L. Harkov, 'Erdan: «We Have a Broad Government Program to Fight Boycotts»', *The Jerusalem Post*, 05 May 2016. https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Erdan-We-have-a-broad-government-program-to-fight-boycotts-453276

[55] I use the term 'imaginary' in the sense given by Castoriadis, as "not an image *of*. It is the unceasing and essentially undetermined (social-historical and physical) creation of figures/forms/images, on the basis of which alone there can ever be a question of 'something'. What we call «reality» and 'rationality' are its works". C. Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987 [1975], p.3.

[56] S. Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

[57] L. Qutami, 'Rethinking the Single Story: BDS, Transnational Cross Movement Building and the Palestine Analytic', *Social Text*, 2014. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/rethinking-the-single-story-bds-transnational-cross-movement-building-and-the-palestine-analytic/

[58] S.F. McMahon, 'The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Campaign: Contradictions and Challenges', *Race & Class*, vol. 55, no.4, 2014, pp. 65-81.

solidarity within a colonial struggle.[59] Theory on settler-colonialism will shape the analytical engagement with BDS. The importance of using such a framework is that it allows us to take the views of the people under oppression as central to the resolution of the 'conflict' and by doing so, offer a terminology that is redundant of Western power relations. As will be further explained, departing from a framework of anti-colonial struggle means addressing concepts of resistance, indigeneity as identity politics, and deconstruction as a conceptual tool for decolonisation.

The topic is relevant to studies on democracy and human rights for several reasons. Firstly, it contributes to this literature because it directly addresses the diplomatic and academic conceptualisations of peace, conflict, and democracy-building. As will be seen in *Chapter One*, the political process initiated by Oslo has created a unique framework for understanding 'peace', which mainly relies on Western paradigms of 'conflict' between equal parties. By embedding a political formulation of the 'solution' with justice at its centre, the BDS is directly affecting such concepts and re-imagining not only the solution on the ground but also forms of theoretical and practical engagement with the 'political' itself. If the restrictions imposed on boycott groups by Israel can be seen as a move against democracy,[60] BDS' own practices enact specific conceptualisations of democracy and peace-building. How do they promote egalitarian values and ideas of democracy and human rights through their principle of boycott? On the other hand, the study of BDS encourages an inter-disciplinary approach to research these debated and highly politicised conceptual frameworks. Settler-colonial studies, critical ethnic studies, indigenous studies, all have unique perspectives to bring to the topic covered within this thesis. They bring useful contributions to issues covered by social and political sciences and attempt to break with separate conceptualisations of social phenomena. The work is therefore located at the intersection of several disciplines and theoretical frameworks and hopes to encourage researchers to join – rather than fragment – the discussion.

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[59] L. Tabar and C. Desai, 'Decolonization is a Global Project: From Palestine to the Americas', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 6, no.1, 2017, pp. i-xix.
[60] L. Taraki and M. LeVine, 'Why Boycott Israel?', *AlJazeera*, 13 August 2011. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/08/201188976675245.html

BDS has been described, almost interchangeably, as a 'resistance movement', a 'liberation' movement, a "counterhegemonic movement",[61] depending on the narrative of the author. These terms are empty of meaning if they are not deconstructed to understand their origins, associations, and (mis)uses within local and global discourses. Chaitin et al. show that texts on BDS have been either in favour or opposed to it,[62] with the respective terminology and framework associated to each position as that of Israel denying Palestinian rights[63] or as promoting anti-Semitism.[64] As such, they only offer implicit descriptions without constructive analysis. Studies that have focused on the BDS' function or identity, have analysed it in terms of its global connections as a transnational movement,[65] or have addressed its role within the Palestinian national movement.[66] Others discuss its 'legitimacy', including the question of its origins as a Western or Palestinian-led movement[67] or a more philosophical debate between boycott and academic freedom.[68] Many case studies, especially around student groups in US campuses,[69] insist on highlighting the gap between, or within, groups' discourse and

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[61] A.B. Bakan and Y. Abu-Laban, 'Palestinian Resistance and International Solidarity: The BDS Campaign', *Race and Class*, vol. 51, no.1, 2009, pp. 29-54 ; S. Bahour, et al., 'Debating Forms of Resistance', *Roundtable Discussion, alShabaka*, 2011. https://al-shabaka.org/roundtables/debating-forms-resistance/

[62] J. Chaitin, S., Steinberg and S. Steinberg, 'Polarized words: discourse on the boycott of Israel, social justice and conflict resolution', *International Journal of Conflict Management*, vol. 28, no.3, 2017b, pp. 270-294.

[63] R. Wiles (ed.), *Generation Palestine: Voices from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement*, London, Pluto Press, 2013.

[64] I.M. Sheskin and E. Felson, 'Is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement Tainted by Anti-Semitism?', *Geographical Review*, vol. 106, no.2, 2016, pp. 270-275.

[65] M.C. Hallward, *Transnational Activism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, New York, Palgrave Mcmillan, 2013.

[66] H. Jamjoum, 'The Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel', in M.C. Hallward and J.M. Norman (eds.), *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp. 133-151.

[67] S. Morrison, 'The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement: Activism Across Borders for Palestinian Justice', *PhD Thesis*, London, LSE, 2015. http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/3350/

[68] S. Fish, 'Academic Freedom and the Boycott of Israeli Universities', in A. Bilgrami and J.R. Cole (eds.), *Who's Afraid of Academic Freedom?*, Chichester, Columbia University Press, 2015 ; J. Butler, 'Exercising Rights: Academic Freedom and Boycott Politics', in A. Bilgrami and J.R. Cole (eds.), *Who's Afraid of Academic Freedom?*, Chichester, Columbia University Press, 2015.

[69] S. Truesdell, 'The Nature of the BDS Movement on US College Campuses: A Brief Analysis in Three Case Studies', *Master's Thesis*, Brandeis University, 2016. http://bir.brandeis.edu/handle/10192/32048

actions[70] or even between their 'strategic agenda' and stated aims.[71] Few have actually focused on the local relevance of the boycott for the Palestinian community in and outside of Palestine, stopping at its global connections.[72] Although these examples show the importance of focusing on the 'local', they fail to engage deeply enough in their ethnographic enterprise to grasp the variety and multiplicity of practices and discourses that make them unique while connecting them to the larger context. Most of these studies focus on its effectiveness – even BDS' critics focus on the 'failures'.[73] Stopping at this binary of success/failure[74] neglects the other dynamics, discourses, and practices created on the way.

There are better questions to ask than simply the effectiveness of the movement and of the boycott as a tactic of resistance. What discourses, practices, and reactions are they producing and what are their implications? The 'how' is widely missing from academic discussions on BDS – how are concepts of a decolonial struggle produced and how can they benefit other groups? But also, how can political sciences understand a social and political movement using tools and concepts from a variety of disciplines, without losing track of the voices and lived experiences on the ground? What transpires throughout literature on BDS is an understanding that BDS has entailed a reformulation of discourses – whether positive or negative. In her analysis of pro-BDS groups in the US, Hallward describes how such groups have actively reframed the popular discourse on 'conflict'.[75] Hallward and Shaver add that BDS initiated a "reformulation of the theory of power".[76] Qumsiyeh shows how the BDS clearly reformulated the military

[70] M.C. Hallward and P. Shaver, '«War by Other Means» or Nonviolent Resistance? Examining the Discourses Surrounding Berkeley's Divestment Bill', *Peace and Change*, vol. 37, no.3, 2012, pp. 389-412.

[71] J.S. Fishman, 'The BDS Message of Anti-Zionism, Anti-Semitism, and the Incitement to Discrimination', *Israel Affairs*, vol. 18, no.3, 2012, pp. 412-425.

[72] Those who have, are mainly Palestinian academics and pro-BDS Western authors, which hints to the need to reach to further audiences.

[73] D. Newman, 'The Failure of Academic Boycotts', *Geographical Review*, vol. 106, no.2, 2016, pp. 264–269 ; P. Mendes and N. Dyrenfurth, *Boycotting Israel is Wrong: The Progressive Path to Peace between Palestinians and Israelis*, Sidney, NewSouth Publishing, 2015a.

[74] And what would 'success' even mean in the context of the Palestinian struggle?

[75] M.C. Hallward, *Transnational Activism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, New York, Palgrave Mcmillan, 2013.

[76] M.C. Hallward and P. Shaver, '«War by Other Means» or Nonviolent Resistance? Examining the Discourses Surrounding Berkeley's Divestment Bill', *Peace and Change*, vol. 37, no.3, 2012, p.394.

occupation "as a system of racism and apartheid".[77] These texts shed light on an active form of production – of language but also discourse and practice – that is largely left unexplored. This dynamic and continuous production reflects the implicit meaning of a 'movement' as a body in motion igniting the "contentious politics"[78] that characterise social movements. It is this vital act of creation that this research is concerned with, both in its practicalities and potentiality.

A common trend in identifying the emergence of BDS as a social movement is to locate it within a historical context of the failure of Palestinian activism after the Second Intifada.[79] This offers an avenue to understand the movement as a tool to resist the social and political fragmentation caused by the territorial and political reconfiguration since the Oslo Accords and the birth of the PA.[80] BDS appears as an attempt at re-creating an identity and narrative of resistance to counter the breakdown of "collective identity"[81] and relative Palestinian loss of trust in leadership. In fact, Jamjoum sees it as a "process of reclaiming their national movement by organising Palestinians across national boundaries".[82] However, he does not show *how* this was done or achieved. The development of boycott as a resistance tactic in Palestine is not a new finding. Mazin Qumsiyeh narrates its history in his book, *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment* (2011). This traces the "indigenous roots" of the boycott,[83] which was not only modelled on the example of South Africa as many claim,[84] but was endemic of the resistance movement in Palestine since the

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[77] M.B. Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment*, London, Pluto Press, 2011, p.209.

[78] C. Tilly and L.J. Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2012*, Third Edition, London, Routledge, 2013, p.3.

[79] C.M. Dibiasi, 'Changing Trends in Palestinian Political Activism: The Second Intifada, the Wall Protests, and the Human Rights Turn', *Geopolitics*, vol. 20, no.3, 2015. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14650045.2015.1028028?src=recsys

[80] S. Morrison, 'The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement: Activism Across Borders for Palestinian Justice', *PhD Thesis*, London, LSE, 2015, p.205. http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/3350/

[81] J. Høigilt, 'The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 35, no.4, 2013, p.349.

[82] H. Jamjoum, 'The Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel', in M.C. Hallward and J.M. Norman (eds.), *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p.145.

[83] Baroud in R. Wiles (ed.), *Generation Palestine: Voices from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement*, London, Pluto Press, 2013, p.5.

[84] P. Di Stefano and M. Henaway, 'Boycotting Apartheid from South Africa to Palestine', *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, vol. 21, no.1, 2014, pp. 19-27.

first waves of Jewish immigration. Acknowledging such a history gives a grounded vision of the BDS movement, as well as a focus for the debate on normalisation, within its historical dimensions and avoids overestimating its role, as only one of many tactics available since the beginning of Palestinian protests against Israeli domination.

Settler-colonialism is deeply entrenched within the foundations of the BDS: the movement is a reaction to it both as a system of institutionalised oppression, and as a concept of white supremacy.[85] Hence, an understanding of BDS must engage with the theoretical framework of colonialism, and therefore decolonisation, as a lens of analysis. *De*-colonisation or *anti*-colonial struggle hint to a destructive and violent, 'unsettling' process.[86] It is "a program of complete disorder",[87] which actively seeks to destroy a social and political system of organised control, which involves both the physical and/or symbolic violence to deconstruct a system of thought and practice. However, Bird highlights that decolonisation also involves a creative, productive element, which is often overlooked. He describes decolonisation as both an 'event' and a 'process' that entails "activities of creating, restoring, and birthing".[88] These include both giving life to new ideas and reviving traditional practices that may be useful to the movement.[89] Seen within this frame, the BDS' decolonial struggle is not an abrupt break nor a completely new creation, but ultimately a *transformation* of a discourse and practice of power as well as resistance – as confirmed by authors talking about a 'reformulation'. This is not to understate its brutality and the adoption of the term as a mere 'metaphor'.[90] but to look, *within* the horrors of violence, for the details of how struggles grow seeds of change through their everyday words and actions. It is within this framework of anti-colonial struggle that the rejection of normalisation assumes its meaning. The cultural and academic boycott of Israel rests on the premises that colonial power is maintained both economically, as well as

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[85] For a definition of settler-colonialism as compared to colonialism, see L. Veracini, 'Introducing Settler Colonial Studies', *Settler Colonial Studies,* vol. 1, no.1, 2011, pp. 1-12.
[86] E. Tuck and K.W. Young, 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no.1, 2012, pp. 1-40.
[87] F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p.36.
[88] Waziyatawin and M.Y. Bird, *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, Santa Fe, SAR Press, 2005.
[89] R. Craggs and C. Wintle, *Cultures of Decolonisation: Transnational Productions and Practices, 1945-70*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2016.
[90] E. Tuck and K.W. Young, 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no.1, 2012, pp. 1-40.

culturally, through the reproduction of images of supremacy, vulnerability, and their normality. Hence, the cultural boycott targets the reproduction of the colonial system and its violence through ethical discourses, practices of rejection, and new imaginaries of justice.

To understand their role further, this essay departs from Salaita's conceptualisation of BDS as both a form of critique and dialogue.[91] Salaita argues that BDS is a rejection of "ethical repudiations of neocolonial and neoliberal models of conflict resolution", assumptions of modernity and statehood.[92] Not only does the movement implicitly and explicitly criticise the multiple failures of international governments in taking action against the illegality of Israel's abuses against the Palestinian people. It also criticises and ultimately rejects the whole foundations of thought that described and legitimised Israel's colonialism as a 'conflict', and the solution as 'peace-making' and 'dialogue'. How critique and dialogue become dynamic – which accounts for their role in driving change – is through a constant re-evaluation typical of decolonial praxis. According to Waziyatawin and Bird, decolonial resistance is firstly based on 'praxis', a concept taken from Freire as merging both reflection and action to trigger transformation.[93]

Within the deconstructivist perspective, by combining the two elements of critical thought and decolonial practice, this 'critique' has the potential of 'radicalising' the resistance. As Hirst writes, "acts of resistance may be further radicalised, as they are conceived of and enacted, by adding to them second- and third-order onto-political critiques - namely of the resistance-act itself and the agent or actor of resistance herself - intended to pull away from such ontologisation".[94] Such critiques, he adds, have three main consequences that render it radical:

> an insistence on the *limitlessness of responsibility* which takes seriously the urgency of the political; the *politicisation of intervention* precisely as a consequence of its ultimate indefensibility; and the *self-conscious attempt* of the subject to interrogate and thereby endeavour to (re)write herself in light of the aforementioned [*emphasis added*].[95]

[91] S. Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016, pp. 31, 43.
[92] Ibid., p.31.
[93] Waziyatawin and M.Y. Bird, *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, Santa Fe, SAR Press, 2005 ; P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1970.
[94] A. Hirst, 'Derrida and Political Resistance: The Radical Potential of Deconstruction', *Globalizations*, vol. 12, no.1, 2014, p. 7.
[95] A. Hirst, 'Derrida and Political Resistance: The Radical Potential of Deconstruction', *Globalizations*, vol. 12, no.1, 2014, p. 7.

His theorisation of 'critique' gives us several elements for examination. Firstly, the connection of critique to a responsibility to engage, a political consciousness and a moral imperative. As Barghouti writes, BDS is seen as 'moral resistance'[96] and an 'ethical imperative'.[97] Bird assesses responsibility as necessary for an effective decolonial practice.[98] Building a sense of responsibility constitutes a drive against the fragmentation that modernity – in all its shapes – promotes, which according to Bauman produces a separation of responsibility from action, neutralising morality towards the logics of rationality.[99] In this sense, the construction of a 'collective' responsibility is meaningful because it counteracts the same system that was tearing it apart and creatively recomposes it under new terms.

Secondly, the critique re-gives the act of resistance its political value, but even further, it re-attributes the political dimension to the critique itself. In fact, it addresses the question of the standing of the subject – and its intervention – as inherently political and bounded within a system of violence to which they must choose how to react.[100] Thus, this re-politicisation of the act of resistance against the colonial system, and its appearance of normality, is a stand against the opposing trend of normalisation as "the process, the instinct, the narrative that *neutralises what can never be neutral*, that renders over six decades of meticulously institutionalised Israeli military rule into an eternal and incorrigible spat between two groups of people who 'can't get along' [emphasis added]".[101] According to Derrida, critique, despite not leading to an adjustment of the unjust, may lead to a "reinterpretation of the whole apparatus of boundaries within which

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[96] O. Barghouti, 'Boycott as Resistance: The Moral Dimension', *The Electronic Intifada*, 28 December 2004. https://electronicintifada.net/content/boycott-resistance-moral-dimension/5388

[97] L. Taraki and M. LeVine, 'Why Boycott Israel?', *AlJazeera*, 13 August 2011. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/08/201188976675245.html

[98] Waziyatawin and M.Y. Bird, *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, Santa Fe, SAR Press, 2005.

[99] Z. Bauman, 'A century of camps?, in P. Beilharz (ed.), *The Bauman Reader*, Malden, Blackwell, 2001 [1995], p. 271.

[100] A. Hirst, 'Derrida and Political Resistance: The Radical Potential of Deconstruction', *Globalizations*, vol. 12, no.1, 2014, p. 21.

[101] Kassis in R. Wiles (ed.), *Generation Palestine: Voices from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement*, London, Pluto Press, 2013, p.81.

a history and culture have been able to confine their criteriology".[102] This value of critique – of de-essentialising categories and breaking the boundaries of differences that Hirst discusses – challenges the boundaries and spaces of the 'political' itself and the engagements with it, while producing a responsibility or commitment to critique itself.[103] Finally, through the previous processes, a critique creates a new, conscious, decolonial (reflexive) subject, building a morality to act, based on the language of human rights and justice as its ethical grammar.

By shifting boundaries, the rejection of normalisation implicit in its critique partly explains the additional conceptualisation of BDS as an attempt at a new "form of dialogue".[104] This dialogue lies not merely in giving voice to the oppressed as Salaita suggests, but also in creating a conversation that includes local, regional, and international actors. The production of new discourses and imaginaries, as well as of new relations of connection, stems from the basis of this dialogue and frame, therefore, the networks that emerge around it. As *Chapter Two* illustrates, BDS did in fact spark a series of intellectual (and not only) debates about the nature itself of the terms and logic that frame the implementation of the boycott. Language is a key component within these processes as firstly it re-imagines and introduces a vocabulary that transcends the socially imposed limitations of existing discourse and, secondly, because it creates a communicative bridge that connects the local to global audiences. McMahon describes the function of BDS as transgressing the limits of discourse around the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, through questioning the representation of the symmetry of the conflict, its historicity and the image of the Jews as 'unique', as delineated by their three calls.[105] The transgression runs however much deeper. As it counteracts the colonised discourses and mechanisms that oppress and restrict the mind,[106] it also transgresses not only the foreign

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[102] J. Derrida, 'Force of law: The «Mystical Foundation of Authority»', in D. Cornell, M., Rosenfeld and D.G. Carlson (eds.), *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 19.

[103] Hirst, op.cit., p. 21-2.

[104] S. Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016, p. 43.

[105] S.F. McMahon, 'The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Campaign: Contradictions and Challenges', *Race & Class*, vol. 55, no.4, 2014, pp. 65-81.

[106] F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press, 1963.

imposed limits of discourse on the 'conflict', but also the Palestinians' own visions and ties with the desire of national sovereignty, as *Chapter Three* will further explore. What the transgression counters is what Leone calls a "discursive process of domestication"[107] inherent in the colonial system, which imposes a system of thought delimiting the ability to imagine alternatives to both the colonial system or the resistance itself.

By critically opposing the specific discursive context of the Oslo era, for example, BDS also seizes the potential of narration to recognise and erase the ingrained inequality of discourse and re-conceptualise a framework of speech that is sensitive to people's sufferings and justice. In doing so, it re-attributes meaning and discursive agency to the resistance movement by reconstructing a language of emancipation that is not imposed from the outside but actively produced from within. Moreover, "language remains alive when it refuses to "encapsulate" or "capture" the events and lives it describes".[108] This vitality of language is an important factor in practices because it actively creates connections, assembles meanings, and induces (re)actions.[109] This process of production through language delineates a possible space for imagining and implementing what is often called 'a just peace', a peace riddled with justice and values of equality and equal rights, whether based on international law or other grammars of morality, in addition to terms of conflict, democracy, and human rights. By building on Motamedi-Fraser,[110] Sheldon explains, in fact, that "words can be active participants in relationships, so that the process of imagining new languages can be generative of new ethical and political formations".[111] As a creative process of re-imagination, it is part of what Bird includes as central to the decolonisation process. In fact, "decolonisation is about imagining modes of life and futures that are rooted in indigenous Palestinian epistemologies, memory and relations to land, place and the body, and not solely just about replacing the colonial state and racial economy".[112] It is through new and old language and

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[107] M.C. Hallward and J.M. Norman (eds.), *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, p.13.

[108] J. Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, New York, Routledge, 1997, p.9.

[109] Ibid. ; M. Motamedi-Fraser, 'Once Upon a Problem', *The Sociological Review*, vol. 60, no.1, 2012, pp. 84-107.

[110] Ibid.

[111] R. Sheldon, 'Formative Sociology and Ethico-Political Imaginaries: Opening up Transnational Responses to Palestine-Israel', *The Sociological Review*, vol. 64, 2016, p. 840.

[112] L. Tabar and C. Desai, 'Decolonization is a Global Project: From Palestine to the Americas', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 6, no.1, 2017, p. xi.

ways to converse that actors can re-imagine the relations, strategies, and boundaries of the political.

So what types of political engagements does this dialogue create? Some argue that although part of the Palestinian activist tradition, the BDS movement has seen a unique type of organising for the cause both locally and transnationally.[113] *Chapter Three* will analyse some of these forms in further detail to show how BDS in Palestine connects to – and transcends – existing networks of solidarity. Apart from the globalism of these ties, which classic social theory identifies as a key feature of modern movements, more significant is the link that Tilly and Wood draw with democracy-building. They write, "new social ties bec[o]me become crucial sites of democratisation".[114] This is a *potential* space *of* and *for* democratisation – one that might produce elements of democratic practice if the political, social, and practical conditions allow it. Tilly and Wood name a few such elements, such as inclusion, equal participation, networks based on trust and the reduction of inequalities, which do not only describe government practices but can also be embedded in movements' organisation and actions. This potential space of transformation produced by social relations stems from the basis of what Tabar and Desai describe as solidarity:

> Solidarity is a space where *ethical relationships and strategic political alliances* can be built; colonial and capitalists structures and categories can be *contested*; and different modes of radical thought and relationships can be envisioned and *enacted*. Solidarity, therefore, is [...] also a transformative process that can prefigure a different world [*emphasis added*].[115]

Ethics and responsibility, critique and creativity are all dynamic elements that are active in this space of transformation. The space is in fact created by the "dialectical exchanges between the experiences and epistemologies of Palestinians and South Africans, provoking radical anticolonial imaginaries of the world we wish to see".[116] However, how

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[113] S. Morrison, 'The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement: Activism Across Borders for Palestinian Justice', *PhD Thesis*, London, LES, 2015, p. 205. http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/3350/
[114] C. Tilly and L.J. Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2012*, Third Edition, London, Routledge, 2013, p.141.
[115] L. Tabar and C. Desai, 'Decolonization is a Global Project: From Palestine to the Americas', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 6, no.1, 2017, p. xvii.
[116] Ibid., p. xv.

solidarity builds on difference and discomfort[117] is a question that needs reflection.

Viewing Palestine within this framework of decolonisation has several implications both on the discursive, conceptual, and practical levels. On a discursive level, decolonisation evokes a set of related concepts that appear in academic studies and Palestinian discourses alike. One of them is the description of the colonised as 'indigenous'. The term allows one to automatically recognise the situation as one of colonial rule because of the association to other known indigenous struggles, like the Native Americans. The term automatically places Palestine within a network of connecting geographical and conceptual spaces bearing discursive resonance and sharing a commonality of purpose, strategy, and organising principles. Laidlaw and Lester (2015) describe indigenous communities as being at the same time 'local' and 'trans-local'.[118] This, however, does not simply relate to a mere connection with the 'outside' but to evolving relationships and dynamics. They write, "indigeneity has never been about stasis: connectedness to the land arises from the retention of some control over movement to, across, and from it, rather than fixedness".[119] This movement, although identified by the authors in its concrete dimension, is also metaphorical for anything movable. In fact, they add, "[indigeneity] is about exercising influence over things that are mobile",[120] which include people and objects, but also ideas and words.

By countering the traditional idea of indigenous as 'local' and 'static', Laidlaw and Lester, like many others, offer a view of the meaning of the term that reconnects it to its global dimension. This perspective is what Qutami calls the "Palestine analytic",[121] which sees Palestine not in isolation but within the multiple nodes of connections of a global struggle against capitalism and imperialism. It is to see Palestine, as she explains,

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[117]   Based on Boudreau-Morris' proposition that relations of solidarity should rest on a "constant and uncomfortable engagement with difference [...] based on discomfort and contingency". K. Boudreau Morris, 'Decolonizing Solidarity: Cultivating Relationships of Discomfort', *Settler Colonial Studies,* vol. 7, no.4, 2017, p. 466.

[118]   Z. Laidlaw and A. Lester (eds.), *Indigenous Communities and Settler Colonialism: Land Holding, Loss and Survival in an Interconnected World*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

[119]   Ibid., p.7.

[120]   Ibid.

[121]   L. Qutami, 'Rethinking the Single Story: BDS, Transnational Cross Movement Building and the Palestine Analytic', *Social Text*, 2014. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/rethinking-the-single-story-bds-transnational-cross-movement-building-and-the-palestine-analytic/

as paradigmatic of broader structures of (settler) colonialism, apartheid, racism, White-supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, dispossession, surveillance, bio-politics, necro-politics, repression, policing, arms trade and other forms of power and violence that socialize all people transnationally in a divided world of human and non-human, conqueror and conquered, enlightened and un-enlightened and other dichotomies of power and powerlessness.[122]

This perspective connects the local movement and its identity to global struggles that go beyond geographical or ethnic identifications, and enlarge the focus to a global system of injustice that dominates through discourses and practices. The divisions and categories that this expresses are those to be deconstructed and transgressed.

The focus on indigeneity does not simply raise the question of identity, but also of identity politics: how does the attribution of a discourse of indigeneity frame the politics of local and international movements for justice? In fact, Haklai and Loizides reveal the dangers of using the 'indigenous' as a product of a settler-colonial framework.[123] In their study, they draw the history of the evolution of Palestinian claims and explain that after WWI, the objective of the struggle was framed in terms of 'national self-determination'.[124] Although still used, this justification misses part of the potential role of BDS in breaking and rebuilding boundaries – this is what this research explores. Such a conceptualisation of the 'indigenous' reveals different levels on which ethnic and indigenous studies contribute to the theorisation of Palestine. By re-centring the study of Palestinian politics onto the 'indigenous', power – and therefore agency[125] – is re-attributed to the people at the grassroots through both language and practice. The struggle becomes contextualised within a larger, social, economic, and political struggle against a global, anti-colonial and anti-imperial system of governance. At the same time, the local re-appropriates a struggle, which has been 'globalised' and diffused into international networks of imperialism. Therefore, bringing the framework of indigenous and ethnic studies to

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[122]   L. Qutami, 'Rethinking the Single Story: BDS, Transnational Cross Movement Building and the Palestine Analytic', *Social Text*, 2014.

[123]   O. Haklai and N. Loizides (eds.), *Settlers in Contested Lands: Territorial Disputes and Ethnic Conflicts*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2015.

[124]   Ibid., p.9.

[125]   R. Barakat, 'Writing/Righting Palestine Studies: Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Sovereignty and Resisting the Ghost(s) of History', *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2017. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1300048

the forefront of political sciences is important to highlight a definition of power that stems from the grassroots.

In sum, what a radical critique and dialogue produce are new ethical and political imaginaries that frame a way/method of organising, based on localised discourses and practices, that are nevertheless connected to global networks. By reflecting on the productive power of language, the empowering force of rejection, and the 'democratising' elements of connections – I hope to provide just some conceptual tools to approach the analysis of movements within local realities of settler-colonialism and grasp their richness. Tabar and Desai highlight the importance of studying connections to reveal the broader picture of the structural and systematic power of the colonial regime.[126] Here, I want to highlight instead the way that the local context shapes the global networks, including through images, discourses, and practices, which are at the same time constituted and pre-defined by the global ones. It is by looking at such a production process that academics, activists, and organisations can become aware of the effects of their engagement with the political, both at the discursive and practical levels, and take an active stance in what it is they wish to produce. In the next chapters, interviews will enrich the understandings of such concepts of 'critique', 'dialogue', and 'indigeneity', while exploring the debates that a small section of the academic and cultural boycott in the West Bank has engendered.

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[126] L. Tabar and C. Desai, 'Decolonization is a Global Project: From Palestine to the Americas', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 6, no.1, 2017, pp. i-xix.

1.

A CRITIQUE OF THE GLOBAL, NEO-LIBERAL PARADIGM OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Occupied, terrorized, genocide – while the whole world is hypnotized,

Sixty years, incessant tears – no day passes by without countless fears, [...]

Through your 'diplomacy', and your foreign relations –
you attempt to justify and give credence to your occupation,

Palestine is my land, and I won't let you take it –
and while you put the world to sleep, I try to wake it.

Abdelnasser[127]

A critique of the colonial system is widespread and easily formulated across the Palestinian community. This poem by an 11-year old boy, titled "The definition of occupation..." criticises the violence of the military occupation of Palestine and the foreign terms of diplomacy legitimising it. The critique is not just directed to Israel, but also to the wider political structures, ideologies, and networks that allowed such a system to emerge. In their 2005 manifesto, the BDS National Committee justified their call for a general boycott of Israel with the failures of the internationally-led peace process. The statement read: "all forms of international intervention and peace-making have until now failed to convince or force Israel to comply with humanitarian law, to respect fundamental human rights and to end its occupation and oppression of the people of Palestine",[128] including the countless UN resolutions. These failures became particularly visible in the post-Oslo

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[127] A. Abusrour, 'Beautiful Resistance, Revolting Memory', *BADIL Resource Center*, 2006. http://www.badil.org/en/component/k2/item/956-beautiful-resistance-revolting-memory.html
[128] BDS, 'Palestinian Civil Society Calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel until it Complies with International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights', *Open letter, BDS Website*, 2005. https://bdsmovement.net/call

era and encouraged a sense of 'responsibility' to act, both in Palestinians themselves and by making the international community take responsibility for their role in the conflict. This chapter will provide an overview of the critique – through and with the opinions of the boycott's supporters interviewed for the research. It will address the paradigm of 'peace' that the Oslo process instated and the distorted political imaginaries that arose as a result. A focus on the role and use of discourse in reproducing these images stems also from the basis of the role of the reformulation of such language that will take place in *Chapter Two* and *Three*. The chapter inquires of the grounds on which BDS' logics of rejection, or critique, is constructed.

The Oslo Peace Process, initiated in 1993 by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, PLO President, Yasser Arafat, and US President Bill Clinton, set forward a plan to 'solve the conflict' in five years based on Israel's military withdrawal and the institution of a Palestinian 'government' (not a state) founded upon 'democratic principles'.[129] One of the practical outcomes of the agreements was the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) as the interim, administrative rule of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The second, was a project for the subdivision of the West Bank into three Areas, A, B, and C, with full Israeli, Palestinian, or joint civil and military control. The plan however avoided the most contentious questions at the core of the conflict: the return of Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem, the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and even borders. Although the aim was to "recognise their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace",[130] it failed to do so as it didn't result in the creation of a Palestinian state.[131]

The plan was dismissed as "a smokescreen",[132] an 'illusion'[133] and an 'imbroglio'.[134] One of the criticisms stemmed from the negative impact the agreements had on the ground and power imbalance it resulted in.

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[129] Oslo I, 'Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements', *Oslo Accords*, 13 September 1993. https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IL%20PS_930913_DeclarationPrinciplesnterimSelf-Government%28Oslo%20Accords%29.pdf

[130] Ibid.

[131] D. Jones, *Cosmopolitan Mediation? Conflict Resolution and the Oslo Accords*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999.

[132] S. Jabarin, 'Oslo's Smokescreen, Twenty Years On', *Huffington Post*, 2013. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/shawan-jabarin/oslos-smokescreen-twenty-_b_3922652.html

[133] A. Hanieh, 'The Oslo Illusion', *The Jacobin*, 2013. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2013/04/the-oslo-illusion/

[134] L.L. Grinberg, *Politics and Violence in Israel/Palestine: Democracy versus Military Rule*, London, Routledge, 2010.

"The Israeli peace process relegates Palestinians to the sidelines of history and tells us to shut up and lie down for the bulldozers to run over us…".[135] Several interviewees highlighted the worsening of the situation since Oslo especially with regards to a booming settlement expansion and fragmentation of Palestinian lands and connections. As Jamal said, "the problems of settlements, daily invasions in zone A,[136] have clearly shown that there is no obligation from Israel to respect the Oslo agreement, so people need to do something." In fact, Oslo was seen as just a facade to hide the ground reality of settler-colonial oppression. As Jabarin affirms, "the continuation of Israel's settlement policy and the intensification of the pillage of Palestinian natural resources, both unequivocal violations of international law, have been exercised under Oslo's mantel of legitimacy".[137] By providing a veil of 'legitimacy' to the military, and in some cases civil rule of Israel on Palestinian territory, the agreements consolidated the "facts on the ground",[138] strengthening the reproduction of the colonial system of control. In his analysis of the Norwegian role in the mediation during the Accords, Jones concludes that both the agreements and the foreign intervention "reproduce rather than overcome structures of inequality and domination".[139]

Together with the territorial separation, there was a parallel political fragmentation within the OPT that was worsened by the institution of the PA. This resulted in a weak leadership and a general mistrust amongst the population towards governmental institutions, and the commitment of its elites. Hilal describes the post-Oslo period as giving rise to a "new political field with "a political culture that values partisan and ideological pluralism" which led to "a state of inaction".[140] This state was reflected in the NGO field, where the Western influence and material funding provoked inaction and cynicism which "stall[ed]

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[135] Student in M.C. Hallward and P. Shaver, '«War by Other Means» or Nonviolent Resistance? Examining the Discourses Surrounding Berkeley's Divestment Bill', *Peace and Change*, vol. 37, no.3, 2012, p.402.

[136] Zone A is supposedly under full Palestinian civil and political rule.

[137] Jabarin, loc. cit.

[138] M.C. Hallward, 'Building Space for Peace? Israeli and Palestinian Activism in the Second Intifada', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, vol. 21, no.3, 2009, p. 309.

[139] D. Jones, *Cosmopolitan Mediation? Conflict Resolution and the Oslo Accords*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999, p.5.

[140] J. Hilal, *The Palestinian Political System after Oslo*, Birzeit, The Institute for Palestine Studies and Muwatin, The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, 2006.

Palestinian activism and channel[led] it to inactive activities".[141] Institutions had a large role in spreading a discourse and practice of 'peace' according to the paradigm set in place by Oslo. Initiatives working for 'peace', like One Voice and Seeds of Peace, were based on Oslo's assumptions of power balance and the conflictual nature of the ground reality. Sponsors adopted 'conditions' on their funding based on the principle that both parties should be included, whether the project was on conflict-resolution, human rights, or development. The neoliberal paradigm of rationality and focus on enterprises led to the weakening of the national movement while furthering depoliticisation and social fragmentation.[142] By transforming "social relations, general conduct and subjectivities",[143] this period institutionalised forms of resistance under the headings of human rights NGOs. This process initiated by Oslo,

> fatally undermined the widespread solidarity and sympathy with the Palestinian struggle built during the years of the first Intifada, replacing an orientation toward grassroots collective support with a faith in negotiations steered by Western governments. It would take over a decade for solidarity movements to rebuild themselves.[144]

On the other hand, the critique of Oslo promoted by BDS took on the paradigm of international law and human rights. As Jabarin writes, "Oslo's most fundamental weakness is the absence of international law from its text. [...] not once were the notions of self-determination, national sovereignty, territorial integrity or human rights [...] meaningfully provided for in the Accords".[145] International law became the basis of a 'global' critique based on the universality of the terms of human rights, which was able to target the daily human rights violations on the ground together with the larger processes of colonial structural violence and absence of 'justice' as a parameter for

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[141] L. Allen, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013.

[142] S. Merz, '«Missionaries of the New Era»: Neoliberalism and NGOs in Palestine', *Race & Class*, vol. 54, no.1, 2012, pp. 50-66.

[143] Ibid., p.51.

[144] A. Hanieh, 'The Oslo Illusion', *The Jacobin*, 2013. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2013/04/the-oslo-illusion/

[145] S. Jabarin, 'Oslo's Smokescreen, Twenty Years On', *Huffington Post*, 2013. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/shawan-jabarin/oslos-smokescreen-twenty-_b_3922652.html

peace. One of these 'legal' tools,[146] the Durban Position Paper, reacted and condemned the resolutions and omissions carried on in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism.[147] The document, drafted by the BNC, states that Western powers, including "public officials and the mass media" are complicit in Israel's violations of international law because they "protected Israel from condemnation by the UN Security Council for its illegal practices, and thus they share the responsibility for the results".[148]

Together with the lack of international law, the principles of peace and conflict themselves were debated. In fact, Hallward explains that the concept of peace used by organisations aimed at promoting joint 'peace' initiatives involved disparate interpretations of what that meant: as Israelis implied a negative peace, linked with security, Palestinians thought of it as one filled with justice, equality, and rights.[149] This discrepancy was reflected in discourse. As supporters of BDS speak about human rights and nonviolence, its opponents talk about conflict resolution and peace.[150] This inevitably produces a gap in the starting points themselves of the implementation of any frameworks of peace. The nomination of BDS to the Nobel Peace Prize embodies this tension: the shock it created amongst opponents of the movement stemmed partly from the (mis)use, from their viewpoint, of their own terminology of peace. Their reactions convey an exclusivity and monopoly of meanings and uses of language within colonial enterprises, which is largely used in propaganda activities to discredit discourses promoting different understandings. In fact, such variation in terms and conceptualisations gives grounds for the misuse and manipulation of vocabularies of both justice, peace, and emancipation.[151]

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[146] Tools that use 'legality' as their basis.
[147] BNC, 'United against Apartheid, Colonialism, and Occupation: Dignity and Justice for the Palestinian People', *Palestinian Civil Society Strategic Position Paper*, Durban Review Conference, Geneva, 20 – 24 April 2009.
[148] Ibid., p.18.
[149] M.C. Hallward, 'Building Space for Peace? Israeli and Palestinian Activism in the Second Intifada', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, vol. 21, no.3, 2009, p. 312.
[150] M.C. Hallward and P. Shaver, '«War by Other Means» or Nonviolent Resistance? Examining the Discourses Surrounding Berkeley's Divestment Bill', *Peace and Change*, vol. 37, no.3, 2012, p.401.
[151] N. Perugini and N. Gordon, *The Human Right to Dominate*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2015.

The post-Oslo framework did not only institute a flawed political system and territorial division, but also targeted the economic system, by creating dependency of the Palestinians on the Israeli economy. The historical role of boycotts in Palestine always had as part of their aim the creation a local, popular economic alternative. This active organising was particularly prolific during the First Intifada, with nonviolent protests and a collective being organised all over Palestine. Oslo and the Paris Protocols[152] "wanted to break with this and created a rupture. […] they aimed to undo the economic structures created and make Palestinians dependent on the Israeli economy" (Jasmin). She adds that this was "a systematic project, that's why the economic boycotts were challenging to achieve." As a full rejection against the neoliberal paradigm of dependency and threats of the occupation, the PLO Council issued a statement in January 2018 stating that the agreements signed in Oslo, Cairo, and Washington "no longer stand", and gave the PLO Executive Committee the role of "suspend[ing] recognition of Israel" and "stop security coordination in all its forms".[153]

1.1 Addressing Distorted Imaginaries

Even those with good intentions misunderstand what happened in Palestine with regard to popular resistance. […] They fail to understand the true nature of the struggle by reducing the message to a statement about the undesirability of violence on the part of an oppressed people. Both ignore the rich history of precisely such nonviolent struggle while failing to appreciate what Palestinians really want: freedom and the right of return, not a flag over a canton called a state.[154]

As one attendee of a BDS meeting said, "BDS is the way to say no to Oslo"; the critique is clear. The centrality of Oslo within the setting of the Palestinian panorama lies in its image as "the main official venue for the appearance of Palestine in the world".[155] The visions and concepts

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[152] Otherwise called the Protocol on Economic Relations, included within the Oslo II accords (1995). It aimed to integrate the PA's economy into the Israeli one by giving Israel power to regulate borders and customs, as well as impose taxes on the OPT.
[153] WAFA, 'UPDATE: PLO Central Council Decides to Suspend Oslo Agreement', *Palestinian News and Info Agency*, 15 January 2018. http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=zbyLEda96057575031azbyLEd
[154] M.B. Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment*, London, Pluto Press, 2011, p.1.
[155] S. Esmeir, 'Back to History and Judgment', *Social Text*, 2014. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/back-to-history-and-judgment/

produced with the accords entered the global imaginaries of Israel and Palestine, causing a series of misrepresentations of both the resistance struggle[156] and of the 'conflict' itself.[157] Such misunderstandings affect the internal debates and strategies of BDS by on the one hand framing the terms of the debate and on the other creating practical obstacles to the movement. In a 2015 article entitled "How BDS is Actually Perpetuating the Occupation", Shumsky writes that, "by obscuring the uniqueness of the Israeli colonialist regime, BDS is giving Israel an escape hatch; instead, the boycott movement must focus on occupation and settlements, stop blurring lines between Israel and Territories".[158] This is a classic example of a distorted imaginary and a warning sign of its subtlety. While recognising Israel as a colonial entity, it simultaneously distorts its ground reality by separating the military occupation of the OPT as the colonialist enterprise from the State of Israel. He reinforces this view by encouraging the practice of boycott "until the settlement enterprise disappears", as if it was a self-producing and self-destructing entity. Furthermore, he reverses the claim of Israel as a colonial state by describing this label as a trend of "Israelization of the occupation".[159] This is the deepest level of confusion that these distorted imaginaries engender; what I would call a 'pro-Palestinian' de-legitimation of the Palestinian struggle. Similar texts are diffused and add to the chaos of representations about BDS and the situation on the ground. Although the levels and degrees of confusion vary, I will here consider three of the most significant understandings and how they obstruct the BDS and the wider resistance: the mis-representation of the situation as a 'conflict' between political actors with equal power rather than one of territorial colonialist conquest; the mis-identification of the boycott as targeting illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank only; and the political aspirations of the Palestinians towards a two-state solution.

The first is perhaps the most simplified and most impactful representation, which labels the situation as a balanced, two-sided

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[156]   TOI, 'Defense Minister: There's «No Partner» for Peace', *The Times of Israel*, 8 December 2013. https://www.timesofisrael.com/defense-minister-theres-no-partner-for-peace/
[157]   BBC, 'Guide: Why are Israel and the Palestinians Fighting over Gaza?', *BBC Newsround*, 20 February 2015. http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/20436092
[158]   D. Shumsky, 'How BDS Is Actually Perpetuating the Occupation', *Haaretz*, 11 June 2015. https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-focusing-the-boycott-weapon-1.5370890
[159]   Ibid.

'conflict'. The whole paradigm is based on the assumption of parties' equality, ignoring the deep power inequality of the colonial system imposed by Israel. The Durban Paper resolved that this "balanced approach" presents the conflict "as if Palestinian non-state actors were an equal party in an inter-state armed conflict, rather than a case of racism, colonialism and foreign occupation".[160] This has a series of consequences within the narration of the situation. In fact, it lies at the basis of Israel's principle of exceptionalism and the implicit promotion, through images of security risk and Palestinian 'terror', that one Israeli individual is worth several Palestinian lives.[161] It ultimately distorts the reality from one of colonisation to one of conflict. Such a view fits the international relations' conceptualisation of the world order as interrelated states that enter a conflict – this despite the fact that Palestine is not recognised as a state.

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) condemned the approach and any initiatives "based on the false premise that the colonisers and the colonised, the oppressors and the oppressed, are equally responsible for the 'conflict'," as "intentionally deceptive, intellectually dishonest and morally reprehensible".[162] However, the rejection of this distorted narrative becomes a broader rejection to the principles of liberal theory, economic interdependence and institutional and diplomatic cooperation, which do not work in the Palestinian case because they do not fit the ground realities of oppression. In fact, Palestine is excluded from the world order both politically, as it is not a recognised state, and economically, as the neoliberal doctrine foresees a world interdependent financially, where politics become subordinated to political interest, hence, the failure to get especially Western countries to support sanctions against Israel. Turner argues that in fact, this view of conflict and peace has "securitised

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[160] BNC, 'United against Apartheid, Colonialism, and Occupation: Dignity and Justice for the Palestinian People', *Palestinian Civil Society Strategic Position Paper*, Durban Review Conference, Geneva, 20 – 24 April 2009, p.18.

[161] O. Barghouti, 'Two Degrees of Separation: Israel, its Palestinian Victims, and the Fraudulent Use of Antisemitism', in Jewish Voice for Peace, *On Anti-Semitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice*, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2017, pp. 139-151.

[162] PACBI, 'Guidelines for Applying the International Academic Boycott of Israel', *Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel*, 1 October 2009. http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1107

democracy",[163] by giving primacy to issues of risks and terror. It links therefore 'conflict' with several other representations – of Palestinians as inciting terror[164] and not wanting peace.[165] In the political and organisational fields, this translates into a division between an elite working for 'peace' and those that aren't willing to.[166] This has led to "political polarisation, elite fragmentation" and the manipulation of Palestinian politics.[167]

The second is the view of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 as a separate entity from Israel, in the same way that Shumsky[168] unconsciously conveyed. This is a crucial perspective for the BDS because it portrays the idea that the boycott is only directed at products produced in illegal settlements in the West Bank. For example, Sarid writes in Haaretz that, "Israel is legitimate. About that there is no debate. Only its occupation is illegitimate".[169] This is reflected even in academic writings about the BDS. For example, McMahon criticises the movement as contradictory because it is unclear whether the boycott is targeted at the settlements or the whole of Israel.[170] This is a criticism shared by authors who refuse the 'blanket BDS'[171] targeting all Israeli products and relations. In practice, this imaginary corrupts and confuses local politics and international support. Even supporters and activists within the Palestinian struggle misconceive the distinction, and only refer to the Israeli 'occupation' of the West Bank and Gaza, without

[163] M. Turner, 'Creating «Partners for Peace»: The Palestinian Authority and the International Statebuilding Agenda', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 5, no.1, 2011, pp. 1-21.
[164] MFA, 'Wave of Terror 2015-2018', *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 18 March 2018. http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Wave-of-terror-October-2015.aspx
[165] TOI, 'Defense Minister: There's «No Partner» for Peace', *The Times of Israel*, 8 December 2013. https://www.timesofisrael.com/defense-minister-theres-no-partner-for-peace/
[166] Turner, loc. cit.
[167] Ibid.
[168] D. Shumsky, 'How BDS Is Actually Perpetuating the Occupation', *Haaretz*, 11 June 2015. https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-focusing-the-boycott-weapon-1.5370890
[169] Y. Sarid, 'Yes to a Boycott', *Haaretz*, 21 February 2014. https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-yes-to-a-boycott-1.5324664
[170] S.F. McMahon, 'The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Campaign: Contradictions and Challenges', *Race & Class*, vol. 55, no.4, 2014, pp. 65-81.
[171] J. Chaitin, S. Steinberg and S. Steinberg, '«BDS – it's complicated»: Israeli, Jewish, and others' views on the boycott of Israel', *The International Journal of Human Rights,* vol. 21, no.7, 2017a, pp. 889-907.

addressing Israel's colonial system.[172]

The idea that the boycott only addresses settlement products automatically legitimises 1948 Israel and distorts the understanding of BDS as an anti-colonial movement. It blurs geographical and political boundaries by shifting historical grounds of (im)morality, "as if the excess of occupation normalises previous moments of colonisation by relegating what is deemed unacceptable to more recent episodes of expansion".[173] "Ironically – she continues – the exclusive boycott of settlements produces the most normalisation of Israel".[174] Hence, this view does not only affect the territorial borders and political claims, but also a series of imaginaries, and therefore material practices, of legitimacy and illegitimacy, proposed solutions and realistic ones. It plays on the image of Israel as 'the only democracy in the Middle East', which de facto "legitimises the use of violence and the military rule of Palestinian non-citizens in the West Bank and Gaza".[175] This position 'outside of history' recreates privilege and supremacy.[176]

Finally, the third distortion is that of the Palestinians struggling to achieve a two-state solution, which sometimes becomes a 'one-state solution without the Jews'[177] or even replacing Israel altogether.[178] Once again, even the Norwegian MP who nominated BDS for the Nobel Peace Prize stated the presumption that BDS is trying to achieve their own state.[179] Such a view underestimates the value and role of the boycott. In fact, the resistance has never been specifically about the two-state solution, but about calling out and dismantling a system of oppression. This does not mean, as (conscious) misinterpretations by

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[172] Kairos Palestine, 'A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering', *Kairos Document*, 2009. http://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/about-us/kairos-palestine-document

[173] S. Esmeir, 'Back to History and Judgment', *Social Text*, 2014. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/back-to-history-and-judgment/

[174] Ibid.

[175] L.L. Grinberg, *Politics and Violence in Israel/Palestine: Democracy versus Military Rule*, London, Routledge, 2010, p.22.

[176] Esmeir, loc. cit.

[177] P. Mendes and N. Dyrenfurth, 'What BDS Really Wants: A One-State Solution, minus the Jewish State', *Haaretz*, 30 April 2015b. https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-what-bds-really-wants-1.5356807

[178] Brahm and Romirowsky in C. Nelson and G.N. Brahm (eds.), *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, Chicago, Wayne State University Press, 2015.

[179] TOI, 'Norwegian MP defends nominating «peaceful» BDS movement for Nobel prize', *The Times of Israel*, 18 February 2018. https://www.timesofisrael.com/norwegian-mp-defends-nominating-peaceful-bds-movement-for-nobel-prize/

Israeli or pro-Zionist authors promote, 'eliminating Israel'.[180] Far from it, it leaves room for several options. As Ahmed describes, "there are many solutions being proposed, every 10 years there is a new one made." He says, there are currently five ideas that have been designed, but only one that is realistic. In fact, although BDS as a group does not advocate for a specific political vision, most of the members I spoke to agreed that the most realistic option would be the integration of both people into a one, a democratic and secular state for all. "The vision is there but has become distorted by the Oslo process and the international-led campaign to promote *talking* [stressed given], *talking* about a two-states solution. The solution has always been there and it is one of a democratic, secular state for all" (Saeed). This vision was supported repeatedly by the movement, by the PLO Charter, and before all the uprisings (of 1904, 1922, and so on).

Discussing history, Saeed brings up other cases of colonialism in which, he said, the most common scenario, placed in between a full-scale resistance as in the Algerian case and genocide like in Australia and New Zealand, has always been integration under one rule. "This solution is just the reality, the others are illusions or delusions of two states," he repeats. The distortion of the vision is reinforced in practice by the Palestinian political elite, who joined the BDS while normalising relations with Israel and maintaining the goal of a two-state solution. A member of the PNC declared that, the "official position is that of two-state – however, there is a tension because there is no synergy with the views of BDS". Kareem adds that by accepting the two-state solution on their political agenda, PA officials "consider Israel as an existing state, and therefore compensate for [the refugees'] rights[181] with the right to have a state". His view highlights that in order to conceal the loss of the refugees' right of return, as well as the territories beyond the borders imposed in 1967, the attention is shifted to the aspiration to a state. As Fatima said, with Oslo, there was a parallel shift in the resistance towards 'recognition' that emphasised the right to self-determination and to a national state. In fact, the framing itself of nationhood is a misconception. Haklai and Loizides draw the historical roots of the resistance and the origins of their ties to the claim of 'national self-determination' to the post-WWI

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[180] Brahm and Romirowsky, loc. cit.
[181] Such as the right of return of Palestinian refugees, as one of the three calls of BDS.

national struggles.[182] It was this period of state formation that gave the Palestinian struggle the label of national 'self-determination', which was later framed on the newly-established human rights code.

These imaginaries constitute a serious challenge for the BDS and the wider resistance movement. What they convey is a discourse that emphasises a sort of "harmony ideology",[183] transmitting the idea that reconciliation is good and more 'civilised' against the inherent negativity of conflict. However, opposite to the Zapotec's use of this discourse as a way to resist the coloniser's ideology,[184] in Palestine this has been used to further Israeli imperial ambitions and to portray the colonised as the real obstacles to peace in the region. As Saeed highlights, the role of Israel's lobby in influencing public views not only targets the situation but also gives Israel a positive, cultural and political image, assisted by "the [Israeli] lobby [which] has infiltrated popular culture", including Hollywood – and even Bollywood, films. These imaginaries have come to dominate popular views, but also academic studies of peace and conflict resolution, and government policies and diplomatic efforts in the region. They stimulate what Leone calls a "discursive process of domestication",[185] namely, delimiting the ability to imagine alternatives to the colonial system or the resistance itself. Imaginaries appear as prone to being occupied by what Thiong'o refers to as 'colonisation of the mind'.[186] This mental occupation occurs through the manipulation and monopoly of vocabularies.[187]

This gap between global imaginaries and practical, local reality creates several tensions. Firstly, as previously mentioned, human rights organisations' material need for funding pushes them to normalise the colonial system, which undermines the nature itself of their work. Secondly, organisations and municipalities' outlook towards the image they portray abroad leads to a disconnection with Palestinians at home.

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[182] O. Haklai and N. Loizides (eds.), *Settlers in Contested Lands: Territorial Disputes and Ethnic Conflicts*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2015.

[183] L. Nader, *Harmony Ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Village*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1990.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Leone in M.C. Hallward and J.M. Norman (eds.), *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

[186] N. Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Melton, James Currey, 1986.

[187] N. Perugini and N. Gordon, *The Human Right to Dominate*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2015.

This impacts the local BDS as well, as it tries to gain international coverage while losing touch with the local supporters, for example by using narratives aimed at international audiences. As a result, BDS tries to adapt to this evolving discursive context while conveying their messages. So, they speak of 'colonialism' rather than simple 'occupation' and use human rights language to engage with the global movement for justice. These tensions are caused by the disconnection of the international approach to diplomacy and peace-building as well as by the new NGOs and 'internationalised' civil society with the colonial reality, which has provoked a subjugation of public imaginaries to the distortion caused by the post-Oslo period. This disconnection can only lead to further social and political fragmentation.

Such imaginaries are important not only for external visibility and representation, but also for internal identity-making. Asma' argues that, "we are in a place that is confused in terms of identity. The confusion stems from a mix between rumours and facts, for example through images of others within our society. Such is the place of Rawabi for example, everybody hears but few really know." The prominence of Western and Israeli narratives dominates the global, but also local imaginaries. "We are in the post-Oslo scene, in which people forgot how we should look at ourselves because of the focus on the image of how we should look for the international world," says Salim. Understanding BDS within the context of the political and social fragmentation caused by the Oslo 'peace process' within Palestinian society hints to its role as a tool to re-claim a collective identity and unity[188] based on a national, anti-colonial struggle.

As Salaita writes, BDS is a form of critique.[189] Beyond its criticisms of Israel's violations of human rights, the BDS also rejects the foundations of the common discourses and disciplines that have shaped a 'peace' which in fact supports and reproduces the colonial system. This critique is at the same time discursive and practical, in its complete rejection of any collaboration with Israeli institutions. The rejection "emerged from a synchronicity" of events: the end of the Oslo process and its

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[188] H. Jamjoum, 'The Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel', in M.C. Hallward and J.M. Norman (eds.), *Nonviolent Resistance in the Second Intifada: Activism and Advocacy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, pp. 133-151.

[189] S. Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016, p. 31.

aspirations, the end of any hope developed during the First Intifada, and the failures of the PA.[190] The rejection of collaboration is also a rejection of the image of Israel as democratic. Tilly and Wood write that social movements promote democratisation through "those processes that cause shifts from particularised and/or mediated to categorical and direct relations between citizens and government".[191] By negating the relations promoted by 'dialogue' and 'peace' initiatives, the movement rejects the idea and theory of direct relations as having any democratising effect apart from reproducing the normalcy of the colonial system and their guise of democratic identity. In this light, the critique of Oslo also constitutes an attempt to redeem the image of Palestine and the Palestinians in the view of Western eyes, in the hope of receiving – not help or aid, but solidarity and equal recognition. The Oslo framework, through its distorted imaginaries and colonised discourse, shapes the foundations for people's engagement in the overall political scene. As such, it bounds/labels their engagements, and even views, of the boycott as an act of resistance and the movement in its political role. It is in the intricacies of these imaginaries that the issue of normalcy first appears and retains its cruciality. As the world watches the protests and killings caused by the transfer of the American embassy to Jerusalem, the issue of normalisation shows its real threat to the Palestinian case. In an interview to BBC Newsnight, Netanyahu spoke of a "subterranean normalisation",[192] demonstrating the manipulation of the same terms used by the BDS with alternative connotations. In the next chapter, normalisation will be examined by a closer look through the debates it produces.

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[190] S.F. McMahon, 'The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Campaign: Contradictions and Challenges', *Race & Class*, vol. 55, no.4, 2014, p. 66.
[191] C. Tilly and L.J. Wood, *Social Movements: 1768-2012*, Third Edition, London, Routledge, 2013, p.140.
[192] BBC, 'Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu on Iran Nuclear Deal and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict', *BBC Newsnight*, 8 June 2018. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p069h4fb

2.

THE LOCAL WITHIN THE GLOBAL: THE CASE OF THE CULTURAL BOYCOTT

In a conference room of the Palestine Crescent in Ramallah, academics, students, journalists, and other (middle class) activists were engaged in lively discussions with a panel of speakers, and, in the back, between each other. They had come both from Jerusalem and different cities of the West Bank, but mainly Ramallah itself, to discuss the latest edits of the criteria of the cultural boycott. Only a week later, I sat in the lecture theatre of Birzeit University waiting to hear speeches from quite a different panel – I met indigenous scholars and activists from the US, South Africa, Chile, teachers and students of Birzeit, involved in different forms of activism. Although BDS was not the main topic of the conference, it was raised several times in questions and discussions from the panellists. The two conferences had very different demographics: the first, representing an urban, middle-aged, Palestinian, active 'elite', and the second, a more global audience involved in indigenous struggles worldwide, linking in solidarity with Palestine. The two are not atypical of the different sites and agents of production of local knowledge and praxis of decolonisation. They also reflect the connective location of the debate on normalisation, resistance, and settler-colonialism at the intersection of multiple nodes of connections, between local activist or intellectual circles and global struggles against imperialism. Within these spaces of debate, questions on terms and strategies, identities and imaginaries played out participants' awareness and commitment to defining their own struggle. The forms and contents of these interactions lead to questions regarding the ways local activists debate, decide, and contest tactics of resistance. By looking at some of these debates, this chapter will employ an ethnographic approach to highlight issues and practices that arise.

At these collective meetings, as well as private conversations, the word on everyone's mouth is *taTbi̊*, normalisation. Everyone seems clear that "normalisation is in general obvious. But we should work on the details" (Ramallah, March 2018). Normalisation is a relatively new concept within the Palestinian narrative. The term was defined at the first BDS conference in Ramallah in 2007 as the participation,

> in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions) without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people.[193]

Organisations seemed also clear on what that meant on a practical level: "The cultural boycott is embedded [in our work] we refuse to engage with organisations that normalise, local or international" (Kareem). "We don't work in joint productions, nor do we host international troupes if they have been to Israel as part of their tour. […] We are against normalisation" (Rami). Examples include boycotting a panel at a conference where an Israeli is co-speaking, refusing to host academics, artists, or groups that are visiting both Israel and Palestine, and participating in any joint projects with Israeli institutions.

However, the definition of normalisation is not uniform. Each group, or organisation, can draft its own principles. In fact, Abu Sarah writes that, "in Palestine, there are many definitions for normalisation – it seems there are as many definitions as there are Palestinians themselves".[194] Countries like Lebanon, with an active Palestinian population and BDS group, have stricter principles, says Salim. To counter the confusion arising from the multiple and shifting definitions of normalisation, PACBI has produced a series of guidelines that assist groups and individuals in knowing the 'how' of boycotting. The guidelines serve as a minimum standard of practice, for groups to refine according to their needs and contexts. Context-sensitivity is in fact one of the core principles of the BDS, which recognises that the boycott would not work in the same way all around the world. Normalisation is what sets

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[193] PACBI, 'Israel's Exceptionalism: Normalizing the Abnormal', *Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel*, 2011. http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1749

[194] A. Abu Sarah, 'What is Normal about Normalization?', *+972 Magazine*, 26 December 2011. https://972mag.com/what-is-normal-about-normalization/31262/

the Palestinian understandings of BDS and boycott apart from their international partners, as most of my interlocutors emphasised. "BDS is understood more internationally. Palestinians are boycotting by default, although some do normalisation. Normalisation is also defined in a different way" (Rami). PACBI representative, Salim, recognises that even in Palestine, the cultural boycott applies very differently depending on the location. Most of the international cultural exchange is centred around Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. While,

> the scene in Jerusalem is damaged by Israel, [as] they have very limited capacity, in terms of funds, permits, and being allowed to work; the discussion in other cities like Tulkarem is completely different because they don't have the capacity for international hosts, so they don't even have to pose themselves this problem.

An organisation described how their BDS activities in Qalqilya and Tulkarem mainly focused on boycott campaigns targeting schools, shops, and businesses, while cultural centres in Ramallah were actively discussing and raising awareness about the cultural side of the boycott.

The different understandings and experiences of normalisation inform the process of drafting the boycott's guidelines, which are defined and redefined to include these differences. The latest edition provides for some exceptions, not only in case of the vital need for coordination, such as in emergency situations, but also by excluding Palestinians living in Israel, where boycotting is not an option. In some instances, the guidelines remain vague to form a consensus on their implementation. Such was the case at Birzeit University, where the criteria were kept less specific to reach common agreement. "There was variation among people's opinions. For this reason, the guidelines produced were kept not specific in order to have consensus in university" (Ali). "It's a process", says Rema. In fact, disparate conceptions within institutions themselves challenged the framing of the boycott. At Birzeit, discussions amongst staff, the Students' Council, and the administration revealed some different understandings and political visions. Ali describes the discussions that the BDS Committee engaged in with students. It was,

> challenging because they had a more abstract idea about globalization [and boycott], which was problematic. For example, [the student body] organised a few demonstrations against hosting Palestinians from the 1948 territory – while the university was clear that they do not boycott Palestinians, only Israelis.

Shifting notions of normalisation merged with conceptions of resistance and of the political situation. Amongst the youth, the ideas and practice of boycott are taken more seriously – "they are also more consistent and play an active role" (Rema). They come from a generation that has no contact with Israelis, apart from the soldiers that come to arrest their brothers and the settlers that burn their lands, says Ahmed. As such, it's easier for them to refuse any collaboration, because they have never seen any productive exchange between the two parties.

Their views show how the definition of normalisation is heavily dependent on the external environment, which shapes the opinions and the practical obstacles experienced by people and, by doing so, affect the practice of boycott. "We can't define normalisation as we want – says Rami - but we all agree on the criteria, they are clear, but they still need to be developed." By adapting to the local and temporal circumstances, the guidelines are however also a tool that makes it possible for activists to act upon their surroundings with the aim of building pressure and transforming the reality on the ground. Rema narrates that when attending academic conferences abroad, "[many] organisers don't tell us anymore when there is an Israeli speaking at the event with you, and we find out only when we are there". Dealing with evolving Israeli strategies and propaganda also pushes for a reformulation of discourse. Through these shifting notions of normalisation, BDS groups are constantly producing and reformulating definitions of what 'normality' means for people living within the context of the Israeli colonisation within (or outside) Palestine.

At the conference, new edits are being read and discussed. They add details on the practicalities of boycott under specific circumstances. The details arose from a lack of cases in which the absence of specific guidance provoked dilemmas of practice. "When a grey area comes up, we re-discuss it and edit them" (PACBI member). The latest additions incorporate guidelines on the film industry, permits for Arab citizens entering Palestine, and the media. The case of Lebanese film director Ziad Doueiri is the latest in a series of debates. "The case of Doueiri's film brought up the question whether it was right to boycott the product of an institution, in this case a film director, when the guidelines were violated before, on a previous product" (Rema). The issue started a debate when the screening of the film at the "Days of Cinema" film festival in Ramallah last year was cancelled by the municipality. An initial review by PACBI revealed that as the case was not included in any

of the guidelines, it was not subject to boycott. PACBI later decided that the new film, *The Insult*, should be boycotted along with the previous one, *The Attack*, which was filmed in Israel.

> The problem arose because the case was not covered in the guidelines. But youth activists said yes, it is at the core of the boycott, because it is a cultural product. The question was whether to boycott Doueiri as an individual or his cultural product? The idea of boycotting the cultural product created no problem, because of its political and social bad influence. It has also already happened internationally, for example with the Hollywood director accused of sexual harassment (Salim).

They used the occasion to publish a pamphlet to clarify the issue. In their 'five points to illustrate the principles of the boycott',[195] they distinguished freedom of expression from the "freedom of normalisation", which is used "as a weapon [...] by colonialists to colonise the colonists' minds to defeat and accept colonialism as an inevitable fate".[196] According to a PACBI representative, the move was "important in order to uphold the praxis of the boycott. If [the film] had been promoted, it would weaken the premises for the cultural boycott in the region. So, it's important to promote cultural praxis". More recent films, like Sara and Salim, from film director Al-Ayyan, suffered the same fate. Screening the film is not the problem: Salim emphasises that the issue is the purpose, whether it's criticism or entertainment. "It's okay to watch pro-Zionist movies but to discuss, not to enjoy them."

The question of movement in and out of Palestine is one that, Kareem recognises, makes the whole movement hypocritical. "Just travelling outside [Palestine] is already being part of the system. There are many questions but no answers." The question of entry to Palestine for Arab nationals came as the definition of normalisation was being refined. "They want Arabs to come to Palestine, but PACBI decided that the same treatment should be held for Arabs and Palestinians. For example,

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[195] PACBI, 'بين حماية الحق في التعبير ورفض الحق في التطبيع' [Between Protecting the Right to Expression and Rejecting the «Right of Normalization»], *Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel*, 24 October 2017. https://bdsmovement.net/ar/news/%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%B6-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B9

[196] Ibid., p.2.

that Arab singers should have a permit by Israel through the PA. The counter-argument is that they shouldn't come at all" (Ahmed). Ahmed adds that, "for us, this is the only way to protect ourselves, as this is an issue of Arabs, not just Palestinians". Similarly, Rami affirms that,

> part of the members want to make the standards higher and stronger. For example by bringing Arabs through permits, although some say that this would also be normalization. A minority wants to make the standards softer, by saying why can groups who were in Tel Aviv not come to the West Bank. We had a meeting last month to discuss these issues.

At the event, some criticised the edit as even with permits, passing through Israel is inevitable. The issue is more symbolic: highlighting a system of inequality, while taking a collective stance to refuse dealing with it – even when doing so is unavoidable, which makes its 'normality' even more absurd.

As the audience takes the stage, a long flow of questions, suggestions, and criticisms come to the surface. As guidelines are discussed, the role of the criteria appears as inciting more debate than finding practical solutions. However, a university professor tells me that the centrality of BDS within the anti-colonial struggle lies exactly in the re-articulation of clear criteria of boycott (and beyond). My conversation with Jasmin confirms that BDS "has a clarifying role, to make more organisations understand the logic of the boycott." It is effective in this function because "it names the actions that should be boycotted, it gave a clear vision. BDS works as a tool for advocacy, to give strength to the movement" (Kareem). "It is not always clear – says Jihad – but that's why we are always working to improve it". Jasmin adds that the debate on cultural boycott has been filled "with confusion and distortion because there is no strong liberation movement, which means there are no clear principles, no political plan" (Jasmin). The function of clarification is fundamental for the construction of daily practices of boycott. Through the process of discussing and defining criteria, the BDS "has created a culture – not of boycott yet – but of referring to the guidelines. It would be a culture of boycott if people didn't have to ask but would already have the awareness of how to boycott", says Ali. If they lack conscience, or awareness, of the boycott, criteria set the basis to give people directions (event, Ramallah, March 2018). Through debates that point to visibility, recognition, and solidarity through equal treatment, these discussions push and draw boundaries in an interminable exercise,

as they constantly push their standards of practice according to new questions that arise.

Debates around the specific cases of what constitutes normalisation or what counts as an exception hints to the micro-specific definitions and understandings of the concept of normalisation. What constitutes normalisation varies in fact from the specific contexts, which display unique characteristics and different dynamics of power relations. Normalisation is often described as "a static phenomenon, overlooking microscale analysis of everyday life in the city, and its effect on urban praxis".[197] The former authors describe the case of Jerusalem, where the spaces of colonial domination and Palestinian integration have blurred boundaries, which create a sort of paradox. Although specific to the case of Jerusalem, it is important to take their lesson that dynamics are much more fluid and intricate which is often perceived from research on the topic. The fluidity of these dynamics is central to the construction of guidelines by PACBI for the cultural boycott.

Pullan and Yacobi's ethnographic study of urban planning in Jerusalem shows for example the double-edged effect that normalisation produces.[198] Practices of normalisation, they say, are not only systematic and carefully planned, such as building a colonial system of neighbourhoods, but also "ha[ve] have the potential not only to help the course of Judaization, but also may threaten it by breaking ethnonational dichotomies".[199] Although their description is somehow deficient of the larger mechanisms of democratic inclusion of Palestinian citizens not just in equal housing, but in the national goal of self-determination and justice, their observations call for an understanding of normalisation that looks at its different 'lives' across towns, peoples, and identities. How does normalisation, and therefore anti-normalisation campaigns, produce an inclusive concept that is applicable – and relevant – to the multiple fragmented political and social entities that the current Palestinian population is split into? How does it apply to the open-prison of Gaza, the Palestinians who have gained Israeli citizenship by having to pledge allegiance to the State of

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[197] W. Pullan and H. Yacobi, 'Jerusalem's Colonial Space as Paradox: Palestinians Living in the Settlements', in M. Allegra, A., Handel and E. Maggor (eds.), *Normalizing Occupation: The Politics of Everyday Life in the West Bank Settlements*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2017, p.194.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid., p.207.

Israel, the Palestinian elite representing the population in the Knesset or in the Palestinian Authority, having to deal with opposing demands? Or even to the Jewish-Palestinian community of the Samaritans and the Syrian population in the Golan Heights? An understanding of normalisation must account for the specific contexts and identities as well as for the power relations that frame its social dynamics.

2.1 Criteria of Boycott and Morality: Constructing a Political Conscience

Normalisation debates are based on an inherent morality constructed and reproduced through the dilemmas of practice that continuously arise. Allen writes that,

> these conflicting debates take place, through word and deed, in a context of changing nationalist dynamics. Palestinian nationalism is constituted within a normative argument, productive of – and dependent on – a shared but shifting notion of moral community and political ethics – the standards of behaviour, rules, values, and injunctions – by which political actors and activities are judged and held to account, unofficially or otherwise.[200]

So what type of moral community and political ethics is BDS producing? A discussion amongst BDS members showed that one of the most important factors of the boycott is the construction of political conscience – in terms of an awareness of their role and power as individuals and an ethical responsibility to act. Kareem outlined the rise of interest in BDS as "the reflection of a "political conscience" itself. From its simple description of the boycott as "moral resistance"[201] and the movement as an "ethical praxis",[202] to the active mobilisation of people through moral paradigms, BDS is employing a moral universe that is based on principles of equality, and international human rights. BDS "is not an academic exercise; it is a deeply ethical praxis aimed at realising our freedom, justice, and equality".[203]

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[200] L. Allen, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013, p.10.

[201] O. Barghouti, 'Boycott as Resistance: The Moral Dimension', *The Electronic Intifada*, 28 December 2004. https://electronicintifada.net/content/boycott-resistance-moral-dimension/5388

[202] O. Barghouti, 'Two Degrees of Separation: Israel, its Palestinian Victims, and the Fraudulent Use of Antisemitism', in Jewish Voice for Peace, *On Anti-Semitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice*, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2017, p. 150.

[203] Ibid.

In fact, boycott guidelines constantly refer to a "social responsibility"[204] targeting 'conscientious individuals'.[205] They are based on a legal morality, as it bases its ideological roots on a series of general human rights principles and specific legal judgements. The initial BDS call starts by making explicit reference to the one-year anniversary since the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) judgement on the illegality of Israel's construction of the 'separation' wall.[206] It also mentions as basic parameters international human rights and several UN resolutions such as the General Assembly resolution 194 for the rights of the return of Palestinian refugees. In the Durban Paper, the complicity of states defending their 'neutrality' is also linked to the idea of legality. Perugini and Gordon reveal that the rise of the global human rights discourse served the Palestinian cause by providing a vocabulary, unknown until then, which framed Israel's actions as "violations" and Palestinian civilians as "right-bearers".[207] As it attributes moral terms to international law, human rights are actually employed in their idealistic meaning, devoid of Western origins and interpretations. These are linked to the question of morality and associated with 'respect'. While writing in favour of the boycott, Eid affirms that, "no respectable academic institution […] no respectable festival" would collaborate with Israel.[208] The use of morality is made stronger by its inclusion in the terms of a discursive conflict. Barghouti says that due to the human rights violations committed by Israel, BDS "has dragged Israel into a new, global, battlefield, so to speak, where Palestinian moral strength largely neutralises Israel's massive weaponry, including hundreds of nuclear warheads, and an even more massive lobby influence".[209] "It's never the same, it's a war", says Rema while explaining the challenges of normalisation.

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[204] BU, 'لجنة المقاطعة الأكاديمية والثقافية «لإسرائيل» ومقاومة التطبيع في جامعة بيرزيت' [The Academic and Cultural Boycott Committee «of Israel» and Resisting Normalization at Birzeit University], *Academic and Cultural Boycott Committee «for Israel»*. Birzeit: Birzeit University, 2014, p.1.

[205] BDS, 'Palestinian Civil Society Calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel until it Complies with International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights', *Open letter, BDS Website*, 2005. https://bdsmovement.net/call

[206] Otherwise known as 'security fence' or 'apartheid wall', depending on the point of view.

[207] N. Perugini and N. Gordon, *The Human Right to Dominate*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2015.

[208] H. Eid, 'BDS: Decolonizing Palestine', *Social Text*, 15 November 2016. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/bds-decolonizing-palestine/

[209] Barghouti in R. Wiles (ed.), *Generation Palestine: Voices from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement*, London, Pluto Press, 2013, p.216.

The practical side of building a political ethics of boycott is by encouraging personal and collective responsibility through personal engagement and commitment to the boycott. When asking about the challenges of practising BDS, interlocutors resorted to examples from their daily lives to portray on the one hand the shock they felt at seeing for example Israeli products being sold in Palestinian shops. These cases brought to the surface the moral duty to complain or act, and on the other hand, the ease of doing so, simply by changing small everyday practices. "The boycott happens gradually, every day, it's an idea that takes place every day and as such it becomes something that people can believe in" (Ahmed). BDS groups are in fact engaged in relentless efforts to show that an alternative is possible - by following up on products in shops and university cafeterias, changing laptops at the organisation, engaging in dialogue with consumers, colleagues, and business owners. As an internal practice, BDS is promoting, via example and advertisement, a culture of commitment to the cause through a 'morality' and 'ethical imperative' to boycott and rejection. The boycott pushes the idea that everybody can be an activist in their daily life through small choices (e.g. of consumer, of business owner or seller, of institution). This is done also at the organisational level: an organisation working in a Palestinian camp, described the boycott as not taking up much of their time and activities. This is because adherence to the cause is promoted through practical example, such as refusing to invite any Israeli speakers to the organisations' events or changing all the resources in the office. The transformation they aim at is one that brings change to both actors and dynamics.

Although the group loosely categorises criteria as compulsory and voluntary, in practice, through them, the group has built different layers of standards and therefore types of engagement with the boycott. The 'compulsory' ones are relations of 'security coordination', with those directly involved in violence, such as government bodies and officials, the army and police forces. A further level is composed by relations that create an 'appearance of normalcy', such as the case of academics working together. Less direct connections are those that create confusion because of their vagueness. Finally, there are the specific cases of vital connections that by them being broken would cause harm, such as life emergencies or environmental crisis, but also those that by connecting, promote not 'peace' but justice, accountability, and critical education about the situation of oppression. The distinction is not only based on

the type of relation and degree of closeness to committing atrocities, but also in terms of the purpose, for example, critical discussion. This shows that critical discussion and thinking lie at the basis of the movement. By describing criteria, groups decide what is 'acceptable' or not in terms of relation-building within the context of colonialism. "Values are continuously changing and adapting through actual choices and practices, while, at the same time, they continue to inform and shape choices and practices".[210] This local, and dynamic, dimension of the global BDS movement highlights how the same tactic of boycott is uniquely framed within the local contexts, which results not only in separate understandings of how to practice the boycott, but also in a specific formulation of the boycott itself.

By attributing morality to the Palestinian case and building a shared, political conscience, BDS offers an alternative to Palestinians in the form of an active role not only in non-violent resistance, but in framing their own debates and solution. BDS is contributing to shaping and expressing not simply which 'solution' they desire (one vs. two-states), but most significantly, an idea of the type of state they are looking to achieve. Based on a "rights-based approach".[211] the movement has been upholding the primacy of justice within any 'peace' resolution, which must depart from the grassroots perspective of the colonised. At the same time, they have opened a discussion based on the construction of a 'political conscience', which attempts to redefine not only the images of the conflict but also the role of organisations and individuals within it. Interviews revealed the importance that members of BDS placed on the educative aspect of the boycott and the production of a sense of responsibility in the population to take an active stance in the decolonisation process.

During the two events attended, standing and representativeness of the speakers were in the post light: they were affirmed, questioned, and re-confirmed within a larger framework of claims and self-identification within settler-colonial power relations. The framing of these individual and collective identities was carefully but decisively put forward around affirmations of morality. The debates on specificities of the

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[210] S. Howell (ed.), *The Ethnography of Morality*, London, Routledge, 1997, p.4.
[211]   BDS, 'Palestinian Civil Society Calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel until it Complies with International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights', *Open letter, BDS Website*, 2005. https://bdsmovement.net/call

guidelines on the cultural boycott reflected larger-scale debates on normalisation, recognition, effectiveness, and political visions, which were here analysed. Such discussions show the active framing of terms, and forms of engagements with the debates on normalisation. The first condition for these debates to reproduce is the networks that allow them to form and shape. The confusion expressed about the details of practising the boycott is mixed with – arises from and influences – the misleading imaginaries of the post-Oslo peace and conflict resolution. Hence, it creates tension between local and global spheres as well as an avenue of 'clarification' as a step of resistance against the narratives and propaganda of Zionist supporters. By giving visibility to the meaning of normalisation, these spaces of debate build a local and international, moral community taking stands against oppression.

3.

DEMOCRATISATION BY A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL, ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENT

The value of boycott lies as much in the economic damage it could do to the target as it does in the conversations, bonds, and spaces that are formed in the process of organizing. These are the foundations of any future liberation, beyond boycott and beyond BDS itself.[212]

Husain's quote highlights the BDS' role not only in destroying an economic system of colonial gain, but also a productive element that creates debate, connections, and new spaces of engagement and political activism. Chapter Two revealed some of the unique debates that are constitutive of the local context of the cultural boycott and the actors involved in its production. Although uniquely local in their manifestation, these conversations are connected to – and actively produce – wider networks of regional and international exchanges, solidarity, and other forms of interconnected engagement. These will be the focus of this chapter. In particular, the sections analyse BDS' role in stimulating dialogue within regional and international circles, including constructing a unifying 'political conscience' at the basis of community organising. The themes analysed bring back the local within its global context to consider its importance for political processes of unity-building and democratisation. The question that arises is the classic dilemma of activists working for social change, whether it is more effective to work from within or outside the existing power system. Considering the diffusion and structural pervasiveness of the colonial system, what type of 'praxis' is therefore needed to perforate it?

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[212] A. Husain, Y. McKee and N. Dhillon, 'Palestine, Boycott and Beyond: The Time is Now', *Tidal Occupy Theory*, 2014. http://tidalmag.org/blog/palestine-boycott-and-beyond-the-time-is-now/

Or better, how can a movement build on an ethical praxis – including through relation-building and language awareness? As Chapter One and Two portrayed a picture of BDS as a critical 'discourse' and a loose set of spaces and interactions stimulating debate, this chapter will instead introduce the idea – and potential – of BDS not just as a tactic but also as a full-fledged social and political, anti-colonial movement. This distinction – between a tactic and a movement, is needed to make a few observations.

Barghouti in his writings on the BDS describes the movement's unifying function. He says that BDS "presents a platform that not only unifies Palestinians everywhere in the face of accelerating fragmentation, but also appeals to international civil society by evoking the same universal principles of freedom, justice, and equal rights".[213] Moreover, "the formation of the Palestinian BDS National Committee, the BNC, created a unified Palestinian reference and guiding force for the global BDS movement".[214] In fact, the movement brings together existing networks, activists, and institutions in the common struggle against the colonial system. The original call of solidarity by BDS was signed by more than 170 civil society members. These now include student groups and popular committees, art companies and cultural centres, trade unions and coalitions, which aim to strengthen not just the grassroots identity of the movement, but also the internal bonds that keep it together and help in making it successful. The BNC was founded in 2008 in coordination with PACBI and the International Coordination Network on Palestine (ICNP) to campaign, advocate and coordinate with local BDS activists. Asma' explains that BDS' origins in Palestine came from several initiatives in the first years after 2000, including by Al Marsad al Falasteeni, which strengthened the formation of the BDS call. In fact, the director of a cultural centre explains that when the BDS was introduced in 2004, it changed very little in the organisation's practices as the principle of boycott had been embedded in the strategies of the organisation since its foundations.

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[213]   O. Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights*, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2011, p.17.
[214]   O. Barghouti, 'BDS: A Global Movement for Freedom and Justice', *Al-Shabaka Policy Brief*, 2010. http://al-shabaka.org/wpcontent/uploads/2010/05/bds-global-movement-freedom-amp-justice_0.pdf

In addition to connecting to existing networks, BDS is also actively constructing its own partnerships and methods for working inclusively while representing a large number of disparate people, allegiances, and opinions. As seen in Chapter Two, PACBI's criteria of boycott are carefully designed according to the feedback gathered by people in wide consultations across the relevant sector. The cultural guidelines were produced after a series of workshops with cultural centres across Palestine, while the BNC was consulting universities about the case of the UNESCO centre in Jordan, which seemed to lay the foundations for possible, future collaborations with Israel. "Last year alone, we held 10 workshops with cultural organisations in Qalqilyia, Tulkarem, Jenin, Ramallah, Bethlehem," tells Salim. This process is open to members and non, "organisations that were both part of the BDS and those that were not, as it's beyond that, the call" (Salim). In taking decisions, the group follows the principle of unity and consistency. When a debate emerged around the participation of Palestinians in international conferences taking place in Arab countries where Israelis were attending, the local BDS committee consulted with both universities and their groups in the country.

> This was not in the guidelines. There was a conference in Jordan, it was an international event, but it sparked debate because it was being held in an Arab country. The university asked the [BDS] National Committee for advice and they replied that they should follow the guidelines of what the country decided – even if against local consensus. [The BDS committee in] Jordan had agreed so they could not go against what the country had decided (Ali).

These meetings, consultations, and events stimulate dialogue with academics, artists, scientists, and professionals on the position to take in different cases. While doing so, they build relations, common grounds, and a reference for future practice.

Through these debates, the local groups also engage in regional and international dynamics. "These debates at [the organisation] reflected the wider debates at the BNC which came from the idea that the strategy of boycott should be integrated in the Arab context, not only in the Palestinian one" (Ali). The impact of such regional and international debates is felt through the increasing number of platforms where such debates are shared. "They make every […] meeting [and event] a potential opportunity to challenge the extant discourse of

Palestinian-Israeli politics".[215] By exposing Israel's violations and arguments through the small details, they create "another opportunity to educate and organise for Palestinian rights and international law on a global scale".[216]

Investing energy in such networks serves as a tool to organise and mobilise the local community around the purpose of resisting the oppression and occupation. Eid writes that the "BDS movement is forging a new leadership, one that understands the unity of the cause of all Palestinians, whether inside or outside historic Palestine, whether refugees from today or from long, painful decades ago".[217] One of the key aspects of BDS is that it is constructing unity and stimulating political allegiance by targeting all Palestinians across borders. The three demands expressed in their call[218] reflect the three categories, although not internally homogeneous, of Palestinians under the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, those living in Israel, and Palestinian refugees. Uniting groups that are geographically, politically and socially divided does not mean simply gathering them under the name of resistance. It means an active inclusion whereby the diversity of aspirations and experiences come together to decide on a common strategy. This gives participants an active role to play in the politics of the struggle and beyond. It removes the label of 'victim' of the colonial system by providing a channel for people to act. As Jahad states, BDS becomes a "way of developing 'joint ownership' over a political process".[219]

One interviewee mentioned that the position of BDS was "stronger than Fatah". Although Bahour et al remind that the BNC is not meant as an alternative to the PLO but "as a popular mechanism",[220] their role

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[215] S. F. McMahon, 'The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Campaign: Contradictions and Challenges', *Race & Class,* vol. 55, no.4, 2014, p.78.

[216] Ibid.

[217] H. Eid, 'BDS: Decolonizing Palestine', *Social Text*, 15 November 2016. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/bds-decolonizing-palestine/

[218] "1. Ending occupation and colonization of all territories occupied in 1967. 2. Recognition of the basic right to the full equality of the Palestinians of 1948 and the end of the Apartheid regime. 3. Respect, protect and support the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and to restore their property as stipulated in UN Resolution 194"; see BDS, 'Palestinian Civil Society Calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel until it Complies with International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights', *Open letter, BDS Website*, 2005. https://bdsmovement.net/call

[219] Jahad in A.B. Bakan and Y. Abu-Laban, 'Palestinian Resistance and International Solidarity: The BDS Campaign', *Race and Class*, vol. 51, no.1, 2009, p.46.

[220] S. Bahour, et al., 'Debating Forms of Resistance', *Roundtable Discussion, alShabaka*, 2011. https://al-shabaka.org/roundtables/debating-forms-resistance/

within grassroots politics is interesting in the way they affect not only the Israeli occupation but also the politics of the PA. The recent engagement of Fatah and the PLO Council with BDS, although debatable in its extent and commitment, shows the power of the discourse of BDS locally and the potential for building political allegiance and unity. Although hinting to the elite's interest in participating, their engagement becomes highly controversial, and is recognised as such, because they don't engage fully but normalise Israel as a state while aiming towards a two-state paradigm. Many interviewees were sceptical about the role of the PA. "The position of the PA is elastic on this issue, as they follow the interest of companies instead of the national interest" (Hassan). He adds,

> at the political level, we find that nobody is representing us or the whole Palestinian population and the national interests. We should work with everybody, we work with the PA and the Ministry of Culture, but we do not work for anybody who dictates our work. Also, we are not really affecting the political discussion. So, we work in the national interests, not the political one, this means to respond to the needs of people, this is a priority for us, to address people's marginalisation.

Mistrust in political officials mixes with ethical elements of engagement organisations that refuse not only collaboration with Israeli institutions or pro-Zionist Western funders, but also to work under any conditions imposed from the outside.

Political allegiance in a context of fragmentation of the national institutions and collective resistance is hard to gain. "People give legitimacy through blood and fighting Israel, not through elections. That's why Hamas won the elections, and that's why Fatah is not getting enough support" (Salim). Unity across parties is built through wide-membership and the lack of a proposed political plan or strategy. Members and adherents to the BDS include, for example, the Council of National and Islamic Forces, a coalition founded after the Second Intifada that is composed of all political parties in Palestine. The unifying role of BDS is a significant tool in the resistance, says Rema. "It doesn't matter which political faction one belongs to, they have all adopted it as a tool. It represents the expression of not just material resistance but also very much a resistance discourse" (Rema). As an attempt at a new form of dialogue, BDS is not merely giving voice to the oppressed as

Salaita suggests,[221] but also by creating a conversation that includes local, regional, and international actors. In doing so, it re-attributes meaning to the resistance movement by reconstructing a language of emancipation that is not imposed from the outside but actively produced from within. This forms the basis for a grassroots form of politics and political engagement.

Despite the hailed successes of the BDS' swift diffusion, the local environment creates serious challenges to the group, as previously described. I had been warned, through Allen's reading[222] that mistrust towards the Western-funded NGO sector was rampant. The organisations she writes about are mainly foreign or Palestinian ones the projects of which are funded by investors such as USAID, the EU, and other governmental or non-governmental institutions. Most of these are indeed practising normalisation through their activities. I was also aware of the wider literature on organisations' competitive behaviour; Kate Nash applied it to human rights organisations explaining that they compete for the authority to establish what human rights mean in practice.[223] They also of course compete for resources, including funding and official permits, as well as for support, through mobilisation and awareness-raising. Although this was not the direct topic of my research, it was frequently raised in conversations and therefore demands some attention. All the organisations I spoke to, formally and informally, raised the challenge of working with other organisations or groups within Palestine. Abed described it as mistrust towards the groups' real activities and transparency towards funds and interests. This was not to mention my 'unofficial' conversations with these same and other organisations, activists, and groups, which revealed a deeply disconnected environment and would need a whole separate research to focus on it.

This became relevant for two main reasons. Firstly, as I talk about the resurgence of the 'indigenous' as an identity of the local struggle for emancipation, such a situation blurs its definition and meaning based on the 'local'. *Which* local does it refer to, and is there only one type of – being and acting – 'local'? How would groups with different social (and

[221] S. Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

[222] L. Allen, *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013.

[223] K. Nash, *The Cultural Politics of Human Rights: Comparing the US and UK*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

political) allegiances identify and explain what 'indigenous' and 'local' mean for them? Secondly, variation in identity and disconnection based on mistrust, questions the types and purposes of the wider networks that these groups build, stemming from a troubled core. What type of solidarity can be built on a disjointed struggle? Sharing the struggle does not mean agreeing on an opinion, a political vision, or losing people's support: it means departing from the same situation of equal and limitless suffering and building on common aspirations of liberation. The lack of internal cohesion between organisations and groups is in fact the first barrier to building resilient solidarity networks and a coordinated national movement. Roediger describes this as "making solidarity uneasy"[224] by questioning its inherent structures and the practices it spreads.

3.1 The Potential of Decolonisation: Breaking Political and Social Boundaries

> *The boycott is a push not to normalise, but also to firstly build peace within.*
> Hassan

Traditional views of cultural resistance see the production of a counter-culture as strengthening the group's identity. Far from it, BDS stimulates local identities while building a shared culture of resistance by connecting to the 'global'. The span of it is what makes the present boycott unique in comparison to previous boycotts employed within the Palestinian resistance. Tabar and Desai write that the fact that the movement links the local to global networks "necessarily opens up new *productive discussions* both within and across movements, regions, geographic, temporal divisions, and disparate bodies of scholarship, as it unsettles these compartmentalisations".[225] This highlights two elements. Firstly, that it is a creative process, as previously stated by Husain, in light of the decolonial definition set by Waziyatawin and Bird.[226] Secondly, that it breaks the boundaries between geographic, temporal, and conceptual spaces, by revealing their social construction. Keck and Sikkink theorise

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[224] D. Roediger, 'Making Solidarity Uneasy: Cautions on a Keyword from Black Lives Matter to the Past', *American Quarterly*, vol. 68, no.2, 2016, pp. 223-248.

[225] L. Tabar and C. Desai, 'Decolonization is a Global Project: From Palestine to the Americas', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 6, no.1, 2017, p.xii.

[226] Waziyatawin and M.Y. Bird, *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, Santa Fe, SAR Press, 2005.

networks as "communicative structures",[227] which suggests that their layout itself is adept at becoming a tool of communication, by bridging divides and connecting separate points.

McMahon describes the function of BDS as transgressing the limits of discourse around the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, although he stops at the points delineated by the three calls of the BDS, which question the representation of the symmetry of the conflict, its historicity and the image of the Jews as 'unique'.[228] The transgression is however much bigger because it transgresses not only the foreign imposed limits of discourse, but also the Palestinian viewpoint and connection with the desire for national sovereignty. In fact, those interviewed spoke about 'breaking social walls', not only to break with the boundaries set by colonised mindsets but also the societal norms and mentality that fail to give equal rights to people in their everyday life.

> You cannot isolate art with BDS and politics. Art is a bridge, not the main goal. It is related to Palestinian identity, rights, and to a liberated mind. So we go to villages and refugee camps to talk about this, because a lot of minds are occupied. Once you feel freedom inside, you can achieve freedom. But how come you want freedom for Palestine but do not give freedom to your daughters? (Rami).

The psychological role of the cultural boycott is in fact one of the values that people interviewed attributed to BDS. Munir added, "if you are not free in your brain, how can you demand freedom?" What BDS aims towards is a double liberation: of territory and of imposed conceptualisations, as well as vocabularies that not only occupy, but colonise the mind. Comparing BDS to the boycott in South Africa reveals its role of creating debate as crucial within the struggle. In fact, Guelke explains that when it came to the use of boycott in South Africa, "what really mattered was that with the change of attitudes on race in the Western world by the 1960s, most academics simply did not want to go to apartheid South Africa".[229]

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[227] M.E. Keck and K. Sikkink, 'Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics', *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 51, no.159, 1999, p. 92.

[228] S.F. McMahon, 'The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Campaign: Contradictions and Challenges', *Race & Class*, vol. 55, no.4, 2014, pp. 65-81.

[229] A. Guelke, 'The Academic Boycott of Apartheid South Africa', *Conference on Academic Freedom and the Politics of Boycotts*, Ramat Gan, Bar-Ilan University, 25-26 January 2006. http://www.biu.ac.il/academic_freedom/abs.html

These debates and new bonds established by the movement span across regional and international borders. According to Musa, the networks, types of discourse and relations of solidarity that BDS has established have "restored relations among organisations and activists within Palestine, with unions, and across indigenous, Black Liberation, feminist, LGBT, and student movements on a scale not seen since the 1970s, when the PLO allied with movements across the global south".[230] Salamanca et al suggest that the importance of these wider networks and international connections "assert that the Palestinian struggle against Zionist settler colonialism can only be won when it is embedded within, and empowered by, broader struggles – all anti-imperial, all anti-racist, and all struggling to make another world possible".[231] The creation stems from the basis of the project of decolonisation, which Tabar and Desai define as a "global project".[232] Walia suggests replacing the focus on solidarity with one on decolonisation and the active re-imagination it involves.[233] Boudraeu-Morris further underlines the importance of building networks of solidarity that are based on ethical principles, self-reflexivity, and an awareness of differences and discomfort. She writes that, "the deployment of discomfort towards seeking highly contextualised, contingent, and specific knowledge of similarities and differences with others over time can work to create an environment of decolonising solidarity".[234]

The potential lies in the deconstructivist perspective of decolonisation. Derrida writes that "a deconstructionist approach to the boundaries that institute human subjectivity… [can] lead to a reinterpretation of the whole apparatus of boundaries within which a history and culture have been able to confine their criteriology".[235] Breaking existing boundaries

[230]   S. Musa, 'BDS and Third World Internationalism', *Social Text*, 2016. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/bds-and-third-world-internationalism/

[231]   O.J. Salamanca et al., 'Past is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine', *Settler Colonial Studies,* vol. 2, no.1, 2012, p.5.

[232]   L. Tabar and C. Desai, 'Decolonization is a Global Project: From Palestine to the Americas', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 6, no.1, 2017, p.i.

[233]   H. Walia, 'Decolonizing Together: Moving Beyond a Politics of Solidarity Toward a Practice of Decolonization', *Briarpatch Magazine*, 1 January 2012. https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/decolonizing-together

[234]   K. Boudreau Morris, 'Decolonizing Solidarity: Cultivating Relationships of Discomfort', *Settler Colonial Studies,* vol. 7, no.4, 2017, p.457.

[235]   J. Derrida, 'Force of law: The «Mystical Foundation of Authority»', in D. Cornell, M. Rosenfeld and D.G. Carlson (eds.), *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 19.

gives rise to an active production of ethical principles, political visions, and networks of connection. Tabar and Desai suggest that networks of solidarity can transform the foundations of the settler-colonial state and its inherent violence. They write, "such past and present relationships have disrupted and work against settler categories and imaginaries that have configured the native as always 'disappeared' or 'defeated', which has at times precluded solidarity across these geographies".[236] They add, "by coming together [...] these movements also rupture the ideological structures, racial hierarchies and discourses of settler colonial states".[237] The movement – and not only the tactic – that BDS is constructing is one based on justice, equality, and the elimination of racism as the 'parameters of decolonisation'. These notions are therefore key to help rebuild the foundations for the practice and academic disciplines, by holding in consideration the views of the colonised to help moving beyond both the idea of conflict as an equal, balanced battle, as well as conflict as the capitalist struggle between the dominating class and the dominated.

These discussions, both within and outside the movement, clarified terms and produced new meanings by cleansing the existing vocabulary of their imperialist histories and connotations and accepting them as pure values, derived from the equal nature and intrinsic worth of human beings. In fact, the nature of dialogue is that it automatically puts interlocutors into the same position; it is only by politicising it/ or simply remembering its political nature, that real balance can be created. Reframing terms to break the barriers of both colonial and imperial domination of territory and (global and local) imaginaries have the potential to develop the imagination of forms of engagements with the political in new ways that defy existing strategies and disciplines.

At a round table debate, speakers pose the question about the role BDS can have in local politics; "can it become a fully functioning democratic structure that provides a popular mechanism?"[238] This raises the question of whether it makes sense to talk about democracy-building within a decolonisation struggle. The link is drawn by Grinberg,

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[236] L. Tabar and C. Desai, 'Decolonization is a Global Project: From Palestine to the Americas', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 6, no.1, 2017, p.iv.

[237] Ibid., p.iii.

[238] S. Bahour, et al., 'Debating Forms of Resistance', *Roundtable Discussion, alShabaka*, 2011. https://al-shabaka.org/roundtables/debating-forms-resistance/

who writes that, "the opening of political space to the Palestinians required two potentially contradicting processes of democratisation and decolonisation".[239] As Grinberg notes, this becomes a paradox in the Palestinian case, as the definition of borders of 'nationhood' is the "precondition for democracy".[240] However, drawing a distinction between democracy as governance and democratisation as a process, dialogue and participation promoted by BDS can be seen as laying the basis of democratic engagement.

The implications of accepting 'democratisation' as a Palestinian process is to delegitimise Israel's view as being 'the only democracy in the Middle East' – it works therefore on and through the imaginaries constructed to support its lack. The implications for notions of indigeneity, as Barakat writes, are that,

> as a means of establishing awareness and coming to terms with the question of origins in a 'successful' settler society, the role of the native is relegated to a symbol – a means to salvage the ethics of the settler in creating a democratic society. This ethical discussion is not about returning native lands nor is it even about recognition of native rights, but rather is an ethical reckoning of the state with its bloody past to create a more just settler society.[241]

Laidlaw and Lester add that, "the adaptations that Indigenous people, as well as former slaves, engaged in at such sites, the 'hybrid' identities that they created and their sheer persistence on the land, represented continual challenges to the categories of belonging through which settler societies reproduce white privilege."[242]

Fatima explains that the ideas of boycott and normalisation in Palestine create "a tension that doesn't exist outside". It creates a tension that incorporates the multiple levels of imaginaries, discourses, and practices that are located between the local and global of colonial power. How BDS will engage with these multiple pressures, how it

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[239] L.L. Grinberg, *Politics and Violence in Israel/Palestine: Democracy versus Military Rule*, London, Routledge, 2010, p.22.
[240] Ibid., p.1.
[241] R. Barakat, 'Writing/Righting Palestine Studies: Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Sovereignty and Resisting the Ghost(s) of History', *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2017. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1300048
[242] Z. Laidlaw and A. Lester (eds.), *Indigenous Communities and Settler Colonialism: Land Holding, Loss and Survival in an Interconnected World*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p.11.

will describe its identity – between local and global dimensions – will define the future direction of the movement. Being aware of these contextualised tensions is the first tool to achieving success in making progess. A critical education is therefore key in the process of re-imagining both a peace practice, rather than just a discourse, based on ground realities of violence and localised practices that actively incorporate democratic elements.

CONCLUSION

SOME DECOLONIAL REFLECTIONS:
FOR A PRACTICE OF ETHICAL INVOLVEMENT

So I ask all of us, can we think beyond BDS as the single story of the Palestinians? [...] can we see embedded in each other, the stories of peoples' movements? Can we recognize that the victories accomplished through BDS are not in fact the passing of the resolutions themselves, but the process through which we forge cross-movement work, share stories, and contextualize the importance of Palestine as a dimension and analytic in our fields of study and movements?[243]

Qutami highlights that BDS is only part of the story of the Palestinian struggle. It does not reflect the multiple facets of resistance and of living under colonial rule. However, it is a meaningful example embedding not just in the visions and aspirations of Palestinians – as these are multiple and manifold – but in a general drive towards meaningful justice and peace. As such, the case of its debates shows a lively and struggled conversation not just based on an idea for a solution, but on a reformulation of what 'peace' would actually mean for people living it. Hence, the BDS has a role to play in local and international politics through its practices of building a collective movement behind a set of ethical principles rather than a specific vision or political strategy. Its practices involve at the same time a rejection of collaboration with Israeli and pro-Zionist supporters, and a new form of dialogue aimed at deconstructing the gaps within both the narrative and implementation of peace in Palestine. As explained in the paper, Salaita's formulations[244] are a recipe for a deconstructivist process of decolonisation – one that

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[243] L. Qutami, 'Rethinking the Single Story: BDS, Transnational Cross Movement Building and the Palestine Analytic', *Social Text*, 2014. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/rethinking-the-single-story-bds-transnational-cross-movement-building-and-the-palestine-analytic/
[244] S. Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

involves both the destruction of systematic (global) oppression and the construction of a new political system, in theory and practice. So, what does BDS teach us about the definition and practical implementation of decolonial struggle and peace-building? A few propositions are here in order to reflect on the meaning of peace, democracy and human rights within the aberrations of state violence, political oppression, and discursive censorship.

The series of conversations and debates about the boycott, normalisation, and political solutions have shown on the one hand the complex and varied connections, discourses, and practises they address and produce at the same time. Confusion is diffused within the public discourse and Western academic literature, and dangerously affects practices, politics, and even the creation and reproduction of state – and epistemic – violence. This is often composed of consciously re-framed discussions, re-narrated stories, and colonised terminologies. The gaps in discourses and reality of abused spaces showed the problematic of unequal paradigms: the imbalance of parties, both on a practical and more metaphorical way, propagates the structural practices of occupation, colonialism and imperial domination. How do localised practices of boycott – of critique, rejection, and dialogue – and global imaginaries of peace and conflict influence the visions on governance, democracy and modern day 'battles' of the colonial era? And how can the movement create a vocabulary that is ethical and constructive rather than destructive, in the sense that it builds upon the values of equality and respect and produces bonds of empowerment rather than reproducing systems of oppression?

As time passes, there's on the one hand the question of evaluation of the BDS' effectiveness so far, as it claims various successes (or failures). This is interesting specifically within the context of the enhanced securitisation of Israel, which includes the criminalisation of BDS, as well as the adoption of its call by the Palestinian political elite, in a long-absent unity. On the other hand, there is the question of prospects, not only *whether* it will have any long-term impact, but most importantly *how* it can produce such effects. Hence, analysing what the tactics are and what these tactics are producing on the ground is the first step of this evaluation. As the struggle is for the end of the colonial regime in Palestine, it is important to look at what BDS can – and is doing for the Palestinians inside the territory, although of course the fruitfulness of the global call as well as of the Palestinians outside are and have been objects of further research.

The question of relevance is one that has been asked and answered on several fronts. However, looking one step deeper into *how* the tactics and regulations themselves are being produced can hopefully shed light on *productive and destructive* mechanisms that aid or prevent the construction of both the liberation tactics *and* the discussion of it. Once again, the importance of it lies in an understanding for further shaping these tactics and seeing them within a wider context. Here is where the questions of local/global scales and connections as well as the discursive vs material elements come into play. Dynamics between local and global connections and the tensions between the two create a unique space of encounter where values, ideas, and practices are transformed from popular words into context-specific objects, conveyors of culturally specific meanings. Hence, the rationale for looking at the BDS in its specificity within the Palestinian territories and not simply as a global movement of solidarity. Within these productive and destructive mechanisms, cultural production is key in shaping the knowledge that is used to build strategies and tactics and the descriptions of them. With cultural production, we mean the active (conscious or subconscious) creation of imaginaries, vocabularies, and practices related to the subject of analysis, in this case the BDS.

What does BDS teach us for both the definition and the resolution of 'conflict'? In their exposition of how to create 'peace', Chaitin et al. criticise BDS proponents for failing to incorporate 'inclusive/dialogic discourse'.[245] However, BDS is not a rejection of relations forging mutual understanding, but of dialogue without justice and accountability, without awareness of the injustice, and commitment to solve it. Several Palestinians themselves criticise the project of anti-normalisation.[246] However, the reason for not focusing on the success/failure of the BDS is that the boycott is not necessarily the most effective tactic to create 'peace' but is/can be used to promote the right ethics to start discussing a solution or to initiate a discussion about peace, as it proposes the initial

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[245] J. Chaitin, S., Steinberg and S. Steinberg, 'Polarized words: discourse on the boycott of Israel, social justice and conflict resolution', *International Journal of Conflict Management*, vol. 28, no.3, 2017b, pp. 270-294.

[246] A. Abu Sarah, 'What is Normal about Normalization?', *+972 Magazine*, 26 December 2011. https://972mag.com/what-is-normal-about-normalization/31262/ ; M.S. Dajani, 'Why Palestinians Should Support «Normalization» with Israel', *Fikra Forum*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2016. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/why-palestinians-should-support-normalization-with-israel

terms for an ethical 'praxis' and practice of peace-building. Should this be the prevalent framing, Palestinians, Israelis, and Western mediators that want, indeed, to work on peace, should not be afraid of embracing it as it is a practice that involves ethical concepts of a 'just' peace, human rights, and equality. Supporting or not the boycott does not preclude agreeing with the need to re-formulate conceptions of peace, justice, democratic inclusion, and a form of political governance and organisation that is founded upon them. It is by noticing the power relations at play, and in acknowledging power abuses that people, governments, and writers can really come together and contribute to building a practice of just peace that overcomes existing boundaries of place, race, and above all nationhood. Reflecting with and through decolonising theory means understanding the powerful role of knowledge production and shifting its dynamics to use it to support indigenous struggles.

I hope these debates show the complexity of the local, while highlighting the need to look beyond political, economic, and intellectual paradigms based on empty terms, towards a re-connection with the 'radical', root life experiences, needs, and aspirations of the 'human'. In fact, the resurging interest in BDS that Rahman discusses[247] did not originate from the 'successes' or effectiveness of the movement, but from what it offers: unity, a 'radical'[248] form of nonviolent resistance against Israeli colonialism by rejecting it altogether, and a channel to do so that embeds networks of local and global solidarity and ethical principles.

[247] O.H. Rahman, 'Co-Existence vs. Co-Resistance: A Case Against Normalization', *+972 Magazine*, 3 January 2012. https://972mag.com/co-existence-vs-co-resistance-a-case-against-normalization/32076/

[248] The meaning of 'radical' employed here is that of 'roots', based on the active involvement and drive of people's power and leadership. It also however engages the fact the BDS has seen a unique type of organising for the cause.

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