

Mohammed Alruzzi

Children's Work and Education in the Context of Political Activism, State Building and Foreign Aid

The Case of Gaza Strip



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Mohammed Alruzzi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3113-9454>

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CHILDREN'S WORK AND EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM, STATE BUILDING AND FOREIGN AID

The case of the Gaza Strip



Mohammed Alruzzi
Palestine

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Prof. Véronique Pache Huber

Prof. Karl Hanson

Dr. Olga Nieuwenhuys

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La Doyenne, Prof. Dr. Bernadette Charlier

Je déclare sur mon honneur que ma thèse est une oeuvre personnelle,
composée sans concours extérieur non autorisé, et qu'elle n'a pas été
présentée devant une autre Faculté

Urbino, Italy, 13 May 2019

Mohammed Alruzzi

A handwritten signature in purple ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'M' followed by 'Alruzzi' in a cursive script.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the children of Gaza, who daily endure and resist the brutality of the Israeli siege and nonetheless keep hoping and dreaming of a better future.

In particular, this thesis is dedicated to the four cousins killed by Israeli shelling on a beach of Gaza city in 2014. Two of them were named Mohammad, one Zakaria and the youngest Ahed. All were aged from 7 to 11 and were members of the Bakr family. They were deadly hit while playing football on the beach.



Image: Amir Schiby's tribute to 'all children living in war zones'

Acknowledgements

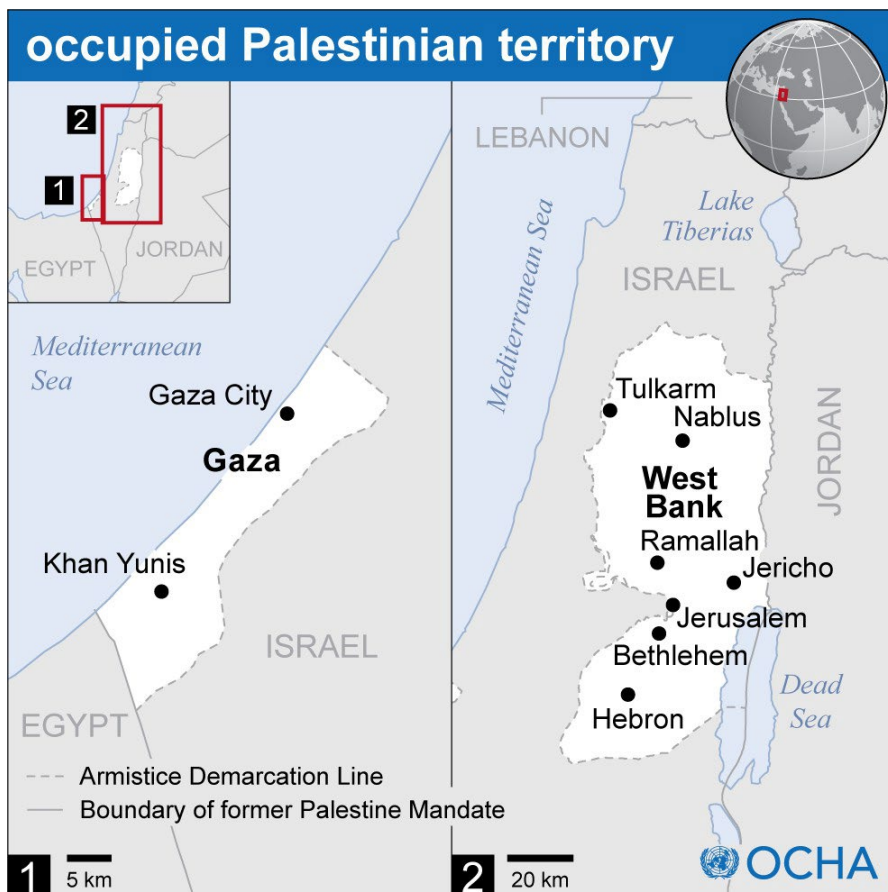
The completion of this work would have not been possible without the help and support of a series of people and institution. First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, professor Véronique Pache Huber and professor Karl Hanson; they guided me through this complex intellectual journey and provided me with invaluable feedbacks and emotional support. Even in the hardest of times, when I got stuck in Gaza after my fieldwork because a new war broke out in 2014, they were willing to bear with me and skype at improbable hours because of the frequent electricity cuts the whole Gaza was subjected to. Likewise, I must gratefully acknowledge the Swiss Confederation, which granted me ‘the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship’, making this journey possible and believing in the academic potential of my work. Thanks also to the Palestinian American Research Center for funding part of my fieldwork, which allowed me to carry out some of the ethnographic research *in loco*, notwithstanding Gaza is still under the Israeli siege and freedom of movement is highly restricted. In this regard, a special thank goes to my Gazan colleagues, which helped me collect interviews on the ground, especially when physical access to the Strip became too risky for me.

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At the end, I would like to thank my wife Valentina who provided her emotional and intellectual support throughout this journey. Her insightful comments and feedback, and her patience made this work real.



Map Sources: ESRI, OCHA, UNCS.

The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Map created in Sep 2013.

Introduction

I started to think about children's work in Gaza long before I began my doctoral studies. Since 2009, when I was working with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as a Child Protection Consultant, many issues related to this topic kept me thinking and reflecting. At that particular time, the phenomenal rise in the number of working children in Gaza left a deep impression on me. Many of those children were involved in smuggling activities in the tunnels under the borders with Egypt. They were working there to compensate the deprivation of basic needs which was affecting their families, due to the June 2007 enforced blockade. At that time, the issue of tunnels was treated as highly political and the leading United Nations (UN) agency in children's affairs, UNICEF, was not intervening, due to the proclaimed neutrality adopted by most of the humanitarian actors in Gaza.

However, some attempts, at that time, were made to understand the extent of and the reasons behind this rise. In October 2009, I went with the UNICEF head of office to the Albarazeel neighbourhood, located on the borderline between Egypt and Gaza, where the activities of digging tunnels and smuggling were ongoing. We managed to interview some children who were working in digging tunnels and smuggling goods. Interestingly, children, during that visit, pretended to be adults and not children under the age of 18. When we asked for a proof, they showed us their identity cards, which belonged to their elder siblings and tried to convince us that they were no longer children. This encounter was a turning point for me, raising many questions; why were children working in this extremely dangerous activity? Why were they hiding their age in a relatively low-regulated child labour context, and what was the value of work that made them continue in this kind of activity? In fact, on our way to the cars, after these informal interviews, I observed two children (aged 5-7 years), few meters away from the digging site, playing in the sand that was taken out of the

tunnels. I walked toward them for a little chat before taking our car back to the office. *What are you doing?*, I asked them. One of them responded: “I am digging a tunnel” and when I asked them about their future dream work, they immediately responded, without taking any time to think: “I would like to become a [tunnel] digger!”

Around a year later, I started my master’s degree in Childhood Studies, in Scotland/the UK. The images of those two kids were hovering in my head and the questions raised after this encounter still kept me thinking. I decided to do my master dissertation on working children in Gaza, but this was not possible due to major difficulties in accessing the fieldwork in a limited period of time. Years later, in September 2013, I started my doctoral studies in Social Anthropology in Switzerland, and children’s work in Gaza was the issue I wanted to explore the most.

1. [Children’s work in Palestine and in Gaza](#)

Few studies have been conducted to understand children’s work in the Palestinian territories¹. Most of these attempts were commenced and/or funded by international and United Nations (UN) agencies and in cooperation with governmental bodies.

For example, UNICEF, in 1995, conducted a survey-based study on the prevalence of child labour. The study used a sample of 300 children from the Gaza Strip to understand the characteristics of working children (8-15 years old). This study presents an early look at the issue of children’s work right after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority² (Birzeit University, 2004). A year later, in 1996, Defence for Children International conducted a similar survey in the West Bank. The sample includes 544 children in the labour market (8-18 years). The study shows that around one fourth of the children in the labour market were less than 14 years old. Moreover, it shows that the majority of children in the labour force dropped out of school during the primary education phase (87%) and worked for 9.6 hours a day in average. It also shows that the majority of children work in non-family enterprises (74.3%). As for the work sectors, the study finds out that more than the half of children work in

¹ The Palestinian Territories, or the Occupied Palestinian Territories is the term used to refer to the areas Israel occupied in the six-day war in 1967 which includes the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

² The Palestinian Authority is a term used to refer to the self-governance body established in the context of the Oslo Accords and the peace process. Sometimes, especially at the national level, the term Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is used instead.

industrial sectors, while others work in the service sector (20.9%), trade (17.9%) and agriculture (5.2%) (Birzeit University, 2004).

Although these early attempts provide a baseline data and information about children's work, they lack the qualitative aspects that go beyond the numbers of the workers and their statistical characteristics. This motivated UNICEF and Birzeit University, in 2004, to launch a large-scale research that looked at the qualitative aspects of work and children, including their perception of their work and the conditions under which they work (Birzeit University, 2004). The study was conducted, in 2004, as part of a regional research project aimed at understanding child labour in the Middle East and North Africa. It focused on five main areas: 1) the living conditions of working children, 2) the relationship between different variables that influence child labour, 3) the relationship between school and work, 4) children in the labour market, and 5) ambitions, aspirations, dreams and suggested solutions. The study uses a variety of qualitative methods including interviews, case studies, and focus groups with children, teachers and employers. The participants of the study were selected on a purposive non-probability sampling basis to ensure that different geographical and demographical areas are included (gender, age, work sectors, economic situation, etc.).

In the same year, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)³ conducted a child labour survey which represents one of the most important sources of information about child labour in this context. The study used random sample household survey in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to provide a detailed picture on the status of working children. For example, it provides disaggregated data for the age groups 5-11 years, 12-14 years and 15-17 years, consistent with the International Labour Organization (ILO) provisions on child labour (UNICEF, 2011).

Both the quantitative PCBS and UNICEF-Birzeit studies were conducted in 2004 (i.e. 14 years ago), and thus, their findings may not apply to the current situation. This is especially so because of the ground-breaking political, economic and social changes which took place since 2000.

³ Besides the thematic report mentioned above, the PCBS releases an annual report on the situation of Palestinian children. These annual reports provide detailed quantitative picture of the demographic, educational, health, labour and cultural situation for the Palestinian children.

1.1. Children's work in History

Across contemporary history, children, in Palestine, actively took part in the social and economic life. Their involvement and contribution varied widely depending on the socio-economic changes taking place in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Generally, their involvement and contribution were welcomed by the Palestinian society on many grounds. Despite the fact that children's economic activities were not perceived as *work*, these activities, which took place in family enterprises and farms, were a necessity for the good of the kinship. Without children *giving a hand*, the household could hardly fulfil the basic and survival needs of its members.

Children perceived work as a duty that should be fulfilled and as a source of pride. This perception was held as a result of the norms that not only condemned *idleness*, but also established practices to prevent it. Proverbs such as "*Eleed El-battala nejsa*" (In English: the non-working hand is impure) and many others treat work, and active manual work, as good deeds. These traditional legacies have contributed in sustaining the work as one of the central social values in the Palestinian society. For families, to rear up good descendants who conform to these values, meant ensuring that most of the children are engaged not only in the family enterprises, but also in the wider social and public activities. At the same time, work was seen as a training for the future adult life, characterized by responsibility and sacrifice.

As only the children of the bourgeoisie were able to go to the few existing schools, especially before 1948, a good amount of time was available to the majority of children who did not go to school. This time was used by taking part in family-related activities in a form of what we generally perceive nowadays as *work*. Despite of their significant contribution, children were not expecting any return for their involvement because they perceived their work as a form of solidarity with the family and a partial solution to the economic hardships experienced.

Moreover, the structure of the patriarchal society characterized by the domination of the male breadwinner made it even easier to mobilize children to work for their families. Within this structure, children were seen as *employees* of the breadwinner who can, backed by the moral legitimacy, employ them for the good of the family and its enterprises. The authority of the male breadwinner was even strengthened by a selective interpretation of religious texts that implies the superiority of the man/husband on the woman/wife and children/sons and

daughters. In such a conservative society, it was unexpected, for subordinated members of the society (especially girls and women) to challenge the *order*. As this patriarchy was not greatly challenged, subordinated groups and members internalized this order and thus contributed to its sustainability.

In fact, little is known about how women and children (in general) perceived and reacted to this order but it is evident that it was sustained, and left unquestioned, for many decades. In fact, there is no available study on the extent and prevalence of children's work in the past (twentieth century) in Palestine. This may support the argument, which suggests that children's work was not a controversial issue. Children widely worked but their work had never been perceived as wrong. It could be said that the characteristics of the traditional Arab and Muslim family made children's work an everyday activity for most of the children. In particular the family as a socio-economic unit, and its legacy, necessitates the work of all its members including young children.

1.2. Prevalence and extent

The PCBS survey estimates that 4.1% per cent children, in the Palestinian territories, are in the labour force. With minor difference, this is true for both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The involvement of male children in work is much higher than female children (7.5% for males, 0.6% for females) (PCBS, 2013c). This can be attributed to a complex set of social determinants in the Palestinian society; gender roles, religion, cultural values and traditions, as I will discuss later, are some of them (Tarazi, 2012).

The 2014 PCBS survey found out that around 3.1 per cent of children (aged 5-17) undertake economic activities (3.8% in the West Bank, 1.9% in Gaza Strip). Interestingly, the study showed a difference between results based on parents' responses, and children's responses. While the results indicated that 3.1 per cent of children work, based on parent's response, results indicated that 4.8 per cent of children work based on children's responses (around 2.9% at Gaza Strip's level). Moreover, it showed that around two thirds of the working children undertake unpaid work for their families (67% on the national level, 53.3% in the Gaza Strip).

However, there is evidence that children participation in the labour force exceeds these rates. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), which is the main source of the information on the prevalence of child labour, adopts a strict and

normative definition of child labour. This definition was originally developed and set by the International Labour Organization (ILO). In the same vein, the national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) usually follow a similar approach, when generating their estimates on child labour. This definition does not capture various *forms* of children's work (paid, unpaid, voluntary, etc.) in different settings (household, family and non-family enterprises). The other problem with the abovementioned estimates is that there is a tendency that people do not acknowledge children's work activities as a work, even in the direct economic domains; a matter that leads to underreporting of the number of the workers. Furthermore, some parents would not report the work of their children because they think that this would affect their eligibility for food assistance and aid. Before all, these estimates are based on the political, economic, and social situation which is constantly changing. Moreover, they widely vary based on the methodological approaches of research (operational definitions, conditions of the research, and the *time* when the research is undertaken).

1.3. Motives behind work

The aforementioned Birzeit-UNICEF's study shows that children work for many reasons. This includes meeting the basic needs of the family and improving its livelihood. In many other cases, children's work because of a feeling of responsibility when the breadwinner has a chronic illness (or physical or mental disability). Furthermore, they work to meet the expectations of the relatives (or parents) especially in communities where work, as a value, is celebrated. In addition, children work because of the importance of work for their self-esteem and their status in the family as contributors in household's income. In the same vein, they work as a way to achieve a form of independence through securing their own pocket money and personal needs. Other children work as because of their low achievement at school and as a training for future jobs. It is also common for children to work as a training to run enterprises that family inherits from one generation to another. For many girls, work at an early age is a training in agriculture and sewing which are seen as good qualifications for the married woman. However, children also work to form social networks and relations and to spend their spare times (Birzeit University, 2004).

Tarazi (2012) found out that poverty is the main cause and motive for children's work. Her findings are supported by earlier studies in the Palestinian context (see for example, Birzeit University 2004; Nashwan, 2010; PCBS, 2004). For example, the PCBS survey in 2004 found out that 71% of children in the workforce, work because of the economic needs (i.e. poverty) (PCBS, 2004). In the above-mentioned studies, it is common for researchers to start with the conventional assumption on the relation between poverty and child labour. In doing so, they methodologically exclude other determinant motives of children's work. Of course, these studies prove the significant relation between the two, but they generally fail to explore further causes and motives. One of the reasons behind this is the focus on the quantitative research. In fact, qualitative research, because of its distinct epistemological inductive nature, has a stronger potential to reveal other causes and motives of children's work.

1.4. Work conditions

Despite of the strict regulation on child labour in the Palestinian law, the reality of working children tells a different story. In his study, Nashwan (2010) (cited in Tarazi, 2012) shows that children usually work before the minimum age of work as stipulated in the Palestinian law. Furthermore, the majority of working children undertake work activities without medical checks and insurance, exposing their health to major risks. Moreover, they work for extended hours, sometimes in night time, without breaks. In return, they usually receive very low wages and do not get any paid leaves or holidays.

Earlier surveys (PCBS, 2004) shows a similar reality. The survey found out that around 7.6% of working children has been injured as a result of work. Furthermore, it showed, a minority of working children receives paid leaves or sick leaves, around the half takes breaks, and only few are medically ensured (both in Gaza Strip and West Bank). The findings also show that two thirds of the working children in Palestinian territories, and around more than the half in the Gaza Strip, work for their families without wages (PCBS, 2004).

Children in Gaza, work in various sectors and economic domains. Nashwan (2010, cited in Tarazi, 2012) found out that the majority of children work in the agricultural sector (30.2%) and collection of waste materials (24.5%), while others work in the construction sector (18.9%), mechanic workshops (17%) and industrial sector (14.2%). Tarazi (2012) demonstrates that gender is a crucial determinant of the sectors in

which children work. Thus, it is common for male children to work in the conventional male jobs and the same applies to female children.

Although, these aspects have been regulated in the Palestinian law, these provisions are being violated on a daily basis. Children, themselves, are usually not well informed of labour regulation and, in most of the cases, they do not know of their existence. The survey also explored the working children fathers' attitudes toward work. It showed that 41% of the fathers prefer that children undertake educational activities, while 18.1% prefer that children work, and around 8.5% prefer that children combine both (PCBS, 2004).

2. [Children-related research agenda in Palestine](#)

The fact that only few studies have been conducted on children in Palestine in general and fewer on children's work in Gaza says a lot about the scarcity of research on these topics. As demonstrated before, only one academic study has been conducted on the topic of children's work in Gaza. This dearth of research can be partially attributed to structural weakness. Although children compose around the half of the Palestinian society (45.8% are under 18 years in mid-2016), they receive inadequate attention on the public policy and practice levels. This is evidenced in the figures of public spending and the status of children in the general public discourse. In fact, it is unusual to devote a percentage of public budget to children except in the sectors in which children are being targeted directly like the Ministry of Education (PCBS, 2013b). This marginalization results in lack of interest in research of children realities.

However, the long-lasting presence of international development agencies in the Palestinian territories has addressed, though not sufficiently, this gap. Apart from the few reports generated on ad-hoc basis by international organizations and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics⁴, research is generally weak in this area. These reports generally focus on the international development agenda (e.g. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All). In doing so, these organizations are usually stuck in merely investigating *development* indicators without going beyond this statistical picture into the qualitative details of children's lives. Although these

⁴ The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics is the national and official body responsible for establishing comprehensive statistical system in the Palestinian territories (PCBS, 2013b).

indicators are highly important, there is scarcity of knowledge about children's social dynamics across the social class and gender.

The difficult accessibility of the international researchers to the Palestinian territories, especially to Gaza, also contribute to this dearth of research. In fact, inaccessibility was a major challenge in undertaking my research as planned as I will discuss in more details in the next chapter.

This research attempts to address the gaps in previous research by adopting an anthropological perspective to the issue. This entails deconstructing childhood, work, education and the other related activities in the daily lives of children. In doing so, this research does not take any presumptions or moral stands against or for work for granted. It aims at providing a different account of children's experiences around work and education.

3. The scope of this research

Growing up in Gaza, children's work was a reality I was always familiar with since a very young age. I remember, for example, that the majority of my classmates in high school were working during the summer and some of them were combining work and education throughout the entire year. My father himself started to work at the age of 11 years old, in order to support his family. In fact, interviews with the first generations of refugees show that children in Palestine were part of the labour force throughout the twentieth century. Till today, they continue to work in various sectors (e.g. agriculture, services, industrial, etc.), in different forms (i.e. paid, unpaid) and in different settings and arrangements (family and non-family enterprises, self-employment, etc.). Although their contributions were rarely acknowledged, they were, in various spatial settings, undertaking what was perceived as *work*, *duty*, or *help*. What have continuously been changing are the prevalence, nature, conditions, and contribution of the workers due to the political and social change.

3.1. Challenging children's work in Palestine

Children's work has been left unchallenged until the Palestinian Authority (PA) took *partial* responsibility over parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1994. As part of the 1993's Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority replaced the Israeli administration's institutions and established its legislative, juridical, and executive bodies in Gaza as well as in the West Bank. Palestinians were enthusiastic and motivated to show a good example of governance, as it was their first self-governance

experience ever. This was translated in endorsing the international conventions in an attempt to follow the international standards in different domains like education, health, labour, etc. In fact, since its 2012 ascension from non-member observer 'entity' to non-member observer 'state' in the UN, Palestine has signed fifty-five multilateral treaties covering a wide range of areas. All treaties have been signed without any reservations. Behind the endorsement of such conventions, there was a political *will* to be part of the *international community*⁵ (Persson, 2016).

With regard to children's work, the Palestinian Authority did not only adopt the international conventions and standards, but it went even further, by adopting stricter criteria than the international standards (ILO, 1973). For example, its laws prohibit children's work under the age of 15 years old without excluding light work and the activities that are not socially perceived as *work*.

3.2. Conflict of policy and practice around children's work

Whatever the intentions were, when it comes to children's work, the law has never been implemented, possibly for many reasons: first, law, in general, has been weakly enforced in the Palestinian territories (Tarazi, 2012). Secondly, the public has not been well-informed about the provisions of the law. Thirdly, children's work has been rarely seen as a problem, and finally, families generally have a positive attitude towards work and thus children's work has rarely been challenged by local communities.

There is a clear contradiction between what is stated in official policies and what the mainstream public opinion thinks about children's work. While official policies, backed by elites, condemn any activities children undertake except educational and recreational activities, local communities recognize the importance, and the necessity, of work, starting from childhood.

3.3. Understanding the causes of children's work

This dichotomy between officials' positions and mainstream public opinion in Gaza sheds light on the more general controversial debate on whether children should/can work or not. It primarily necessitates a comprehensive understanding of children's work in its distinct context. Key to this is to understand *why* children work. Bourdillon (2014) demonstrates that three main causes of children's work, can be

⁵ Only in April 2014, the State of Palestine ratified eight key UN Covenants, Conventions and optional protocol including the UNCRC and its first optional protocol (OHCHR, 2017).

identified in the global literature. These include 1) work as a rearing and training practice, 2) cultural values regarding children as assets to be exploited, and 3) poverty. Although the first and the second could be seen as more relevant to particular societies (especially rural communities with peasant and household-based economy), the latter appears, in the local and international literature, to be a more generalized cause of children's work. This applies to the Palestinian context where it is pointed out in the literature that poverty is the main cause of children's work (Birzeit University, 2004). In his review, Bourdillon (2014) demonstrates that the relationship of children's work to poverty is more complex. While there are broad statistical inverse correlations between the wealth of societies and the labour-force of children, statistics indicate imprecise casual correlation between low income and children's work (Bourdillon, Levison, Myers, & White, 2010). Generally, not all children who live in poverty work and not all the children involved in work activities do it because of poverty. Although most of the households in Gaza are food-insecure and aid dependent, the percentage of the working children does not mirror the percentage of people in poverty.

The three reasons, identified in Bourdillon's review (2014) imply a single position of the child/children in the relation between work and its cause; that is the passive dependency of the child in reaction to cultural, social and economic conditions. They do not capture the micro-dynamics involving children's work. Alternatively, understanding the micro-dynamics of children's work has a strong potential in revealing multi-faceted aspects of children's work. Key to this micro level understanding is the understanding of power dynamics and relations between children and adults in relation to work.

3.4. Socio-economic change & contestation of patriarchal authority

The Palestinian society has been going through a very distinct political and economic situation after the Second Intifada⁶ in 2000. This situation is characterized by political instability, geographical and political division between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and widespread economic hardship. As a result, Palestinian reliance on humanitarian aid has sharply increased (especially since 2000) to reach high levels. A report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) states that

⁶ Intifada is the Arabic word for uprising.

80 per cent of households in Gaza became dependent on humanitarian aid (OCHA, 2007). The impact on the social order, gender roles and divisions of labour is huge. A recent report by OCHA shows that more than 70 per cent of Gaza's population receives some form of international aid, the bulk of which is food assistance (OCHA, 2017).

Muhanna (2013) studied the consequences of aid dependency on the Palestinian social fabrics as part of her study on gender and agency in the Gaza Strip. She demonstrates that dramatic social changes, resulted from aid economy, have provided a fluid space for women to negotiate their subordination and gender roles. As a response to the wide impoverishment, women started income-generating household-based activities. Taking this step, women challenged the conventional gender role of the man as the main and the exclusive breadwinner of the household⁷. Though, it was not easy for men to accept this emerging role of women, they had little space for choice to reject it when the survival of the household's members became at stake (Muhanna, 2013). It is true that gender and generational structure has always been negotiated and contested under military occupation (Taraki, 2006) but the context of the Second Intifada has generated additional fluidity to contest the gender and age order within households (Muhanna, 2013).

As a result, the attitudes toward women's work started to change. For example, people are increasingly acknowledging the contribution women make to the household and the society. In the past, they were working just to meet the needs of the family, but now, they work for totally different reasons (e.g. to achieve social and economic autonomy) (Muhanna, 2013). This 'women's agentive transformation' features in their attempts to transcend gender divisions of labour by entering fields of work that are historically dominated by men (Muhanna, 2013, p. 113). The transformation also includes the involvement of *young* men, at an earlier age, in work and production activities which was not the case before the Second Intifada⁸ (*Ibid.*).

Muhanna (2013) shows, based on empirical research, how the patriarchal structure of the Gazan household has been challenged. In fact, not only the gender order has been

⁷ Families in Gaza, especially the poor, have historically relied on the economic efforts of adult sons to sustain the household and to reproduce the gender order (Muhanna, 2013).

⁸ Before second intifada, social expectations meant that adult sons are not expected to contribute economically before graduating and getting married (Muhanna, 2013).

contested, but the generational order as well. This manifests in the shift of responsibility and power from the *older* parents to the *younger* sons and daughters (Muhanna, 2013).

However, this space for challenging the patriarchal order was not only opened by the aid economy; this had happened also before, for example in the context of the first Intifada in 1987. At that time, for example, young children, and younger generations in general, transcended their father's authority benefiting from the political space that became available as a result of the prevailing culture of resistance. In other words, fathers could not resist these processes, aimed at undermining their authority, as these processes happened in the context of resisting the occupation. It could be said that this challenge did not stop with the end of the Intifada. In fact, it continued to influence the daily negotiations of the social organization.

The case of women challenging patriarchy, in the context of the second Intifada (2000), and the earlier case of children challenging the elder generations' authority, in the first Intifada (1987), together, provide strong evidence on how the conventionally subordinated social groups utilize every available political and economic conditions to re-negotiate their gender and generational position.

In light of these observations, it is vital to study children's motives to work in the context of these social transformations and the wider change in the Arab Muslim society. Relevant to these, is the ongoing challenge of the patriarchy that has prevailed for many centuries in the Arab society. In such context, children, it could be argued, utilized this space to negotiate their position in the society where work and money provide essential means to overcome subordination. This is especially true because, contestation of the patriarchal structure, and of what it entails, gender and generation order, provided new fluid spaces that became available not only for the younger adult generation (men and women), but also for the other subordinated groups including children.

These new spaces, resulted from the challenge of the patriarchal authority of older generations, provide a unique opportunity to study power-relations that are vital to understand the micro-dynamics of children's work. Part of this approach involves exploring the interaction between children's *agency* and *generational*

structure. Exploring these aspects is of utmost importance for understanding the motives behind and the value of children's work in its social context.

4. Defining child labour/children's work

As the reader may have noticed through the first pages of the thesis, I used the term 'children's work' rather than 'child labour' in order to refer to the activities, undertaken by children, that have an economic value. Indeed, at the beginning of this research, I encountered this dilemma as choosing one term over the other has significant implications on the course of the research (i.e. methodology, theoretical framework, analysis, reflections and findings).

This is clear when we look at the literature on the issue, and the fact that it is rare for any discussion on child labour/work to skip the historical and contemporary debate on the definition. The definition is highly important, as it is a determinant issue for many aspects in policy and practice. This is in particular because the definition is of political nature 'posing an emotionally charged choice of social values and objectives' (Myers, 1999, 22). In cynical words, Myers (1999) describes the debate on defining child labour:

Tedious beyond words, the academic-sounding issue of how to define this term has engendered rancour among allies, exasperated both practitioners and researchers to the end of their patience, and resisted all attempts to minimize or resolve it

(Myers, 1999, pp. 21-22)

It is not easy to reach a universal agreement on the definition of child labour (Edmonds, 2008; Giri, 2007; White, 1999) not only because both of the terms composing child labour (i.e. child and labour) are quite controversial and debated themselves, but because of the diverse forms the phenomenon it takes as well. Children's work varies widely in the conditions of work, in forms of returns, in settings, etc. in different spatial and temporal settings (Edmonds, 2008; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Lavalette, 1999c, p. 17). Before everything, "[t]he debate over what is meant by 'child labour' represents fundamental disagreement over what the social problem is that should be eliminated, and the stakes are high for key interest groups divided between the positions" (Myers, 1999, 22). However, it would be helpful to present some of the arguments about the definition, to explore the complexity of this issue.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labour as the:

work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling

(ILO, 2004, 16)

In the same line, Kim (2009) defines child labour as ‘work which is unacceptable for children to undertake if it adversely affects their well-being and development’ (Kim, 2009, 37). Nieuwenhuys (2009b, p. 289) points out that the term ‘came to be closely related to the notion of exploitation and fuelled a growing public sensitivity to the wrongs it implied in respect to the children’. This negative notion of child labour as a welfare-reducing activity is clearly indicated in diverse international Conventions (Edmonds, 2008) as this review demonstrates.

The term ‘child labour’, which is usually used to indicate more exploitive, abusive and hazardous kinds of work, is contrasted with the term ‘child work’, used to indicate the tolerated kinds of work performed in the social domestic context (Edmonds, 2008; Giri, 2007; James & James, 2008; Nieuwenhuys, 1994; Woodhead, 1999b).

This clear-cut distinction has two problems, as investigated Woodhead (1999a; 1999b, p. 9): firstly ‘the parameters of child welfare are... not absolute’; and secondly, hazard, which is the basis of this distinction, cannot be determined by only one indicator, as the level of hazard is determined by context, cultural meaning and other complex sets of indicators. In the same vein, Lavalette (1999a, p. 39) sees the distinction as unhelpful and ‘theoretically unsustainable’. He argued that the work/labour distinction reflects ‘political value judgments about how we treat our children’ but is not based on solid research (*ibid.*: 38).

Bourdillon (2006) went even further, drawing on Mary Douglas’s study in 1966 on taboo and O’Connell Davidson’s writing on sexual exploitation of children, to suggest:

We structure the world into binary categories, such as children and adults, with binary sets of characteristics and appropriate behaviour. These categories are supported by mythologies and defended vigorously against any behaviour or discourse that may threaten them by crossing cognitive boundaries

(2006, p. 1203)

Based on this, a term like ‘child labour’ becomes a moral category of activities, which should be abolished regardless of the impact on children’s lives (*ibid.*).

Researchers, who are aware of the contention, suggested avoiding the use of the terms ‘labour’ and ‘work’ (Giri, 2009, 33) as it is difficult to sustain the distinction between them, in light of the changing representation of childhood, as well as research evidence that utilizes the views of children who work (James & James, 2008). The term ‘working children’ is increasingly being used, instead, as it encompasses both (bad) labour and (good) work activities. Thus, using the term, researchers can avoid the moral judgment that is clearly drawn on this distinction (Boyden, Ling, & Myers, 1998; Giri, 2009; Nieuwenhuys, 2009b). For similar reasons, the term ‘child employment’ appears in the recent publications on the work of children in the UK, to contrast ‘the perceived pejorative sense of the expression ‘child labour’ (Heesterman, 2005, 79; Lavalette, 1999c). This alternative may help to understand the work of children, away from its historical usage, which tend to be negative (Bourdillon, 2006), even though ILO uses the term to indicate only the *legal* work undertaken by children based on its Conventions (ILO, 2004).

Based on the aforementioned discussion, I decided to use the terms ‘children’s work’ and ‘working children’ to avoid both negative and positive connotations associated with the other terms. I also use ‘children’, in plural, as part of the term ‘children’s work’ as I argue that the lives of children across time and space are diverse and not monolithic. This stand goes in line with the questions of my research and the fact that I built this research around the effort to explore how children themselves conceive terms like ‘childhood’ and ‘work’.

5. Theoretical Framework

One of the most common approaches to study socio-economic changes in the Palestinian society under occupation has been the dependency theory (Roy, 1987). This approach gave significant attention to the analysis of the political economy of the Israeli occupation (Rosenfeld, 2002, p. 524). Yet, this approach, although useful for understanding the transformations in the Palestinian society and their impact on work and education there, leaves little room for tackling the issues of this research through understanding social agency.

For that, in addition to using the political economy theories in understanding how the structural political and economic conditions influenced perceptions, constructions, and building of ideals, this study is guided by and contextualized in the concepts and theorizations of the ‘New Sociology of Childhood’, which represents one of the dominant contemporary theorizations about children and childhood. It will be used to understand children’s work from a perspective that is different from the conventional assumptions that are utilized in the international and national legislations. Beside these theorizations, the study utilizes the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of ‘generation’ as one of key concepts in anthropology. The next section will present a general overview of the new Sociology of Childhood, and the main concepts I used in this research. A more detailed account of these theorizations and concepts will be presented across the chapters.

5.1. The New Sociology of Childhood

This research is guided by the theoretical, and methodological, foundations of the New Sociology of Childhood (Alanen, 1988; James et al., 1998; James & Prout, 1990; Jenks, 1982, 2004; Thorne, 1987). The current phenomenal concern about childhood issues, the challenge of developmental psychology’s theories, the innovative attempts in different disciplines to explore childhood and the growing consciousness over child abuse, that challenged the traditional beliefs about childhood, have all contributed to the emergence of a ‘new’ paradigm, the New Sociology of Childhood (James & Prout, 1997c, pp. 1-2). The new paradigm, as Jenks (2004, p. 78) suggests, overcomes the conventional common-sense reasoning by introducing a more disciplined approach. Prior to this ‘paradigm’, common sense served to naturalize and universalize the child and thus placed major challenges in understanding the child’s particularity and cultural uniqueness, within a given particular historical context.

The New Sociology of Childhood represents a revolutionary conceptualization in comparison with past frameworks. Childhood is seen by its pioneers, James and Prout (1997c), as a social construction by which we can understand and contextualize the ‘early years of human life’. In addition, childhood is seen as one of the variables of social analysis that cannot be separated from class, gender and ethnicity (James & Prout, 1997c, p. 3). According to this paradigm, children should not be seen as passive subjects of social structures and processes, instead, ‘as actively involved in the construction of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies

in which they live' (*ibid.*: 4). Moreover, they are worthy of studying in their own right and not just in their relation to adults (*ibid.*). Ethnography, in particular, is seen as a useful method for studying children, since it is thought to contribute to the process of reconstructing childhood in the society (Jenks, 2004; Kehily, 2004).

Prior to this paradigm, the 'dominant framework' regarded children as 'incomplete dependents' and the role of society was to invest in their care and 'upbringing', as children are the future of the 'social world'. Thus, the child was seen as a 'human becoming' rather than 'human being' (Jenks, 2005; Lee, 2001, pp. 42-43; J. Qvortrup, 1991, p. 19; Uprichard, 2008). In contrast with previous theorists, James and Prout (1997b) see the 'biological immaturity' as a universal and natural feature of human groups, rather than a feature of childhood (Balagopalan, 2002, p. 21; James & Prout, 1997b).

Agency (i.e. child as agent) is seen as one of the crucial cornerstones of this paradigm. James (2009) considers the emergence of 'agency' as a concept in the last decades, as one of the most important theoretical developments in the history of childhood studies. This is because it shifted the perception of children from passive 'vessels' to active agent participants. In addition, it placed more focus on studying children 'in their own right and not just as receptacles of adult teaching' (Hardman, 2001, p. 504). James and James (2004, p. 25) assume that children are social agents by arguing:

If children were not agents and were simply passive being, at the mercy of some social and developmental trajectory over which they had little control, then clearly the 'need' for such forms of ideological control and social intervention would disappear

(James & James, 2004, p. 25)

The New Sociology of Childhood opposes the conventional ideas about children and childhood, which still dominate laws and policies, as will be outlined later. Advocates for children's work are usually backed up with the new *paradigm*, which tends to liberate children, respecting their agency and autonomy, but opponents are driven by the previous theories that adopt a protectionist model (as in the developmental psychology theories) (Lavalette, 1999a). With more relevance to working children, Lavalette (1999b) argued that the construction and reconstruction of childhood,

through this paradigm, has led a number of academics to question the ‘legitimacy of present restrictions and impositions on children’s lives’ (Lavalette, 1999b, p. 26)

As part of this paradigm, James et al. (1998) suggest at least four ways of studying childhoods (i.e. socially constructed, tribal, minority and socially structured). Although each of these approaches, to the sociological study of childhood, complements the others, the current research focuses on the socially structured and socially constructed childhood.

Structure, relations and ‘generationing’

Although the structural study of the society and social groups is not a new approach in sociology, the emergence of the new sociology of childhood, as a discipline, has contributed to considering the structural study of childhood. Before the emergence of the new sociology of childhood, Fitz and Hood-Williams (1982) suggested:

“If we wish to understand ‘youth’ and childhood we have to proceed not by studies of discrete phenomena but by studies of relationships, since youth [or childhood] is not a function of age but a social category constituted in relation to, and indeed in opposition to, the category adult (as feminine to masculine). (emphasis added by Alanen)

(Fitz and Hood-Williams, 1982, 65 in Alanen, 2009, p. 160)

In fact, the historic work of Ariès (1962) provides a starting point to discuss the structural nature of childhood and the emergence of children as a separate social category that is interrelated to other social categories. In his *Centuries of Childhood*, Ariès provides historic evidence that childhood, as we know it today, did not exist in the medieval society. As Ariès (1962, p. 128) suggests:

In the medieval society, the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children; it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from adult, even the young adult. In the medieval society, this awareness was lacking.

(Ariès, 1962, p. 128).

Jens Qvortrup (2005) finds it paradoxical that, in Ariès’ work, ‘children were much more visible when childhood did not exist’ (Qvortrup, 2005, p. 3). He explains this paradox by arguing that children were part of the public life and thus they had access to the same arenas as adults. Only when the modes of production, and children’s *position* in these, had changed, attitudes towards children started to change

(Qvortrup, 2005). This positioning implies the relational aspect in the relationship between children and adults and its effect in the constructing and reconstructing of the childhood and children's position in the society.

It is common to dichotomize the relational aspect in the independence/dependence relations (i.e. the child is dependent on adults, while adults are independents). Punch (2001, p. 23) claims that adult-child relations should not be seen in terms of independence versus dependence but as a result of unequal power relations between the generations (Punch, 2001, p. 23). She argues that it is 'too simplistic to use the notion of dependency, whether of children on adults, or adults on children, to explain the often complex nature of adult-child relationship' (Punch, 2001, p. 23).

The notion of interrelatedness, thus, is theoretically important as it provides new space for rethinking childhood and adulthood in means of relations. Their interdependence (adulthood and childhood) means that neither of them can be defined or understood without understanding the relational aspects with the other. In practice, this means that children and adults (i.e. the members of the two structural categories) produce and reproduce childhood and adulthood through the interactions take place between the members.

Alanen (2001b) took a step further in theorizing child-adult relations. She studied the concept of *cultural* 'generation' as stipulated in the works of Mannheim (1952 [1928]). Moreover, she compared and analysed the Weberian and the Marxist understanding of class and the *nature* of relations between classes. Alanen concludes that adults and children could be seen as social categories whose members interact internally (amongst the same category's members) and externally (between members of different social categories). Through these interactions (she called them intergenerational practices), a particular organization of social relations recurrently emerges. Alanen calls it, *generational order*. She defines it as: 'a structured network of relations between generational categories that are positioned in an act within necessary interrelations with each other' (Alanen, 2009, pp. 161-162). Moreover, she advocates for the use of generation as a social structure that is similar to gender, class, ethnicity, and disability. She outlines that relations between adults and children

(as different generational categories) are *internal* and *necessary* and not contingent (2001a, 2001b, 2009). As she puts it, referring to child-adult relations:

structural relations are *internal*, or *necessary* relations (see Sayer, 1992, pp. 88-92) in that one position (such as the parental position) cannot exist without the other (child) position; also what parenting is — that is, action in the position of a parent— is dependent on its relation to the action ‘performed’ in the child position, and a change in one part is tied to change in the other. Internally related phenomena, then, are strongly interdependent although, as Sayer notes (*ibid.*:89-91), the relationship need not be, and often is not, symmetrical in both directions

(Alanen, 2001b, p. 19)

Although admitting that childhood is gendered and classed, she argues that children’s position in the social order is profoundly attributed to their generational structure and *generationing* practices. The notion of ‘generationing’ refers to the complexity of social processes through which people become children while other people become adults (Alanen, 2001a, p. 129). Mayall (2001a, p. 3) agrees with Alanen (2001b, 2009) in that adult-child relations are characterized more profoundly by ‘generational difference’. Despite the advancements made in the new sociology of childhood and the theoretical space which became available, thinking of childhood as a generational phenomenon has not received a sufficient attention. Despite its potential for theorizing child-adult relations and understanding children’s position in the social order, little has been done to explore generation as a structuration unit.

Alanen (2001b, 2009) and Mayall (2001a) explain the significance of exploring the generational structure while considering the agency of children. In that context, Mayall (2001a, p. 3) argues that children should be considered not only as actors — who enact or have a perspective on their lives — but as agents whose powers, or lack of powers influence events and the social structure. Alanen (2001b, p. 21) asserts that agency in the context of relational thinking (structure) ‘need not be restricted to the micro-constructionist understanding of being a social actor’. Instead, it is linked to the powers of those positioned (children for example) to influence the events taking place in their everyday lives. Thus, such positional power are best approached as ‘possibilities and limitations of action ‘determined’ by the specific structures (regimes, orders) within which persons are positioned as children’ (Alanen, 2001b, p. 21). Negotiations of these possibilities and limitations represent the people’s struggle to gain a better deal in their relationships within different structures (Mayall, 2001b;

Punch, 2001). Alanen (2001b, p. 21) outlines we have to identify ‘the generational structures from which children’s power derive’ and to find out these structures, we should study ‘the social organization of generational relations (Alanen, 2001b, p. 21).

Generation

In addition to the theorizations of sociology of childhood, this research is guided by the different conceptualization of ‘generation’ in both of sociology and anthropology. ‘Generation’ as a concept has been used in different social sciences to understand social change in different ways (Kertzer, 1983; Troll, 1970). The term provides a conceptual framework to understand many of the social phenomena such as social change and progress. For example, August Comte associates the life span with the tempo of social progress. For him, without death, and generations, social *progress* is not possible. In theorizing social progress, he argues:

[P]erhaps the most important of all accelerating influences is the ordinary duration of human life... I mean, the successive steps suppose the steady renewal of the agents of the general movement, which is almost imperceptible in the course of any single life, and becomes marked only on the succession of a new generation... If the general constitution of the brain remained the same as now, there must be a retardation, though we know not how great, in our social development: for the perpetual conflict which goes on between conservative instinct that belongs to age and the innovating instinct which distinguishes youth would be much more favorable than now to the former

(Comte, 2009[1853], pp. 152-153)

In his prominent essay, ‘The Problem of Generations’, Karl Mannheim outlines that cultural transformation happens through the ‘continuous emergence of new age groups’. The culture is developed through ‘fresh contact’ and interaction of individuals with the ‘accumulated heritage’ (Mannheim, 1952 [1928], pp. 292-293). Although Bourdieu sees this continuity of generations as a way of transmitting the ‘cultural capital’ of the old generations to the newcomers in order to enable them to acquire the ‘basic elements of legitimate culture’ (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 70-71), in his theory of the habitus he admits that people belonging in different generations have often conflicts because their habitus have been developed and influenced by different contexts (Lamb, 2015).

However, the different uses of the term *generation* in various disciplines pave the way for different meanings and interpretations. These include generation as a

principle of kinship descent; generation as cohort; generation as life stage; and generation as historical period. As I explain later (in chapter 4), I used these different meanings of the term, sometimes simultaneously, throughout my research. Nevertheless, in the majority of the instances I used the term to refer to two meanings: first, generation as historical period (as in chapter 4, 5 and 6), and second, generation as principle of kinship descent (as in chapter 7).

The institutional production of childhood

In addition to the abovementioned theoretical and conceptual frameworks, this research is guided by the theoretical foundations on institutional production of childhood and children (see for example, Stephens, 1995a, 1995b, Malkki & Martin, 2003, Pache Huber and Dasen, 2010, Pache Huber and Spyrou, 2012, Pache Huber and Ossipow, 2012, Pache Huber, de Suremain, & Guillermet 2016).

Pache Huber, de Suremain, and Guillermet (2016) examine how children's pathways shape and are shaped by the various institutions in charge of them (for example, youth services, hospitals, parliaments, kinship, etc.). The authors analyse how the values promoted by these institutions are appropriated, contested or redefined by children and other individual and collective actors involved. In particular, the works of Veronique Pache Huber, who is one of my two supervisors, provided a solid base for rethinking childhood through the lenses of the institutional production's perspective. Using this perspective, we could better understand the dramatically changing images and ideals of childhood by looking at the institutions involved in the process of image production. As I discuss in more details in chapter 4, 5 and 6, children were idealized as stone throwers who are part of the resistance project at the time of the First Intifada but this idealization had changed shortly (only six years later) to be replaced by a new idealization of children as state builders in the context of the peace process in 1993. A reversed change took place few years later (after 2000) in the context of instability that prevailed throughout the Second Intifada. This dramatic change has an institutional aspect that fuelled these idealizations and make them prevalent. Through my discussions with professor Pache Huber on childhood in different contexts, in light of her anthropological work in India, I came understand the dynamic character of the institutional production of childhood and its political, social and cultural dimensions.

6. The structure of the thesis

This work is composed of seven chapters in addition to the introductory (current) chapter. The second chapter looks at the different aspects of collecting ethnography in the Gaza Strip through attending to the practical and ethical dilemmas of researching a besieged place like Gaza. Moreover, the chapter reflects on my experience of moving between the fieldwork in the Strip and my University in Switzerland and the dialectical approach of collecting data *remotely* when accessibility to the field became difficult.

The third chapter attempts to investigate the relation between work and education; two domains that are usually perceived as incompatible. It builds on the centrality of education to Palestinians as one of the key themes emerged in the ethnography. The chapter looks at different political milestones that gave education that centrality. Moreover, it outlines how this centrality came to be determinant of children's work in Gaza context.

The fourth chapter looks at the generation of the First Intifada and how political activism (1987-1993) helped in challenging the patriarchal order of the society in Gaza. Moreover, it demonstrates how children's work, education and the interaction between them were influenced by political and economic conditions at that period. It does so by explaining the dominant ideals and constructions of childhood and adulthood in that generation and how these ideals came into interplay in prioritizing work and education.

The fifth chapter tackles the generation of children who lived immediately after the Oslo Accords and peace negotiations that started in 1993. It attempts to understand how different ideals came into being through the existing of national, and international, discourses and policies around education and work. In particular, the chapter looks at how the state building process and the Israeli restrictions on the Palestinian labour force has created new social dynamics that gave more weight to education and skills.

The sixth chapter looks at the generation of children lived after the eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000. This generation of children lived under a totally different kind of political, economic and social conditions that resulted in redefining work and education in that context. Relevant to this is the widespread foreign aid,

unemployment and poverty. In addition to that, children who lived in this generation experienced three major military operations the resulted in extreme fragility and uncertainty; both are determinant to the choices of work and education and the development of effective life strategies.

The seventh chapter looks at the intergenerational aspects of children's work addressing it as a matter of negotiating the patriarchal structures. Building on Alanen's theorization of intergenerational order (2009, 2015) and other examples of women's and children's negotiations (Fernea, 1996; Mabuchi, 2003; Muhanna, 2013), it argues that poverty and widespread unemployment provided a facilitating context for children, as one of the socially marginalized groups, to challenge the patriarchal structure built on the base of age and sex through engaging in work activities.

The last chapter concludes with a review of the main findings of the research and looks ahead beyond Gaza. It aims at pointing out extent to which these various understanding of children's work can help in building a critical movement against the normative global discourse that demonizes families, victimizes children, and stigmatizes governments for not joining the international march for the elimination of *child labour*.

Breaking borders

A methodological reflection

1. Introduction

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, the interest in conducting research on children and childhood has witnessed a remarkable rise in different disciplines. This happened in the context of the approval of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989 and the emergence of a new theorization within the sociology of childhood. Since then, childhood has become a central topic in different disciplines, not only in the traditionally child-related ones like developmental psychology and education, but also in sociology, anthropology, history, and human geography. In fact, this rise stands on two main foundations: the first is the ‘participation aspect’ of the CRC which gives more weight to children’s views especially in issues that matter to them; and the second is the theorization of children as social actors with the capacity of constructing their lives and the lives of the people around them. These foundations paved the way for doing more research with children.

In the course of the last three decades, doing research with children has been put on the academic and non-academic research agenda, thanks to theorists, researchers and practitioners who believed in its necessity and importance for advancing children’s situation in the global South and global North alike. However, the unprecedented *enthusiasm* that accompanied this wave of research resulted in a less critical examination of the question of children’s participation and doing research with children. With the exceptions of the discussions featured in the work of Davis (1998), Punch (2002), Christensen (2004), James (2007), Spyrou (2011), Hunleth (2011) and Tisdall and Punch (2012), the question of children’s participation, especially in research, was taken for granted. Moreover, highlighting the methodological challenge of researching children, based on practical insights, is still scarce.

The interest in research on children is reflected in the rise of the number of academic journals, and other publications focusing on children as well as the establishment of many child research centres and departments in universities around the world. While many of these centres and departments have a disciplinary focus (for example on pedagogy, sociology, psychology, or anthropology, etc.), others have a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary orientation.

Anthropology has been central to understanding children's 'lifeworlds' (Nieuwenhuys, 1994), possibly for two main reasons. The first is that anthropology has been committed to allowing the voices of the marginal groups to be heard. In fact, for their position in the generational structure, children are dominated by adults and their capacity for action and autonomy is highly restricted (André, 2015, p. 112). Children from the global South, in particular, are subject to a further layer of subordination, connected to the history of colonial domination (André, 2015, p. 113). In this sense, they belong to one of the 'muted groups' referred to by Hardman (1973, p. 85), which anthropology can help to overcome subordination and marginalization (André, 2015). The second reason is that, because of its methodological possibilities, anthropology allows 'a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research' (Prout & James, 1990, p. 8). For this, ethnography and participant observation are powerful methods not only for grasping the perspective of children, but also for giving them recognition (André, 2015).

As a result of these developments, a great deal of anthropological works on childhood and children emerged in the last decades, as in the works of Pamela Reynolds (see Reynolds, 1991), Olga Nieuwenhuys, (see for example Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013b; Nieuwenhuys, 1991, 1994, 1996, 2005, 2007, 2009a, 2010, 2013), Heather Montgomery (see Montgomery, 2001, 2007), Sarada Balagopalan (see Balagopalan, 2002, 2011, 2014), Tobias Hecht (see Hecht, 1998), Tatek Abebe (see Abebe, 2013; Abebe & Bessell, 2011; Abebe & Kjørholt, 2009), Yvan Droz (see Droz, 2006, 2013) and many other scholars. Most of these anthropological works relied, in collecting research data, on getting immersed in the local communities, becoming familiar with their culture, and generating a thick description of various aspects of life in these communities, which is a typical approach in anthropological studies. In fact, this is what makes anthropology and ethnography different from other

disciplines and methodologies (André, 2015). It is through adopting such an approach that anthropology was able to survive and preserve its legacy. Collecting data through direct interaction and involvement in people's lives has proved to be useful, both at the scientific and ethical levels. It is more engaging, participatory, and democratic and fits with the global values of citizenship and human rights. But what if accessibility to the field becomes difficult or impossible? Should researchers give up using these anthropological methods for inability to get fully immersed in the fieldwork's environment? What does it mean to conduct anthropology in an extremely politicized context such as Gaza? What are the implications on the ethnography and research participants? And finally, being a local researcher and undertaking my fieldwork where I grew up and lived, what are the implications on positioning myself as a researcher as well as the research participants? These are some of the questions I attempt to address here.

This chapter is composed of two main parts. In the first, I tackle the issue of inaccessibility, which I encountered across different stages of my research. Moreover, I reflect on the use of the ethnography I collected via internet, when accessibility to the fieldwork became extremely difficult. In the second part, I provide a reflexive account of my experience in doing this research: in particular, I address the issue of the distance from the research participants, the challenges of conducting an anthropological research in the aftermath of a war, and the psychological and sociological dynamics around this experience.

2. A history of inaccessibility

Gaza came to be known in the media as well as in the academic literature as the biggest 'open-air prison'. The Israeli restrictions started to be imposed from the beginning of the 1990s, but became even stricter when Hamas¹ took over the Gaza Strip in June 2007 (OCHA, 2012). This siege has *imprisoned* over 1.8 million people in one of the most densely populated areas on earth, causing a massive deterioration of residents' living conditions and a sharp worsening in the distribution of basic services such as education and healthcare. Consequently, 'the whole of Gaza's civilian population is being punished for acts for which they bear no responsibility'. This

¹ Hamas (*ḥamas*) is the Islamic Movement of Resistance is a Palestinian political party established in the context of the First Intifada in December 1987 and consider itself as the Muslim Brotherhood's section of Palestine.

‘collective punishment’, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), violates Israel’s obligations under the international humanitarian law (ICRC, 2010, par 3). The closure was also tightened when the Egyptian authorities imposed further restrictions, in the second half of 2013, on the movement of passengers through the Rafah crossing, the only door left for Gazans to the outside world (OCHA, 2014); a time that coincided with the beginning of my studies.

Based on the estimates of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the opening days of Rafah crossing witnessed a decrease since July 2006. It is estimated that the crossing point was closed for 43% of the working days (from July 2013—September 2015). The last three years, during which this research was conducted, witnessed even more restrictions on the movement of individuals and goods. It is estimated that the crossing was closed for more than two thirds of the time during the period from September 2013 to September 2015 (Data obtained from OCHA, 2015b). When the border happens to be open, only a very limited number of travellers can cross, due to a system of quotas imposed by the Egyptian authorities. In addition, the crossing is operating only in one-way direction in many of the opening days: in this case, only travellers who would like to return to Gaza (and not leave Gaza) are allowed to cross.

2.1. You are not allowed to pass, you are a potential terrorist

My personal struggle with inaccessibility goes beyond the experience of the fieldwork conducted in the context of this research. Even when I was doing my bachelor’s degree, I faced the same challenge. After completing my high school studies in Gaza, I got an admission in Bethlehem University, in the West Bank, to study occupational therapy: a major that was not taught in Gaza, and deemed necessary to the health sector, given the high number of persons with disability. At that time, in 2003, Israel denied my application to cross Israel to the West Bank, along with other nine students. One year later, I submitted a petition to an Israeli court, via an Israeli human rights organization called ‘Gisha’, to reconsider the collective rejection of my application to enter the West Bank, a Palestinian territory according to the 1993 Oslo Accords and the international law. The court rejected the petition for general security reasons. A year later, other renewed petitions received a similar response. This demonstrates that the policy against the passage of students from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, remained effective. Throughout 2006 and 2007, the legal battle

continued and harvested nothing but statements that Israel has no responsibility on the accessibility of residents of Gaza to the West Bank. The attorney of the petitioners outlined that the court rejected the petitions on the following ground:

The passage from Gaza to the Judea and Samaria area [the Israeli naming of the West Bank] is allowed for high ranking officials in the Palestinian Authority who are not associated with Hamas, leading business people and high ranking employees of international organizations, residents of the Judea and Samaria area who wish to return home, and humanitarian and exceptional medical cases – but not for 16-35 year olds, including students as a special "risk group".

The court justified this ban on the claim that:

most of the roles in terrorist activity are taken on by 16- 35 year olds especially students; and that the universities in Judea and Samaria serve as 'hothouses' for growing terrorists, and that even if a person comes to study with no such intention, he is liable to be affected by his surroundings'

(Supreme Court proceedings)

After four years of submitting and renewing petitions, the Israeli Supreme Court refused to allow the students, including me, to cross to the West Bank to complete my bachelor's degree. During the four years of these legal proceedings, I completed my degree using video conference and webinar tools. This was especially difficult as this specialization necessitated the development of practical skills. Finally, my graduation ceremony as well was organized via video conference tools.

After the ruling, a columnist in Haaretz, a leading newspaper in Israel, commented:

The High Court has been wrongly besmirched. The patriotic ruling put an end to attempts by seven young men and three young women to attend a university course designed to meet the needs of Palestinian society with regard to caring for people with disabilities

(Hass, 2007)²

2.2. The background of the current research in the context of inaccessibility

My interest in understanding children's work started at an earlier stage of my career in international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Gaza. Throughout my work with different organizations, I came to question the prevailing

² The full story of my struggle to access to education was published as a book chapter see Lavin (2011). For further details, please also see Hass (2005).

discourses and practices in this working environment. In fact, to me, they did not seem relevant to the everyday life of the local population. Later, when I started my master's degree in childhood studies in Scotland/the UK, the memories of the two kids dreaming of becoming diggers or smugglers, were still hovering in my head. Therefore, I decided to do my master dissertation on working children in Gaza but, at that time, this was not possible due to major difficulties in accessing the fieldwork.

Certainly, the restricted accessibility is one of the reasons behind the scarcity of anthropological research on Gaza. In fact, many researchers prefer not to take the risk of being stuck inside or outside Gaza, while carrying out their fieldworks and studies. Unfortunately, this reality applies not only to the non-Palestinians but also to the local residents. Despite the anticipated difficulty, the dearth of research provided another motive to conduct this study.

Years later, in September 2013, I started my doctoral studies in social anthropology in Switzerland, and children's work in Gaza was the issue I wanted to study the most. At that time, accessibility to the fieldwork was a major issue but I was hoping that by the time I had to conduct the fieldwork, the conditions of accessibility would have improved. Unfortunately, this did not happen, as the blockade worsened, and further restrictions were imposed by both the Israeli and Egyptian authorities.

The situation had not changed by the time I planned to conduct the first exploratory fieldwork (May 2014). As consequence of this, I had to postpone the planned fieldwork for five months. Then, accessibility became impossible as Israel launched a 51-day large scale military operation (Protective Edge, 8 July – 26 August 2014). At that time, only injured people in critical conditions were allowed to travel outside Gaza to receive medical treatment. Finally, one month after the end of the war, I was able to enter Gaza and to start the postponed fieldwork. In taking the decision to go, I was assured by the fact that one of the conditions of the truce negotiated between Hamas and Israel was the opening of the Rafah crossing. However, soon after my arrival home, the situation changed, and borders were shut. Hence, after completing the fieldwork, leaving Gaza was impossible. As a result, I got stuck in my home country for four months. During that time, I had to deal with high levels of uncertainty. First, I was not sure whether extending the fieldwork at that stage would be feasible and useful. Moreover, I was not in the position of planning my

next steps as the Egyptian-Palestinian border crossing opened only for few days every several months without a prior notice.

3. Stuck inside and stuck outside: challenges and opportunities

3.1. Getting stuck in Gaza and the issue of uncertainty

Being stuck inside Gaza was, in many aspects, similar to the experience of being stuck outside of Gaza during the Protective Edge military operation. In both cases, I faced uncertainty, stress and anxiety, due to the inability to plan the next steps of my research. Prior to my entry to Gaza in 2014, I utilized all possible technological means to follow the local political and social developments. The same happened when I was stuck inside and communication technologies (e.g. Skype) became the only means for keeping in contact with the outside world and organizing research meetings with my research supervisor and colleagues.

Although the first fieldwork aimed to be exploratory, with the purpose of refining the research questions, the uncertain opening of the borders for months made it necessary to go beyond this objective. Soon, I adapted the methodology approach to tackle more field sites and include more participants. After successfully conducting the planned preliminary activities, including focus groups discussions with children and parents in three different neighbourhoods in the Gaza Strip, I started to organize in-depth individual interviews with children, their parents, and grandparents. Few weeks after, the borders temporarily reopened, and I was able to travel back to Switzerland (January 21, 2015). By the time I left Gaza, I had been able to conduct three focused interviews with three children and their parents in one of the sites of the fieldwork (Beitlahia). However, the rest of the planned fieldwork could not be undertaken as I was at risk of getting stuck in Gaza longer if I did not seize the opportunity to leave immediately when the border reopened.

The ethnography I collected in Gaza was invaluable for shaping the scope of research. However, it was insufficient to draw solid arguments and conclusions. Going back to Gaza for another fieldwork was impossible because of the uncertain conditions of the opening and closure of the crossing. In 2015, the crossing was opened for only 19 days. Moreover, the closures and openings have never been scheduled preventively by the authorities, so that my attempts at planning resulted in failure.

4. Ethnography through technology?

After exploring all possibilities of getting access to Gaza to conduct a second fieldwork, I started to think about using technology for collecting ethnographic data in Gaza. In fact, I considered this option as a viable alternative for many reasons. First, half of the Palestinians live in the diaspora³; second, telecommunication technologies are the only way of communicating between different communities, inside and outside the territories. In addition, the geographical and political separation between the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel, strictly enforced after 2000, increased the use of the available technology for communication between families and friends. This solution is largely adopted at the institutional and official level. For example, video-conference technology is massively utilized by Palestinian parliamentarians in the West Bank and Gaza when movement of diplomats and parliamentarians is prohibited by Israeli authorities (especially after the victory of Hamas in the 2006 elections). When UN-commissioned fact findings committees on the 2014 war crimes were also banned from entering Gaza⁴, technological solutions became an alternative to overcome this restriction.

Therefore, growing up in this context of isolation, having relied on this kind of technological solutions during my bachelor studies, and having used Skype to maintain personal contact with my family and friends while studying abroad, all made it easier to me to consider ethnography by distance a feasible option. In fact, having seen the extent to which Palestinian population rely on technology for communication gave me more confidence in using this form of communications for my ethnography.

4.1. Internet and technology in everyday life in Gaza

In the Palestinian context, closure, siege and internal repression encouraged people to use internet and technology not only for everyday communication but also for political and economic activities. Starting from 2000, internet became a means for enjoying political and social freedoms that people were deprived of in everyday life. Also, the inability to leave Gaza to study was compensated by online education. Video streaming websites, such as YouTube, became a popular destination for young people

³ According to PCBS (2015), around 38.4 per cent of the 12 million Palestinians lives in the Palestinian territories, 12 per cent lives inside Israel while 49.7 per cent of them live in the diaspora.

⁴ See the public report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry into the 2014 Gaza Conflict the 29th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Diakonia (2015).

wishing to master new skills such as karate, breakdance and other adventurous sports. Moreover, many graduates are contracted with international employers, and they provide their services (designs, artistic works, technological solutions, etc.) via internet (Personal communication with IT specialists). It is worth noting that the expansion of internet networks and speed, and the decline in the prices of these services, all contributed to the popularity of the use of internet in these domains. A recent report published by ‘Concepts’, an information technology and social media organization, shows that 50 per cent of the population in Palestine is connected to the internet and most of them use Facebook (84%). Around 83 per cent of the users are aged 13-34 years old⁵. (Concepts, 2016).

On the political level, internet has been used intensively to speak out about the internal oppression and the occupation alike. Furthermore, it became a tool for communication with pro-Palestinians groups all over the world. It provided a space for solidarity and activism beyond the physical borders. This took many forms; increasingly, people challenged occupation and the restrictions on movement of people and goods, by showing its effects on people’s everyday life; for example, denouncing the misery and harsh conditions resulting from the economic blockade. On the other hand, through communication technologies, people also started to challenge the rulers of Gaza (the Hamas movement) by organizing digital campaigns when demonstrations were not allowed.

The first trend led to an increase in Youtube channels run by young people with the objective of “showing the truth” and challenging the international mainstream media. It also pushed a number of young journalist and activists to establish connections with journalists and advocates from the rest of the world. At the time of the military operations, young people spontaneously gather to form media clubs where alternative news and footages were edited and disseminated via internet. The spread of social media increased the number of people of different social backgrounds who took part to this kind of initiatives. Starting from 2008, everyone with a Facebook and Twitter account became a reporter of her story or other people’s stories (Ward, 2009). Soon, journalists started to rely on Facebook statuses and tweets to depict the

⁵ According to the report, 17% aged 13-17 years, 39% aged 18-24, and 27% aged 25-34 (Concepts, 2016).

real life in the 'ghetto'. This paved the road for online activism which became popular in Gaza, paralleling an international trend (for example in the Arab Spring in 2011).

The second trend featured in stand-up comedy programs broadcasted on social media. Their main objective is to challenge the rule of Hamas using satire. These programs proved to be effective as they succeeded in creating a debate on online platforms especially when this became difficult in the physical public space. Activists and journalists have been arrested, detained, and tortured for 'insulting and mimicking' the ruling government via sarcasm and comedy (personal communication, 2014).

4.2. The use of technology in the methodology

The issue of inaccessibility faced throughout the journey of this research led me to use multiple methods including, semi-structured interviews and focus groups in the field or via skype. I complemented the ethnography by using other methods like archival research and interpretive autoethnography (Denzin, 2014). As part of this research, 18 children were interviewed, from two different neighbourhoods. The first was Beitlahia, which is a typical rural community where the majority of the residents are non-refugees and whose economy has recently witnessed many transformations. The second is called Al-Shati', which is a refugee camp traditionally known for fishing but whose current economy has faced some degree of diversification. Twelve of the children's parents were also interviewed through face-to-face participation or via skype technology. In addition, seven focus groups were organized with children and mothers and five interviews were conducted with some key informants who are workers in the field and officials from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social affairs. Besides these semi-structured interviews and focus groups, I conducted extensive informal interviews with children passing by, or family members and friends. Added to that, I utilized some archival material, for example I explored the Palestine Poster Project which include thousands of posters printed throughout the last twelve decades.

When I decided to conduct ethnography via skype, I came to realize the challenges of undertaking this form of research with children. To overcome the ethical and practical obstacles, I had to rely on two research assistants in the field in Gaza. Children were interviewed by a research assistant in my presence (on skype) allowing autonomous and spontaneous communication to take place between the

research assistant and the participant. Attending the interview (via skype) gave me the chance to intervene at the end of the interview by reflecting on additional questions, and asking children to elaborate and explore issues. I decided not to conduct skype interviews directly with the children (without a research assistant in the field) as this might have affected children's interaction. Technology, especially for children, may add an additional barrier towards an open conversation. This is especially so, as the younger generation of children interviewed, did not have access to such technology, thing that might have made their interaction relatively difficult. On the other hand, direct skype interviews were organized with the parents of the children (in that case, the research assistants only helped in setting up the interview itself). Technology, in the case of interviews with adults, did not seem to have any shortcomings especially when the use of this technology was clearly explained and justified.

The use of this flexible approach proved to be effective and useful for collecting life stories around work and education and for capturing intergenerational perspectives on the change of attitudes towards work and education across time. Despite the fact that using Skype interviews was unusual for the research participants, it proved to be a good option in the context of fragmentation and isolation. In fact, both children and parents, unexpectedly, did not question the use of such approach, possibly because of their awareness on the limitation on movement and accessibility to and from Gaza.

Interestingly, this experience provided a space to reflect on some of the existing dynamics between Palestinians inside Gaza and those in the diaspora; a dimension that is worth studying on its own. In precise terms, virtual communication, through technology, sheds light on the social construction of the binary division *inside/outside* Gaza. It showed to what extent participants imagined that Palestinians in the diaspora enjoy a totally different life, without challenges. It also showed that Gaza, for residents there, is lived and perceived as a prison in which persons are deprived of everything, not only their freedom to movement. This reality of deprivation embraces every field: studies, work, tourism, visiting relatives and friends besides the basic needs for food, shelter and dignity. These constructions, I argue, are strongly linked to their attitudes and choices in relation to work and education.

The distance established through the Skype interviews was also beneficial as it gave especially adult participants more freedom to express themselves openly. For them, the connection, through internet, and the fact that I was outside of Gaza were both constant reminders that the researcher is an outsider and thus *neutral*. This gave them an added space to freely talk about their stories without fear of judgement. This was evident, for example, in the fact that they addressed political issues and expressed their thoughts about the conflict. I imagine that different dynamics would take place if I was there in the same room asking questions. Indeed, if that was the case, adult participants would feel anxious before identifying my political thoughts, social class, and attitudes on work and education. With the established distance, they felt more at ease in saying what they actually think.

Nevertheless, the use of technology brought different kinds of questions. Those were related to confidentiality and privacy. How can someone trust a researcher based on his voice and blurred video image? How can comfort be established and sustained without the physical presence of both the interviewer and interviewee? These were some of the major concerns I had to address throughout this phase of the research. I believe that establishing a bond of trust with the participants was key to the good outcome of the interviews. In order to do that, the role of the research assistants based in the field was essential; indeed, they played a key role in introducing me to the participants, assuring them of issues related to privacy and confidentiality, and explaining the objectives and the scope of the research.

The assistance of the two research assistants was invaluable. It is worth to mention that both of them unconditionally accepted to assist in conducting this research. They also declined my offer to pay them as a compensation for their time and effort. One of them, Sufian, a pedagogy graduate, is a friend. The reasons behind his willingness to contribute to this research are many. First, he did it in the context of our established friendship. Secondly, it is a way of showing support for the project I am doing and believing that something could change as a result of publishing this research. It is also a way of cultivating work connections for the future, which is vital in the context of Gaza, characterized by isolation and closure. The same applies to Huda who is working in one of the international organizations on a project on working children and their engagement in educational and vocational training

activities. Her contribution was motivated by intellectual curiosity to understand better the issue of children's work as well as to support my research project.

5. The dilemmas and challenges in doing research in Gaza.

In anthropology, like in many other disciplines, the position of the researcher is critical to the research findings and results. In the following overview, I highlight some of the main challenges I faced during the fieldwork and I reflect on the dilemmas I encountered in resolving them. While some of these are related to my position in relation to research participants (i.e. outsider/insider), others are related to the generational differences and power dynamics resulting from gender, age and class variations. I also reflect on the consequences of the 2014 war (Protective Edge Operation) on the fieldwork and what it means to conduct anthropological research in a highly politicised context such as Gaza.

5.1. The researcher, the research participants and the shared memory

In approaching this research, I had first to reflect on my personal history in order to understand my position in relation to the people I was going to interview and how that could affect the fieldwork and the collected ethnography. I am a Palestinian whose life trajectory is, to a large extent, similar to that of many other Palestinians living today in Gaza. My grandparents fled their home villages in 1948 when they were forcibly displaced during the events of *Al-Nakba*⁶. Like most of the Palestinians at that time, my grandparents hoped that the battles would end soon, and they would return home and resume their life. Unfortunately, their hopes did not come true with the establishment of the State of Israel on their lands and villages. Every year, the Palestinians who live inside Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, and outside of the *historic Palestine*⁷, commemorate the anniversary of *Al-Nakba* with events aimed at remembering the life before becoming refugees, reaffirming their right to return to their home villages, and transmitting this narrative across generations. People, in these anniversaries, recall emotions of despair, sorrow and feelings of hope, determination and revenge. The commemoration can be attributed, in part, to the long-lasting consequences of *Al-Nakba* on the devastation, fragmentation, and total rupture of the Palestinian society in 1948. It is a contribution to the continuation of

⁶ *Al-Nakba* (the catastrophe in English), refer to the events of forced displacement and ethnical cleansing took place around 1948 following 1947 partition plan.

⁷ The Historic Palestine is a term which is used to refer to the lands which the British troops controlled after the First World War, and administered its Mandate (the Mandatory Palestine).

the Palestinian collective memory that is seen essential to confront the colonial project of Israel. Besides, it is an annual reminder of the root cause of the refugee crisis that is being lived on a daily basis until today. These series of tragic events and their continuous consequences on everyday life shape the political identity of the Palestinian people.

5.2. Being a refugee and the spatial and temporal uncertainties

Till now, and for sixty-nine years, my parents, grandparents and I have been holding the status of refugees; a status that is for me a daily reminder of my uncertain destiny. Because of it, I cannot concretely define myself to myself and to the others. In fact, many Palestinians feel reluctant in defining themselves because of the displacement experience and the importance of place to identity. When a Palestinian is asked: “where are you from?” two kinds of thoughts intervene in defining himself/herself. The first involves a self-definition based on the current situation and location. For example, some people would say, ‘*ana ghazzawi*’ or ‘*ana Laji*’ (meaning ‘I am Gazan’ or ‘I am a refugee’, respectively). Others prefer to define themselves based on the home villages they fled. For example, some would say: ‘*ihna mijdalawiyih*’ (meaning ‘we are from Almajdal’); a village that is located inside Israel but is no longer inhabited by Arab Palestinians. This applies, also, to the younger generations of refugees who had not fled themselves at the time of *Al-Nakba*. Of course, the later definition reflects a reference not only to the past, but also to the future and *permanent* status they are hopeful to get back. The ‘right to return’, as stipulated in the United Nations’ General Assembly Resolution 194 is key to this discussion. Article 11 of the resolution reads:

(The General Assembly) resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible

(article 11, UN resolution 194, December 11, 1948)

Even though the Resolution is not legally binding⁸, it still has a symbolic value that supports their aspiration to return. For this, in addition to their belief of their

⁸ Unlike Security Council Resolutions under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, General Assembly resolutions have only a recommendatory character and are not binding on its states.

eligibility to return, they continue to define themselves based on where they *should* be. For many, it is a way of showing that they will never give up attempts to return to their grandparents' villages. Having this shared history and daily experience has constantly positioned my research and me and has influenced the way I look at the phenomenon I am studying.

In addition to this, I happened to be born and have lived in Gaza, in a refugee camp (Alnusierat refugee camp), for the whole of my life, until I left to undertake my postgraduate studies. Uncertainty is a key marker of the life in the refugee camps. Their name '*Elmukhayamat*' (meaning the camps), the infrastructure, the chaotic urban structure, and the details of everyday life (i.e. refugee schooling, health and sanitation and dependence on food assistance, etc.) provide simultaneous reminders about the uncertain situation and the unknown future.

Being reminded about my own life, characterized by uncertainty, and its harsh details, has made my anthropological investigation emotionally and psychologically more difficult. Despite all of the advantages of being an insider anthropologist (i.e. speaking the language, getting easier access to the research participants, etc.), it was a challenge to conduct this research in the area where my family and I live, in a situation of chronic hardship and devastation.

5.3. The challenge of taking a distance

Being affected on the personal level, besides the research level, made it difficult to detach emotionally and to take a *cold* anthropological look at the social phenomenon I was studying. This detachment did not come smoothly for many reasons; chief amongst them is the eruption of a large-scale military operation in Gaza during my stay in Switzerland in 2014.

I left the Gaza Strip in September 2013 to undertake my research in Switzerland. This was motivated by the availability of academic institutions and research infrastructure there. Going from Gaza - one of the most chaotic, densely populated, and problematic places in the Middle East - to Switzerland - one of the most peaceful, quiet, and relaxing places in the world - had its impact on this research. It is through this dramatic move, between what looks like two ends of a dichotomy, that I was able to explore the difference, the sharp divide, between 'we' – our lives and our daily struggle - and the 'others'. Besides, I was able to practice a kind of artificial

detachment I needed in order to look at children not through the ordinary lenses constructed by the prevailing social norms and expectations, but through a different set of peculiar lenses. I call this detachment ‘artificial’ because it did not result from a smooth and slow transition from one place to another. Moreover, what made this detachment incomplete was the eruption of a military operation in July 2014 (for seven weeks) resulting in a massive number of casualties among Palestinian civilians⁹. Any member of my family could happen to be one of them. During those two months, on a daily basis, I was following the news about Gaza until late at night. The first thing I was doing when waking up in the morning was checking the death toll to see if any of my friends and family members got injured. The death of any of my friends or family members was very probable. This tragic event complicated my stay in Switzerland and was a barrier to develop a smooth detachment.

5.4. Losing relevance or what?

With this artificial detachment, I insisted on visiting Gaza immediately after the end of the military operations. Interestingly, on my return to Gaza, friends and acquaintances reacted as if I was completely detached from the reality of Gaza since my leave. They started telling me stories about the operations; how brutal, massive and indiscriminate they were. They gave details on how they reacted to this longest-in-period operation. The way they were narrating the incidents reflects an implicit assumption that once you are not physically there you are totally disconnected. People held this assumption even after I demonstrated that I was following the news probably more than they did. In these moments, I felt a mix of guilt and sorrow. Guilt resulting from my inability to *completely* share moments of misery with close family members and friends. This happened despite the fact that I lived a significant part of these details through following the news and calling family and friends. This aspect of sharing (happiness and/or misery) is determinant to the social fabrics there. I also felt sorrow as they treated me as if I was a temporal stranger or a foreigner (to some extent); a positioning I could understand as a consequence of years of imprisonment in Gaza. In fact, because most of the people have not had the chance to leave Gaza throughout their entire life, they think of life outside as ‘paradise’. They also tend to believe that mobility would completely detach them from their dramatic experiences

⁹ The Operation resulted in the killing of 2,256 persons besides the injury and displacement of 500,000 people in Gaza (OCHA, 2015a).

in Gaza. Upon my return in 2014, throughout my informal conversations with friends, I realized how people were eager to talk about their experiences and share their worries and concern very openly: this situation presented an opportunity for my research.

5.5. Doing research immediately after traumatic experiences: some opportunities

The research participants reacted in a similar way, i.e. narrating the details of what happened during the operation, sometimes without me asking them to do so. For them, interviews were useful spaces for debriefing and reflecting on the bad memories they witnessed and narratives of how they survived. In fact, besides the need for psychological debriefing, participants easily engaged and shared their experiences for two main reasons. The first is that they usually confuse research interviews with social work and thus use these spaces to demonstrate their eligibility for aid (i.e. food, non-food assistance, etc.). This confusion can be attributed to the local term used for social work in Gaza '*bahth*' which literally means 'search'. Besides, social work practices involve asking questions and assessing social and economic status and thus resembling the research activities I was undertaking. The second is that they link interviews with journalism, especially foreign press, and thus consider their narrations of the incidents as a political act to unmask Israel and the aggression of its army. As a result of these two reasons, it became common to interview people in their homes or in the other community spaces (non-governmental organization, community-based organizations, etc.). Because of the social perception of interviews and research activities, and the timing of these activities immediately after the war, participants positively responded to the research invitation sent through the gatekeepers; in my case, local community organizations.

This widespread culture of acceptance to be interviewed eased getting the first-contact access through which I was able to explain the objectives of my study. On the other side, in some cases, some people got disappointed when they realized that I was neither a journalist nor a social worker. In some cases, people continued the conversation but with less enthusiasm. In fact, I expected that some of them would opt out of the interviews after clarifying its objectives. Surprisingly, none of the participants dropped out; most probably, because they still needed this space to speak out, one month after the end of the military operation.

5.6. In a betwixt-and-between position (neither a constant insider nor an outsider)

Throughout the interviews and focus groups, power relations featured at different levels. At one level, I was not the *insider* in the complete sense of the term, but I was not the *outsider* neither. I was not the insider as I practiced some levels of detachment through my stay abroad. The stay provided a psychological and physical barrier to the daily life in Gaza and thus enabled a broader look and understanding of the social phenomenon there. At the same time, I was not the outsider because I spent my whole life in that place. I speak the same language and conform to the same social norms. For this, I was neither the typical insider nor the outsider.

Ergun and Erdemir (2010) argue that it is hard for any anthropologist to position himself/herself exclusively as an insider or outsider. Throughout my fieldwork, I was stuck in a betwixt-and-between. In fact, I was continuously navigating between the two positions (insider-outsider). This relationship cannot be determined a priori (Kusow, 2003, pp. 592, 597; Narayan, 1993), and is continuously informed by the perceptions of the researchers and research participants of themselves and the others (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010, p. 16). These perceptions, and thus statuses, are influenced by the social and political situation through which the interaction takes place (Kusow, 2003, p. 597). This is true, in particular as the ethnographic field is an arena for such ‘intersubjective interaction’ (Paerregaard, 2002, p. 331).

As mentioned earlier, not only I was not distinctively an insider or an outsider, but also, I was simultaneously influencing and being influenced by these statuses. Depending on the composition of the groups of children and parents I interviewed, I was situationally playing the roles of the outsider and the insider. For example, it was essential to be an insider in order to get access to a group of women in a conservative neighbourhood in Rafah, but it was important too to play the role of the outsider when disputes and contested issues came at the core of the discussions. Also, when conducting interviews with children, my position as an outsider, for the generational gap, was useful to keep some distance from research participants. At the same time, when I met a group of young fishermen who dropped out of school to work (children and young people) I could not take a *neutral* position. Instead, I gave them many examples of my childhood’s work so to position myself as an insider in relation to them. This was important so that children do not feel that they are judged for their choices of work and education. By showing that I lived a similar childhood, in some

sense, I could be perceived as one of their peer group and not an educated researcher who belong to a different culture and generation, and thus have access to their subjective experience.

In these examples, I used my status of insider based on my nationality and residence in the Gaza Strip, and my status of outsider for not being from the same neighbourhood and the fact that I was temporarily there for research. It was essential not to take any position a priori so not to influence participants' thoughts and reflections.

5.7. The time, the place and the implications of the politicized discourses on children and childhood

My exploratory fieldwork in Gaza took place one month after the end of the military operations when a ceasefire agreement (on 26th August 2014) was mediated by the Egyptian government. Children were at the core of the political and humanitarian discourse during and after the end of the operations, because of the high number of casualties amongst children¹⁰. Pictures of injured and dead children were hitting the front pages of both the international and local newspapers. This moment was exceptionally useful for getting a comprehensive understanding of the antagonist discourses on children and childhood. Through a relatively short time, I was able to capture a variety of reactions to the killing of children and the way this was used in the public sphere. Besides, I had access to a large number of newspapers, reports, Facebook posts and tweets about the innocence, victimhood, resilience and agency of Palestinian children. Unfortunately, media was the only available channel I could read the situation through, as I was unable to travel to Gaza and to *witness* the war myself there. Collecting these materials was not an easy task as I was emotionally reacting to the large-in-scale war resulted in the killing and injury of the children. In such emotionally charged moments, it was hard to adopt an emotionally detached approach in looking at the incidents and their implications and to properly study emerging themes. Besides, my belief that media does not accurately reflect the social reality, especially in the highly charged politicized context, necessitated looking critically at the material I had been collecting.

¹⁰ According to DCI-Palestine, at least 480 children died making up a fifth of the overall death toll, beside many more thousands of injured children, around 1000 of them with permanent disabilities (DCI-Palestine, 2014).

One of the tense moments was when four children were killed while they were playing football on the beach (on July 16th, 2014). According to the witnesses and the international journalists, the children were playing in an open space when Israeli missiles targeted them. The journalist Tyler Hicks wrote on the New York Times:

I had returned to my small seaside hotel around 4 p.m. to file photos to New York when I heard a loud explosion. My driver and I rushed to the window to see what had happened. A small shack atop a sea wall at the fishing port had been struck by an Israeli bomb or missile and was burning. A young boy emerged from the smoke, running toward the adjacent beach... We arrived at the scene to find lifeless, mangled bodies. The boys were beyond help. They had been killed instantly, and the people who had rushed to them were shocked and distraught

(Hicks, 2014)

I was distressed by the fact that the acceleration of the death toll, including the death of children, was not generating any kind of international reaction. Boys and girls, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, children, adolescents, old, sick, healthy, rich and poor, all were exposed to a death that strikes blindly. No one knew if and when s/he will die, but the explosions, sometimes faraway, sometimes close, made a hypothetical death more than likely. In this sense, people were turned into numbers of dead, injured, refugees, or survivors; in fact, dehumanized numbers (Baily, 2014).

5.8. The psychological and social pressure of being a Palestinian and the problem of terminology

Another challenge was encountered in describing the social reality of a population in a very politicized area. How can a researcher from Palestine write about the history and the reality in the Palestinian territories with no politically charged concepts, terms, and connotations? The *neutral* description of the incidences, the observations, and the explanations was hard especially in this context, where you are more likely to see what Caplan (2010) referred to as “competing narratives”. These competing narratives have never been mediated or resolved, as Nusseibeh (2007) writes:

[O]ur respective absolute rights—the historical right of the Jews to their ancestral homeland, and the Palestinian rights to the country robbed from them—[are] fundamentally in conflict, and [are] in fact mutually exclusive.... [T]he more historical justice each side [demands], the less their real national interests [get] served. Justice and interests [fall] into conflict

(Nusseibeh, 2007; cited in Caplan, 2010, p. 23)

This complexity is not solely applicable to the case of the Palestinian and/or Israeli researchers attempting to describe the history and living reality, it is applicable to outsider researchers as well. This complexity begins at using the terms (e.g. Palestine, Israel, Palestinian territories, historic Palestine, hostile entity, occupation, settlement, colonization, etc.) As Caplan (2010) observes:

[a] number of problems stem from the complexities that flow from the very act of naming the conflict and its main protagonists. In naming the conflict and defining what it is about, one is immediately, if unwillingly, taking a position that will surely be disputed by someone holding a different view'

(Caplan, 2010, p. 4)

I was hesitant in my use of terms when collecting the ethnographic data as well as when writing research findings. In the context of the very contesting narratives, there is no room for apolitical terms. When I developed the historical background of my research, one of my research supervisors reacted: "Mohammed, this is a Palestinian version of the history". At that time, I wondered if there is a way to be in the middle, between the *two versions* or narratives of the history. Interestingly, this happened in spite of my awareness of these dilemmas and my attempt to remain scientific and objective. Indeed, I was referring to international literature on Palestine, the United Nations' statements, resolutions, and reports so to avoid any possible bias. I later realized that referring to international sources (for academics who are not *affiliated* to any of the conflicting sides) is not the solution. Before all, the international is highly political. All this resulted in an inescapable dilemma; how to write about a Palestinian issue as a Palestinian researcher but not in a Palestinian way. It was impossible.

The task became even more complicated when it came to the analysis of the root causes of the living situation, and whether they are due to internal (i.e. related to the Palestinian society) or external factors (i.e. related to Israel). This area is indeed very politicized to the extent that may affect the objectivity of the research. In fact, especially when being interviewed, there was a tendency for people to reflect on the external reasons (related to the Israeli occupation). This tendency did not reflect ignorance or denial of the internal causes within the Palestinian society, but it was a form of political discourse in which the collective enemy is to be blamed for everything. The challenge arises when you as a researcher see a broader picture and

understand the politics of using specific terms in such a politicized context. How can the researcher prove the political bias of the research participants, and what should he/she do accordingly? My response to this dilemma was to reflect on the various instances of politically charged narratives I encountered during my fieldwork; in addition, I attempted to provide some analysis of the underlying reasons behind each of these instances.

6. Conclusion

The chapter reflected on what it entails to do ethnographic research in an inaccessible fieldwork. It discussed the major challenges faced not only in getting into Gaza but the hurdle of getting out as well. These challenges necessitated a high level of flexibility and innovation in order to collect ethnography in the framework of restricted accessibility. In this sense, I think I had a good justification for moving away from the *orthodoxy* of doing anthropology and collecting ethnography online.

The chapter outlined the methodology adopted and explained how technology becomes a solution to collect qualitative data. The chapter also demonstrated how technology becomes a solution for everyday difficulties resulted from the politically enforced blockade. It reflected on how it is increasingly being used for education, and work, not only by the local population but also by the international and senior official delegates (like parliamentarians and UN-commissioned fact-finding missions). In doing so, I went beyond the typical approach to collect ethnography to explore the feasibility of adopting other options especially in a context of imprisonment like in Gaza. The second part of this chapter is built on my autoethnography (i.e. my personal experience of inaccessibility), to reflect on the position of the researcher in difficult contexts like Gaza. It addressed the dilemmas and challenges of being a local Palestinian researcher and doing research that touches every aspect of daily life. While showing the hurdle of conducting research there, I explored some of the opportunities that emerged in the field. Not only was the place difficult to access, the timing was critical to the research too. Getting access and collecting ethnography in a war-torn and besieged area immediately after a war was an exceptional experience by all means. Despite its toughness, it facilitated approaching people and talking to them on matters that concerned them. Reflecting on the war was an appropriate medium to discuss various aspects of life and connecting them to education, work, harsh living conditions and the blockade.

Politics of Education and Work in Palestine

1. Introduction

The question of children's work cannot be tackled without understanding its relation to education. This relation has generally been perceived as a competing one. There are two main reasons for this: first, social and political movements against children's work, historically, have not succeeded in having an effective impact before the introduction of education acts which made education obligatory and more accessible. Second, the current national and international legislations on children's work link the minimum age to work with schooling and justify the elimination of work for its impact on education. As these legislations have been enforced for about a century, they have contributed to institutionalizing the relation between work and education as opposing spheres. Moreover, they facilitated the social construction of the relation between the two as a competing one. In the academic literature, it is common to treat them as exclusive activities that are difficult to combine; this vast intellectual production is supported by data on work and its impact on performance at school (in the context of the West Bank, see for example Maio & Nandi, 2013).

When I started the preliminary fieldwork, I decided not to take this institutional and social perception of the relation between education and work for granted. At that time, I began carrying out a broad exploration of everyday activities; in particular, my objective was to look at how children use their time. By doing this, I came to realize that school-time activities are described in a different way than other kind of activities. As one of the children recalled:

First of all, I wake up, and then I brush my teeth. Then, I have my breakfast, get dressed, and go to school. After we come back from school, we change our clothes, have our lunch and then we study.

Another child said:

I usually wake up, wash my face, and then pray. After that, I wear my clothes and go to the school.

Children tend to provide details on how they spend their time before going to school but they do not provide any details on what they do during the relatively long time they spend there. The only description they provided was “I go to school” and “I come from school”. This silence on what they do in schools could be explained in different ways. It might reflect that schooling is a common activity every child does in a similar manner and thus there is no need to get into details. However, it might also mean that school experience is marginal in relation to other everyday activities. Or, otherwise, they perceive school’s time as an *empty* time, or a time without activity.

However, most of all, children’s silence in describing the school time reflects their perception of schooling as a normative experience, and the school as the right place for the child to be. This belief translated in feelings of empathy towards children who cannot go to school and was confirmed in the feelings of guilt which permeated the comments of children who dropped out of school. In fact, those reported to have regrets for having left school and justified their decision on different grounds. This regret was consistently observed both in mixed groups composed of children who attend and do not attend schools, as well as in a group composed only of children who do not go to school. For me, this mix of guilt and justifying statements points to the fact that although children felt they took the right decision in leaving school, they seemed dissatisfied for not adhering to the normative experience of schooling. I believe the tone of guilt which filled their statements was a way of shielding themselves from negative judgements.

These observations and reflections, carried out throughout the interviews and focus groups, made it essential to explore the domains of education and school in relation to each other. In fact, understanding what meaning children and parents assign to education became critical to comprehend the relation between education and work in this context. For this reason, this chapter explores different aspects of education and schooling in the Palestinian context. Its objective is to analyse the complexity of the relation between the two domains, rather than affirming the clear-cut divide between education and work as competing spheres which can be largely found in the literature. The chapter is composed of two sections. In the first one, I

demonstrate how children perceive work and school nowadays and how they relate them to each other. Moreover, I look at the way children prioritize education over work, and vice versa, in everyday situations. Finally, I show how school drop outs are not always motivated by the desire to work; in fact, in the majority of cases, children leave school for other reasons (e.g. poor performance, mistreatment by teachers, early marriage for girls, etc.). These findings raise a key issue, that is the centrality of education in the Palestinian context. Therefore, in the second section of the chapter, I reflect on the social, economic and political factors which contributed to this centrality across key historical milestones.

2. Complexity of the relation between work and education

2.1. Children's attitudes toward education

As demonstrated earlier, the relation between work and education is far more complex than it is usually described in the literature on children's work. This was clear in the initial findings of the preliminary fieldwork I conducted during autumn 2014 in Gaza. The attitudes of students and non-students toward schooling reveal some of this complexity. In fact, while the majority of children who go to school agreed on the importance of education, they maintained that school is not the right place for everyone. In particular, children think that students with low school performance should not waste their time in school and, instead, they should learn some skills for manual work (*šana'a* in Arabic). There was almost a consensus on the fact that children should not stay in school if they do not plan to pursue higher education. Nevertheless, this should be the last choice and children should resort to it only after having worked hard to remain in school. As a girl child said:

Even if their school performance was the worst, they may improve their grades in later stages. We do not know the future.

The importance of education was reflected in the reasons children identified for going to school. For example, one (girl) child said:

I go to school to guarantee my future, to achieve my goals. I go to learn and get high grades, and this will take me to the next class [level] until I complete high school. By getting high grades in high school I can study what I want in university.

Another (girl) child agreed and said:

Everyone has a dream; how can she accomplish it? She must study and learn first.

This notion of school as a medium for guaranteeing a better future was a common theme in the conversations facilitated. An elder (male) child expressed a similar thought in a different way by saying:

When I see a child who is not attending school, I feel that he is losing his future. Assume that you left the school, and started to work, and at the age of 20, your employer fired you, what would you do? You will not find a job. But when you get education, your situation will be easier.

This attitude was expressed by many children, especially when they were talking about themselves. However, when children were asked about the other students' reasons for going to school, they started to go beyond this normalized picture. For example, a child said:

I know some girls who go to school to get rid of boredom. Some escape the domestic work. My friend is usually mistreated by the teachers and the headmaster for her behaviour and performance. I asked her, why are you coming to school despite this humiliation? My friend replied: this humiliation is better than working at home.

For this child, there are many reasons to go to school besides learning and achieving her dreams. Some of the reasons are related to the good time children have with their peers, the possibility of escaping exhausting housework or boredom. Another child explained her dilemma revolving around going/not going to school. She said:

Sometimes I feel like I don't want to go to the school because the teachers are not very qualified, the curriculum is difficult, and girls are not organized when going to the canteen. For these things, I feel I don't want to go to school but when I remember the fun I am having with my friends, I feel motivated to go.

Throughout the fieldwork, I observed that the majority of children attending school were empathetic toward children who do not go to school, and perceive them as being deprived of an experience integral to childhood. On the contrary, children who do not go to school did not consider themselves as victims and tended to justify their *deviance* by explaining why they dropped out of school. For example, one of the children recalled: 'we weren't good at school, so we left it'. He also explained to have tried many times to re-join but eventually he came to realize that he could not continue studying.

2.2. Perception of children's work and its motives

The fieldwork shed light on children's perception (both for students and non-students) of the relation between work and education. When asked of what they think

when they see a child selling parsley by a road crossing - a typical activity for many children in Gaza - most of the non-working children agreed that the child was probably a victim of his/her living conditions. The majority felt pity because they believed the childhood of these kids was *stolen* from them. They felt that those children did not have a future. On the other hand, some claimed to admire those children for being responsible for the whole family, and for facing the challenges of work. For example, one of the children pointed out:

Besides my empathy, I feel admiration because he thought of doing something big nonetheless his young age.

In explaining why children usually work, participants identified a long list of possible reasons. This includes: the feeling of responsibility for supporting the family due to poverty, children's weak performance in school and the unwelcoming school atmosphere, and intergenerational dynamics. For example, one child explained:

Either there are problems in the family, or the father is sick and there is no one in the family to take the responsibility of family's living.

Another child added:

Sometimes, the child feels that he is an added burden on the family so he starts to take care of himself. This gives him a sense of responsibility and soon he becomes responsible for his family and younger siblings.

Some children work because they dropped out of schools, but they do not necessarily drop out of school in order to work. One of the participant children clarified why many children leave the school. She explained that students' weak performance exposes them to daily insults, violence and humiliation at the hands of the teachers. Children, then, start to ask themselves: "why should I go [to school] and get insulted" and eventually they drop out.

A prominent reason behind children's decision of leaving school and working is the unwelcoming atmosphere of many schools, especially for children with weak school performances. In the different individual and group interviews, children talked about verbal and physical violence practiced by teachers against students. This unwelcoming atmosphere is related to the wider institutional and social construction of education and its objectives. Many teachers consider schooling as a step to be followed by higher education that, in turn, requires high marks/grades to be admitted to. In this sense, students with low performance are usually seen as wasting their

time, and disturbing the learning environment. Most of the time, these children are not treated in a dignified way. They are sometimes advised by the teacher to leave the school and look for work; an advice that is usually followed by many. The school environment is an integral part of a wider culture according to which children go to school with the intention of completing their higher studies and then ideally becoming doctors or engineers. When children are continuously failing to meet the school's expectations, teachers, pupils, the family, and the wider community encourage the child to invest in other domains. For example, assisting a relative or non-relative worker is considered a good option so that the child can learn a profession (in sectors such as agriculture, carpentry, trade, etc.). In some instances, children are encouraged to join vocational training¹ courses for a limited period of time, before mastering a profession and starting his/her own business.

Besides, children observe that intergenerational dynamics play a role with regard to this phenomenon. As one of the children expressed:

Maybe his father did not go to school and the father thinks that his child shouldn't go to school too and should work instead.

Another participant commented:

Many of the people from elder generations were deprived of school and had to work to support themselves and their families. They prefer to raise their children in a similar way. They think like: "you should depend on yourself, and be responsible the same way I was raised up, and I established my family".

2.3. Everyday negotiations around work and education

The relation between work and education can be better understood in the context of the decision-making processes taking place at the microlevel (i.e. inside the families). In fact, these relations can be vividly captured in the negotiations taking place around these two domains. Based on the collected ethnography, I came to identify a pattern in how work and education are appraised or prioritized by parents and children. This pattern was useful to understand the complexity of the relation between work and education. The following section discusses this pattern reflecting on interviews with children and their parents.

¹ The majority of vocational training centres are run by non-governmental organizations. The few which are run by the Ministry of Education are poorly equipped and they have a different section from the one which manage schools.

Nael was in the ninth grade when he started to think about leaving school. The living situation of his family was not good enough, so he thought of dropping out and looking for a job. He considered this option, as he was not doing very well in school. However, his mother convinced him to continue studying despite his weak performance and so he did. Nael continued his studies for another 2 years before he thought again of leaving the school. Then, a friend of him convinced him to stay and proposed to teach him at home, so to improve his grades and prevent him from dropping out. Few weeks later, Nael skipped school for two days so the headmaster asked him to bring his father to the school to discuss the issue. Nael was afraid of telling his father so kept the issue secret and stop going to school during the first term of the year. Some weeks later, his parents knew about that, and got angry. The family then asked him to return to school but he claimed that it was too late. When this became the status quo, his mother started to insist on him to look for a job. In this period, he used to leave his home every day at the morning in search for employment, but he was unlucky in finding any. This put additional pressure on him, as the family was giving him the choice of either finding a stable job or returning to school. Unfortunately, the former option was not available in the context of the widespread unemployment. Therefore, Nael started to look for vocational training opportunities, but he never has been accepted to any of these courses (candidates should go through exams to be selected for a limited number of seats in these centres). Now he hopes to find a job or learn some profession so that he can support his family.

As demonstrated in Nael's story, schooling was the first option, but his weak performance paved the way for him leaving school. Work became the priority as the family does not have its own business or trade and its life and survival was at stake. Work was neither the family nor Nael's first choice despite the need for an additional source of income to support family's needs. It is worth to mention that the order of these priorities was influenced by other factors like the work of Nael's father, and his attitude towards schooling and work. The father, in fact, works as a security guard for a private school, but he had not completed his school studies. As observed in the interviews with Nael, and then with his parents, the father showed little interest in influencing the decision taken by Nael. Besides, the order of priorities was affected by his elder sibling's experience. His brother tried to pass the high school for two years

and he was unable to pass the general matriculation test (Al-Tawjihi²), thing which pushed him to give up the schooling option and look for a job.

It is interesting that Nael did not regret his choice despite the lack of proper job opportunities. He said that he would not have taken different choices (like continuing education) even if he was doing very well at school. He stated:

I need an income to support my family. They don't have sufficient income.

I thought that he would consider combining schooling and work as an ideal option especially in a context where education is socially valued. Surprisingly, when I asked him about the option of combining school with work, he said that he would not take such an option. He justified this decision by saying:

If I am working, I need to go from the early morning until late at the evening to work [and this would not leave any time for study].

This pragmatism was even reflected in his later account when he explained that completing school, studying at university, and then finding a decent job would take a long time. In this sense, starting a blue-collar job immediately would be a better option as it does not need any investment. He admitted that, while at the same time acknowledging the advantage of having a white-collar job, which usually requires having completed education.

The story of Nael reveals, among other things, the extent to which education is central to the Palestinian community, demonstrated in the family and peers' repeated attempts at keeping him in school despite his poor performance. But why is education still valued despite the widespread poverty and white-collar unemployment which provide daily reminders that schooling is not the most efficient investment? And why most of the people would not give up the schooling option even in the hardest living situations when the work of more than one family member becomes essential for the survival of the household? For addressing these questions, I seek answers by exploring the value of education to Palestinians across the contemporary history.

² Al-Tawjihi is the general test for the last year of the high school. Based on its results, students can be accepted to certain colleges.

3. The centrality of education to Palestinians: a review of the past and the present

The centrality of education in the Palestinian context can be attributed to a set of intertwined factors. Some are related to the common experience of expulsion that Palestinians faced in contemporary history. Others are related to the economic and political context and the wider global trends in education and work. The following section addresses some of these factors in some detail by delving into key political milestones in the contemporary history: The Ottoman rule, the British Mandate, Al-Nakba, the 1967 war, the First and the Second Intifada and the internal political division. As it will be shown toward the end of the chapter, Palestinians tend to prioritize education over other activities and put considerable efforts on securing good education, despite the widespread impoverishment.

The Palestinians' experience with formal education could be traced back to the last third of the nineteenth century. At that time, Palestinians were under the Ottoman rule and their territory was a relatively marginal part of the Empire. The Ottomans established the first-ever system of elementary and secondary public schools in 1869 by following the French model with regard to structure, pedagogy and curriculum. Palestinians were reluctant in engaging with this new system as Turkish was used as the language of instruction; a language that was not relevant to their indigenous culture (Al-Haj, 1995; Mar'i, 1978). Towards the end of the Ottoman period, precisely in 1914, the proportion of the pupils who joined schools, out of the school-age population, was only 12 per cent of the children at school age (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006).

3.1. Education under the British Mandate

The Ottoman rule on Palestine ended immediately after World War I with the arrival of the British troops. The British military occupation in 1917-1918 was replaced by the British Mandate for Palestine (1923), a civil administration endorsed by the League of Nations. Under the British rule (1917-1948), the number of students increased but formal education remained the privilege of few (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006). In 1946, nearly towards the end of the Mandate, 'only 22% of the school-age population was enrolled in public schools, as compared to 12% in 1914 during the Ottoman rule' (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006, p. 1038). The British had not developed much the inherited system, except for having changed the language of education to Arabic and introduced public high schools. The latter represented a major step by increasing the

overall number of teachers³ and thus allowing the expansion of the public education system. Moreover, those graduates came to be associated with white-collar jobs, whose holders enjoyed economic security and a higher social status because of their affiliation to the British administration (Mar'i, 1978). For this, education itself started to become more valued and a marker of high social status. As a matter of fact, the British established the high schools to respond to the need for indigenous personnel in the administrative sector so that they could act as mediators between them and the local Palestinian population. As Tibawi (1956) points out, schools were essential mediums for the functioning of the government and economic system of the Mandate (cited in Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003).

Investing in the education system was a necessity for the British to run their civil operations in the territories. However, they lacked any interest in expanding the system to serve other objectives. Throughout the three decades of the Mandate, the education in schools was never but an option for a minority of the locals. Even though the whole educational system was being operated by Palestinians (e.g. teachers, headmasters, etc.), the policy making processes were left in the hands of the British (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006). The British took the liberty to present a different narrative of the history in schools, that went in line with their political and economic interest. In doing so, Abu-Saad and Champagne (2006) observe:

[T]he British Mandate ... suppressed Palestinian Arab nationalism and development while allowing the autonomous Jewish and Zionist national development that was working to transform Palestine into a Jewish state despite the Palestinian Arabs' national aspiration, long-standing historical presence, and clear demographic majority in Palestine

(Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006, p. 1040)

Unlike the Palestinians, the newly arrived Jewish immigrant communities, who represented a very small minority, were given the right to manage their educational system including the structure, content, and policy. For this reason, the management of the educational system became a politically-charged issue at the centre of contestations. The Palestinians protested against the use of double standards but have never been granted autonomy in managing their own educational system (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006). This, itself, pushed Palestinians to realize the value of education

³ At that time high-school's graduates were eligible to teach.

and its political dimension, and was reflected in the increasing attention given to educate their younger generation.

The Palestinians started to attend to the political value of education with the emergence of the Zionist groups' immigration and the political and military confrontation with the indigenous population. The Zionist movement portrayed Palestine as 'a land without a people for a people without a land' (see for example Muir, 2008). It used this cliché to describe 'the Zionist immigrants to Palestine as pioneers coming to conquer an inhospitable environment and make the barren desert bloom' (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006, p. 1037). The Palestinians perceived this discourse as intimidating and threatening their existence on their lands, and thus came to realize that education would allow them to challenge and defeat this biased narrative. In addition to this, at that time, the limited number of existing schools was located in the cities and students were from families from high social classes; a matter that made education a marker of social distinction especially among rural communities. In such a context, families from poor economic background and rural settings could transcend the boundaries of their social class to occupy a higher status in the social hierarchy, by sending their children to the schools located in the urban centres.

To summarize, the British administration did not develop substantially the educational system in Palestine, except for increasing the number of elementary schools and establishing the first secondary schools. Palestinians, unlike the Jewish minorities, had never been granted autonomy over the management of their education. As a consequence, 'the education the British provided to Palestinian Arabs repressed their independent development' (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006, p. 1040). Because of the double standards practiced by the British, Palestinians became aware of the importance of education and its political value. This change of attitude also counteracted the dominant Zionist discourses that portrayed them as illiterate and thus as not deserving to live on the land of Palestine. The Israeli advancements in agriculture and technology made it clear, for the Palestinians, that they needed education to realize their national aspirations. This centrality of education developed in the context of internal class divisions between rural and urban communities, where education became a marker of high social status.

3.2. After Al-Nakba (1948-1960s)

Following successive rounds of local revolts and continuous clashes between Palestinians and Zionist groups, the rising widespread instability led Britain to raise the issue of Palestine before the newly established United Nations. In August 1947, the UN proposed the termination of the British Mandate and a partition plan assigning the Jewish minority nearly half of the *historic Palestine*⁴ (Khalidi, 1981). The plan was not accepted by most of the Palestinians and Arabs as it gave the majority of their lands to Jews immigrants which were a minority. When the British withdrew from Palestine, the Zionist groups declared the independence and the establishment of the State of Israel (May 1948). Arab neighbouring states declared war against it. Despite the Arabs outnumbered the rival army, their technology and organisation were inferior. As a result of the war, and by the time of the ceasefire⁵, Israel took control of 78% of the lands of Palestine (Abu-Lughod, 1971; Lustick, 1980 cited in Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006). More importantly, the war resulted in the expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians out of their home villages; while some of them fled to neighbouring countries (such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon), others became internally displaced, reaching the refugee camps in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Palestinians refer to this series of events as *Al-Nakba*. The emergent refugee crisis resulted in the establishing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)⁶, to provide education, health, shelter and livelihood services to the refugees, in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the neighbouring countries (Jordan, Syria and Lebanon). At the same time, Jordan and Egypt, ruling the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, were providing public goods for the non-refugee residents and enforcing their national laws there.

These dramatic events of expulsion and dispossession constitute the most ground-breaking collective experience of the Palestinians for generations. They have been determinant in creating a collective conscience because of their long-lasting implications on the devastation, fragmentation, and total rupture of the Palestinian society. As a consequence, Al-Nakba had its effects also on education and its centrality

⁴ The partition plan proposed dividing the historic Palestine into a Jewish state (56.5 per cent of the land) and Arab state (43 per cent of the land) with an international enclave around Jerusalem.

⁵ In 1949, Ralph Bunche mediates armistice agreements between Israel and its neighbors.

⁶ UNRWA was established by the United Nations General Assembly under Resolution 302(IV) of 8 December 1949. UNRWA operates in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

in the Palestinian context. In fact, as the following sections show, the collective experience of dispossession made education the ultimate refuge, a commodity people could hold despite the displacement and the loss of material property. It also highlights how Palestinians became extremely aware of the political value of education, especially when relating it to the causes of the horrific events of Al-Nakba.

Feelings of guilt and inferiority

The victory of Israel is usually attributed to the superiority of the Israeli army: its organized structure, the use of advanced technology, and precise intelligence, fuelled feelings of inferiority and guilt among the Palestinians. Generation after generation, Palestinians have been linking their defeat to their ignorance. Consequently, and beyond the events of Al-Nakba, education became a collective tool for development and revenge, especially as the advanced technology of Israel was a daily reminder of the old defeat and future potential ones.

Throughout the fieldwork in Gaza, this collective feeling of guilt was explicitly expressed by research participants, both children and parents, in the interviews and focus groups. Not only the first and the second generations of refugees link the importance of education to al-Nakba, but also the youngest generation of children does so. Those children (the third generation of refugees) were born in the refugee camps and had not been displaced themselves at the time of the 1948 catastrophe. Nonetheless, they expressed feelings of guilt, in different occasions, for the nation's *ignorance* that had resulted in the defeat. Sometimes, they combine this guilt with a desire for revenge that could be achieved through education. In fact, in many occasions, children and parents referred to education as the most effective weapon (*al-ta'leem Silah na*— education is our weapon in English) in order to return to the home villages and liberate Palestine.

Refugees' dispossession and education

In addition to the feelings of guilt and revenge, the treatment of education as 'a form of portable commodity that could not be taken away by any party' played a vital role in making education central to Palestinians (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003, p. 174). This special consideration of education as an invaluable tool can be best understood in the context of displacement and dispossession where people develop an *obsession* with loss. As one of the research participants reported:

I feel that education's value is much related to the refugee. We lost our lands and capital when our grandparents left the village in 1948. I am from the fourth generation of the refugees and still believe that education is our capital.

The emergence of education as a portable commodity was sustained by other factors as well such as the role of education in the political struggle, education as a marker of social class and education as a medium for economic security. This can be best understood when looking at the sequence of events which followed Al-Nakba. At that time, people fled their villages and moved to different places including the Gaza Strip in search for safety. The refugees came to be positioned as inferiors to the residents of Gaza as they arrived without any land or properties. The refugees used education in negotiating their inferior social position in relation to the non-refugees. This negotiation was facilitated by the free education provided at that time by the UNRWA.

For the non-refugee population in Gaza (*Al-Mowat'ineen* in Arabic)⁷, who are the inhabitants of Gaza, and compose around 35 per cent of the overall residents, commitment to education can be observed too but at lower levels and due to a different set of reasons. While refugees' commitment can be attributed to the collective experience of displacement, for non-refugees, it is linked to practical/contextual reasons which emerged in the last two decades. These include the hardship of the daily life, the Israeli ban of Palestinian labourers from working inside Israel, and the collapse of trade under the Israeli blockade. These reasons have pushed the younger generations to give up their conventional economic activities (i.e. trade, blue-collar jobs, etc.) and instead study at the universities in search for more financially secured jobs later. It could be said that the presence of a majority of refugees who are committed to education influenced the overall value of education even amongst the non-refugees. This is because of the social status which comes with education in a society where the level of education is a determinant marker of social class. This placed the more privileged families with a lower level of education in a less superior position in comparison to poor but highly educated ones.

⁷ Al-Mowat'ineen is the local term to refer to the original inhabitants of Gaza, and their descendants, to distinguish them from the *refugees* (*Al-laji'een* in Arabic). It literally means 'the citizens'.

Alzaroo and Hunt's research (2003) in the West Bank strongly supports this argument. In their words, 'the experience of displacement and prolonged conflict is a decisive factor in pushing Palestinian refugees towards education' (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003, p. 171). In their research, refugees tended to attach greater significance to obtaining education than obtaining money. This significant value was observed in the statements of three subsequent generations. For explaining the centrality of education to refugees, Sayigh (1995) points out that education is perceived as a 'temporary replacement for a homeland that had previously supplied prestige and status, and a passport' (cited in Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003, p. 173). In this sense, it became a remedy to compensate the loss of land and property, to understand what happened to them, to rescue what is left and rebuild themselves (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003, p. 174).

3.3. The economic boom of the '60s and '70s

This sense of guilt continued to permeate the collective conscience, especially among the more educated layers of the Palestinian population, and its impact kept influencing the centrality of education for Palestinians until today. In the 1960s and 1970s, many bourgeois families could get their sons/daughters educated outside the refugee camps (e.g. universities in the Arab countries, in the US and Europe). Those graduates were able to acquire competitive knowledge and skills needed for the newly emerging job markets in the Arab countries, which had witnessed an economic boom in the 1950s and 1960s upon the liberation from the colonial powers and the discovery of oil. Those graduates, who worked later in the Gulf countries, were able to leave the camps with their nuclear families. They were able to occupy senior positions in different sectors and thus were able to earn higher incomes. This resulted in a significant bulk of remittances received by the extended families inside the refugee camps.

This new context pushed even the relatively poorer refugees in the camps to invest in education as a successful means of survival. At this stage, education had a central economic and social value. It was a tool for 'gaining control over their fate, a chance to build a future and an escape from passivity and dependence' (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003, p. 175). At that time, education was valued for its potential for economic security where political change had never been possible (Abu-Lughod, 1973). However, the extent to which Palestinians valued formal education cannot be exclusively attributed to its role as a secure source for employment and money. In

fact this tendency continued after the 1960s and 1970s, in times of hardship and when employment opportunities in the Gulf and the Palestinian territories shrank as it will be discussed later (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003).

Education and political activism

In 1967, Israel occupied the remaining of the historic Palestine after launching a six-day simultaneous attack on three fronts: Egypt, Jordan and Syria. As a result, it took over both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank after that Egypt and Jordan had ruled these territories since 1948. Following this, and for the first 12 years of occupation, education was administered under the authority of Israeli Military Governor and then was placed under the authority of the Office of Education (Nicolai, 2007). Even though the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were under its jurisdiction, Israel did not expand the inherited system by building new schools (Brown, 2003; Nicolai, 2007). In addition, Israel dismissed, or transferred to distant locations, teachers whose political views were perceived as unacceptable (Shehadeh & Kuttub, 1980). At the same time, any reference to the Palestinian heritage, borders, lands, resistance or Arab nationalism and Zionism in the books were censored (Assaf, 2004).

Palestinian elites were aware of the political dimension of these restrictions and thus they counteracted by embracing education as a form of political activism. New forms of education (for example non-formal education) emerged as an alternative to the formal education system managed by Israel. The new forms were managed by non-governmental organizations, women's institutions, religious groups and charities (Nicolai, 2007). This activism reached its peak towards the end of 1980s when the first Intifada erupted. Especially due to this new wave of political activism, education continued to be significantly valued by Palestinians, despite the fading of the economic boom in the Gulf countries.

3.4. The eruption of the intifada: education as a non-military political reaction

Two decades after occupying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the political and economic situation deteriorated to unparalleled levels. Palestinians, there, suffered from different forms of injustice and discrimination practiced by the Israeli Army and settlers. In fact, their lands were confiscated and replaced by settlements, leaving little space for viable economic activities. Besides, Palestinians were subject to unjust taxation and economic restrictions that destroyed any opportunity for economic development. These factors generated an climate of extreme frustration, especially

among the Palestinian youth who was left with a very limited number of dignified work opportunities (Mahshi & Bush, 1989). The reaction to this situation was the breakout of a popular revolt against the Israeli occupation and its institutions (Mahshi & Bush, 1989).

People in different areas of Palestine started to act in order to challenge occupation using different forms of protest, such as civil disobedience, demonstrations and strikes, boycotts of Israeli products, and tearing apart identity cards (protesting against their legal status), etc. (Andoni, 2001). This collective mobilization, which came to be known as *Al-Intifada* (The Uprising in English), began in December 1987 and continued at different paces until 1993, representing the most popular and engaging act against the Israeli Occupation since Al-Nakba. What characterized this uprising was the active involvement of the youth in conventional and unconventional political acts. The *Intifada* was a ‘genuine mass movement’ that mobilized people to collectively act against the widespread injustice, each in his/her own way (Andoni, 2001, p. 211). In this sense, it was mostly ‘headless’, and thus hard to repress by the Israeli government and its Army (Mahshi & Bush, 1989, p. 437). As Israel was controlling every aspect of the Palestinian life, the protests were widespread and transversal across society (Andoni, 2001).

As mentioned earlier, the formal education system, at this stage, was under the Israeli authority. By the first few months after the onset of the Intifada, most schools in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were forcefully closed by Israel for periods ranging from some weeks to entire months, and sometimes even years (Mahshi & Bush, 1989). In fact, the closure of schools was interpreted by the Palestinians as a threatening message and a collective punishment for the eruption of the popular uprising.

This, beside the extreme neglect of the education sector, led Palestinians to place education at the centre of the national struggle (Nicolai, 2007). One could argue that education was placed at the core of the struggle as a mere political counterattack to the Israeli practices against education. However, when considering the long legacy of education’s centrality, it becomes apparent that this positioning went beyond the fact of being a mere contingent counterattack.

When the schools were closed and public schooling was under threat, the local leadership of the Intifada found new alternatives to substitute classroom-based education, which became illegal and impossible. This includes distributing self-learning materials to the pupils so they could continue their studies at home. This alternative did not last for a long time as distributors were shortly identified, punished and banned from doing so; this is especially as mass distribution was more likely to attract the attention of the Army (Mahshi & Bush, 1989). Later, popular committees initiated neighbourhood-based schools as a temporary replacement of the schools closed by the military. These schools were organized inside homes, mosques, churches, gardens and other public spaces (Mahshi & Bush, 1989) and run by teachers, university students and educated people who were able to volunteer. In short, the Palestinians, through their localized and individual efforts, developed a parallel system, known as ‘Popular Education’ (Mahshi & Bush, 1989, p. 477; Nicolai, 2007, p. 37). Soon after, Israeli authorities outlawed the *popular education* and punished educators who teach students in their homes or in other settings by imprisonment. Teaching became another form of resistance especially for being depicted as an act of sabotage by the Israeli Military. Since then, popular education continued underground and was organized by volunteers who risked their lives (Mahshi & Bush, 1989). These dynamics, as we will see in the next chapter, came to have a determinant impact on work and education in Gaza.

3.5. Education, Oslo and the nation building (1993-2000)

The Intifada continued at different paces until the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) started secret negotiations with Israel. These negotiations set the future agenda for *coexistence* between Palestinians and Israelis, but final-solution matters were postponed for later negotiations. The initial negotiations were concluded by signing the Oslo Accords, which include two separate protocols; the first consists of an exchange of mutual recognition’s letters between the two sides while the other, the ‘Declaration of Principles’, stipulates, though vaguely, the future peace process and agenda (Gelvin, 2014, pp. 235-237). As a result, the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA) took over responsibility on *some* parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Education was one of the first responsibilities to be handed over on 29 of August

1994⁸, which marks the birthday of the first Palestinian education ministry (Nicolai, 2007).

Since then, the value and significance of education started to take new dimensions related to everyday politics and economics and the agentic resistance against social structure. Education did not lose its centrality; on the contrary, in continuity with its old legacy, its importance was reshaped and reaffirmed by new complex factors.

Even with the majority of Palestinians questioning Arafat's move in the peace deal, the Palestinian population was eager to move on from the harsh experience of the Intifada which left them exhausted, impoverished, and socially vulnerable. Palestinians' aspiration can be best understood in the context of the official national discourse which promised Palestinians autonomy, sovereignty, independence, statehood, liberation, and prosperity; statuses that Palestinians had never experienced across their history. For the local political elites, exploiting this promising rhetoric was essential to pass the *deal* which was seen by many intellectuals as well as the wider public opinion as giving up most of the land to Israel (i.e. the Palestinian recognition of Israel practically meant accepting, in principle, the Israeli *occupation* of about 80 percent of the land Palestinians owned before Al-Nakba)⁹. This aspiration to statehood and autonomy has been translated into using education as a means for forming the new citizens of the *future* state. For this, the education system and pedagogy focused on state building, by conceiving students as future state builders. These ideals of the *new citizen* and the *state builder* came to gradually replace the conventional ideals of learners as active political resisters to occupation. What made this transition possible was the fact that confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers became less acute and violent. The relative invisibility of the conventional enemy gradually transformed education's objectives, by gearing them toward the individual and family survival and interest.

This period witnessed the global emergence of the neo-liberal economic policies with a focus on education as an accelerator of economic development. Besides, it saw

⁸ It is worth to mention that responsibilities were handed over three days before the start of the school year. Nevertheless, the schools were opened on time reflecting strategic and political commitment to education.

⁹ For full discussion and details on the arguments, see (Gelvin, 2014)

the rise of the international education movement that, as in the famous slogan ‘education for all’, advocates for moving all children to formal school¹⁰. This movement evolved in the framework of the eight Millennium Development Goals, as achieving universal primary education was one of them. Local policy makers were heavily exposed to, and influenced by, this international movement, especially as they were building the first Palestinian educational system (as discussed in further details in chapter 5). These local and international policy-based developments contributed to reshaping the dominant ideals of childhood and education.

Parallel to the influence of the national and international agenda, there were economic incentives for investing more in education. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority translated into availability of white-collar jobs in the public sectors (for example in health, education, security, etc.). The newly established public sector attracted a lot of graduates as it was conceived as the most secure form of employment. However, these jobs required university degrees: a major gap that directed a lot of people to invest in school and university education.

3.6. Education in the context of the Second Intifada

The failure to establish an independent Palestinian state as promised in the Oslo Accords, and the closure imposed on the Palestinians by the Israeli policies generated immense feelings of frustration. This frustration fuelled the eruption of a second uprising in September 2000 (Al-Aqsa Intifada, or the Second Intifada) (Muhanna, 2013). As a result, Israel expanded its *de facto* military presence and settlements in the areas handed over to the Palestinian Authority in 1994. This featured in the large-scale military operation resulted in the re-occupation of the West Bank in 2002 (Operation Defensive Shield). Parallel to this, most of the Palestinian labourers who used to work inside Israel lost their jobs due to the enforced restrictions on the movement from Gaza to Israel. Although the Palestinian Authority remained in charge of administratively running the West Bank and Gaza Strip, it lacked the modern state’s sovereignty tools including the control of natural resources, borders, foreign policy, currency, and fiscal and monetary policy (Le More, 2004b). In fact, the

¹⁰ The World Conference on Education for All was held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1994 (3 years before establishing Palestinian ministry of education. It was followed by World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 at the same time the Ministry was developing its strategic plans of education.

Palestinian Authority is fully dependent on the generosity of the international donors who sought to alleviate the situation characterized by poverty and unemployment.

The economic and political shock brought about by the Second Intifada had a significant impact on attitudes toward work and education. In fact, starting from 1967 and up to that point, Palestinians were allowed to work inside Israel generating a relatively good income. At that time, this option was the most efficient to secure a decent income, used mostly to build a house, buy a land, or saving. It was also a relatively easy option as it did not require schooling or higher education, the available jobs being mostly manual blue-collar ones. In the context of the Second Intifada in 2000, the majority of Palestinians lost their jobs inside Israel. At that point, what was seen in the past, and for three decades, as the most secure form of employment had become unavailable. Palestinians, soon, started to realize that they had not invested in the right place. Education emerged as the most secure, sustainable, and profitable domain. Both the expansion of the white-collar jobs' market, due to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and the Israeli ban of Palestinian blue-collar workers inside its borders, had a ground-breaking impact on the value of formal education. These changes encouraged the majority of fathers, who were previously working inside Israel, to send their children to schools and, then, to universities in an attempt to invest in the future.

The political division in the territories: two Palestinian governments

The victory of Hamas in the Legislative Council elections in 2006 created an atmosphere of tension between the Palestinian political parties, especially between Fateh¹¹ and Hamas itself. These tensions developed into military clashes that reached their peak in June 2007 when Hamas seized the *de facto* political authority on the Gaza Strip (UN, 2008). As a result, two Palestinian conflicting governments were formed unilaterally, one in the West Bank and the other in the Gaza Strip; the former ruled by a Fateh-affiliated government, while the latter by a Hamas-affiliated one. However, the Palestinian Authority has continued to pay the salaries of 55,000 employees in Gaza (Shaban, 2013), who have not reported to work, since 2007. In response, Hamas employed new politically affiliated personnel to fill the gap resulting from the *politically* driven disobedience of the public (Fateh-affiliated) employees.

¹¹ Fateh, the biggest rival to Hamas, was founded in 1959 in the diaspora. It became the leading political party the context of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and after the six-day war in 1967.

In the context of this internal political division, the temporary increase in the number of job opportunities within the governmental sector had contributed to enhancing the value of education even further and provided another evidence that education was the right investment. This is especially so as employment in the public sector, in most of the cases, needed a university degree. Another important aspect, relevant to this discussion, is the constant instability and uncertainty which leaves the majority of the population with no options but investing in this sector.

4. Conclusion

The collected ethnography showed that it is difficult to understand children's work without considering education. The centrality of education to Palestinians was a key theme that emerged from the fieldwork. Understanding the factors influencing this centrality and the weight people give to both work and education is important for understanding children's work and its relation to education. As demonstrated earlier, many factors came to influence the value of education in the Palestinian context. These include the experience of dispossession, the political activism, the interest in economic security, and the instability that dominated the political scene. These factors simultaneously contributed to give education a social, economic and political value that is distinct in its weight and nature. These factors influenced education, especially in the framework of international movements that put education forward on the international development agenda.

It is interesting to see how relevant and invaluable education is for Palestinians despite the high unemployment and poverty rates. In the context of a stagnating economy, education goes beyond the conventional function of securing income to serve other roles. These include negotiating the social status, overcoming the feelings of inferiority resulting from the experience of displacement and dispossession and engaging in political activism. In this context, children's work, despite its potential importance for the household survival, does not seem to be a straightforward option. It is often the result of long negotiations and it tends to take the form of a struggle between the urgent need for survival and the societal values that give meaning to people's lives.

Work and Education in the context of young people's political activism

The first Intifada (1989-1993)

1. Introduction

When the first Intifada erupted in 1987, new social dynamics and distinct gender roles came into being as a result of the new political space that became available. People who lived this period developed a shared cultural and political identity that are different from the generations before and after. I can relate to this, myself, as I was born in 1985, and the Intifada fairly influenced my childhood. I can recall these moments when soldiers broke into our school, looking for 'wanted' youth (*Muṣaradeen* in Arabic), and the feeling of both fear and excitement that came with it. I remember how some of my relatives and neighbours disappear from the camp for weeks, and sometimes for months, in hide from the Israeli army for being politically active. These memories, which are shared with people who lived through that generation, influenced a lot the way they perceive, and idealize work and education. My attempt in this chapter is to look at childhood at the time of the Intifada; in particular, I will look at how political activism that prevailed at that time, provided a context for mobilizing the *nation* toward education. Moreover, I will analyse how the emerging ideals of childhood, and the new construction of work and education, linked to the Intifada, came to influence both of education and work, and children's and adults' perception of them.

As we will see in the chapter, the education came to be a central activity for the different categories of population. this centrality was distinct as it was inclusive of all categories of population. It transcended age, gender and class through *popular education*. At that time education, and schooling, was not motivated by economic incentives (e.g. viability of employment in the 1970s) or social advantage (as in the time before Al-Nakba). Education in this generation came to be a space for political

activism. Likewise, schooling became a political act in counter of attempt to depoliticise the people under occupation.

This centrality influenced the other activities, children were traditionally undertaking before the Intifada. For example, limited time became available for children to work when engaging in demonstrations became one of the children's central preoccupations at the time when social and cultural life was evolving around activism (Rosenfeld, 2002, 2004). Moreover, working inside Israel, for both children and adults, came under assault as this new political era started. Workers inside Israel came to be treated as collaborators who were contributing in building the nation of the enemy (Hammami, 1990). Having this distinct effect, it is useful to look at this research through the lenses of generation.

The different meanings of generation

Generation is a central term/concept in various social sciences including sociology and anthropology. The concept has been used by demographers, sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, and political scientists across the last century in different ways. This use of the concept in different disciplines resulted in attaching different meanings to the concept, sometimes in a confusing way (Kertzer, 1983; Troll, 1970). Building on Troll's mapping¹ of the term, Kertzer (1983) identifies four uses of generation: generation as a principle of kinship descent; generation as cohort; generation as life stage; and generation as historical period.

Across my work, I came to use the different meanings of generation simultaneously. For example, in this chapter, and the following two chapters, I am looking at ideals of childhood, work and education in three distinct historical periods, and I am looking at *children's* perception of work and education in these periods while attending to their parents' perception as well. This means that the four meanings of generation, as in Kertzer (1983), are present and interwoven. The fact of looking at children means attending to generation as a life stage, and the fact of children being born in specific years or periods, means attending to generation as cohort. Moreover, discussing the various ways *parents* and *their* children perceive schooling and work

¹ Troll identifies five uses of the term in the literature: 1) Generation as ranked descent, 2) Generation as age-homogeneous group, 3) Generation as developmental stage, 4) Generation as time span, and 5) Generation as Zeitgeist (Troll, 1970).

activities means attending to the micro relations, and thus taking generation as kinship descent into consideration. Finally, these different layers of analysis, is contextualized in three historical periods, and thus generation as a historical period is used. Although the different uses and meaning of generations are present and used, I will use the latter (generation as a historical period) as the main organizer of these three chapters. This goes in line with the theoretical framework of this thesis (especially childhood as a social construction). In this sense, I am looking at how childhood, work and education are constructed, and idealised in these distinct political, and socio-economic periods.

This chapter looks at the context of the First Intifada (1987-1993) and the role political activism played in shifting patterns of preference between education and labour. The chapter starts by giving a brief overview of the political and economic situation relevant to the question of work and education. After that, ideals and dominant images and representation of children and childhood will be contextualized. Following, children's work and families' priorities and strategies in that generation will be discussed.

2. Context

Since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, following a 6-day military operation also known as Six-Day War, the living conditions of Palestinians had dramatically deteriorated. This was evident in people's living conditions, poverty, and lack of education. Although a significant number of Palestinians started to work inside Israel, starting from the beginning of the 1970s, their income was not sufficient to guarantee them dignified living conditions. This is because laborers inside Israel used to get a daily wage while having no rights to pension or any sort of employment security. At that time, Palestinians used to prioritize work on investing in education in order to respond to the dramatic scarcity of resources and poverty. One of the reasons behind this is the availability of manual jobs in agriculture and construction sectors in Israeli labour market which did not necessitate high education (e.g. university degree). The relatively good daily income of the workers inside Israel pushed many to abandon agriculture which was one of the main economic activities in Gaza at that time. This economic activity was also deeply affected by exposing the Palestinian markets to fruit and vegetable products exported by Israel to the territories (Farsakh, 2005; Rosenfeld, 2004).

In December 1987, the First Intifada erupted as a response to the Israeli policies of land confiscations and military violence. It was characterized by mass demonstrations, popular activism and civil disobedience, often led by Gaza refugees (Muhanna, 2013). The Israeli reaction was extremely harsh. The army responded to the young crowds with ‘military fire, arrests and targeted assassinations of political leaders’ (Hart & Lo Forte, 2010, p. 5). Moreover, it ‘imposed prolonged curfews on towns, shutting schools and universities and applying severe restrictions on movement’ (*Ibid.*). As a result of political instability, poverty dramatically increased, and the Palestinian economic infrastructure was destroyed. Only in one year, between mid 1990 and mid 1991, the number of the households receiving food assistance from UNRWA increased sharply from 9,383 to 120,000 (Muhanna, 2013, p. 6; Roy, 2007, p. 63). Especially after the eruption of the Intifada, Israel started to practice stricter policies toward Palestinians inside the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, and the rest of historic Palestine. This affected the number of the workers allowed in Israel as well as the general living conditions for Gazans.

Economic situation

The Palestinian economy witnessed some major structural changes after 1967. Central to this is the transformation of the economy from an agriculture-based economy to a one that is based on services (Roy, 1987). This transformation was engineered by Israel through its annexation of lands and exploitation of labour force of the occupied territories. The transformation came to respond to the expansion of the Israeli economy and to cover the demand for labourers inside Israel. As a result, Palestinians in the occupied territories were allowed, and encouraged to work inside Israel. It is estimated that the Gaza’s labour force working inside Israel grew from 5,900 (10 percent of the labour force of Gaza) in 1970 to 41,700 (45 percent) in 1985. This means that around half of the labour force of the Gaza Strip was employed inside Israel² (Roy, 1987, p. 61). Many of those labourers used to work in the agricultural sector inside Gaza before 1967, and soon abandoned their work for the incentives of working inside Israel. This eventually led to the collapse of the agriculture in Gaza and deepened the dependence of Gaza on the Israeli economy. At that time, Palestinians

² These figures are based on the number of labourers registered with the Israeli Employment Service and do not reflect the large numbers of black-market labourers who work inside Israel unofficially, among whom are children between the ages of 8 and 15.

in the West Bank and Gaza were banned from having an autonomous authority that would allow them to build an economic model that considers their self-interest and particularity. At that time, only Israeli policies defined the Palestinian welfare and areas of their economic growth and development (Farsakh, 2005).

Although Israeli government argues that the interaction between the occupied territories' economy and its own economy resulted in a positive impact on the Palestinians, featuring the increased GNP per capita achieved after 1967, there are many indicators to refute this argument. Some of them were presented in an extensive study of Sara Roy (1987) which demonstrates that this interaction fails to qualify even as a dependent economy and in fact resulted in the 'de-development' of the economy of the territories (Roy, 1987, p. 57). This process of 'de-development', as Sara Roy (1987) termed it, started soon after the 1967-war, and more precisely in 1971. The Palestinian labour force, in Gaza and the West Bank, grew in average by 1.9% annually after 1967, and most of it was working in agriculture. Soon after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel started to exploit the Palestinian labour force without granting the labourers any social, political or even labour rights (Farsakh, 2005).

These policies had drastic consequences not only on the Palestinian labour force and its main activities but also on the transformation of micro economy, life strategies especially in relation to education and work as I will discuss later.

3. Ideals of children and childhood during the first Intifada (late 1980s)

3.1. Children's activism in the First Intifada

On the outbreak of the first *intifada* (popular uprising) in 1987, Palestinian children played a significant role in the popular political movement. They became more visible through their activism in demonstrations against occupation. Their involvement included also throwing stones at the Israeli soldiers who were continuously trying to enforce curfews and closures. Because of that, it is common to call the children's generation of the late 1980s as 'the children of the stones'. This uprising itself is sometimes called the 'uprising of the stones' reflecting the large extent of children's involvement in these activities. A study conducted by the Palestinian Union of Women's Work Committees estimated that more than 71 per cent of all Palestinian children had participated in the uprising (Usher, 1991, p. 8). Their involvement is also evidenced in the number of casualties targeted by Israeli soldiers. It is estimated that

more than 159 children were killed besides at least 63,000 children who had been injured between December 1987 and December 1989 (Nixon, 1990; cited in Usher, 1991, p. 2). Assia Habash, a key Palestinian figure in the field of early childhood sees this activism as a normal reaction to the living situation. She argues that children

have spent their lives revolting against one of the most lethal armies and intelligence forces in the world. These young people have nothing to lose... If they continue to resist... they will be trying to make a future for themselves... they feel empowered

(Habash, 1990 cited in Usher, 1991, p. 3)

However, it is simplifying to attribute children's activism only to the prolonged military presence. In fact, this development should not be seen without considering the value and the position of the child in the Palestinian culture. As Usher (1991) points out, 'family', which is the principal structural unit of the Eastern societies, is defined in the Palestinian society by the presence of children. The presence of children is a vital *confirmation* of marriage through which the family is typically formed. So, children enjoy a vital position in society because of their function in maintaining the family legacy. The value of children cannot be sustained without their active role in everyday life. Traditionally, tasks were assigned to children into the workforce of the family. These tasks are based on gender division of labour; daughters help at home and take care of younger brothers and sisters while sons are expected to contribute to the family economy by working in the fields and around the village or in nearby towns (Habash, 1990 cited in Usher, 1991).

At the time of the *Intifada*, young children became participants in the uprising. The *Intifada* did not create a new role and space for children's involvement in the public life, but it helped the children to widen the domains in which they were visible and active before. It was not a case that children, only during the *Intifada*, occupied the public domain to share it with adults. In fact, they were sharing the public domain alongside adults before the Intifada. What helped children in having an extended role, during the intifada was their ability to undertake certain tasks that were difficult for other groups to fulfil. For example, because of their childishness, they could break the curfew, pass messages to neighbours, and scout so that older brothers and sisters can stay one step ahead of the tidal army raids. (Usher, 1991, p. 4). For this, children, during the Intifada had secured 'more respect, responsibility and status than has traditionally been given the young' (Darweish, 1989, p. 57).

3.2. The shift of authority to the younger generation

Mabuchi (2003) connects the widespread children's activism to radical changes in the family structure that evolved throughout the Intifada. One of the significant changes was the decline of the authority of the father. This particularly happened as parents (or generally the older generation) failed to bring any political progress in the Palestinian cause (Fernea, 1991). The breakdown of father's authority is also attributed to their inability to sustain their traditional social roles as exclusive breadwinners due to unemployment and restriction on movement (Mabuchi, 2003). Relevant to the breakdown of the father's authority is the constant humiliation of the parents by the Israeli soldiers through kidnapping, imprisonment and violence that became part of the daily experience of the older generation (Mabuchi, 2003). These experiences turned parents into passive and weak in front of the soldiers; a situation that facilitated transcending parents' authority. As a Palestinian psychologist puts it:

The father's authority is being weakened. Palestinian children feel alone. They must do everything by themselves. They must face the Israeli soldiers by themselves. Neither the home, nor the school provides them with any security. There are no more safe places"

(Intifada, p. 18 cited in Mabuchi, 2003, p. 41)

Following, children's activism can be seen as a sign of disobedience of the parents' authority (Fernea, 1991). Further, their participation became the medium through which they moved from 'childhood to manhood on the individual level, as well as from humiliation to dignity on the Palestinian collective entity' (Mabuchi, 2003, p. 47). Throwing stones, hitting an Israeli car, being prisoned, injured or killed became the characteristics of a hero man (Kuttab, 1988, p. 15). Thus, the traditional patriarchal figure has been challenged. Older generation of parents could not and did not object their children's commitment to the Intifada and the Palestinian cause (Mabuchi, 2003, p. 55). The intensity of Intifada's events made it clear to the older generation that 'their approval or lack of it made little difference to the children', who were determined to go their own way, and that they could not stop them from going out (Kuttab, 1988, p. 18; Mabuchi, 2003). There was a very wide intergenerational gap beyond the age gap between any subsequent generations. This gap had become even wider with the emergence of the *new Palestinians* who, unlike the older generation, held a revolutionary ideology in thinking of the possibility of challenging the military occupation.

This form of disobedience, channelled through activism, can be captured in the extensive coverage of the daily events of the Intifada. A quick look at both the local and international archived newspapers and magazines published at the time of the Intifada shows the dominance of the figure of child and its distinct portrayal across these media. Here are some examples of this coverage. In this context, distinct ideals and representations of childhood emerged and dominated the public discourses as I will discuss in the next section.



Photograph 1: a child throwing stones in a demonstration in the context of the first Intifada (Photo courtesy: Jean-Claude Coutausse)



Photograph 2: a child holding a Palestinian flag; carrying the flag was banned and criminalized by Israel (Photo courtesy: Jean-Claude Coutausse)

3.3. Ideals of children and childhood in the First Intifada

The *Intifada*, did not only challenge the Palestinian society and its traditional structure (Usher, 1991, p. 4), it dramatically challenged the dominant ideals of children and childhood as well. At the time of the Intifada, children were generally seen as heroes because of their active involvement as well as their sacrifice. In parallel, another image of childhood emerged in which children were generally seen as losing their childhood for being born at the time of the conflict. This image was shared across the elder generations who lived a relatively more stable political situation. The image of 'lost childhood' was also captured in the analysis of narratives of young adults who were children at the time of the *Intifada* (Netland, 2013, p. 82). This image was intensively used in the media to attract attention to the conflict and the misery of the children's situation and was even fuelled by psychosocial studies on the psychological and social wellbeing of the '*children of the Intifada*'. These studies showed how children's exposure to a conflict-filled environment had resulted in psychological disturbances and traumas. On the other hand, mainstream Western media portrayed the *children of the stones* as innocent victims, who are politically used by Palestinian parents to fuel the public opinion to take a stand with the Palestinian cause. This featured, for example, in the letter published in the Los Angeles Times in 1989.

What is unconscionable about the Intifada is that children and women have been sent by those that inspired the rebellion to go and do all the fighting and perpetrate the violence, and incur the tragic consequences of that, while the men are all off doing something else. [...] you don't send children and women to right your revolution for you because that looks compelling on camera"

(Maibaum, par. 2 cited in Mabuchi, 2003, p. 6)

Thus, images of children throwing stones at the armed soldiers has never been perceived or portrayed as a form of practicing agency against occupation and the societal structure. In doing so, the image of the passive child whose parents decide on his/her behalf has unconsciously and consciously been propagated. Taking this approach in the media did not reflect only an ethnocentric approach to childhood in the Western media but also the centrality of politicization of children images and ideals to media.

With regard to the above-mentioned heroic image of the child, two types of these images emerged. The first is the image of the child who took part in the public activism through his active involvement in the mass demonstrations and throwing stones at the soldiers. This child was perceived as a hero, as political activism became, during the intifada, the organizer of the social order and hierarchy (Rosenfeld, 2004). Besides gender and age, political activism became a leading determinant of the superiority and/or inferiority of the individuals in the social structure. Relevant to this image is that children were voluntarily taking part in these activities, sometimes despite the dissent of the parents, and many times without their knowledge. This heroic image was even fed by the fact that soldiers targeted children the same extent they targeted adults. Even when children and youth sacrificed their dignity when soldiers humiliated them, they were seen as heroes. This is paradoxical, as humiliation of the older generation, by Israeli soldier, was perceived by the younger generation, as degrading.

The second is the image of the child who lost his *normal* childhood characterized by stability, play, and schooling because of the abnormal political situation. In this sense, children were victim of the conflict and the instability of the situation.

In fact, younger generation celebrated victimhood and heroic aspects of being humiliated (Mabuchi, 2003, p. 50). In resolving this paradox, Jean-Klein (2000) describes victimization, in this context, as a key signifier of virtues associated with manliness and honour (Jean-Klein, 2000).

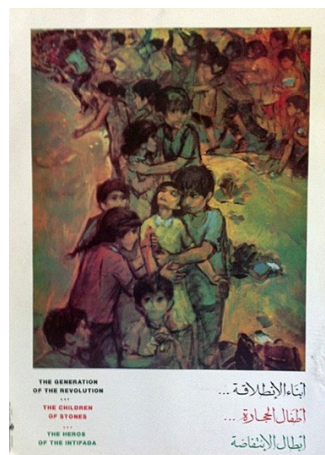
Children, at that time, internalized both images. I was a 5-year child at the intifada's period, but I still recall both images in my memory. The daily experiences of the first intifada have contributed in mainstreaming these emerging images and ideals of childhood. As Mabuchi (2003) puts it:

Before, it had been important to be a respectful and obedient child, qualities that had been considered superior by the parents and the older generation. During the Intifada, children wanted to be strong, muscular and aggressive, a prototype of the "New Palestinian," who became more popular in the new resistance culture

(Mabuchi, 2003, p. 60)

The posters of the political factions and unions in the period of Intifada reflect these ideals and images. The following posters for example show both the heroic

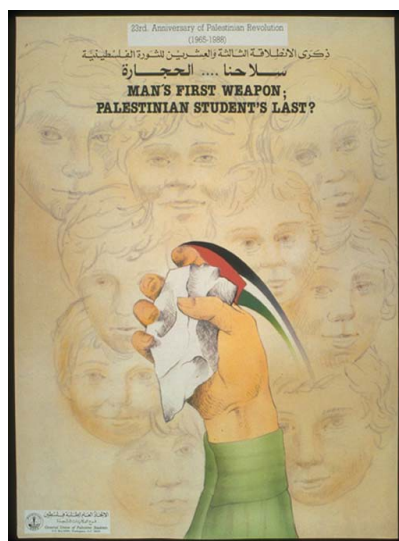
empowered and victimized childhood. In poster 1, in the next page, we can see a painting of the young generation marching together for victory. The poster is captioned “the sons of revolution, the children of stones, the heroes of the Intifada”. This portrayal of children is also reflected in poster 3 in which a fist holding a flag and a stone appear and children’s faces cover the background of the painting. The poster is captioned “our weapon... is the stones”. Similar ideals can be observed in poster 2 as well. The poster 4 is also interesting as it shows children as the successor of the leaders in the struggle and the political cause. It portrays a woman with traditional embroidered dress handing a stone to a child. This portrayal is central to the representation of childhood and the way they were idealized in that generation. It is also significant for an understanding of children’s work and education at the time.



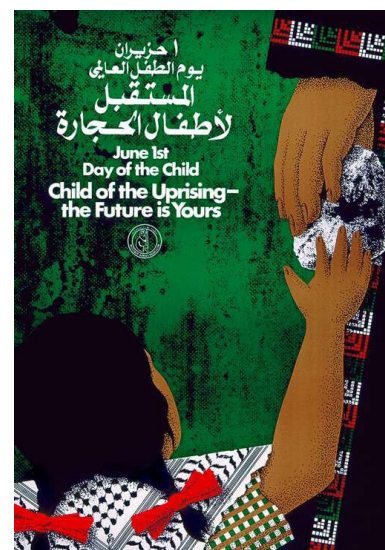
Poster 1



Poster 2



Poster 3



Poster 4

4. Work, children's work and political activism

The context of the first Intifada and the emerging ideals of childhood, and manhood, had created distinct dynamics in relation to work and children's work. Many factors came into play to form children and parents' priorities of education and labour. To better understand this, one should look at the two decades preceded the Intifada. The widespread poverty and food insecurity which prevailed in the 1970s and 1980s pushed a high percentage of Palestinians work inside Israel (around half of the labour force of Gaza was working inside Israel). The availability of the option to work in Israel, encouraged more and more families not to invest in education. This lack of investment in education, before the intifada, happened because of employment in the Israeli job market did not necessitate high-skilled or educated workers. In addition, the Gaza Strip did not have any higher education institutions. Only people from privileged backgrounds could afford university education which was only available abroad. This situation changed with the second Intifada and the emergence of the 'new Palestinians', discussed earlier in this chapter, along with mass political activism resulted in the younger generation investing more in education. In fact, abandoning education by the older generation, for the reasons we discussed before, was perceived by the young people as the root cause for the political defeat and disempowerment. Thus, as a reaction, education became the tool to be used against occupation and a medium for empowerment. 'Education is our weapon' became a slogan amongst young people, especially those affiliated to political parties. Moreover, getting educated became one of the manifestations of detachment from the older generation that invested less in schooling and education in general.

What is important here is that this investment in education has influenced children's work as a phenomenon. Less children, in comparison to today, were engaged in economic or gainful activities. Schooling was the daily everyday activity of children at that period. At some point, school became the space for organizing political actions and demonstrations which led the Israeli government to enforce curfews and close schools for days and sometimes for months. The Palestinian activists and teachers started organizing community alternative education in the neighbourhoods to substitute the days of schools' closure. Israeli military orders were then enforced to penalize teachers and activists teaching children at homes. This politicized childhood made clear that education is essential and should not be

compromised. The more Israeli policies were strict about preventing schooling or education in general, the more activists and politicians became aware of the value and the potential of education. This awareness was translated into a movement of popular education where classes were organized by unions, committees, communities, not only for school children but to the wider categories of population.

This political context in which education is valued, had resulted in few children undertaking work activities during the Intifada. Despite that, it was common for children to work during their summer vacation. It was generally acceptable to work then because of the widespread poverty and the fact that this kind of activity did not affect schooling which was central across the contemporary history as discussed before.

One of the challenges then was that a lot of young people once completed their school education they could not access higher education mainly because of poverty. Because of this families started to adopt a strategy that is based on educating the older son and/or daughter. Once those completed their tertiary education, they became responsible for supporting the education of the following siblings. Rosenfeld (2002, 2004) studied the phenomenal number of higher education graduates in Dheisheh camp in the West Bank. She observed, through her ethnography, a common chain-like pattern that helped the families to survive and improve their livelihood situation. This pattern emerged in the 1960s when a flux of graduates, mainly in the teaching field, encountered the scarcity of employment opportunities in the camp. The only available option for the graduates was to become migrant workers in the Gulf countries. Those migrants kept a strong connection with the family and were sending remittances to their families on a continuous basis. Using this remittance, the family in the camp was able to extend/build its house, and invest in the education of the second child. Only when the second child completes his primary and higher education, mostly in the teaching field, and get employed either in the camp or in other countries, the older brother or sister was able to get married and establish his/her nuclear family. Once employed, the second brother is expected to do the same for the younger sibling by financing his/her education until he/she got employed. The chain goes on for the rest of the family members who follow (Rosenfeld, 2002).

Although accessibility to education for those older siblings was limited and restricted, it indeed was possible because of the presence of UNRWA as a provider of educational services to refugees and the contribution made by Arab countries and universities to Palestinians, especially the refugees (Rosenfeld, 2004, p. 108).

In the context of Gaza, family members seemed to be aware of this pattern in a way that made everyone attend to his/her strict responsibilities. Although many of them were not willing to be vocal about it, the ethnography collected showed a high level of awareness of the pattern and its necessity for survival. Rosenfeld (2002) referred this to the fact that “

[p]ast experiences could now be disguised, rationalized, and idealized as a sacrifice that had to be made, a tribute that the individual raised for the sake of the common good of the family of origin and in return of what she or he had received in form of security and protection”

(Rosenfeld, 2002, p. 537)

These responsibilities became a bit relaxed when a family member got married. Establishing a nuclear family was a legitimate reason for shifting the attention from the extended family to the newly-established family. A clear example of this is my father. He used to work inside Israel to support his family especially his younger siblings. The burden of taking responsibility on his family continued until he got married because the family expectations became more relaxed then.

4.1. The political activism as a medium for change in attitude toward education

As I discussed before, the widespread poverty before 1970s provided a context for the majority of Palestinians to prioritize work on education. At these times, education didn't serve an essential function in the daily life of the refugees, and thus was not appraised or idealized. Furthermore, the lack of education infrastructure, in schools, presented another obstacle for children's education. It is true that education was made available for free to refugees through the UNRWA, but the poor infrastructure and the lack of prospect for employment discouraged families in send children to schools. This is especially because there were no single university in both of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip³ at that time.

³ The first university in Gaza (the Islamic University of Gaza) was established in 1978 and the first university in the West Bank (Birzeit University) was established in 1975.

The occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967 and opening the Israeli labour market to Palestinians in the occupied territories, deepened the general attitude toward education. My father, who was a child, and my elder uncle, who was in his early 20s, used to go to Israel every day to work in carpentry in Jaffa inside Israel. This was one of the factors that made my father drop out of school at that time.

The political activism that prevailed in the First Intifada, challenged this attitude. Palestinians came to realize that their work inside Israel help the Israeli economy and disempower their own economy. During the Intifada, leftist had initially tried, sometimes forcibly, to stop workers from going into Israel, but this only created resentment because they offered no alternatives (Hammami, 1990). Activists started to intercept buses that transport labourers to work inside Israel. My father, who owned a bus, and used to transport labourers to Israel on a daily basis, received many threats from political parties if he continued to transport labourers to Israel. The work inside Israel, came to be perceived as an act of betrayal for the national cause. Many committees were formed to encourage farmers to go back to their fields which they abandoned after the availability of work inside Israel. There political changes contributed to attending to the consequences of not investing in the education of the children.

The same political wave of activism provided a rupture between two generations, the adults who were seen as betraying their *nation* by working inside Israel, and the younger generation of children and young adults who saw envisioned liberation through acts of resistance and disobedience. This rupture was translated in the younger generation taking a different route through schooling and political activism. All of my younger uncles belong to that generation. They attended schools, and home schooling when there were curfews or school closures. After school, they were part of popular movements engaged in demonstrations, civil disobedience, and popular education. I interviewed many of men and women who belong to the younger generation lived this period. Most of them could refer to the principal organizer of the daily life at that time being the political activism and could summarize the generation in one word, resistance.

4.2. The emerging ideals as supporting this kind of change

The emerging representation of childhood, being as a hero or a victim, contributed to that transformation of attitude toward children's education and work. Being

perceived by adults as a victim of the political violence gave children more space to retreat from work activities that were normalized across the previous generations. The general attitude toward children was like “they suffered enough, let them be and do whatever they want”. This coincided with the challenged and reduced of the symbolic authority of the patriarch represented in the figure of the father. In the same line, been constructed as heroes, and the emergence of a younger generation (the new Palestinians), contributed to the change of the attitude toward education and work. This constructed heroism enabled children themselves to go beyond what please the older generation (being their fathers or elder siblings). In fact, the portrayal of the older generation as ‘losers’ for not being able to attend to the national cause and achieve ‘the liberation’, give the children of the Intifada more leverage to take another route.

4.3. The girls of the Intifada

The previously discussed social dynamics that emerged in the context of the Intifada extends to various class and gender backgrounds, though to different levels. Images and ethnography about that period show how the general population was mobilized to take part in the activities of the Intifada despite age, gender, class, religion and disability differences. Although the iconic pictures of the Intifada have less portrayal of women and girls than men and boys, digging deep in the archived materials showed that women and girls played a significant role in the popular uprising. Women started to form unions and community committees that continued until today⁴. The role of these committees extended beyond their functions at the time of the Intifada.

However, women and girls faced more resistance, from the elder generation, to have more authority possibly for many reasons. One of them is the traditional restriction on accessibility of women to the public sphere. Despite the political space the intifada presented through its activities, it was hard for women to break the hierarchy that places them as inferior. In addition to that, the portrayal of women as the ‘the mother of the stone thrower’, ‘the wife of the martyr’, or ‘the daughter of the freedom fighter’ (i.e. in the sense of their relation to the man) contributed in situating

⁴ Some examples of these committees include the Federation of Palestinian Women's Action Committees (FPWAC), the Union of Palestinian Working Women's Committees (UPWWC), the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC), and finally, the Women's Committee for Social Work (WCSW) (Hiltermann, 1991).

the role of the women in the Intifada as complementary and less essential. In this context, the women became the nurturers of the struggle and the auxiliaries to men who lead that struggle.

One of the key reasons behind that restricted role, is the rise of popularity of the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas. The Movement, which was founded in December 1987, led unprecedented campaign on women's participation in the public sphere and introduced new ideals of women that are inspired by Sharia and the tradition of *Alsalaf* (the ancestors of Muslims in English). These ideals intervened in the way women are dressed, their gender roles, and the boundaries of their participation in the political realm.

One example of their intervention feature in hijab (headscarf) campaign. Before the intifada, in Gaza as elsewhere in the Middle East, there was wide variation both in the forms of hijab worn and in its use or non-use by women of different social classes and groupings (Hammami, 1990). During and after the intifada, there was less space for women to dress the way they want, let alone to participate in the public realm when they wish. The *hijabization* led by Hamas used persuasive and coercive measures. The persuasive approach manifested in sending religious youth to schools to convince girls to wear headscarf by linking headscarf to *modesty* which was assumingly needed at the time of intifada more anytime else. At that time, graffiti sprung up all over Gaza with statements such as "*Daughter of Islam, abide by shari'a dress!*". The coercive approach featured in throwing acid water on girls who are not dressed *properly*. The leftist parties did little to counteract this fight against women's conventional life style. One of the reasons behind this was that the parties did not want to challenge the lead of this campaign, Hamas, to establish some form of political unity especially at that critical time of the intifada (Hammami, 1990).

In such a context, there were two antagonist movements in regard to women's and girl's role in the society; the one which benefited from the new available political and social space that became available to 'the new Palestinians', and the other which was inspired by social and religious traditions and called for restoring conventional order. The interaction between the two resulted in limited role of women in the political activism especially in the public sphere.

Children's work and education in the context of State Building

Shifting priorities, objectives and constructions (1993-2000)

1. Introduction

The interaction between work and education took a different shape after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the first Palestinian governance system, founded in 1993. The state became the main recruiter of white-collar employees who enjoyed stability and benefits more than other employees and blue-collar workers. This change coincided with the massive loss of jobs in Israel due to restrictions imposed on the movement of Gazans to the West Bank and Israel starting from early 1990s. This produced a big shift in the construction of education, which came to be regarded as a good investment for the future. Employability in this context became essential in relation to marriage, divisions of labour and the microeconomics of the household.

This chapter aims at looking at education and labour in the context of the Post-Oslo period, which is characterized by political and military relative stability. It analyses the emergence of education and schooling as necessities to launch the state-building project, as stipulated in the national discourse, and as a response to the mass public sector recruitment which took place immediately after the Oslo Accords. Not only it tackles education and labour of adults, it addresses the consequences of these dynamics on children's schooling and labour as well. Besides, the chapter touches on gender issues for both young and elder generations like work and education for girls and the new functions for education which resulted from the political changes. It also addresses the divisions of labour as well as negotiation processes in the context of patriarchy as consequences of the increasing women's work.

This chapter is built on the ethnography I collected while being in Gaza, as well as the ethnography I have collected remotely via skype with research participants. Moreover, the chapter utilizes archival research of Palestine Poster Project and other relevant secondary sources. The chapter starts by giving a contextual overview of the period following Oslo through highlighting the structural changes which took place because of the peace process. The implications of these structural/institutional changes on education and labour will be addressed and their relation to everyday work and education will be tackled.

2. The embryo state and the public-sector expansion

2.1. Oslo era, the political and economic changes

The outbreak of the first Intifada and the constant challenge of Israeli occupation led to a series of secret negotiations that were crowned by the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993. Soon, it became obvious that Palestinians will be given the chance to build their own institutions and their state (Challand, 2008). The Declaration was followed by the Cairo agreements, in May 1994, which paved the way to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, and Oslo II (Interim Agreements of September 1995) which extended the Palestinian *jurisdiction* to another seven Palestinian zones, the so-called Area A.

As per the Accords, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the State of Israel agreed, in principle, to end the Israeli occupation of the lands occupied in 1967 (the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem) and hand them over to the Palestinian Authority as a temporary self-governing system to facilitate the establishment of the State of Palestine after a five-year interim period (i.e. to be accomplished in 1999). The Authority, through its established executive, legislative and juridical bodies, took the responsibility of governance and the delivery of public goods to Palestinians in *parts* of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Muhanna, 2013).

The Oslo Accords did not resolve all the conflictual issues between Palestinians and Israelis. Instead, both sides agreed to resolve these contentious issues through a five-year negotiation process. These issues include the Right to Return (UN resolution 194), Jerusalem, borders, and settlements. Despite a series of consequent peace conferences and negotiations, both sides have failed to reach an agreement on these issues until today.

With a sort of partial ‘sovereignty’, the Palestinians started building their *State* benefiting from their experience in running the PLO in the diaspora (where they were refugees) for decades. In Tunis, for example, PLO used to have its ministries with the purpose of managing the lives of the Palestinians especially those in the diaspora, so this previous experience in governance was used in building the new self-governance system (Challand, 2008).

The enthusiasm which accompanied these ground-breaking political changes was translated in a political will to rebuild all the state institutions previously managed by the Israeli Military departments. The next section shed the light on the process of building and funding state institution which is key for understanding the interaction between work and education at that period.

2.2. New era, new state

With the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994, a new governance system was built from scratch. The ‘peace process’ provided a political space for innovation and creativity necessary for building a liberal, secular, and modern state and ministries. Relevant to the discussion of this chapter is the establishment of the Ministry of Education which was the first instance in which the Palestinians had assumed responsibility for the administration of their educational system.

Prior to the establishment of the PA, the education of Palestinians had been undertaken by a succession of foreign powers including the Ottomans, British, Jordanian, Egyptians, Israelis and by a United Nations agency (UNRWA), set up in 1949 to ensure the education of refugees (Nicolai, 2007). The Oslo Accords was an important benchmark in the history of the educational system as a post-conflict reconstruction environment is the best situation in which to institute a policy reform and a system change. This was a special chance for radical change as the old political regimes had been replaced by a new political space. Equally important, for this opportunity, it was the weakness of the bureaucracy, the availability of new resources and the high expectations of the community after the conflict (The World Bank, 2005). I will discuss later how these reforms relate to the issue of work and education in the post-Oslo era. Before that, it is important to address the issue of funding the embryo *state* because of its significant implication on the national and local ideals and the constructions of childhood in Palestine.

2.3. Funding the embryo state

When the Declaration of Principles was signed in 1993, most of international donors showed their interest and willingness to support Palestinians considering it as an opportunity to support the building of a Palestinian governance system, foster the economic growth and maintain the peace process in its first hard milestones (Le More, 2004a, 2008). At the same time, aid was one of the tools of pressure used to encourage Palestinians to accept the conditions of the Agreement and to take 'painful decisions' (Le More, 2008). Nevertheless, interestingly, many of the donor countries were considering funding as an entry point to play a high-profile role in the so-called Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Le More, 2008).

As a result, two weeks after the Agreement, 42 donors met in October 1993 in Washington DC to stipulate the disbursement of more than US\$ 2 billion during the 5-year interim period (Le More, 2008, p. 2). It is estimated that over this period an average of US\$ 464 million a year have been disbursed to Palestinians (Le More, 2004a). Interestingly, development aid had the lion's share in comparison to humanitarian aid with a ratio of 7:1 (Le More, 2004). The Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) received per capita in Palestine is one of the highest all over the world with an average of US\$ 463 per capita between 2008 and 2011. In fact, it was the highest per capita in 2008 all over the world with US\$675 per capita (data from the World Bank website, 2010¹).

As we will see in the next section, these significant amounts of foreign aid were not priceless, and donors were doing a mere act of charity. In fact, money came with conditionality with which specific attitudes, constructions and representations of how Palestinians, and in this case, childhood, should be. More relevant to our discussion is the fact that donors and organizations helped in establishing the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). In fact, the United Nations plays a key role through its education-related agencies, including UNICEF, UNESCO and UNDP, with each implementing its own agenda and priorities. In the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), chaired by MoEHE, UNESCO was the secretariat and has played an essential role in curriculum development through the International Institute for Educational Planning (Nicolai, 2007) along with the Italian Government,

¹ The data was downloaded from World Bank official website and calculations have been done to suggest some findings. http://data.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/data/wdiandgdf_excel.zip.

which has been involved in supporting education since the beginning (Velloso de Santisteban, 2002). Other agencies worked on infrastructure, protection, and nutrition within schools (Alrozzi, 2013).

The funding processes and the flow of foreign aid is important for several reasons. First, it made it possible for the public sector (i.e. state institutions) to be easily founded from the scratch and maintained especially in the new pseudo-and-non-sovereign state. Without this generous funding, the expansion of the public sector would not have been possible. This is critical for expansion of the schools and its infrastructure and thus has tremendous impact on education in Palestine. Second, and more importantly, this aid and technical support provided by different international actors to the new ministries and institutions, meant more intervention in the way policies were shaped; this was true especially when it comes to the policy making of the education system and its impact on the ideals of childhood, work, and education. As discussed in depth by Donn and Al-Manthari, aid is one of the entry tools used to influence the global policy of education (Donn & Al-Manthri, 2013, see also Alrozzi, 2013). As I argue later in this chapter, this intervention created a momentum in schooling and higher education. This happened especially as the building of the Palestinian educational system (1994-1999) coincided with major international moves to globalize education including Education for All (EFA) led by UNESCO and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) in 2000.

2.4. The availability of jobs in the public sector

As discussed earlier, the education system before the establishment of the Palestinian Authority was managed by the Israeli military authority (after 1967). The Israeli authority did not invest in the infrastructure of the schools and did not expand the educational arena to absorb the increasing number of the students. The schools were working on several shifts and the teachers were subjected to interrogations by the Israeli intelligence services (Shehadeh & Kuttub, 1980). In addition, schools were frequently closed by Israeli orders as they turned into a political space.

The availability of fund and political will that accompanied the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, beside the enthusiasm to build a modern state and its ministries, helped in the flourishing of the public sector. Since then, a lot of jobs became available in hospitals and schools as well as in the security apparatus.

However, at this stage, there were not enough *university graduates* to work in this emerging sector mainly because a significant number of the working force was working inside Israel starting from 1968. In the Gaza Strip alone, workers who had jobs in Israel constituted 45.4 per cent and 67.5 per cent of the labour force and wage laborers, respectively² (CBS, 1988, pp. 722, 727, 729 cited in Rosenfeld, 2004; see also Roy, 1987). In Gaza, these rates were higher to their corresponding rates in the West Bank because of the ‘more rapid depletion of sources of livelihood inside the Gaza Strip, where agricultural land was much smaller in comparison with that of the West Bank, and where three-quarters of the population [were] refugees’ (Rosenfeld, 2004, p. 37). In fact, other sources, including one of the most comprehensive surveys undertaken in 1993 (FAFO’s Survey of Living Conditions), give another indicator related to this. FAFO’s survey of living conditions in the Occupied Territories shows that the average number of years of schooling attained by men aged twenty to twenty-nine was 10.3, compared with a slightly higher average of 10.5 years for men aged thirty to thirty-nine. This indicates that the generation that entered the secondary school (grades ten to twelve) during the 1980s completed less years of schooling on average than did the generation that entered the upper level during the 1970s (Heiberg & Øvensen, 1993).

This need for employees to work in white-collar jobs in the public sector, to establish the state institutions supported by foreign aid increased the demands for graduates in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. This happened in a period when Israelis started to gradually restrict the movement of the Palestinian labourers inside Israel; another important change that put a major proportion of families in a situation of extreme vulnerability. The workers who became unemployed sought employment in the new public sector, but the majority could not have access to these employments because of the lack of university degrees to work in key sectors like education and health. Many of these unemployed workers, especially those politically affiliated to Fateh (a leading political faction of the Palestinian Liberation

² Rosenfeld (2004) estimated that the numbers of the workers in Israel and their composition of the Palestinian labour force is Even higher as many were unregistered laborers and the numbers provided above are based on official Israeli Central Bureau of statistics estimations. According to her, she estimated the actual number of Palestinians who worked in Israel in 1990 at 120,000 to 150,000 (Kav La Oved, June 1992 cited in Rosenfeld, 2004).

Organization) were absorbed in the security apparatus. However, the majority of the unemployed workers, who were working in Israel before, remained jobless.

These rapid changes which took place at the same time (restriction of work in Israel and expansion of governmental jobs) led to a very important development; the shift in preferences toward skill-based work which necessitates university education. The fact that the main universities in Gaza exponentially increased, and expanded through private funds, reflects how university became attractive for the population of Gaza. For new faculties and specializations been opened, more and more students, both males and females, joined universities (EL-Namrouti, 2013). This happened in spite of relatively high costs of joining universities especially when public universities with free access to education did not exist. University education became a family's project to ensure better future through more secure job opportunities. In fact, this investment featured in families mobilizing their resources (e.g. land, savings, wages, etc.) toward educating young males and females in universities. These dramatic changes took place in the course of the 2-3 years after the Oslo Accords resulted in a massive shift toward education. This shift paved the way for new ideals of childhood, education and work to emerge, as I will discuss shortly.

3. The various constructions and ideals of childhood in the context of the Oslo Period

Without doubt, the Oslo agreements and the political, economic and social changes which entailed, represented a momentum for a significant change in the way children were being idealized. For the first time, Palestinians were not under the action and the reaction of the Israeli occupation. Instead, they were in charge of making change which came about with the state building project, the flow of foreign aid, and the social space which became available at that time. This period witnessed a confrontation between, at least, two distinct constructions and ideals of childhood; what I will call hereunder the local childhood and the global childhood. The first one shaped by the history and daily experience of local communities and the second being enforced by the national institutions and the international agencies; both will be described in the next sections.

3.1. The local childhood

The childhood's definition, boundaries, and characteristics

Despite the widespread use of the Arabic literal translations of the terms, children and childhood (*Atfal, Tofolah*), most people tend to use some other terms in their everyday life. The translations of the terms, mostly used in the official, institutional, and the more urban settings, are less used by the local indigenous culture as explored in the ethnography collected. The local term which is mostly used to refer to children is '*elwlad*' which literally means 'the boys'. The term, despite its masculine connotation, is used to refer to both young boys and girls. The equivalent feminine term '*elbanat*' is used exclusively to refer to the young girls. To distinguish between the very young children, and older children, before puberty, the adjective '*Sgheira*' (literally means small) is used to refer to the relatively younger children. This adjective is sometimes used alongside the feminine and masculine terms of children (e.g. *walad Sgheir*, and *Bent Sgheira*) meaning a small boy and a small girl in the literal meaning. The use of the terms *elwlad*, *elbanat*, and *elwlad* (i.e. the children, the girls, and the boys respectively) continues, in most of the cases, until the boy or the girl reach the age of puberty. The child, then, starts to get a kind of stronger social recognition by upgrading his/her status and becoming *elshab* and *elsabiyih* (i.e. the young in the masculine and feminine terms, respectively). In term of their relation to their parents, sons and daughters are referred to as *ewladna* (literally means our boys) even after puberty, adulthood, marriage and establishing the new nuclear family.

The boundaries between different stages of childhood and between childhood and adulthood are not linked to age. Instead, they are marked by biological signs (e.g. puberty), social markers (e.g. marriage), economic empowerment (e.g. having a job and income) and productivity (e.g. reproducing children). In addition to these markers, responsibility (i.e. the capacity to be responsible) plays an essential role in distinguishing the younger and elder and drawing boundaries between the terms equivalent to children, and adults.

However, responsibility is different from the other markers as it is not linked to any stage of life (like puberty or marriage). Because of its nature, it provides a good means to transcend the social statuses mainstreamed to each generation. Being responsible, in its wider sense, grants the child a more respectful treatment that is sometimes similar to the way adults are treated. For example, a young child who

demonstrates he can be responsible is usually respected and admired more than a man who is failing to be responsible for his own nuclear family. Even persons who possess the biological, social, productivity, and masculine markers, but lack the sense of responsibility, are usually treated in a way similar to the way young children are treated. In a situation where an adult person acted irresponsibly, people would say: “*beddallo walad*” meaning “he will remain a child”. This statement reflects two indigenous ethos; the first places the child in a lower position in the social hierarchy, and the second asserts the irresponsible nature of the child. The issue of responsibility, as a social marker, and distinguisher of adulthood from childhood will be discussed in further details later, especially for its relevance to the intergenerational aspects of children’s work.

The possession/accomplishment of more of these markers places the person higher in the social hierarchy and contributes to his/her own status. This is not to imply that children who have not reached puberty yet are considered without any value. They are, in fact, despite the lack of their direct economic importance, productivity value, etc., important for asserting their parents’ position in the society.

Boyhood and girlhood

Boys and girls are usually treated equally at the earlier stages of life. This is not to suggest that divisions of labour based on sex are not assigned at a very early age when the child is physically able to help and contribute. These roles are usually being asserted more strongly toward puberty and onwards. The offspring are raised up under the assumption of the superiority of boyhood on girlhood, and eventually, manhood on womanhood through explicit and implicit means. This differentiation is usually justified on a basis of expectation. For example, the male child is expected to grow up, developing a sense of responsibility, and take care of the whole family (e.g. protection, affection, security and livelihood). Embedded in this reasoning is the social importance of the males. Men, even after establishing their nuclear families, are expected to stay connected, physically and socially, with their extended family. In the past, they were expected to live in the same household and to provide means of living not only for their nuclear family, but also for the extended family. Nowadays, they are still undertaking a similar role despite the fact that the issue of physical proximity with the extended family is not as stringent as before. Women, on the contrary, are not expected to meet these expectations. In fact, when they get married,

they join their husbands' family, thus moving away from the nuclear, and sometimes the extended, family. In this context, it is not uncommon for men and women to acknowledge that men deserve to be considered superior based on the heavier burden and expectations of social responsibilities they have to carry throughout life.

Although in Modern Standard Arabic there is a term equivalent to the English noun *childhood*, there is no such a thing in the local dialects used in Gaza. In the daily use of the term, people usually refer to the stage of childhood using other indirect phrases. For example, one would say: "when we were kids..." to indicate this stage of life and the state during which he was a child. Of course, the absence of a term in the local dialect, equivalent to 'childhood' in English, does not apply to the official and institutional structures where they used the standard Arabic translation of the term 'childhood' to refer to every person under the age of 18. Interestingly, the term, which is being used in this context, has different connotations in the Arabic dictionary. *Al-tifl*, which is derived from '*Al-tufolah*' (i.e. the childhood), is defined in Lisan Alarab dictionary as the new, small and smooth of people, animals, and others. It is not associated with any age/generational category. For persons, it means, as it appears in various literature sources, the persons from being born until they reach puberty marked by the first wet dream (i.e. Nocturnal emission) (Ibn Manzur, [1290] 1883).

Bulough – adulthood—too, is not marked by age boundaries but by biological, physiological, social and mental capacities as explained earlier. Adulthood is associated with completeness and the general capacity to act properly in conformity with the social expectations. In this sense, the childhood takes place in the pre-adulthood phase when the child accumulates the reason (*'aqil*) and becomes more responsible and a member of the community.

For this, the child and the childhood as a period are placed in an inferior position in comparison to adults and adulthood, respectively. The relationships between children, too, are organized based on qualities of age and works – as a proxy-indicator of maturity, reason, and responsibility. Of course, the age is not treated as the exclusive determinant of the social hierarchy amongst children, and between children and adults. Nevertheless, it is conventionally used as an indicative marker of the level of maturity (*Bulough* in Arabic).

3.2. The newly emerged childhood: a global childhood?

Globalization's effect

Since the completion of my bachelor's degree, I have been working in child-related organizations, operating both at the local and international level. Career wise, this field of work seemed promising as a flux of international organizations were generously funded to implement child-related programs. Children and gender programs, everyone knew, were *fashionable* in development market. I moved between different jobs in different organizations with various mandates. I was in different junior and senior positions and had the chance to work with children and their caregivers, as well as with policy makers and senior planners. Across these diverse experiences, I came across contesting discourses on children and childhood. These discourses featured in discussions with targeted beneficiaries of the projects, international donors and organizations, and governmental policy makers. These, which can be observed in the definition, boundaries, and the construction of childhood, happen in context of local ethos exposure to the global ideals.

The seventh decade of the twentieth century witnessed many major social and economic changes in the world. These changes, backed by a new social and economic order, manifested themselves with the emergence of the welfare state, the rise of the human rights' discourse, and the move towards the individual as the structural unit of society. These social manifestations coincided with a general improvement of the citizens' living conditions in the industrialized countries and the bettering in the delivery of public medical and educational services.

On the policy level, a significant attention was given to children; studying them, taking care of them, and protecting them from the surrounding hazards. These conditions contributed to the emergence of a new ideal of childhood, characterized by innocence, happiness, safety, and privacy. This ideal was in harmony with modern constructions of gender, family, boundaries between public and private domains, and the appropriate children's socialization approaches to become the citizens of the future (Stephens, 1995a). This ideal childhood was maintained by isolating it from the supposedly harsh adults' world. More attention was directed to children to enjoy a safe and secure world of innocence, play and fantasy. Thus, they should be protected from exhausting tasks and instrumental relations in the production domain (Malkki & Martin, 2003; Stephens, 1995a).

This emerging model of childhood found its way in the ‘developing countries’, including the Palestinian territories, through the foreign aid and development programmes that became available based on the developing/developed division. In this context, any childhood that did not resemble the European childhood was described as primitive, retarded and underdeveloped. Then, countries that failed to follow the example were stigmatized by shame, old-fashion, corruption, and immorality. In reality, this idealistic image of the childhood fed long-lasting debates at the level of national and international policy toward issues such as children’s work, juvenile justice, education and wellbeing etc. (Stephens, 1995b).

Not surprisingly, this model of childhood featured in the ethnographic data collected during the fieldwork. In fact, many research participants defined childhood and its markers and boundaries based on the legal definition institutionalized by the public and civil society organizations. It was unexpected, for me, to see the influence of this discourse across neighbourhoods, gender divisions, and social classes. Of course, the local model of childhood was always present but not in an explicit and spoken way. It was captured between the lines when exploring the relations, the kinship, and the social structure. Unlike the global model of childhood which dominates the official discourse, the local model and its ideals, the ethnography revealed, was central to the everyday decisions and negotiations. For example, young people, and their parents, do not take the decision to marry, work, etc. based on the age or the qualifications of adulthood. Instead, they use the social, physical markers in such decisions. Interdependence and responsibility, as discussed before, are key to these social processes.

[Carrier of global childhood](#)

Key actors of the global childhood discourse are the Palestinian and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Challand (2008), who documented the development of the Palestinian civil society, outlines the importance of the role of the NGOs as an actor on the Palestinian scene. He observed to what extent the Oslo process was a turning point toward the sharp rise in the number of NGOs working in Palestine: 37.6 per cent of NGOs active in 2001 were created after the signing of the Oslo Accords (MAS 2001a, 20 cited in Challand, 2008).

Children and youth were the main focus of the NGOs’ activities during that period. A study published by the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)

in 2001 showed that children and youth activities constituted the bulk of NGOs' work in Palestine in 2001. Children activities composed 40.2 per cent and youth activities composed 30 per cent of the work of the existing NGOs. This was also reflected in the amount of funds received. Apart from health activities which took the lion's share of the funding received (32.3 per cent), children's activities were receiving the largest amount of funding with 16.6 per cent of the total funds (MAS 2001a, 20 cited in Challand, 2008).

This great attention given to children and youth, mainly by European donors, highlights two issues; 1) children were at the core of their foreign policy intervention, which, as revealed by the fieldwork, was successful in instilling the emerging global childhood ideals and its manifestations outlined above. 2) It indicates to the politics in foreign fund hidden in funding children-related activities and the importance of this *investment* for donors (see Hart, 2006; Hart & Lo Forte, 2010). As Curmi (2002) states 'the question of funding to Palestinian NGOs remains intimately political and must be read according to this yardstick to understand the nuances of the debates' (Curmi, 2002, p. 113). A more detailed and scrutinized look at aid in the Palestinian context will be addressed in the next chapter tackling the period of the Second Intifada, foreign aid and the question of work and education.

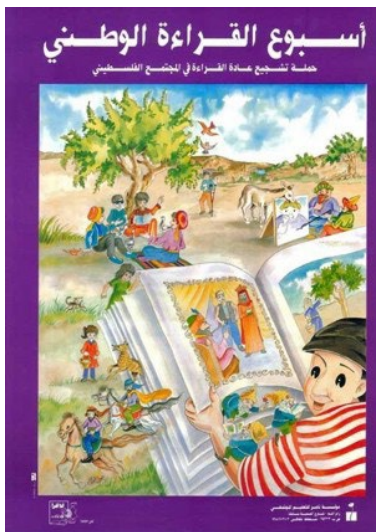
[The manifestation of global childhood](#)

The influence of the global construction of education (and thus work) at the institutional level can be observed on a number of publications and posters. A happy childhood is defined as a childhood dedicated to education and schooling in which children are entitled to rights. The constructions around work have not been seen in posters which predate the 1993's Oslo Accords. For example, the poster 1, 2, and 3 are posters published by the Tamer Institute for Community Education at different times between 1994 and 1999. All of them portrayed childhood as a space for practicing hobbies, reading and drawing. They came as part of an annual campaign to encourage reading in the Palestinian society.

In poster 4 and 5, a different construction of childhood appeared, which focused on specific children's rights, such as the right to play like in poster 4 and to receive health care as in poster 5. Both of the posters were printed during the same period, after the Oslo Accords, by the Palestinian Independent Commission of Citizen's Rights, a key human rights organization working both in Gaza and the West Bank.

Slogans related to children and childhood were not confined to child-related activities, as we can see in poster 6, which was published by the National Theatre where the slogan says: “Children First” although the main age category of interest for that theatre is adults. This can be seen explicitly in poster 7 which was printed and distributed widely. The poster portrayed the photo of a stone thrower (at the time of the first Intifada) who became (the same person) a violinist at a later stage at the time after the Oslo Accords; this representation clearly depicts the shift in priorities and the different constructions of children, who were welcomed as political actors during one period (the Intifada) while depicted as citizens, artists, or musicians, at the time of the peace process.

It is hard to say that these different portrayals were motivated by a collective institutional genuine shift to invest in children as future citizens and state builders after being portrayed so differently just 7 years before. In fact, this sharp shift can be attributed to the flow of funding which became available by donors who conditioned a change in the agenda of these national non-governmental organizations. These observations were supported by key scholars who addressed the issue of aid in the Palestinian context (for example see Challand, 2006, 2008; Hart & Lo Forte, 2010; Le More, 2004b). Moreover, it was confirmed by key informants who worked at NGOs at that stage as well as throughout my work experiences.



Poster 1: National Reading Week



Poster 2: National Reading Week



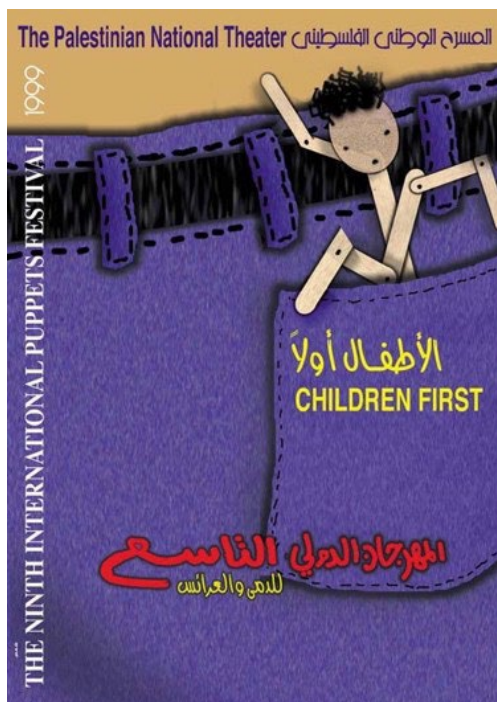
Poster 3: National Reading Week



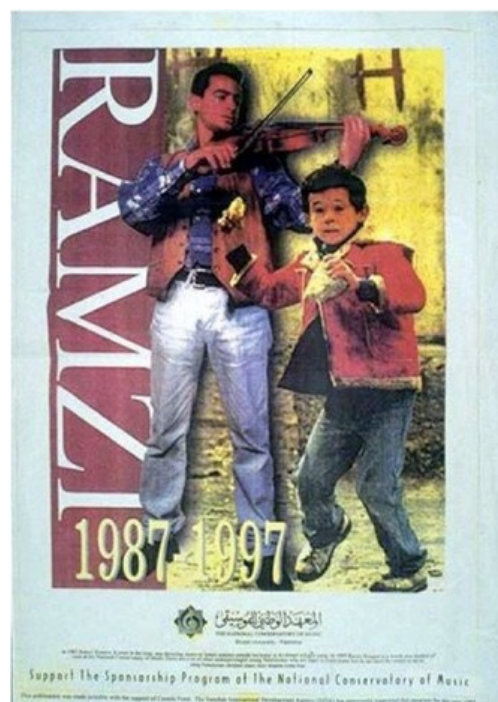
Poster 4: The right to Play



Poster 5: The Right to Health



Poster 6: Palestinian National Theatre



Poster 7: National Conservatory of Music

3.3. National discourse of state-building and the ideals of children as future-state-builders

The conflicting faces of Palestinian nationalism

For Palestinians, preserving the national identity has been the corner stone of their struggle against the colonial project of Israel. Across the contemporary history, diverse forms of nationalist discourses came to dominate the political life, inside and outside Palestine. These forms developed, and replaced each other, in response to the overwhelming dramatic political events which took place before, and after, the establishment of Israel. The various ‘faces’ of nationalism have also evolved in response to the rising and falling of the regimes in the Arab countries and all over the world. From a different perspective, reviving these nationalist discourses came to challenge the Israeli policy of what Baruch Kimmerling has described as “politicide” aimed at the ‘dissolution of the Palestinian people’s existence as a legitimate social, political, and economic entity’ (Kimmerling, 2003, pp. 3-4). It is essential to outline that in a highly politicized context like Gaza, different forms of nationalism existed. Without going through them, it will be difficult to understand the discourse of state building emerged during the Oslo period and the consequences of this discourse on the construction and idealization of children, work and education.

Three faces of nationalism

The first of these faces was the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN) which dominated the political scene in 1950s and 1960s, not only in Palestine but also in the neighbouring Arab countries. It was inspired by the liberation movements which succeeded in eliminating colonialism in the Arab countries and was greatly influenced by the events of Al-Nakba which showed that Arabs were less united and more fragile before the newly established non-Arab entity. For their ‘godfather’, Constantine Zurayk, Al-Nakba was possible only because of the backwardness vis-à-vis the modern industrial West and Israel (Baumgarten, 2005, p. 27). The Movement was composed, and influenced by, pan-Arab leaders but the majority of its leaders were Palestinians. It evolved inside the refugee camps in the neighbouring countries (especially in Lebanon), especially through the engagement of university students.

The failure of the Movement’s ideology in achieving its objectives of restoring Palestine through the mobilization of Arab countries paved the road for the dominance of a different wave of nationalism led also by Palestinians in exile (mid 1960s). The new movement witnessed the defeat of Arab armies in 1967 by Israel in six days and thus lost faith in the MAN’s ideology of liberating Palestine through

modernizing the Arab world. Unlike its predecessor, the new movement, Fateh, adopted the armed struggle as a means for liberation of Palestine and believed that Palestine can be restored only by Palestinians, and not Arabs. Narrowing the nationalist discourse, by focusing on the Palestinian identity, instead of the Arab identity, and with the adoption of armed struggle, this movement gained a quick rise in popularity especially among Palestinian refugees. The movement revived the hope that liberation of Palestine could be possible especially after implementing many successful military operations against Israel. This, in turn, increased Israel's worry about the consequences of Fateh's activities from outside Palestine (for example, from Lebanon). The result was the surrounding of the Movement's leadership in Lebanon by the Israeli army which was followed by the 1982 expulsion of the same leadership to Tunisia. The siege which took place in Lebanon affected the Movement profoundly, and soon after, it started to think of diplomacy as means for restoring *parts* of Palestine.

This dramatic change represented a profound weakness for the Movement's ideology and opened the door for other discourses to develop and dominate the political space. After the unilateral declaration of the state of Palestine in Algeria in 1988 by PLO, composed mainly by Fateh's affiliates, and the eruption of the first Intifada, Islamic movements started to mobilize people, especially in the occupied territories, against the occupation. Hamas, a political wing of Muslim Brotherhoods, holds an ideology that is different from its predecessors. Beside its belief in armed struggle as a means for liberation, it holds that Islam is the solution; a slogan that the Movement heavily used in its activities. For the movement, Palestine is an Islamic land and its mission is to get back this land to Muslims. The popularity of the movement increased throughout the Intifada's years because of its charity and social activities and got more popular being the opposition to the Oslo Accords which was seen as legitimizing the Israeli occupation of significant part of the Palestinian lands. The movement also became more dominant and popular after implementing many operations against Israeli targets; some of them through suicidal attacks. Due to their popularity, and the corruption of the Palestinian Authority, dominated by PLO and Fateh, they won the majority seats in the 2006's Legislative Council's elections.

As briefly described, these three faces of nationalism, namely pan-Arab nationalism (MAN as an example), Palestinian nationalism (Fateh as an example), and

Islamic nationalism (Hamas as an example), conflicted with each other. Although all of them had, at least initially, the objective of liberating the whole Palestine, their means and look at the struggle were significantly different. This conflict mirrors the difference in their perception of the Palestinian, the individual, the family and the society. While MAN held the image of the Palestinian who belongs to the Arab community that should be modernized in order to defeat Israel, Fateh held a more distinct image of the Palestinian who is nothing but a Palestinian freedom fighter. Hamas, at the opposite, sees Palestinians as Muslims who are part of the wider Islamic community *Ummah*. These initial perceptions had their more complex translations in everyday life and representations. Relevant to this research is their perception of children and childhood and the family.

[National state and the discourse of state-building](#)

The three successive and failing waves of nationalism paved the way for the peace process crowned by the Oslo Accords with a promise of establishing a Palestinian state that lives side-by-side with Israel. This shift of the national conscience toward state-building was a new major development and resulted in a ground-breaking change in the idealization of children and work. For the first time, Palestinian had to abandon the radical and military options and set on a negotiation table with Israel. This meant changing the national discourse to one that focuses on citizenship, peace, and productivity, instead of revolution, warfare and instability.

Ministries translated this vision into a set of practices in various fields including children's care and education. Children's schooling became obligatory and free. By 1999, 98 per cent of children at school age, were enrolled in schools, reaching nearly universal education. Children, in this discourse, were perceived as future state-builders who will be able to contribute to this national mission by getting educated. Any work undertaken by children, even in the family domain was condemned and illegalized through a set of laws that were stricter than international child labour conventions.

Parents were expected to act as citizens who have the responsibility of raising their children on patriotism towards the new state and obliging their children to go to schools. The traditional methods of socialization became old fashioned; a part of the history that needed to be abandoned. Gender equality was affirmed through a set of policies that guaranteed equal education and work opportunities for males and

females. Women were welcomed to hold positions that were traditionally dominated by men.

All these changes, at the level of rhetoric and practice, marked a real change in how people were perceived at least by the state. Children who were previously perceived as political activist through demonstrations and stone throwing (for example during the first Intifada), became pupils and future state-builders whose place should be in schools. Soon, these policies became a reality, as we will see in the last section of this chapter. However, it is worth to mention that the realization of this shift should not be only attributed to state policies. In fact, a number of factors contributed to this, including the aforementioned restriction policies enforced by Israel as well as the global trends on children, work and education.

3.4. The Hybridity or co-existence of various ideals and constructions of childhood

The ethnography collected reveals complex dynamics of coexistence between various ethos and ideals of childhood and children. The intertwining nature of these ideals and ethos and the relations between them, makes any exercise of conceptual deconstruction far from easy. On one level, one can observe the contestation between various local institutions (i.e. bureaucracy, religion, civil society, etc.) in defining and constructing childhood. On a second level, the local, although heterogeneous, is in constant dispute and negotiation with the global (in terms of ideals, images and discourses). A third level of friction and continuous reconstruction is attributed to the nation-based political conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, especially with the politicization of the figure of the child, at the core of it. These three layers, producing different forms of negotiations and constructions, and so ideals, prevent recognizing a single ideal, or clearly separate ideals, of childhood in contemporary Gaza.

4. The transformation of the job market and the shift toward education

The period of Oslo (1993-2000) witnessed a sharp increase in school enrolment for boys and girls alike. This increase was motivated by several factors; chief amongst them is the availability of new political and social space to accept change. The social space was facilitated partially by the return of well-educated Palestinians who lived in diaspora before the Oslo Accords. Those newcomers came with new values around work and education as a result of living in host countries. They were given high ranked jobs in the newly established Authority, because of their former involvement in the

liberation movement. Thus, their values and thoughts about education and work came to be affluent in the context of building the national system.

Palestinians have seen themselves, for the first time in history, in control of their own lives and matters. This fuelled a momentum for optimism and inspiration for the future. Alongside with the political and social space, there was the Palestinian *national* Authority's discourse built around the future state. It was not a surprise for the *embryo* state to focus on education of the offspring who will be the backbone of the future state. This can be explicitly seen in the rhetoric of different Ministries as well as in the expansion of the education institutions. Civil society organizations promoted education in a way that is coherent with the national discourse of education. This was possible through the generous funding which became available to these organizations (by international donors) immediately after Oslo.

Another key factor that came into play was the political situation. The gradual restriction on the movement of the Palestinian workers inside Israel enforced after the Oslo Accords by the Israeli government, under the claimed security threats, resulted in the loss of a major proportion of jobs which were available since 1970s. These jobs, as discussed, composed a major proportion of the labour force for Gazans. Those day-wage labourers became jobless at one stage or another between 1993 and 2000. For those labourers, the accidental unexpected loss of their jobs in Israel made it clear that they have invested in the wrong place. This is so, especially because their lack of academic qualifications made them unfit to get employed in the expanding public sector. The reactions to this radical change in their employment situation differed according to the age. The younger workers (married and unmarried) started to join schools or at least get enrolled for the general matriculation exam that qualify them to enter universities. Many also followed their late schooling with starting higher education degrees. For older workers, this was not an option because it was more difficult for them to join schools and universities, partially because of cultural reasons, or because they were the sole breadwinners of their families. What were common for both the younger and older workers was their investment in their children's education. It became a life lesson that they should get their children educated (in school and then universities) to secure them an employment in the public sector which was seen as essential for the survival of the whole extended family.

The preference to join the public sector was shaped by a set of factors. Firstly, employment in this sector was available, secondly, it represented a more secure form of employment when comparing with the wage labour in Israel³, and most importantly, it represented a work in the national state and not in the state of the *enemy*. Unlike the labour work undertaken by most Palestinians before Oslo in Israel, which was morally justified on the ground of the necessity for living, the work in Israel after Oslo was not culturally acceptable. Likewise, schooling during the first Intifada was a political activity, while schooling at time of Oslo was motivated by the necessity to secure a future good employment in the public sector.

The price of education: life strategies for education in the context of vulnerability
This shift toward education necessitated mobilizing family resources to the new project. Although most of Palestinian universities were registered as public institutions, students were required to pay tuition and semester fees which sometimes went beyond families' income and priorities. This was especially so, when family size was relatively big. Many families interviewed tried to negotiate this dilemma of choosing between the survival of the household and the education of many sons and daughters. One of the effective strategies to overcome this dilemma was observed by Rosenfeld (2004) in her ethnography in the West Bank. This strategy, as demonstrated earlier, was used from 1970s but continued during the first Intifada and after the Oslo Accords, for different reasons. This strategy entails investing in educating the elder sons and daughters with the hope that once they would become economically productive, they will be able to support their younger siblings throughout their education. In this way, the family would not compromise the survival for education or vice versa. This strategy became a pattern and was effective to the extent that has been endorsed by many families, until these days.

This pattern is well-reflected in my own family's history. My father was born in 1958 and got married at the age of 22 in 1980. He was working in Israel since he was 17 years old until Israel enforced a restriction on the movement of the workers in 2000. When he got unemployed, he started to invest in his sons and daughters' education. My three sisters, four brothers and I completed school. As we were good achievers in

³ Palestinian workers were exempted from Israeli labour law, and thus they were deprived of their basic rights to monthly salary (i.e. salary was given on daily basis), pension, holiday, etc. (Rosenfeld, 2002; Roy, 2007).

school, this encouraged my parents to invest in our university education. Although his wife and sisters have not completed their school years and/or entered universities, he made no distinction between his sons and daughters' education. As our family lived in poverty when he lost his job in Israel, financing all my siblings' education was very difficult so my parents put more attention in getting the older three kids educated. I am the elder amongst my siblings so I was expected to support the other siblings' education once I graduate and find a job. This is what my sister, brother, and I did once we completed university degrees. Thanks to this life strategy, all my siblings managed to complete their university education. I personally know a lot of families who adopted this strategy.

[Gender and new role of working women in the context of Oslo](#)

The context of the Oslo Accords was a turning point for girls' education. In fact, school education witnessed a sharp rise in the 5 years following Oslo and the gender gap in this area started to sharply narrow. This can be seen in the statistics of the FAFO survey commissioned in 1993 and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). The girls schooling and the increasing attention given to girls' education were much influenced by public policies and the changing labour market.

During the Oslo era, the demand for jobs that were acceptable for women to do (like doctors, nurses, teachers, etc.) increased because of the expansion of the public sector. Women were socially encouraged to undertake such work because it does not necessitate extended working hours or night shifts. This increase in the number of graduates can be reflected in the numbers of the male and female graduates in that period, and the number of female graduates that exceeded the male graduates after 2000 (statistics from PCBS).

Another important factor that came into interplay was the need for a second breadwinner's income in a context where the size of the family continued to be bigger than in the neighbouring countries and other Palestinian territories (like the West Bank). This need for a second breadwinner, especially among the younger generation, has been translated into a preference to marry working women (and especially women with white collar jobs). Gradually, the taboo of women's work started to ease under the influence of arranged marriages' new preferences. The rise of work as a preference for marriage, in its turn, made more families invest in their children's

schooling and university education. Women's education and work became important factors for marriageability.

Although the gender gap in school education started to narrow, not all the girls were able to continue in university education. This is because many communities continued to hold reservations on girls' schooling, females' education, and women's work. This situation is another example of the confrontation and convergence of two ideals around women and education; the traditional local idealization of woman as a wife and mother, and the emerging idealization of her as a partner and worker. These reservations on women's employment were challenged and eased under the intensity of poverty. In this context, women's work started to be normalized and women started to take part in the conventionally male-dominated jobs like engineering and medicine. Before Oslo, as, there were many women working in Israel in low-skilled labour sector's jobs like cleaning, farming, sewing and gardening. This change, shaped by the necessity of the state to have female employees and the families' need for additional income, paved the road for challenging the traditional divisions of labour

Not only the divisions of labour were reconstructed, wider gender roles and patriarchy came into question as well. Many believe that women's work started, although not sufficiently, to give women more independence and a say in decisions that traditionally were taken by men solely. Others contend by arguing that women's work did not challenge the gender roles as most women continued to undertake care work inside the private sphere. Their income, although equal to the men's, was not seen as principal and critical to family survival the same way men's income was treated. Ethnographic evidence suggest patriarchy at this stage, has not been challenged entirely, even with the contextual challenges and conditions that necessitated women's work.

Children's work and education in the context of the Second Intifada (2000-2013)

1. Introduction

At the end of 1990s, the peace process between the Palestinian Authority and Israel reached a stalemate. This led to a massive deterioration of the political and economic situation of Palestinians; a trigger that resulted in the breakout of the Second *Intifada*. Since then, dramatic changes took place in the relation between the Palestinians and Israelis, most of these were characterized by hostility. Unilateral actions, undertaken by Israel, have deteriorated the living conditions of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian territories, especially in Gaza. Besides the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, restrictions on movement of persons and goods were enforced. Both this expansion, which is illegal according to the international law, and the restrictions on movement made the everyday life of Palestinians instable, uncertain, and very difficult.

The closure has 'locked in' over 1.8 million people in one of the most densely populated areas on earth leading to degrading living conditions and a serious decline in the provision of services such as education and healthcare. As a result of this, 'the whole of Gaza's civilian population is being punished for acts for which they bear no responsibility'. This 'collective punishment', according to International Committee of Red Cross, is considered a clear violation to Israel's obligations under the international humanitarian law (ICRC, 2010).

This chapter explores children's work and education in the context of fragility in Gaza. It attempts to deconstruct the complexity of children and families' choices towards work and education. It does so by drawing on 14 interviews with children and their parents from two different neighbourhoods in Gaza. These people were

interviewed during the fieldwork conducted in October-December 2014 and through the ethnography collected via Skype in September- November 2015.

The two sites of research were quite different. Beitlahia is a rural village, in the north of Gaza, inhabited mostly by non-refugees. A significant number of people used to work in agriculture, but they are currently abandoning this economic activity. The other site is Alshati' [al-Shāṭi'], (which means the beach in Arabic) which is an overcrowded refugee camp in the western part of Gaza city. The camp went through many waves of urbanization, but it is still called *camp* due to the fact that its inhabitants were originally refugees. Many of the population there work in fishery due to their closeness to the sea. Also, this economic activity has been progressively being abandoned because of the restrictions on fishery imposed by Israel.

The chapter starts by giving a general overview of the political and economic milestones which happened in children's generation. So, it looks at political and economic changes which took place between 2000 and 2015 (children who were born from 2000, are now 18-year old). This overview is followed by a description of cases of working children building on the collected ethnography. It challenges different stereotypes on working children. It also looks at the complexity of the relation between education, work, employment, and marriageability. Then, it discusses these findings in the context of ideals of childhood, manhood and womanhood in Gaza. At the end of the chapter, a link is established between the structural political and economic difficulties and the patterns/trends observed in children's work and education in Gaza.

2. Context

2.1. The Second 'Intifada (Al-Aqsa Uprising)

In the framework of the Oslo Accords the Palestinians and Israelis agreed to resolve the pending contentious issues through a five-year negotiation process including the Right to Return (UN resolution 194), Jerusalem, borders, and settlements. However, notwithstanding a series of peace conferences and negotiations, both sides failed to reach an agreement on these issues. This resulted in the eruption of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* (the Second Uprising, in English) in September 2000 (Muhanna, 2013). Consequently, the living conditions of the Palestinians in the territories deteriorated. The majority of population became dependant on food assistance, provided by UNRWA or other relief agencies (OCHA, 2012, 2014, 2015a, 2017). What used to be a

flourished job market before 2000, shrank due to saturation of the capacity of the public sector and the political division between two leading political parties (Hamas and Fateh). In fact, the consequences of the political division were catastrophic. It has affected the economic and social conditions of the overall population in Gaza, and public service employees in particular (Muhanna, 2013). In parallel with this, Israel continued to tighten the blockade it progressively imposed since the parliamentary election in 2006. The blockade on the Gaza Strip was imposed not only on the movement of the people but also on trade and the entry of humanitarian assistance. Through its blockade, Israel banned the entry of the basic needs such as food, medicines, fuel – necessary for electricity – and other necessary commodities.

2.2. Massive military escalations

What exacerbated the humanitarian situation even more was the onset of three large-scale military conflicts between Israel and Hamas inside the Gaza Strip. All initiated by Israel, the first in December 2008 (for 23 days), the second in November 2012 (for 8 days), and the third in July 2014 (for 51 days), resulted in a new record of injuries and death tolls. The first, resulted in the killings of more than 1,414 Palestinians, an overwhelming majority of them (83%) were civilians (Operation Cast Lead). 313 persons out of the death toll (22%) were children. Moreover, it resulted in injuries to more than 5,300 persons, 1,606 of them were children (PCHR, 2009). The second, named Operation Pillar of Defense, resulted in the deaths of 174 Palestinians and injuries to 1,046 persons including 446 children and 105 women (OCHA, 2013). The third was the largest-in-scale military operation against Palestinian targets since the occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem in 1967 (Operation Protective Edge). It resulted in the killing of 2,256, injuries to, and displacement of 500,000 people in Gaza (OCHA, 2015a). Besides the substantial loss of lives and properties, the operations have resulted in a devastating socio-economic situation and widespread impoverishment. Moreover, they resulted in more restriction on the movement of people and goods than ever before.

2.3. The current political situation

The three large-scale military operations, the sharp increase in hostilities, and the siege on Gaza and its population resulted in an extraordinary fatigue for its Palestinians residents. Displacement, unemployment, and besiegement became the

main features of daily life in Gaza. This exceptional situation made the UN release a statement that Gaza will not be a liveable place in 2020 (UNSCO, 2012).

The political division between the two leading political parties (Hamas and Fateh) for more than ten subsequent years made life intolerable. Security regimes affiliated to Hamas and Fateh, in Gaza and in the West Bank respectively, practice brutal forms of oppression, through detention and interrogation, against their opponents. Despite all initiatives made, by local and international parties, to establish a reconciliation between the political parties in order to activate the rule of law and the work of the Palestinian Legislative Council, nothing has been achieved in reality.

3. [The Palestinian economy since Oslo Accords \(1993- now\)](#)

The contemporary political situation, discussed earlier, has resulted in a fragile and mostly dependent economy both at the Palestinian Authority and households' levels. The Palestinian Authority relies on the international donors and tax revenues (collected by Israel) to pay the salaries of the public employees and to provide public goods. At the same time, households depend on the Palestinian Authority resources or the international donors to sustain their livelihood. Thus, the macro and micro economy are characterized by instability and uncertainty. An *economy of aid* has emerged. The following sections shed the light on some of the economic aspects and contextualize the understanding of children's work in later in this chapter.

3.1. [The dependence on foreign aid](#)

As discussed before, the Palestinian Authority is one of the countries with highest Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) per capita worldwide. This availability of foreign aid developed a form of dependence on donors' generosity. Le More (2008) claims that the Palestinian Authority (PA) continued to function only because of the support from the international donors; a claim which is asserted by the Palestinian Government that, itself, admitted that 'stability and growth in the Palestinian economy remains largely dependent on public expenditure, backed by substantial external aid' (PNA, 2010, p. 7). This dependence on aid has been widely criticized by national as well as international institutions. For example, the World Bank, in the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) Meeting 2007, criticized the transformation of the Palestinian economy from being driven by the private sector and investments to one 'sustained by donor aid' (The World Bank, 2008, p. 2).

Nevertheless, and despite this dependence, foreign aid has been criticized for its limited impact on the lives of the people. Despite of the vertiginous sums of money that have been pledged and disbursed, the living conditions have been worsening (Le More, 2008). For example, poverty prevails in the Palestinian territories despite the availability of resources to eradicate poverty. Statistics show that more than 38.8% of the Gaza population live in poverty, and that 21.1% live in absolute poverty (PCBS, 2013b). The most recent estimates also show that 65% of the households in Gaza depend on food assistance and more than 44% of people are food insecure (PCBS, 2013b).

This awkward role of aid in the Palestinian territories could be attributed to a set of complex reasons. Some of them are related to the foreign aid system itself (i.e. international development programmes), others are related to the Palestinian governance system; its lack of transparency and accountability. Moreover, the lack of sovereignty has a decisive role on aid in the Palestinian territories. In fact, a sustainable development process cannot be achieved in the context of the Israeli policies and practices including the control of borders and resources, and the annexation of Palestinian economy to the Israeli economy (Le More, 2004b; PCBS, 2013b).

3.2. The delivery of aid in territories under occupation

The humanitarian crisis, the prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict heightened since 2003, Israel's blockade of Gaza in 2007 and the military offensives in 2008, 2012 and 2014 brought the Palestinian society to fall down reaching a state of fragmentation. The blockade restricts the movement of people and goods, preventing the majority of the population from working or accessing agricultural land. Restrictions on importing goods have crippled public service provision and created an environment of chronic food insecurity. This chronic situation contributed to the expansion of the informal economy that pushed vulnerable and disadvantaged households to survival activities to maintain their subsistence. Also, the blockade has effectively isolated the Gaza Strip from the rest of the world resulting in more obstacles to trade, investment and by large the growth and development. The World Bank report on poverty in Gaza and the West Bank (2011) unveiled the genuine Palestinian economy status:

Following the Second Intifada of 2000, the Palestinian economy began to resemble no other in the world. Limited say over economic policies and

trade, the extent of dependence on Israel and international aid and a regime of internal and external closures has created an economy characterized by extreme fluctuations in growth and employment and an increasing divergence between the two territories: the West Bank a fragmented archipelago; and Gaza an increasingly isolated island.

(The World Bank, 2011, p. 1)

3.3. The impact of aid economy on the social life

Relevant to this discussion on aid, is the impact of economic instability and aid dependence, on the lives of the people in the Palestinian territories. Besides the internal Palestinian conflict, aid has contributed to dramatically changing the social construction of work and activity. The high unemployment rate, resulted from the rigorous blockade, has increased people's dependence on aid. Gradually, this dependence affected the value of work, which was traditionally perceived as an honourable activity.

The uncertainty features in the political and economic reality has influenced the various aspects of daily life of Palestinians such as employment, education, and marriage. Using case studies collected during the fieldwork, the next section highlights how political and economic situation affected, and were affected by, children's work and education during this generation.

4. Children's work and education in contemporary children's generation (2000-2016)

4.1. The story of Warda

Warda is a 13-year old girl from Beitlahia. She lives with her family composed of her parents and seven siblings (6 sisters and 1 brother); she is the eldest among them. Her father (aged 34 years) is unemployed. Before that, he used to work as vegetables vendors, but because of the sharp increase in vegetables' prices, he is no longer able to work in this domain. Instead, he sometimes works with his brothers in the farm they have. The father attended the school when he was a child, but he then dropped out when he reached the seventh grade because of his poor school performance.

Her mother (30 years old) is a housewife. She dropped out of school when she was in the ninth grade. Unlike her father, her mother was the best in school performance at schooling time. Despite her outstanding performance, she dropped out of school, under massive pressure from her mother, to get married. Warda's mother did not accept this decision of dropping out of school easily especially because of her high

school achievement and aspiration but she forcefully accepted it under the social pressure of the family. Before getting married, Warda's mother was working with her brothers in farming. According to Warda, her mother's brothers were tough and uneasy. Before dropping out of school, she was working in farms besides going to school. Her mother's father was in Jordan and passed away when she was one month old, and her elder brothers and mother took care of her until she got married. Warda's father wanted to allow her mother to continue her education especially because her notable high performance at school but his parents did not want her to continue her education because they needed her hands in the farm work and household activities.

Warda is currently a student at the eighth grade in school. According to Warda, her school performance is very good. She reported that she spends 3-5 hours a day in revising lessons and studies. Currently, Warda is not working but she used to work with her father in her uncles' farms (when she was 10 years old). They were collecting eggplants, beans, and other vegetables. At the same time, she was going to school immediately after the morning shift of work. She was not getting any cash in return, but her father did.

Warda addressed the impact of her work on her studies. She said that she was doing weaker at school when she was working because she did not have the time to read and revise lessons. She said that she used to feel inferior to the other girls. While other girls focus on their studies without the need to work, she had to combine work and education. Because of her work, she used to go late to school, which exposed her to teachers and headmaster violence. She could not admit that she was working because "it was shameful to work at [that] age".

At the same time, Warda expressed her happiness when she was working because she was able to contribute to the household income. She also felt equal to her brother who was also working. As she puts it, "whenever the family talked about work in the family, I felt proud of being productive and that I am equal to my brother". She added, "the best moment of my work was when I was getting my wage from my uncles and giving it to my father". She was happy because of her father's happiness and appraisal of her. Her father was particularly proud of her because she was doing relatively good at the same time she was working.

Through work, Warda developed a sense of responsibility for her family featured in her care of the younger siblings and in taking care of household activities. She said: “my cousins have never worked, and they can easily feel fatigued when doing simple activities because they have not been used to exhausting activities”. Her decision to work is connected to this sense of responsibility. Reflecting on this, Warda reported:

We have been through a very difficult situation in the house and we did not have any food or money. At that time, my brother went to help my father (when he was in the first – second grade). He was collecting beans and other vegetables. I felt that I should do the same, and started to work with them. My father realized that my work was good and that I could help them so he allowed me to continue the work. I felt that I could not sit at home while others are working in the farms. I can eat and drink because of them, because of their work”.

When Warda grow up, she wanted to give more priority to her education and thus asked her father to skip some working days, but her father disagreed. She said, “my mother, at the contrary, was on my side and she was trying to convince my father to let me focus on my education”. However, because the final word was for her father, she could not help in this. It is important to mention that dropping out of school (i.e. abandoning school education), because of Warda’s contribution to work, was not an option for her father nor her mother. Warda reported that when the work affected her school performance, she thought of dropping out of school, but her father and mother did not approve that. Once the economic situation of her father improved and he was able to buy a donkey cart for selling vegetables, her work was not necessary, and she could focus more on her schooling.

When Warda was asked about her opinion of children’s work, she responded:

I think work is not good for young children. I was little when I worked and I did not know that work is not good, but later I realized the importance of education. After dedicating my time to education, I became more aware of the things I lost because of my work. The childhood is the best thing in life and I feel that I lost my childhood in farms.

What I observed in her statement was an articulated argument around work and education. Warda perceives education as a medium to break the vicious circle of poverty and disempowerment. Being inspired by her mother’s story, she reflected on

how education can help in sustaining good living conditions not only for the educated individuals but also for their families. She explained:

the children who work do not understand that education would help them for the whole of their life. The ones who focus on education will go to university and they can help their family when getting employed. They also can help in teaching their kids. If my mother had the chance to complete her education, she would have helped us now. I would not have worked if my mother was helping in family income.

Besides linking education to empowerment, Warda explained the social aspect of education outlining that

The girl sometimes learns to have good groom, and to feel that she is not inferior to others who get educated. Girls learn so that her children become proud of her and so that she helps her husband in family income. It is not to become independent. You do not get education to help yourself only. You should help your family who helped you to continue your education journey.

Warda reflected on her work experience and said that when she was very young (7 years) when she started to work, but as she got older, she became more aware and prioritized education on work. She expressed a form of regret for having worked when she was seven. Warda wanted to become a nurse and thus see the importance of completing the secondary school and study at the university. In fact, many of her relatives were nurses, she explained.

In her choice to education and work, Warda was influenced by the life story of her family including her mother and grandmother. When she reflected on the story of her mother when she dropped out of school, she reported that her mother was the youngest among her brothers who were married. She did not have a say when her mother and brothers decided that she should work, and later, that she should drop out of school for marriage. She was able to combine education and work until she dropped out of school to get married. She added: “they would have beaten her if she did not accept their decision”.

Warda was deeply inspired by her mother’s story and the sadness of her mother felt for not being able to continue her education. This was a key factor for Warda to prioritize education on work. She also expressed her worries not to be able to continue her education if her family forced her to marry soon. Her mother

encouraged her to continue her education referring to her life story and the sad experience of being deprived of her ambition to study. She told her many times:

I do not want you to end up in the same route I had in my life. I wanted you to complete your studies, enter the university, and get employed, so that your children become proud of you in the future”.

Warda reported that her grandmother has a sort of regret for not allowing Warda's mother to continue her education. Her grandmother now feels the importance of a second breadwinner in the family. Her grandmother told Warda once “I wish I had allowed my daughter to continue her education and to get employed. She would have been helping her husband in this harsh situation”.

The story of Warda was of special interest because it shows the complexity of children's work as a phenomenon. Her story shows the role different factors play in decision making process such as, family history, living conditions, educational environment among many other factors. The following stories of other children interviewed contribute in shedding light on this complexity.

4.2. Work and education

One of the main arguments of the campaigners against children's work is that work essentially affects schooling and child education. Warda's story sheds a light on the complexity of combining work with education. She was able to combine education and work at the same time. She used to go for work in the farms at the morning before going to school at the afternoon. Combining education and work was not easy because it was leaving Warda exhausted at the end of the day. This also affected her school performance, as she could not find the time, for working and studying, to compete with the top students in school. Warda was not an exception. In fact, combining work and education features in most of the cases interviewed in the two neighbourhoods. The stories of Hadeel and Manar (girls from Beitlahia) and Moayad and Akram (boys from Beitlahia), for example, show that work and education are not incompatible. They demonstrated that they either worked in the past, or are currently working, besides their schooling. Their work did not prevent them from continuing their education. The fact that most of the children still go to schools despite the widespread poverty indicate the centrality of education to the communities in Gaza. This centrality features in children's attempts not to drop out of school as long as possible. The ethnographic work conducted shows that schooling

was a priority for the children and the families in all cases regardless of the social and economic class and gender.

4.3. Dropping out of school and work

Contrary to the literature on children's work and education, ethnography I collected shows that most children do not drop out of school in order to work. This fact features across the ethnographic work conducted in both neighbourhoods. The main reasons behind children's dropout of school were 1) low school performance, 2) chronic disease or physical and mental disability or 3) marriage (especially for girls). These reasons demonstrated to be the most responsible for children's dropouts. Having one, or more, of these reasons does not necessarily mean that a child would drop out of school. In fact, the actual leaving of school goes through a series of negotiations and discussions at the family level. In most of the time, the first choice is to stay at school and try to overcome the effects of the abovementioned reasons. Once this becomes impossible, the child decides to leave school. Sometimes, the child takes the decision himself/herself without any consultation with the family, or secretly like in the case of Nael (a 17-year boy from Beitlahia). In other cases, dropping out is a big familial decision that is taken jointly by the child, parents, and elder siblings as in the case of Samar (15-year old girl from Alshati').

Wael, a 15-year old boy, for example, dropped out of school because of his poor school performance that resulted in fights with teachers. He said:

I dropped out because of the teacher. We had a fight, and he started to [verbally] abuse me and I couldn't accept it. We had a fight, and in reaction he failed me that year and I responded that I will not come back to his class next year, and that's why I dropped out.

Wael linked his choice to leave school to abusive practices at school especially against poor school achievers. He outlined that it hurts him not to be able to read or write at elder age at school especially when 'students do not stop bullying [him] in the class and everywhere'. Learning an occupation, in this context, is more dignifying especially as people who usually take such a choice (of vocational training) are not *top achievers* in school. Children in this context do not feel intimidated or insulted by teachers who often expect them to do better at school.

He openly expressed his desire of leaving the school since he was in the third grade. His father was convincing him to proceed, year after year, until he made up his mind

to drop out of school in the seventh grade. He referred his drop out to both the need for income and low school achievement. He said: “I decided to work instead of proceeding with education because I wanted to bring food and needs to my family. And I cannot study”.

Before completely dropping out of school, he used to skip some school days and work to get some money. The work was not available on a continuous basis, so he was going to school in between. Before and after he dropped out of school, he occasionally worked in farms, streets, whenever and wherever possible. Recently, he joined a vocational training programme to learn denting; a similar track one of his elder siblings took two years ago. Once he joined the programme, he stopped working heavily and he gave the priority to learning denting. He is happy about his experience in the vocational training centre especially as he sees the potential of opening a workshop himself.

4.4. Vocational training as a mid-way between education and work

As demonstrated in Wael’s case, and in many other cases, the vocational training is sometimes *the* last resort when schooling became impossible. Many of the children, and their parents, prefer this track as it ensures a kind of continuity of the child’s education. It also assures parents that their child will have an opportunity to master a profession based on a two-year educational programme. This will give them more professional skills, and a better chance in getting employed. At the same time, such programmes would minimize hazards resulting from the random involvement of the child in exploitative and hazardous work (for example working as an assistant in car mechanic workshops, or in the coal industry like in the case of Nael). Although, the vocational training was the choice of 6 children interviewed (4 boys and 2 girls), this choice was not possible for three of them. This was because of the limited number of vocational training centres in the Gaza strip, especially the governmental and free-admission centres, and the strict prerequisites for admission to these centres (age, admission exams, etc.).

4.5. Disability, education and work

As outlined earlier, children do not leave schooling only because of their school performance. The case of Wafaa (13-year old girl from Beitlahia) shed the light on other factors; disability, and stigma associated to it, is one of them.

Wafaa lives with her family composed of her parents and seven siblings; she is the eldest amongst them. Her father works as a taxi driver (the car is owned by her father who works in shift along with his brother). Before that, the father used to work in agriculture sector (as a day-wage labourer). Her father dropped out of school when he was in the fourth grade and he is not able to read or write. Her mother is a housewife and she dropped out of school at an earlier age (in third grade) and she currently does not know how to read or write. Wafaa dropped out of school too when she started her eighth grade. However, he left the school for a different reason. According to her parents, she suffers from muscle atrophy. The chronic disease resulted in progressively preventing her from walking easily. She walks few steps before falling down. Wafaa reported that she left the school because of the constant bullying practiced by her peers at school. Because of the progressive nature of the disease, she was able to attend the first grades of school before she became unable to easily move. She went through a surgery when she was in the fourth grade, but the operation was unsuccessful. Because of the constant bullying, the family encouraged Wafaa not to leave the house. The father listened finally to acquaintances' advice to drop Wafaa out of school. She also dropped out of school as her performance at school was very low by the time she was at the eighth grade.

School was not only an educational space for Wafaa, it was also a social space where she can hang out of with friends and meet new people. To fulfil her desire to learn and to socialize, Wafaa joined a local community centre where qualified teachers provided remedial education classes. She receives a better treatment and understanding in the centre. Besides going to the centre, Wafaa helped her mother in the household activities. In addition, she takes care of the small field behind their house. This includes grass cutting and irrigating the few trees of lemon, citrus and olives. She reported that she was doing this voluntarily and without any delegation from her parents. The crops produced are consumed domestically. For her, this work is a sort of entertaining activity she enjoys doing while being at home.

The case of Wafaa, and Warda before, does not support the arguments which dominate the discourse on the relationship between work and education. These two cases show that work does not start immediately when a child leave the school. Many children leave school, for different reasons, without any prospects to work in the future. Once they dropped out of school, work, vocational training, or doing nothing

become available options. In a culture that detests idleness, work and training became the more appropriate and socially acceptable options.

4.6. Free or forced choices

The ethnography collected touched on a very controversial issue in the topic of childhood in general, and children's work in particular. This issue is related to agency and free choice. It was surprising for me to see how children think of decision made, and their say in the decision process. In most of the cases, children demonstrated that it was their choice to continue schooling, dropout, or combine both schooling and work together. At the beginning, I thought their statement were politically aiming at showing some levels of comfort in the decision taken and control over their current situation. Soon later, when I interviewed the parents, I realized the high extent to which children were in control of their decisions and actions. This features in Warda's resistance to drop out of school despite the indicators that suggest that her father may force her, in the near future, to leave school for marriage. This also can be seen in Nael's story in which he dropped out of school without informing his parents. He kept this secret for two months before the family was informed by the school administration that he had dropped out. Nael understood that if he had informed his parents of his decision to drop out immediately, this step would have been reversible. In not informing the family about this major issue for two months, he wanted his action to be irreversible.

This features also in the negotiations Samar (15-year old girl from Alshati') went through to convince her father that school was not a good choice for her, and that it was better for her to join a vocational training programme and learn hair-styling. Years later, Samar realized that vocational training and work would not substitute education, and had to go through a different negotiation, to convince the family of her desire to study after she dropped out of school. Confidently, she expressed that she knows how to convince her father. She said: "I am good in this [convincing her father], I can change my father's decisions easily. I know what it takes to make him change his mind". Agency was observed in their comfort with the decisions they take. In fact, most of them do not regret their choices of education, work, or combining both of them.

By being assertive about their choices and not showing regret, many children showed how their decisions were based on a realistic and pragmatic analysis of the

living conditions and the consequences of their decisions. They openly discussed the reasoning behind the decisions they made. This demonstrates how responsible they are on their choices and actions. The reasoning of Nael (17-year old boy from Beitlahia) is a good example here. He dropped out of school at the 11th grade hoping to join a vocational training programme. Unfortunately, he has not been accepted in the programme. At the time of the interview, he was occasionally working in a coal manufacturing. Nael said that he would not continue his schooling even if he was doing better at school. He explained that he had to work to secure his, and his family, needs. At the same time, he admitted that graduates usually have more comfortable jobs than the people who have not completed their schooling and university, he acknowledged that he would not take this route (of studies and university). This is because this route would take longer time without guarantees of employment. He knows about queues of unemployed graduates waiting any opportunity to work. He said:

When you are at school, you don't work during vacations, and you do so when you are at the university. What is the value of your certificate? To find a job after the university is not easy

For him, there is no point of waiting and waiting and instead, he would work without investing in education. His logic has not developed in a vacuum; it is in fact reflecting the everyday struggle for work in the Palestinian territories especially in the context of the second Intifada. Free choice is never an absolute free choice. In fact, children's choices and decisions to work or study are influenced by a variety of factors. Some of these factors are related to family characteristics, personality of the child, and the history of family's work and education.

4.7. Family size and choice to work and/or school education

Most of the children of Beitlahia interviewed (6 out of 8) came from big-sized families (more than 6 siblings). There was an explicit relation between the family size and the choice to work. Although this family size is not very higher than the average family size in Gaza (5.6 person per family in Gaza according to PCBS, 2018), the size proved to be a motivating factor for children's work. The significance of this factor increases when 1) the child is male as in case of Nael and Wael, and 2) he/she is one of the older siblings in the family as in case of Hadeel, Warda and Wafaa.

One of the possible explanations is that harsh economic conditions play an influential role in making work a feasible choice for the elder children. As family size increases the economic vulnerability of the family, elder siblings step forward as rescuers for their younger siblings. Especially male children step forward to help possibly because of the well-embedded ideal of the male as responsible breadwinner and work being a marker of manhood.

Interestingly, especially when a big-sized family has infants or toddlers, the elder children start to think of working to support the family. This can be attributed to the sharp increase in family expenses when having a new child. These new expenses are not easily negotiated as they are related to the health and survival of the newly born child.

In many of the cases, the younger children tend to have more commitment to school, in comparison with elder children. Two possible reasons could be seen behind this pattern. The first is that it is a form of diversifying life strategies across siblings so that when one fails (for example labour), the other works (schooling, and employment). The second, it may mean that younger siblings benefit from elder siblings' lessons of life and adopt schooling as they saw their siblings' work is not significantly influencing the income and living conditions of the family.

The later explanation was clearly observed in the cases of a number of children who prioritized education over work. Although some of them have temporary work experiences (seasonal or occasional), they think of education as a way to go for the future and as a life strategy for improving living conditions. This featured in Manar's case (12-year old girl from Beitlahia). She is the sixth in order among her 9 siblings. Three of her elder siblings dropped out school because of low school achievement. One of them started to work and got married. She worked in farms while giving the priority to education. This also can be seen in Akram's (13-year old boy from Beitlahia). Akram has 6 siblings and he is the youngest. He worked during summer holidays, but he did not drop out of school. Akram prioritized education as he saw his elder siblings struggling to find a work after they dropped out of school.

4.8. Family history, and children's work

One of the main interests of this research is to explore the intergenerational aspects of children's work. For this, it was essential to interview not only children, but also

their parents. It is interesting to see how the life stories of parents strongly affect children's attitudes, choices, and actions. These stories have two different influences; the first is the inspirational effect, and the second is the lesson-learned-effect.

The inspirational effect can be seen in Bilal (17-year old boy from Alshati') who is committed to education because of the influence of his mother's story. His mother was a pedagogy graduate. Because of her university education, his mother was able to get an employment and significantly contribute to family's income. The boy used his mother's history of education and employment as a guide for his track in life.

Although he had some experience in working for his relatives and was able to get some cash in return, he was convinced that the real investment should be in education. His rationale was that education, and higher education, is more likely to secure the person's future against the backdrop of the political and economic instability.

The second can feature in the story of Warda mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The story of Warda's mother influenced Warda significantly in a way that increased her commitment to education and schooling. Warda's mother was forced to leave school to get married although he was one of the best achievers at her school. This story encouraged Warda to deprioritize the option of working in relatives' farms as it was affecting her education negatively.

This effect was also noticed across the cases of children whose parents dropped out of school at a very early age and especially in the cases of the parents who cannot read or write (like in case of Wael's father). The children expressed their thoughts regarding their preference of education linking it to their family history where education was lacking. In their choices, in some cases, they were trying to avoid the harsh living conditions their families were forced to live because of the lack of education especially as education could have secured them a proper and sustainable employment (as seen in Akram's case). It also featured in Yasmeen and Samar (both girls from Alshati's area) whose parents dropped out school at an early age. Both decided to learn from their parents' stories by joining a vocational training programme when schooling became impossible due to their low school achievement.

In the case of Jehad (17-year old boy from Alshati'), this influence was there in an interesting way. Despite his acknowledgement of the advantages of work in

negotiating within the generational order and its impact in upgrading his status as a responsible man, he decided not to work. Although he benefited from cash he secured from work in construction during summer holidays, he decided to take a track that is different from the one had taken by his parents. He is committed to schooling and does not think of dropping out.

4.9. Gender and work

As demonstrated earlier, children drop out of school for different reasons. In the Gaza context, most children drop out of school because of the low school performance which prevents them from moving to the next level of education in school. Only a minority of children drops out to work; all of them are boys. In fact, girls showed more commitment to education than boys. One of the reasons for this is the social expectations on boys and girls in the patriarchal society. Unlike boys, girls are not expected to take over parents' or elder siblings' responsibility in sustaining the household income. Girls are expected to help in household activities, go to school, and receive higher education if they were good in school until they get married. Of course, they can work in the farms or family business, but this work holds no prospects of productivity in the future. For example, it has no training or income-generating value.

Boys are raised up on the ideals of responsibility and manhood. It is socially acceptable, for them, to stay at school as long as they are doing well there. Once they demonstrate low school performance, the expectations and priorities become totally different. Continuing at school without any indicators that the child will continue his studies at university is conceived, by the local society, as a big failure. Once they drop out of school, children become under pressure of meeting the new expectations; leaving childhood behind and starting the race towards manhood. Leaving school is a significant marker that the child is no longer a child, or at least, he is in the stage of preparation for adulthood. This is especially true where school is treated as the typical space for childhood.

When children, especially boys, leave schools, family and local community start to treat them as grownups, or at least men-in-preparation. This look puts children under social pressure to prove his masculinity and manhood. Getting older, marriage, bringing children, and work are all social markers of complete adulthood, and for boys, manhood. As getting elder cannot be accelerated, and marriage and bringing

children cannot be done because of the complexity of the marriage project, children start working as a step towards achieving this social status related to adulthood, and manhood. Work becomes the only marker children can use to transcend their generational inferior status.

Girls are more committed to education because of different ideals of adulthood that are basically related to womanhood. Girls are expected to fulfil social roles of wives and mothers for their nuclear families. Most of the girls interviewed showed that schooling was important because it will help them in teaching their (future) children in a proper way. Most of parents of those girls dropped out of school in primary education level and many of them do not read or write. Girls (of this generation) see the significance of education as it will make their (future) children prouder of them as clearly expressed by children I interviewed. Only a minority of girls highlighted the pragmatic aspect of completing education. One of the children said that schooling and then higher education will help her in finding a proper job so that she can help her future husband and family. Others referred to their parents' regret for not completing their education that would increase their employability which would have helped them in this harsh economic situation.

In this context, work (at school age) has less significance for girls than for boys. Here, I refer mainly to the manual low-skilled work that does not necessitate any education or training. However, employment, which comes after higher education, has a higher significance for girls for two reasons; 1) it increased their opportunities to marriage with educated men with better economic capabilities and social status, and once marriage is done, 2) it gives the girl (or woman) a higher chance to participate in household decisions through her economic contribution. Thus, employment is valued for marriageability and empowerment (Muhanna, 2013). As expected, this significance of employment, for girls, explains the aforementioned commitment to education among girls as it is the way to get a job.

Interestingly, the commitment to education can be clearly seen in refugees' communities. In Alshati' for example, girls who drop out of school because of the low achievement take another educational chance by joining vocational training centres. As in the case of Yasmeen and Samar (two girls from Alshati's aged 16-year and 15-year old respectively). In fact, one of them (Samar) decided to re-join the educational

system three years after dropping out school. She joined home-education (*manzeli*) when re-joining school became more difficult. The same can be observed, to a lesser extent, in rural non-refugee communities where the woman is idealized as a housewife who raises up her children.

Commitment to education comes mainly from the child him/herself especially in the rural non-refugee communities like in Beitlahia. Children are more likely to adopt this track when their parents are illiterate or had been deprived from education like in the case of Warda. In refugee communities, like in Alshati', the child's commitment to education is even supported by parents' encouragement. Some of those parents have not completed their education and thought that a better life would have been possible if they supported their children's education. Others support their children's education on the ground of their own experience and life lessons they learned.

In the same way work helps children, especially boys, to transcend generational differences, work helps also girls in challenging gender roles and the patriarchal order in general. Warda (a 13-year old girl from Beitlahia) reported how work helped her to feel equal to her younger brother. Through work, and contributing to household income, she was demonstrating her importance and usefulness to the family.

The household activities, conducted mainly by the mother and the girls, are not useful for negotiating within the context of patriarchy, where gender and age are the main organizers of the social order. This is because these activities are obligatory and normalized for girls. Moreover, because these activities lack *direct* economic value, they are not useful when it comes to challenging patriarchy.

I would like to complement these fieldwork findings by also delving into my family history. By 2018, most of my siblings received their university education but none of them was able to find a job¹. They were good in school and university but the lack of jobs due to the blockade and the political fragmentation made them all unemployed.

¹ Since their graduation, my siblings were engaged in a series of training courses to overcome the difficulty of finding a job. This situation changed in 2019 when two of them got employed. One of them is in a local non-governmental organization in Gaza and the other through working for an engineering company in the Gulf.

This is true for all university specializations. An interview with my father showed high levels of despair and sometimes regret for adopting a life strategy that is based on long-term investment in education. At some point, he thought that education blocked the way to accept blue-collar jobs. In his words: “you all became arrogant; the girls are not accepting to marry men who are proposing to them, and boys are not accepting manual work.”

For my mother, she still thinks that investing in education was a good thing for other reasons. Educating the children was a way to reposition us higher in the extended family where most of the children, boys and girls, did not complete their university education. However, she thinks also that a degree without a job is an incomplete project.

5. Children’s work and education in the political and economic context of Gaza

Four main characteristics of the political and economic situation

At least four different features can be noticed in the current political and economic situation. These features affect the various aspects of the daily life of Palestinians not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank, Israel, and the diaspora. These include political and economic uncertainty, instability, lack of control/governance and encapsulation. Each of these has a significant effect on population’s attitudes, choices, priorities, and actions. Children’s work and education, and discourses around them are among the aspects affected by these political and economic features. The following section explores the relation between children’s work and education and the context of Gaza.

5.1. Uncertainty

Palestinians, nowadays, live one of the hardest times in their history. The current situation is characterized by wide impoverishment, unemployment and closure. What complicates this situation is the lack of any prospects for future and ways to get out of the current successive crises. This uncertainty affects the daily aspects of life, and the everyday negotiations population has to go through to live and survive. Uncertainty pushes people towards a diversification of their choices and constantly thinking of different scenarios at any given time. It encourages multiple life strategies to simultaneously emerge in any household (micro-level). For many families, it is essential to have children who work, and others who go to schools, when possible. This approach will ensure that the living conditions of the family are likely to be secured despite of the unexpected political and economic changes. This makes the

family more prepared for shocks. At time of widespread unemployment (like these days), manual work would be the way to rescue the family and decrease its poverty and dependence on aid. At the same time, families would ensure to invest in, at least some, children's education and higher education hoping that they would help if they get employed by the government or UNRWA.

This pattern of diversifying would not be possible if the situation was not subject to political and economic shocks. Taking the decision of how to diversify life strategies is a complex process and takes different forms. Sometimes, it is the children who assign their roles to themselves based on their personalities, family history, age, peer and siblings' influence, educational performance, besides many other factors. In other cases, the process is organized centrally by the father (as in the case of Abu Wael), and sometimes by the mother (as in the case of Manar's mother). In this context, everyone accepts his/her role and they collectively act as one unit (or a task force) for survival.

5.2. *Instability*

Both the political *instability*, resulting from the ongoing occupation, and the economic instability, resulting from dependence on aid and economic blockade, have massive consequences on different aspects of the daily life including children's work and education. In this context, instability prevents any purposeful process of reflecting on life strategies adopted in the past, and evaluating whether they were helpful in overcoming hardship. This instability leaves most of the population under the mercy of waiting the change of the situation and thus develops a more passive attitude towards poverty and hardship. Most of the population in Gaza think of the daily life challenges without giving sufficient attention to future plans. Future is unexpected, and planning is continuously causing more and more disappointment as these plans constantly fail. The result is that most of the population started unconsciously to live day by day without taking actions as part of planned strategy.

The impact of this on children's work and education is significant. At one level, parents started to think in a more critical way about their children's choices questioning the ones that may bring future rewards. Moreover, they are unable to identify an approach that would definitely help them or their children. For example, most of the parents interviewed reported that they have no clue whether their choices, and their children's choices, of labour and/or education would work. They

clearly reflected that they lack any possibility to foresee the situation in the near future. This should be understood in the context where all population were at real risk of being killed and injured in one of the three massive military operations initiated by Israel in Gaza in 2008, 2012, and 2014.

Children show less sensitivity to the instability possibly because they are less aware of it and its manifestations. In fact, children interviewed showed that they have a sort of plan for the future and they were more hopeful that they can achieve what they wanted.

Instability also fails any planned actions and life strategies. For example, many of the parents invested in their children's education immediately after the Oslo accords in 1993, when establishing the Palestinian Authority necessitated more jobs and employments. This investment was also motivated by the loss of their parents' jobs (mostly manual, day-waged labour) in Israel after restrictions on movement of the Palestinians were imposed in the 1990s. Although many harvested the early fruits of this investment through being employed in the expanded governmental system, the instability in the situation in the years after 2000 (starting from the second Intifada) made this investment a failure. Unemployment has been increasing since then, and many people started to give up their strategy and investment in education due to this instability. On the long-term, this instability makes fewer people put their faith in planning itself. Gradually, people became fearful of the future, and prioritized living their day on investing in the future.

5.3. Lack of control/governance

Another feature of the current political and economic situation is the lack of control at the individual and institutional level. As demonstrated earlier, Palestinians have not succeeded in establishing their state based on the international law. Israel is expanding its illegal settlements on the Palestinian lands in a grave violation of the UN resolutions and conventions. Palestinian government lacks all forms of sovereignty on resources, borders, monetary policy, etc. This resulted in the inability to develop a social and educational system that respond sensitively to the needs of the population. The state of occupation, started in 1967, paralyzed governance, and the rule of law in a way that made most Palestinians feel that they do not have a government.

The consequences of lacking institutional control are massive. It turns individuals into fragile human beings. As many people ironically said it: “we are orphans, we do not have a father” referring to a government that may protect them in case of political or economic shocks. This feeling of fragility magnifies the feeling of powerlessness and complicates processes of rational decision-making. For children’s work and education, it makes children and parents put less weight in their choices and actions.

5.4. *Encapsulation/imprisonment*

Palestinians in Gaza have been under strict blockade for more than ten years now. The Israeli restriction on movement started earlier in 2000 but they got stricter after 2006 as a result of the victory of Hamas in the 2006 elections. This blockade turned Gaza into a real prison surrounded by Israel, and its ally Egypt. In this context, Israel has endorsed a policy for food supplies that is based on how many calories Palestinians would need for living a single day. This policy, named ‘red lines’, is a clear indicator of the Israeli approach to keep Palestinians in Gaza at the threshold of survival and just survival. The living of 1.8 million persons in a 365-km² prison, made every person feel entrapped and isolated. This imprisonment reduces the lives of the population to securing basic needs. In this context, life became a mere struggle for survival. Education and work become immediate means to stay alive. And as education necessitates long-term investment before turning into an economically rewarding project, through employment, low-skilled labour become the way to go. In this context of imprisonment, the struggle becomes intense between education, with its social and cultural legacy, and work, as immediate means to overcome a constant emergency situation. This struggle would not have been that intense without the enforced blockade.

6. *Conclusion*

The rapidly and constantly changing situation in the Palestinian territories in general, and in Gaza in particular, have a massive effect on the daily life of the population. Dependence on foreign aid, which is not regular or sufficient, increased population’s vulnerability. The residents of Gaza have been subject to the consequences of occupation, internal political and geographical division, and strict closure; all of this drove families to adopt mitigation tactics for survival.

These structural difficulties complicated families and children's preference of education and work. Their preferences have become built on reactions to the emergency state of life rather than on a rational evaluation of long-term empowerment strategies. Children's work and education became less consistent or relevant to their parents' lessons learned. The current situation characterized by uncertainty, instability, lack of control, and imprisonment resulted in despair and disappointment for most of the population in Gaza.

Despite the fragile situation, children show more resistance to these structural difficulties. Most of the children interviewed showed that they have a plan for their lives, and they were able to justify their preferences and choices using different rationales.

The ethnography collected reveals many interesting aspects of children's lives and negotiations using work and education. It showed that education and work are not opponent realms. Instead, they are using consciously to negotiate and overcome the widespread harsh living conditions. It also showed that children were not forced to go to school, drop out of school or work. In most of the cases, they took one of the available choices based on many factors including life history of work and employment, order in the family, number of siblings, scholastic performance and the general living conditions.

These findings challenge many of the stereotypes about working children who are usually seen as powerless and unable to defend themselves or construct the meaning of their lives. It also challenges the argument that children's work main motive is poverty. Most of the children and parents interviewed come from less privileged socio-economic classes (this is in fact the situation of the majority of residents of Gaza). Despite poverty, there was a variation in children and their families' choices and attitudes toward education and work. Unexpectedly, with widespread poverty and unemployment, for the majority, education was a priority. Only when children demonstrate that they cannot continue schooling because of their poor school achievement, they start to think of dropping out. These thoughts are usually resisted by parents who use all possible means to keep the child in class as long as possible. When this becomes impossible and the child dropouts, he starts to think of working. The motives behind the choice to work are linked to many factors including securing

a pocket money, contributing to the family income, boredom at home, meeting social expectation of being economically active, and challenging the generational order that regard children as inferiors to other social groups. Many children work also to improve their relations with the family and peers.

Generation, intergeneration, intra-generation, and the question of work

1. Introduction

As discussed in the introduction of the thesis, generation is a key concept in anthropology and has been used with different meanings in the field (see Lamb, 2015 for a review). Whereas the previous chapters (4, 5 and 6) looked at three subsequent generations of childhood and adulthood through addressing their construction of childhood, work and education in three historical periods, this chapter focuses on the structural aspects of the generation as one of the organizers of the social structure.

Using this relational-structure approach is not common in childhood studies and is usually treated as an in-progress approach (Alanen, 2009, 2014; Alanen & Mayall, 2001). However, this approach is useful as it provides a conceptual framework to look at the position of children in the social structure as well as everyday negotiations children undertake to challenge/transcend this position. In fact, social constructionism in childhood study became a “theoretical orthodoxy” through overstressing the socially constructed nature of childhood (Wyness, 2015; in Alanen, 2015, p. 19). While the previous chapters were guided by the idea that childhood is a social construct, which is a necessary to understand children’s work in the Gaza context across the generations (generation as historical periods), the relational structural approach, advocated by Leena Alanen and Berry Mayall, among others, is essential for understanding other dimensions of their work. The later comes with the benefit of understanding children’s work as a medium of negotiating the generational order that organizes the relations between children and adults as distinct social groups.

The structure of this chapter builds on the theoretical framework discussed in the introduction chapter by presenting case studies and ethnographic data that show the generational aspects of children’s work. It starts by outlining some of the distinct

features of the Palestinian society being part of the wider Arab society. Then, it shows, through the ethnography, how work became a medium for negotiating generational order (Alanen, 2009) in the context of instability, poverty and foreign aid.

2. The Palestinian Society

In order to understand children's work in Gaza from a relational-structural perspective, it is essential to contextualize it in the structure of the Palestinian family and society. This is essential as this structure comes with distinct forms of power dynamics and negotiations. Analysing these dynamics is key for understanding social phenomena including children's work.

The review starts by outlining the main demographic characteristics of the Palestinian society. Then, it addresses the main features of the Palestinian society which will be the context for discussing the relational structural perspective of children's work. Later, the review focuses on the position of the child in the society and aims at showing that while child birth is celebrated by the family, children generally face considerable marginalization and are positioned as inferiors to adults. At the end, children's work in this context and relational-structural theorization of generation will be discussed.

2.1. Demographic aspects of the Palestinian society

It is estimated that the overall number of Palestinians reached 12.7 million people at the end of 2016. Only 38 per cent of them live in the Palestinian territories¹ (4.88 million) while the others live in Israel and in the diaspora. Out of the population in the Palestinian territories, around 39 per cent live in the Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2016). Refugees compose 42 per cent of the Palestinians who live in the territories. Those refugees compose around two thirds of the population of the Gaza Strip (66.7%) and less than one third in the West Bank (PCBS, 2016).

The population of Gaza had a staggering 20-fold increase over the last six decades (Hammami, 1994; cited in Muhanna, 2013, p. 5). This increase is attributed to many reasons: 1) the mass influx of refugees who fled in 1948 to Gaza, 2) the high fertility rate in the Palestinian territories in general and in Gaza in particular, and 3) the low mortality rates comparing to the neighbouring countries (Muhanna, 2013). Although

¹ 'Palestinian territories' is a term that is usually used to describe the areas occupied by Israel in 1967. It includes the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. However, the statistics, here, include only the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

the fertility rate, in the Palestinian territories, has decreased since 1997 (4.4 births in 2008-2009, and 3.13 births in 2015), it remains higher than in Arab neighbouring countries and other countries in the region (Klaus, Suckow, & Nauck, 2007; PCBS, 2013a, 2016). This rate is even higher in the Gaza Strip where it reached an average of 5.2 births per family in 2008-2009 (PCBS, 2013a). At the same time, life expectancy remains high (72.9 years in 2013) (PCBS, 2013a) due to provision of health services by the UNRWA (Efrat, 2006; cited in Muhanna, 2013). Although it is lower than the average rates of the industrialized countries, it is generally higher than the average of neighbouring countries in the Middle East (Pedersen, Randall, & Khawaja, 2001).

The Palestinian society is demographically a very young society (PCBS, 2013c). It is estimated that persons aged (0-19 years) compose more than the half of the Palestinian population on the national level (52.7%), and around 56 per cent of the Gaza Strip inhabitants.

2.2. The Palestinian society in the context of the Arab Society

It is common to study and describe the Palestinian society by referring to the wider Arab society. This could be attributed to the shared history of colonization which contextualized the contemporary political, economic and social dynamics that are currently taking place (see Farsoun, 1997 for a review). In fact, The Palestinian and Arab societies share many social characteristics because of the geographical and historical proximity. The majority of the people in Palestine, as in other Arab states, speaks the same language (Arabic) and follows the same religion (Islam). Moreover, these countries went through similar socio-economic transformations and political changes at least in the last three centuries. Typical to these countries is their experience under the European colonization, which was followed by liberation, independence and the emergence of the state. Throughout the twentieth century, the Arab countries have become more distinct especially after the discovery and extraction of oil in the Gulf in the 1930s. Despite of these dramatic changes, the legacy of the Arab culture and Islamic traditions has remained important and relevant.

In spite of the Arab societies' common heritage and shared history, the Palestinian society went through distinct political processes and, thus, very unique social transformations. Some of these political processes are linked to the fact that Palestine is one of the few territories that are still occupied in the twenty-first century. Unlike the other Arab States that got their independence, through liberation

and the independence wave in the 1950s and 1960s, Palestine remained ruled by external powers. Thus, the Palestinian society did not go through the social transformations resulted from the emergence of the national state as in the other Arab societies until the establishment of the Palestinian Authority as a self-governing body.

In fact, the continuous Israeli occupation resulted in social developments that are distinct from the neighbouring Arab countries. As a result of the forced migration and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians since the 1940s, Palestinians exercise two forms of resistance: the first is related to their struggle with Israeli settler colonial project (Veracini, 2010, 2013; Wolfe, 2006). The second is the collective and individual resistance and negotiation of class, gender, and generation in the context of the patriarchal society. The two struggles intertwined especially with the first providing a context and mediums for practicing the second. In fact, their struggle for equality in the context of the occupation raises the issue of other less privileged groups such as minorities, women and children.

2.3. A Portray of the traditional Arab Society

As indicated earlier, it is vital to understand how the Arab society developed, at least in the last two centuries, in order to understand children's position in the contemporary society and thus the relational-structural aspects of childhood. The following sections give a brief overview of the characteristic of the Arab society and children position in the family and in the society in general.

In Arab societies, the family represents the main structural unit for sociological analysis (Hopkins & Ibrahim, 1997). Barakat (1984) and Sharabi (1984), key Arab sociologists, outline that the study of the Arab family provides genuine insights to understanding the wider society. Barakat (1984, p. 175) identifies four characteristics of the Arab family; firstly, it is a socioeconomic unit that is based on cooperation, mutual commitment and love. Secondly, it is patriarchal in relation to authority, responsibility and lineage. Thirdly, it is pyramidal based on age and sex. And finally, it is an extended family.

1. *The Arab Family as a Socioeconomic Unit:*

The *traditional* Arab family constitutes a single socio-economic unit. All its members cooperate and depend on each other. Family members contribute to this collective unit according to their capacity, age and sex to provide and improve the standing of the family in the community. Barakat (1984, p. 175) says that ‘it is true that family coherence is built on *lineage*, but this coherence is also established on the unit of property and the unit of production, consumption and the defense of interests.’

On the social level, the family is a dialectical unit between family members. All of the members share achievements and failures, victories and defeats, happiness and sadness. Every honourable act brings honour to all, and likewise with individual acts that bring shame on the collective level. As a result, family members are responsible not only for their personal acts but also for the acts of others. As all family members bear the responsibility and the results of behaviours of each other, independent unilateral decision is regarded as a deviation from the family culture. Barakat (1984) argues that one of the consequences of the family being a socio-economic unit, is that decision-making becomes a collective matter of the family, not an individual one. This is what usually happens in decisions related to marriage, divorce, and upbringing of children.

Relations between family members are characterized by cooperation, sacrifice, and comprehensive obligations in all matters. This comprehensive obligation offers members in the Arab family the feeling of security, emotional satisfaction and the ability to face crises. In all circumstance the individual can depend on their family. For Barakat (1984), obligation toward the family needs great sacrifice to the extent of denying one’s own self. In this context, the reproduction of more children, although comes with more economic burden, is appraised for its collective value in strengthening family status.

2. *The Arab Family as a patriarchal family*

The father is the head of the family and is considered a powerful and charismatic figure. He commands respect as the legitimate authority for all matters of the family. The patriarchal structure extends throughout

all levels of society. The father of the nuclear family is subordinate to his father, who in turn defers to the authority of the head of the clan. All clan heads are subordinate to the head of the tribe or *hamula*. The tribal or clan leader also serves as the spiritual and practical father of the whole group.

The father achieves his authority as a result of his struggle to secure the livelihood for the family and his role in the household. He occupies this status for the greater good and interests of the family. Moreover, his authority is originated from being the exclusive breadwinner, who has accumulated knowledge and experience more than any other members of the family given his age and struggle with life outside the household. His authority manifests in the wife joining his kinship group (patrilocal) and the children taking his surname (patrilineal). The father expects respect and unquestioning compliance with his instructions. This features in a full obedience of the others with no objection to what he views as relevant and correct. In short, the traditional father deals with his family members as if they are in continuous need for his protection and leadership.

3. *The Arab family as a pyramidal structure based on sex and age*

The traditional Arab family is stratified on the basis of sex and age. Men and the elderly have a higher status than women and children. Children are dependent on adults; as such they have to obey their orders. Sharabi (1984, p. 77) argues that the ‘communication between children and adults is not horizontal but vertical and takes the form of orders, instructions, and restrictions’. This form of communication – from top to bottom – may also be accompanied by punishment, deprivation, anger and beating. Communication from bottom to top may take the form of pleading, listening, and obeying, accompanied by crying, depression, fear, silence, and withdrawal.

4. *The Arab family is traditionally an extended family that is shifting toward a nuclear form*

Traditionally, the Arab family is characterized as an extended family, which means that strong ties exist not only between parents and children, but also include the grandfather, the grandmother, uncles,

aunts and cousins. The extended family means that three generations live under the same roof. The entire family comprises the family of the husband, his brothers and sisters, the husband and wife and their children.

This type of family is connected to the function of the family as an economic unit. In Bedouin areas, the tribe constitutes this unity. The Arab family is gradually shifting to a nuclear family, where the couple and their children settle in independent houses in the village or in the city. Nevertheless, strong ties between members of the extended family continue to exist in different forms despite the spatial separation.

These four characteristics provide not only micro understanding of the social structure and dynamics at the level of the household, but also a macro perspective on how the whole society functions and the kind of societal pressure to conform the society members are subjected to. These characteristics are also determinant to the position and status of the children who are perceived as lacking *reason* and experience and thus status in comparison to adults. The second and the third characteristics are particularly relevant to the discussion of children's work because of their manifestation in the life of children as a social group, and their impact on children's struggle to challenge their inferior position in the society.

2.4. Children in the Arab Society

As indicated earlier, the study of the family and the child in the Arab society is essential as the Palestinian society shares many commonalities with the wider Arab one. This is also true, because of the scarce historical and contemporary resources on the Palestinian society and the child in the Palestinian society.

One of the important historical sources, for the study of children in the Middle East, is the works of Elizabeth Fernea (1991). She is one of the few anthropologists who studied childhood in the Middle East, from anthropological perspective. She described the Arab family and society throughout her stay there in the second half of the twentieth century. This period is particularly important as it is characterized by major changes and transformations in the Arab society as a result of the emergence of national states, the discovery of oil, and the manifestations of globalization and development.

Elizabeth Fernea (1991) reflects the principal transformations of the childhood in the Middle East before, during and after the European colonization that started with the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798 (Fernea, 1991). Her research focuses on the liberation and independence of states in the mid twentieth century, and their consequences on the family system and child in the region. She argues that despite the diversity of the child and childhood ideals across the spatial and temporal contexts, these ideals continue to share common themes across the region.

The child, in the Middle East, is a crucial link for the unity and continuity of the family. He/she represents the living person who links past with present and present with future. The child carries the name of his father, and thus transcends the boundaries of the father's lifetime even after his death. The birth of the child has a special value for the family as it means the evolution of the newly married couples into complete adults in the family, and mature members of the wider society (ibid.). These social statuses cannot be achieved without the birth of the child. In this regard, Fargues (2001, p. 256) stresses that 'infertility seems to be the main cause for breaking up a marriage.' Many cases of divorce, or second marriage, are attributed to the infertility of the wife. From a different perspective, the birth of children means, for the family, strengthening the probability of living a better life. A birth of a child means increasing the number of the kinship's members, and thus increasing the number of present and future contributors to the household economy. This was crucial, for the kinship, as it ensured the continuity in undertaking the traditional profession of the family. For the future, it means the availability of more breadwinners who remain, despite of their relative economic independence, partially responsible for the extended family.

The family represents the conventional social environment for rearing up. Parents are usually rearing their children up on what they see as appropriate to ensure their conformity with the social values (Barakat, 1984; Fernea, 1991). As the child is usually seen as lacking the *Aqel* (reason), which is a necessity for adults' life in the society, the socialization process aims at instilling reason and developing it (Fernea, 1991). In addition to the principal role of the parents, neighbours and other members of the extended family (uncles, aunts, grandparents, etc.) play a role in *disciplining* the child (Barakat, 1984; Fernea, 1991). This socialization process starts at an early stage since stopping the breast-feeding (*Alfetaam*). It focuses on the cultural

values, gender roles, and divisions of labour based on age and sex (Fernea, 1991). The main cultural values include respecting religion and family, and before anything, the respect of the father (Fernea, 1991, p. 451). Instilling the divisions of labour starts also at a relatively early age. For example, girls are trained at an early age (4-5 years) on how to take care of house and younger children while boys take the responsibility of animal care. These roles are different in the rural and urban areas.

Despite of the value of the child in the family and the society, Fernea (1991) argues that childhood was considered a marginal stage in itself. From adults' perspective, it was unpleasing, though necessary, stage for disciplining and preparing child to conform to the societal values. After all, it aims at preparing children for adults' world (Ammar, 1954; cited in Fernea, 1991). The end of childhood, and the beginning of adulthood, is marked by marriage when persons undertake the tasks of the adults and take the responsibility of establishing the new family. Jessup (1897), who studied children in Palestine, reported that female and male children were not alike in the marker of adulthood. While marriage marked the end of childhood for girls, independent work and income marked the end of childhood for the boys. In both cases, end of childhood was usually reached before the age of 18 years.

Although these ideals have generally been transformed especially after the processes of globalization and the emergence of the state, the traditional legacy continues to dominate. Key elements of this legacy include prioritizing group's interests on individual's benefit, the significance of children especially boys, honour and moral values, religiosity, hospitality, respect of parents especially the father, taking care of old parents, superiority of males on females, and the importance of conformity to social values.

The works of Fernea (1991, 2002) were also supported by earlier works of Jessup (1897) in which she describes the daily dynamics of the children in Palestine. Jessup (1897, p. 403) argues that models of child-rearing and child-adult relations were similar across different religions and sects in Palestine. Moreover, she finds out no major differences in the position of the child in the family and children's activities between residents in Bedouin and urban dwellings. Referring to Bedouin children, she noticed that they used to be sent off with the animals as soon as they become able to do this work. This applies to girls who were taking part in baby-tending and helping

in the housework. Moreover, girls and boys were accustomed to outdoor life of hard work at a very early age. Boys were usually going to farms and fields and girls are sent to springs to bring water to the family (Jessup, 1897, pp. 406-407). The way children helped their families was an integral part of their lives. Without their contribution, households could hardly sustain their livelihood. However, children were not only appreciated because of their contribution. Literature on the Arab child and family shows a strong attachment of child to his family. Jessup (1897, p. 412) finds it interesting that '[p]eople in the East are fond of children and like to have them about, indulging them one moment and scolding them the next'.

3. Children's work in the context of patriarchy: structural analysis

As I explained earlier, patriarchy is one of the main characteristics of the Palestinian society. The patriarchal hierarchy is based on sex and age. The ethnographic data collected as part of this research shows a far more complicated dynamic of patriarchy and children's work. In that context where children are generally seen as inferiors to the adults and where children are recognized for their *future* status of *becoming* adults, work becomes a medium through which children negotiate their status in this social organization and structure. Poverty and unemployment of the parents work as a context which facilitates this process of negotiation.

To explain this, one should understand the different ways a child becomes an adult. As I discussed in chapter 5, the transition from childhood to adulthood becomes possible only after completing a 'checklist' of social markers. Unlike many societies in Europe where age became a legal and social marker of becoming an adult, marriage, puberty, economic independence and responsibility, in the context of the Palestinian society, are the social markers for this transition. So, children, girls and boys, can be considered adults if they are able to prove that they are able to achieve these social markers.

3.1. Puberty and marriage as social markers of adulthood

Puberty, because of its biological nature, becomes the least used medium to negotiate children's position in the hierarchy. For example, young boys at the age of adolescence take care of their slowly-growing moustache and get excited when their voice become lower in pitch and tone. Thus, these biological and hormonal changes are used to assert that they are no longer children. For girls, this issue is more

problematic as the main signs of puberty (menstruation, changed shape, etc.) are hidden, and showing them is not welcomed, in the public and private sphere.

Marriage has a similar limitation. Marriage cannot be allowed before a certain age (15 for boys and 14 for girls) that is regulated by the law. In many cases families go around these rules getting their sons and daughters married through loose judges. The other limitation is to have parents from both the girl and the boy sides to accept this marriage and recognize it. Once girl and boy reach the legal age of marriage, this process becomes easier and more common. Statistics show that the median age for the first marriage is 24 for males and 20 for girls. Statistics of marriage contracts record 758 cases of girl marriages at the age of 14, and 20,851 cases at the age (15-19) in 2015. For boys/males, only 3,034 contracts of child (15-19 year) were recorded². This difference is attributed to many reasons including gender roles, the search for economic security, and honour. For example, in attempt to establish some economic security, many parents arrange marriage of their daughters as a means of minimizing the family's economic burden. This is particularly relevant especially with the relatively high family size in Gaza³. The arranged marriage is motivated by fear of shame that may result from a girl getting into a relation outside the marriage. This translates, sometimes into forced marriage at an early age. According to PCBS's statistics, early marriage⁴ stand at 24 per cent at the national level.

Although marriage can be one of the means to negotiate status in the social hierarchy in patriarchy, it is not very common because of the difficulty of starting such a *project*. It is economically very expensive, and few people can afford it even in the case of working children and working-class families. Children's marriage usually happens when there is a will and economic means and support from the male child's family to establish a nuclear family.

3.2. Work as a medium to transcend social structure

Unlike puberty that necessitates biological maturity, and marriage that necessitates puberty, family consensus, and economic capabilities, children's work is easier to

² These statistics are available on the national level. Statistics of Gaza are not available.

³ Average family size is 5.1 persons per family at the national level, and 5.6 person per family at Gaza level (PCBS, 2018).

⁴ This indicator is defined by PCBS as the percentage of women aged 20-49 who got marriage before the age of 18.

undertake. This is especially in a context where child labour's laws are not strictly enforced (Tarazi, 2012). In this context, the widespread poverty provides a facilitating context for undertaking work activities.

In her ethnography on agency and gender in the context of Gaza, Muhanna (2013) describes how poverty and food insecurity, for women, became means to challenge their status in the patriarchal structure. In the context of foreign aid and food insecurity, one of the emerging roles of women was to seek food and non-food assistance from the aid agencies in Gaza. This kind of work was mostly undertaken by women as it was shameful for men to do what looks like "begging". Muhanna found out that women, who were accepting to undertake this role, were using it as a way of negotiating their status in the family and challenging patriarchy. This activity, which was essential to fulfil family's needs for survival, was a medium through which women were able to reposition themselves in the social structure. The fact women were accepting to undertake this role (i.e. going to relief agencies and getting food assistance), helped in challenging the stereotypical image of the woman as housewife. Muhanna (2013) also observed that women, she interviewed as part of her research, did not express explicitly their negotiation as a result of their role as breadwinners in the context of foreign aid.

Interestingly, I had similar observations in my fieldwork. Children, in my research, generally do not admit that they did these negotiations consciously. They expressed this indirectly through highlighting what has changed since they started to work. Many of the children reported that no one forced them to leave the school and work. In fact, there is a tendency from the parents to push their children to stay in school as long as possible. For example, the story of Nael, in chapter 3, shows how the child was dropping out of school for an entire semester before the family found out. They tried to convince him to go back to school but it was a no-return decision for him.

The fact that children in my research and women in Muhanna's research undertake these negotiations implicitly, reveals at least two issues; the first is the strict patriarchy that is stronger than children and women's attempts to challenge. The second is that being at the bottom of the social hierarchy in a generally patriarchal society leaves less options for children and women to reposition

themselves in a more powerful position. Whether women or children challenge the established order based on sex or generation, or they negotiate their position in this order by disassociate themselves from the more subordinated groups, depends on each case.

Interviews and focus group discussions with many children offered an explanation. In most of the cases, children reported that they work because they were not good at school or because they do not want to invest in the education path while witnessing a lot of graduates without jobs. When I directly asked them about poverty and if it pushed them to drop out of school and/or start working, the majority of children interviewed agreed. For example, here is a sample of children's responses:

I work as a waiter. I make 30 Shekel [\$8 USD] a day. This is good. Better than idleness.

15-year-old child from Alshati' camp

Another said:

I work to save money because I would like to get married.

15-year-old child from Alshati' camp

Another reported

I am working to save money to buy toktok (cart pulled by motorcycle). My old toktok was destroyed in the war.

16-year-old child from Alshati' camp

In many occasions, children expressed their regret to drop out of school and work. Abdullah (14 years old from Alshati' camp) wanted to drop out of school after failing for two years to move to the next level. His family resisted his desire to quit but they surrender to his will. He started to work as a fisherman with his family. Abdullah now regrets his decision especially after facing very difficult working conditions. One of the other possible explanations for this regret is Abdullah's failure to situate himself as an adult because of working in the family business. Working with his siblings and father enforces the patriarchal structures at home and lack of experience, in comparison to his elder siblings, put him in an inferior position despite his economic contribution. Another possible reason behind this *failure* to negotiate is related to the fact that Abdullah was employed to give an additional hand to the family. Although he is receiving a symbolic cash return, his contribution is perceived as accessory and not essential.

Other children reported that they did not regret working. As one of the children said:

I've been working in the sea for five or six years. I failed for two years and then I dropped out of school. My employer asked me to be able to read and write before start working with him. Once I was able to read, I started working

Mahmoud 17-year old from Alshati'

Another child said:

I don't regret it. The work brings cash, the school does not. It only brings cash after many years. In one year, I can make a lot of money, in one or two years I can have money.

Salah 15-year old from Alshati'

These two children were in a better position to negotiate their position in the social family structure because they were not employed by a family member and they were able to bring cash to the household as a return of work and not giving a hand.

For me, these cases show a far more complex picture of the struggle to negotiate one's own structural position. These cases and others outline that every case is unique based on the family culture and dynamics, the order of the child amongst the siblings, the need for additional financial support, the employer and many other factors.

As discussed before, being myself the eldest amongst my siblings comes with a lot of privilege and responsibility. I was privileged to have my family support to complete my education at the university; at the same time, this also came with the responsibility to take care of my younger siblings. Immediately after starting to work in Gaza, I was contributing to our household economy. Part of my contribution was directed toward my siblings' education, which was always a priority for my parents, and some for the daily living and savings. I maintained this role for the last 9 years of working and studying. My parents think that this contribution helped a lot in getting all of my siblings educated at universities.

My lasting commitment to the expectation of the family gave me some leverage in family decision-making processes. In fact, it allowed me to reposition myself in the family hierarchy and, at times, influence my father's decisions in some areas.

4. The intergenerational aspects of work in the context of structural theorizations

It is common, in the context of patriarchy, to explain children subordination on the grounds that this structure is hierarchical (based on age and sex). However, this explanation does not offer sufficient answers to the questions I encountered as part of this ethnographic work. For example, why are children situated as equally inferior despite the age differences between them? Why children, as a social group, are positioned as subordinate in relation to adults? How can the position of the child, in this structure, change from more to less subordinate as he grows up every year, in a context where *age* is not the main marker of the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood? Alanen and Mayall (2001) offer useful conceptual framework to look at the structural position of children in hierarchical social structures. Thinking of the relations between adults and children in the form of generating practices, and of generation as an organizer of the social structure similar to gender, class and ethnicity, is conceptually and theoretically useful especially in the context of patriarchal structure, such as in Gaza.

According to Alanen, the relations between children themselves, and between children and adults as distinct social groups are organized by generational and intergenerational order respectively. This generational and intergenerational order are continuously reconstructed, reproduced and negotiated by children and adults. In particular, *generationing* practices reproduce this order (Alanen, 2001a; Mayall, 2001a). The distinct forms of relations between children and adults across societies (for example student-teacher, or father-son, etc.) sustain the intergenerational order through the generationing practices.

Throughout my research, I observed these generationing practices that position children as children, adults as adults, and children in relation to the adults. For example, I can say that schooling itself generates some of these practices. Being *disciplined* by teachers who are adults, and using strict rules, schooling is an example of a culture that generate power dynamics that place children as inferiors in relation to adults. Moreover, the economic dependence of children of their parents comes with generationing practices that strengthen and reproduce intergenerational order.

These intergenerational practices have been observed throughout my life as well as during the fieldwork of this research. Some of these practices are internal and are related to the peer group and social pressure of the children as a group. Others are

related to the interaction between children as individuals or a group and other social groups. This made me reflect on my personal experience when I was very young. At that time, my father was working in Israel and because of that the family was enjoying a sort of financial stability and comfort. One day, I came to my father and I asked him to allow me to work as street vendor of biscuits and balloons during the summer school vacation. I still recall the moment when my father got angry and offended. He asked me: “do not you have enough pocket money? Do you need anything else? What do you need?” One of the reasons behind his anger is that he considered poverty as the exclusive motive behind work or children’s work. This understanding touched his honour as the breadwinner of the family. However, what motivated me to work is, in fact, that most of the children in my age were doing these kind of work activities. Through these ‘work’ activities, they were getting extra money that they could spend on stuff considered unnecessary by the parents but important for children such as a football, a pair of new shoes or a bike. More importantly, these work activities can be seen as a form of negotiating the terms of the intergenerational order. As my ethnography shows, work is used by many children to disassociate themselves from childhood. Work in this sense can be seen as intergenerational practice that counter the established intergenerational order, or at least reposition the children differently in this order.

Children’s agency manifest in these generationing practices against the established intergenerational and generational order. In this context, Mayall (2001a, p. 3) argues that children should be considered not only as actors — who enact or have a perspective on their lives — but as agents whose powers, or lack of powers influence events and the social structure. Alanen (2001b, p. 21) asserts that agency in the context of relational thinking (structure) ‘need not be restricted to the micro-constructionist understanding of being a social actor’. Instead, it is linked to the powers of those positioned (children for example) to influence the events taking place in their everyday lives. Thus, such positional power are best approached as ‘possibilities and limitations of action ‘determined’ by the specific structures (regimes, orders) within which persons are positioned as children’ (Alanen, 2001b, p. 21). Negotiations of these possibilities and limitations represent the people’s struggle to gain a better deal in their relationships within different structures (Mayall, 2001b; Punch, 2001).

Beyond Gaza

Concluding notes

In this work, I follow the call for more qualitative research on children's lives and realities in their political, social and economic contexts. In line with research developments and theorizations on this topic, I have presented an account of children's experiences in the context of Gaza, characterized by instability and fragility at the intersection of activism, state building and foreign aid. My research shed light on different constructions of children's work and education, by looking at different generations to understand how, among other things, older generations' life trajectories affect children's construction of work and education. In addition to that, I looked at children's work in the framework of intergenerational dynamics, a perspective that allowed me to explore children's negotiations and decision-making processes.

The case of Gaza is interesting and worth studying for many reasons; first, the uniqueness of the current situation characterized by siege and instability and second, the dearth of empirical studies on this topic carried out in this context. Since 2006, restrictions on the movements from and to Gaza have increased and three massive attacks on Gaza's civilian population have taken place. Consequently, both the limitations on mobility and the continuous political tensions have been an obstacle for many researchers, especially to undertake empirical studies. Nonetheless, focusing on Gaza provides an invaluable opportunity to highlight and understand the political dimensions of children's activities such as work and education.

The peculiarity of this context is given by its high degree of politicization inevitably linked to the Israeli occupation which, through its hegemonic practices, has been influencing every aspect of the daily life of the population. For more than seventy years, Palestinians in Gaza have been lacking any form of autonomy and

independence and have been suffering from siege, home demolition, imprisonment, political violence and restriction on movement, all affected the socio-economic conditions of their lives. Moreover, the lack of any political solution, until today, has exacerbated the fragility and instability of this territory.

My research aims to deconstruct the complexity of children's work through an exploration of the multi-faceted aspects of children's lives. In particular, by looking at three subsequent generations, I uncovered how the ethos and ideals of childhood have shifted across different political historic periods. Focusing on the changes in the political and economic scene, which have taken place in a relatively short time, enables us to observe the variations and adjustments in the families' strategies and priorities.

This research is based on the ethnography I have collected from September 2014 to December 2015 at two stages. The first fieldwork took place immediately after the 51-day military operation in Gaza (Operation protective edge) which was concluded by ceasefire on August 26, 2014. This fieldwork, although was planned to be preliminary and short, it lasted four months due to inability to leave Gaza until end of January 2015. During that fieldwork the restriction on movement to and from Gaza has worsened putting the whole research at risk of being suspended or cancelled¹. These restriction on movement made it extremely difficult to plan an extended fieldwork at a later stage. These difficulties encouraged me to think 'out of the box' in going beyond the methodological 'orthodoxy' of conducting extensive fieldwork in anthropology; they pushed me to collaborate with local research assistants and collect research data 'remotely' through fieldwork and online ethnography. This approach was adopted due to the inability to access the field at different stages of this research. Resorting to this option was not easy as it involved further practical and ethical dilemmas (see chapter 2). At the same time, online ethnography has many advantages, chief amongst them, the flexibility that inaccessible and difficult contexts require in order to be studied and better understood. Without this flexibility and creativity, this research would have not been realized.

¹ As I indicated in the acknowledgements, this research was funded by State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI (the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship scheme). As a doctoral student at a Swiss university and conducting research on education and labour in Gaza, I needed to travel between Gaza and Switzerland. The need for mobility, to and from inaccessible place like Gaza, complicated the conditions through which I conducted this research.

The research assistants were of great help in recruiting research participants and conducting interviews with children and their parents. They allowed me to interview parents via Skype and to enrich the ethnography which I collected at an earlier stage of this research. As using the same approach with children was challenging – the remote conversations affected the dynamics of the interviews with them – I trained the research assistants to conduct the interviews themselves and later share the recordings with me. Resorting to this option was not an easy decision considering the novelty of this approach in anthropological studies and the ethical dilemmas it involves. In addressing these dilemmas, I extensively reflected on the experience of conducting research under these conditions tackling ethical and methodological questions.

This chapter aims at looking at my research retrospectively and providing a summary of its findings. It also outlines a set of general reflections which go beyond the context of Gaza, highlighting the relevance of this particular research to the understanding children's issues at the global level. Building on this, the chapter provides a set of suggestions for future research on this topic.

1. [Local childhood/s in the age of globalization](#)

With the aim of understanding children's work in the Palestinian context, I gave considerable weight to childhood as a construct that interacts with the local socio-economic conditions. In doing so, there is always the risk of underestimating the role played by the global context in shaping and sustaining these constructions. To avoid this, in my research I gave extensive attention to how the local constructions of childhood are affected by global/international political, economic, legal, social and cultural processes. This is important especially at the time of globalization, characterized by interconnectedness between people and places (see more on globalization in modernity in Giddens, 1990) and where dominant discourses on childhood are being increasingly universalized and globalized. Especially with relevance to child labour, it is necessary to understand the child labour in the context of global political economy that 'creates material conditions and transform familial and community livelihood strategies' (Hanson, Abebe, Aitken, Balagopalan, & Punch, 2018, p. 273).

In this context, the focus should be on identifying hybridity of local and global models and ethos of childhoods that came into contact and interacted with each

other. In fact, although I tackled and deconstructed some of these constructions of childhood separately, I outlined that the local childhood is a product of convergence between various childhoods that are locally, nationally and globally constructed. Both of global and local childhoods are continuously reconstructed, and thus they are ‘unstable’ in everyday life (Hanson et al., 2018). As they constantly influence each other, it is more productive not to look at the two as separated but instead to look the convergence between them.

Probably one of the useful ways to look at this convergence between the global and the local is through recognizing ‘the global in the local’ and the ‘local in the global’ (see Abebe in Hanson et al., 2018, p. 273). But how can we identify the essence of the global as well as the local when both are not static and are influencing each other? Stephens (1995b), who addressed this concern, outlines that *globalized* childhood represents a localized Western construction of childhood. For Tatek Abebe, this influence, of the ‘Western’, came to have an hegemonic importance through international development and children’s rights movement (Hanson et al., 2018). Thus, to understand these processes, one should look at the ‘Western’ childhood and how it came into being.

A new ideal of childhood emerged in the global North as a result of many structural transformations manifested in the emergence of the welfare state, the rise of the human-rights discourse, and the move towards the individual as the structural unit of society. This ideal of childhood is characterized by innocence, happiness, safety, and privacy, and is maintained by isolating it from adults’ harsh world. This childhood was in harmony with modern constructions of gender, family, boundaries between public and private spheres, and the appropriate children’s socialization approaches to become the citizens of the future (Stephens, 1995a).

The emergence and celebration of this new childhood was accompanied by significant social, cultural and economic changes that contributed in making this ideal a reality for children in the industrial countries. In addition, human-rights discourse in general, and children-rights in particular, has contributed in feeding this ideal and considering it as a goal and target that should be reached. Relevant to this discussion is the development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The overall result of these dramatic changes was the emergence of a new

modern European childhood. This childhood became relevant and well-embedded in the lives of people living there.

Under the influence of globalization and using the universalizing language of both human rights and development discourses, these ideals have been travelling beyond the global North (Koshy, 1999). These travelling ideals include human-rights discourse, the individual as the structural unit of the society, and childhood as it emerged after the European modernity (James & Prout, 1997a, pp. 3-4). In that context, cultural relativity was rarely considered and, sometimes, came under attack.

2. Conflicting global discourses and local practices

In the context of globalization, charities, missionary churches, trade unions as well as political movements emerge as key actors in the social change. All of these bodies have one commonality, the fact of being non-governmental institutions. Thus, they are seen as more accountable, transparent, reliable and efficient than the bureaucratic governments in the developing countries. Utilizing this advantageous position, these organizations stepped forward to provide care for children, and other social groups. This mission was sustained through receiving fund from donor governments and other international institutions (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013a, p. 13).

It is on the shoulders of these organizations that the *idealized* model of childhood travelled across the world; a model that is based on the notion of a child who lives in a nuclear family with his biological parents and learn in the public schools away from the work environment. This model has been traveling also through United Nations' conventions, international policy and development programs (Alber, 2012, p. 175). One of the key conventions, in relation to children, is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Convention uses a rights-based discourse that stresses the individual characteristic of the citizens whose care and welfare should be ensured by the state. As a result, different forms of care, responsibility and solidarity, that characterize relationships among people, became deviations from the standard (Malkki & Martin, 2003, p. 221). In fact, besides its cultural bias, the Convention is 'grounded in the assumption of superiority of the childhood model as it has developed in the North' and of the need to extend this model to the global South (Nieuwenhuys, 1998, p. 270).

The idealized model of childhood finds its way to the local communities through a number of fields, such as child protection (Hart, 2006; Hart & Lo Forte, 2010), that uses a morality and a language that is difficult to contest especially by local institutions (André & Hilgers, 2015). I came to observe this language through my ethnography and through working for many years in international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The International NGOs claim a non-judgemental position in regard to the local ideals and representations of childhood, education, work, wellbeing, etc. while acting in an opposing manner to this claimed position. In the Palestinian context, manuals, guidelines and standards sometimes are introduced to the local communities after being translated to Arabic, in a way that gives the impression that although they were developed in the North, they still respect the local ideals and traditions. A good example of this is a handbook aiming at helping children facing distress and anxiety through drawing and writing exercises. The book was developed by an international organization I used to work for in 2009 after the military operation (Operation Cast Lead 2008-2009). The work was led by an American psychologist based on her earlier work on similar handbooks developed in the US after the trauma of hurricanes and floods. The handbook was completely developed in English and then it was translated to Arabic to be used by children in Gaza. Although some efforts were made to localize the handbook, its main premise stayed irrelevant to the local culture there. In this context, it is not uncommon to see training and awareness-raising campaigns encourage participants to think of local practices that match the globalized ideal of childhood. These practices are usually appraised leaving the impression that international NGOs are not *installing* a new cultural reference, irrespective of the local practices and forms of socialization. In the majority of these learning processes, specific models, practices, and ideas are directly and indirectly identified and appraised as *the* reference of ‘how things should be.’

The conflict happened, and happens, when these exported ideals and models confront the realities of children and their families in the global South, where the contrast between legal principles and modelled childhood on one side, and the daily practices on the other, become explicit (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013a). Anthropological research has contributed in revealing many of these contrasts between international discourse, as in the international conventions, and the local reality. Moreover, it helped in exploring solidarity-based relations, defence of

collective interests and the sense of communal harmony in the South (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013a). For example, through his anthropological research in Recife in Brazil, Hecht (1998, p. 19) shows ‘how the ideal of children as nurturers of the family informs young boys’ feelings of injustice and their resentment against society when they find themselves unable to live up to that ideal’ (Hecht 1998, p.19 cited in Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2013a, p. 13). In Africa, Alber (2011) demonstrates how development organizations stigmatized many African countries with backwardness because of child trafficking. These organizations presented themselves as rescuers through their programs to abolish the *phenomenon* without a deeper understanding of its root causes and embedded social and economic dynamics. Alber (2011) shows that their interventions did not come as a response to dramatic changes that affected children but only because children and children rights became central issues in international development programmes.

These interventions had harsh consequences on children and their families. One of the well-known examples is the prohibition for children to work in the textile industry under American sanctions that resulted in children working in less visible and more hazardous sectors. Another example is the consequences of the prohibition of children’s work in vineyards in South Africa which put the children and family survival at stake (Levine, 1999, 2011). Ennew, Myers, and Plateau (2005) point out that poor children are often harmed rather than protected by being prevented from working, as this leads them to engage in livelihoods that transgress moral and socio-legal boundaries. This contradiction became more vivid when the international organizations struggle to define ‘the best interest of the child’ in different cultural contexts (Malkki & Martin, 2003, p. 217).

In my ethnography, I came to observe similar dynamics of convergence and conflict between the local ideals and representation of childhood at the local level, on one side, and the international ‘globalized’ ideals of childhood, on the other. These dynamics take different forms of endorsement, contention and/or resistance depending on the contexts where they take place. These dynamics also depend on the positions of the relevant actors in the social structure based on gender, generation, and class. For example, children from upper middle class, in a time when stability prevailed after the Oslo Accords in 1993, tended to endorse the global discourse of ‘education for all’ based on their position in the social structure and the social, and

cultural capital they had at that time and potential capital they could acquire through education. Girls, in particular, sought to increase their social and cultural capital through investing in schooling. This investment is key for meeting the ideals of ‘the educated mother and wife’. Using this cultural capital, girls for example could increase their marriageability.

André and Hilgers (2015) made a similar observation looking at the case of working children in the mines in Africa. They found out that the globalized childhood, that is promoted by development agencies, interacts with children from different backgrounds in different ways. For example, families from upper middle class tend to endorse the idealization of the globalized childhood as it strengthens their privileged position in the social structure that is organized by seniority. For adults in that class, endorsing the education of children, and the prohibition of work, maintains their position against other groups including children.

This process gives an advantage to the globalized childhood and the discourses around it, especially when it transforms the local practices and representation of childhood into ‘universal common sense’ that ‘make one forget that they have their roots in the complex and controversial realities of a particular historical society’ as it is presented as a ‘model for every other and as yardstick for all things’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999, p. 42).

The idea that there is only one childhood, and that the other childhoods are ‘underdeveloped’, neglects the fact that modern childhood has emerged as a result of distinctive transformations in forms of production and children’s position in relation to them (Qvortrup, 2005, p. 5). It cannot be assumed that if these transformations took place in the North, it happened or must happen in the global South as well. This generalizing and universalizing attitude must be put under scrutiny and careful examination. This examination is needed as ‘childhood has remained one of the most persistently biologized and universalized’ when the scholarship has been emphasizing ‘the historicization and de-naturalization of virtually every category of social identity (prominently including race, ethnicity, gender, class and nationality)’ (Stephens n.d. p. 3 cited in Malkki & Martin, 2003, p. 217).

The ideal of modern European childhood has faced criticism by some Western scholars. Stephens (n.d.), for example, points out that the model of European upper

middle class childhood was exported to the whole of the European society and then to the colonies, and thus, it did not reflect the social dynamics of the low and middle classes of European societies themselves (Stephens n.d. p. 3 cited in Malkki & Martin, 2003, p. 217). In addition, Jens Qvortrup (2005) notices the increasing invisibility of the child in the public life through the isolation of children's activities in social institutions such as home, the club and the school. Qvortrup (2005) marks the increasing invisibility with the move of the child from the manual work with adults, to the mental work in the school that was annexed to the industrial units. This invisibility, he argues, was a consequence of celebrating the childhood as a stage of fantasy and play away from the economically productive activities connected to adults' harsh life. In the same vein, Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) shows how children were more visible in the public domain before the emergence of the contemporary childhood. It could be argued that, in practice, the ideal of the modern childhood has created barriers towards children's involvement in the public life. It has basically isolated them from spaces that were traditionally available to and open for them (Qvortrup, 2005). Moreover, the modern Western model of childhood is challenged, Stephens argues, by increasingly visible and problematic "children out of place", for example at work, at war, in refugee camps, in the streets, in prison, in politics, and in the media (Stephens n.d. pp. 1-2 cited in Malkki & Martin, 2003, p. 219). Those 'out of place' children remind us that childhood, as the one John Holt describes, does not exist, it is imagined (James & Prout, 1997a, p. 2).

3. [Gaza: multiple childhoods across time](#)

This research provides empirical evidence of childhood as a social construction, that reflects, and interacts with, the social, political and economic reality. This involves rethinking childhood beyond its biological dimension and implies the existence of various childhoods across time and space. In this work, the rapidly changing constructions of childhood across the three generations examined mirror dramatic changes in the political, social and economic situation in the Gaza Strip.

For example, during the First Intifada, the prevailing ideals of childhood were shaped in terms of heroism and victimhood. Children tended to think of themselves as a generation that is different from the older ones in term of political orientation and aspirations, being referred to in the literature as 'the new Palestinians'. At the same time, children were perceived as hope for the future, a vehicle through which the

dream of liberation would be realized. In this sense, they were considered as adults-to-be, who would engage in the struggle for freedom until its achievement.

Later, with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, this construction of childhood was seized under the influence of the state-building discourse that dominated the public sphere for a decade after the 1993 Oslo Accords. The newly established Authority's political discourse focused on state building and situated children as a means to build the future state institutions through education. In this sense, children, again, were seen as a hope for the future but in a different way from the previous generation. The objective now shifted from liberation to state building.

The incorporation of children and constructions of childhood into state building efforts and discourses is not unique to the Palestinian case and, for example, resonates with what took place in Britain toward the end of, and after, the Second World War. In that context, as King (2016, p. 393) argues, thinking of "children as future citizens, vessels in which to invest, [...] provided a language of apparent consensus across ideological boundaries as the welfare state was established." Both the wellbeing of the families and the wellbeing of Britain as a whole were connected through positioning children as an economic investment and as the future of the country. Similarly, in the Palestinian context, the state building discourse has influenced the construction of a new childhood at the local level after the Oslo accords, impacting families and children's perceptions of childhood.

This is evident, for example, in the attention that, at that time, parents gave to sending their children to schools, even in the midst of economic hardships. The focus on education was also promoted by the availability of public employment that required higher education qualifications and the simultaneous loss of blue-collar jobs due to the closure of the Israeli labour market for Palestinian workers. For that generation, childhood became a project to invest in at two different levels: that of the future survival of the family and the state. This double focus on the future, reinforced by political discourses and campaigns, was instrumental in reaching a political consensus, glossing over the past failures and unmet promises (King, 2016; Lister, 2006).

Finally, after the Second Intifada (2000), with the failure to achieve the 'promised' Palestinian independent state, another construction of childhood emerged. This

childhood was constructed in the context of political division, instability, closure and isolation and thus, it was characterized by fragility. Education became less central in ways that resemble, to some extent, the dynamics which had taken place during the First Intifada. This shift was affected by the failure that family strategies faced after investing on education as a means for securing white-collar job opportunities. This change took place in the context of the political division between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and the closure policy enforced by Israel after 2000.

The three different constructions of childhood outlined in this research were shaped by numerous processes that involve various actors: among them, 1) the state, acting through national discourses and policies, 2) non-governmental organizations, operating in the human rights framework, and 3) other institutions such as religion. It is important to note that this institutional aspect is highly important for its role in reproducing childhood (see more on the institutional production of childhood in Pache Huber, de Suremain, and Guillermet, 2016). For example, after the Oslo Accords, the state came to play an essential role in diverting the attention towards education in the context of the dominant discourse on state-building. This diversion would have not been possible without dedicated policies to reconstruct childhood and children's issues in line with the emerging political discourse. These different constructions of childhood were also affected by the prevailing socio-economic conditions in each of the periods examined and, consequently, by how life strategies were envisioned and adjusted to emerging challenges and issues.

4. [Children's work and education in Gaza](#)

School and higher education have emerged as key themes in the ethnography, even if they were not initially foreseen as questions to be addressed as part of this research. In fact, without tackling the question of education, it would have not been possible to understand children's work especially in the Palestinian context, for its centrality to the lives of the people there. This centrality was sustained by a variety of factors: the experience of dispossession and displacement, the evolution of political activism and the national discourses around education, and the importance of education for improving living conditions.

However, the centrality of education fluctuated across the different political and economic periods. For example, the widespread unemployment led many families to give up their investment in education. With the number of unemployed graduates

who lack opportunities to freely move, or to initiate projects, more people shifted their life strategy away from education. This was not the case in 1970s, for example, when graduates were able to migrate to the Gulf countries to work, after the discovery of oil. The ability to travel, and the availability of jobs in these countries encouraged people to complete their higher education. The remittances sent by the workers improved the living conditions in the refugee camps inside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip significantly. This resulted in increasing the possibility of getting more children educated through utilizing these remittances (Rosenfeld, 2004). This built a chain-like pattern that enabled more individuals to invest in the educational realm.

The change in the educational scene including service providers, motives, and constructions influenced children's work to a large extent. As I discussed earlier, when formal education was perceived and valued as an efficient means for economic stability and even mobility, family survival strategy shifted to focus on education even at times of widespread poverty and unemployment. Although the living conditions of the families, during the First Intifada was characterized by poverty and fragility, this socio-economic situation did not translate into idealization of children's work as a solution, especially as children's education was perceived as a form of resistance to the Israeli occupation at that time. This perception of formal education was affected when higher education failed to secure white-collar jobs in the public sector, at the time of the Second Intifada. As a consequence, this opened the door for accepting and appraising the children's work in the public sphere.

One of the key findings of this research is that education and work are not opposing realms, and that the relation between the two activities are far more complex than presenting it in a linear correlation. Instead, both of the activities, and the relation between them, should be studied in light of the socio-economic context as well as the dominant construction of childhood. Moreover, both should be read in the context of changing power relations and possibilities for negotiating the social structures at any given period.

It was interesting to see that education, and more specifically going to school, is not constructed by children as a form of work despite its present and future economic value. Although investing in the track of education is motivated, among many other

factors, by improving living conditions and future employability, children, throughout my ethnography, tended to think of schooling as non-economic per se. One of the possible explanations for this is that schooling does not translate into immediate cash income which is an aspect that defines work in this context. Another reason for this is that the construction of work is itself influenced by the wider context of globalization and capitalism.

Likewise, political activism was not perceived by children and their families as a form of work during the First Intifada, although this activism was prevalent and had an economic aspect, possibly because of the notion of national resistance, which is considered as benevolent and not lucrative, centred in the political activism. Although one could see the political activism trajectory in a form of political career, its economic connotation was undermined and sometimes consciously neglected throughout the interviews I conducted. I made a similar observation during my visit to the borders with Egypt where digging tunnels for smuggling goods from Egypt were ongoing in 2009. While this activity undertaken in the context of border closure covered economic issues, my interlocutors – both children and adults – tended to underscore the political dimension of their enterprise. They considered that smuggling was a form of resistance at the time of siege and defined their work not only as an economic enterprise but also as a heroic one.

It was important to look at children's work, and also education, beyond the typical environment of school and work space, in line with the call for researching the domain of the everyday life. Through these lenses, it was possible to reveal some of the complexity of children's choices and preferences when it comes to work. Without applying these lenses, it would have been difficult to children's work in the context of family life strategies for survival in unstable context like Gaza.

5. [Changing intergenerational power relations across time](#)

The change in the socio-economic situation across the three generations, as well the different constructions of childhood, created distinct forms of intergenerational relations between children and adults in the three studied historical periods. For example, during the First Intifada, political activism became for children a means of negotiating their position within the patriarchal structure of society. In that context, where political activism was valued and appreciated, the younger generation's negotiations faced less resistance from older generations, as the core of these

negotiations was perceived as legitimate. Similar dynamics took place during the Second Intifada when the widespread poverty and adult unemployment provided an opportunity for children to negotiate their position within the patriarchal structure of society, especially because their work acquired an increased economic value for their families. Similar examples were provided by Muhanna (2013) in her ethnographic work in Gaza during the Second Intifada with a focus on gender-based negotiations and in the work of Rosenfeld (2004) in the West Bank during and before the First Intifada.

The power dynamics in these intergenerational relations could be better grasped when considering social organizers such as class and gender. For example, one of the findings of this research is that girls and boys, in the same social class, have different positions in the social structure in a way that gives each of them different means to negotiate their subordination in relation to adults. The ethnography showed that girls do not have the same space to use work as a mean of negotiation even when additional income addresses an essential need for family survival. The well-embedded social roles and divisions of labour make it more difficult for girls to use work in this process of negotiation.

Even between boys, there are notable differences in the way they use work to negotiate their status depending on their social class. For example, boys from the upper middle class face more resistance if they want to work especially because they cannot utilize poverty as a facilitating factor in these negotiations. These examples show that intergenerational relations and the power dynamics embedded in them are not monolithic at any given point in time and space. Moreover, the diversity of forms of negotiations, or the lack of them, depends also on the family composition, size, and history. In this sense, it is difficult to fully understand how these negotiations take place, and the potential resistance to them, without understanding the micro relations' dynamics of the household.

It is important not to look at these distinct forms of micro-negotiations only as *reactive* in relation to dominant constructions of childhood and the prevailing socio-economic reality. Instead, we need to attend to the agentic aspects of these negotiations and their potential to influence social constructions of childhood, and consequently the social reality of children in these generations and the next

generations to come. For example, the children's negotiations in the context of the political activism have contributed to the emerging of a new construction of childhood characterized by heroism during the First Intifada. Similarly, children's negotiations in the context of poverty in the Second Intifada, and using work as a means for those negotiations, have contributed to challenging the normative construction of childhood, and in particular, schooling as a normative activity for children. This change in construction can be better grasped when comparing the prevailing construction of childhood and children at that generation with those of the generation that precedes (the generation of state building). In the latter, school was the normal place for children to be, and children's work was not acceptable by most of the population.

6. [An agenda for future research](#)

This research provides an account of children's work in the context of political activism, state building and foreign aid, through reflecting on the Palestinian case. In doing this, it employs ethnography to reveal the complexity of the issue, in line with many calls to undertake empirical research utilizing children's point of view. In this work, a number of aspects have been tackled; one of them involves looking at the *other* activities children do in their everyday lives such as education. Understanding education provides an entry point to address the complexity of children's work. As I found out in my research, the question of children's work could not be addressed without tackling the question of education including the education environment, construction, function, and its relations with other activities. Future research should go even further, by providing an analysis of existing educational policies and practices of inclusion. Although I touched on these aspects briefly, future research would benefit from holistically understanding this realm.

This research does not only offer a descriptive and interpretative account of children's work in the Gaza Strip. In fact, it also points out to the existence of multiple childhoods across space and time and challenges the idea of the 'superiority' of one childhood over the others. It also stresses the need to address the relation between the global North, where the globalized model of childhood has originated, and the South, where this model of childhood is exported, in any analysis of children's issues such as children's work. Future research would benefit from looking at the dynamics of interaction between globalized models of childhood, and the various childhoods at

the local level. This exercise should take into consideration the policy making processes involving state and non-state actors and should be understood in the context of other relevant institutions.

Although I addressed some of the ways in which the globalized childhood interacts with the local childhoods through foreign aid, there is a need to understand the role of other factors in normalizing this convergence, such as global media. Especially in a time of intensification of interconnectedness, and fast information exchange, there is a need to address how media play a role in facilitating the hegemony of this globalized model of childhood. In addition, mobility and exposure to other contexts seem to play a role in this process. I touched on this briefly when I discussed how the Palestinian returnees, after the Oslo Accords, enforced the emerging ideals around childhood and education, influenced by their experience in the diaspora.

In this research, I used Alanen and Mayall's theorization of generation as an organizer of the social structure (see for example Alanen, 2001b, 2009, 2014; Alanen & Mayall, 2001). The use of this approach is rare in the academic literature despite the calls for more empirical research utilizing this perspective. One of the reasons behind this scarcity is that this approach is relatively new, and its popularity is limited to the field of Childhood Studies. Furthermore, the fact that this approach is work-in-progress – mainly due to the lack of empirical research – discourages researchers from adopting it. More empirical research is needed to develop these theorizations through examining them in different contexts.

Probably one of the main reasons behind my commitment to this research is the fact that conducting research in the Palestinian territories, especially in the Gaza Strip, is extremely difficult leading to a lack of studies on major issues. Accessibility to the field and instability make it more arduous for any researcher, both local and international, to plan and conduct research activities.

Due to the inability or, at time, impossibility to access the field, this research used a creative methodology which involves collecting data through fieldwork and online ethnography. Future research, adopting this approach, should reflect more on the advantages and disadvantages of using online ethnography by highlighting the opportunities and challenges it brings to research.

Doing research in the Palestinian context, especially with children, have a great potential for understanding childhood both at the local and international levels. The Palestinian case provides a suitable context for understanding childhood through the lenses of nationalism and the nation-state. In my research, it was necessary to explore the waves of nationalism that dominated different historical periods in order to understand the various representation of children and childhood and their impact on the construction of work and education. At the same time, this context facilitates an understanding of children not only as social actors but also as political ones. This is especially so because when political processes are highly intensified such as in this context, it provides a space for analysing the complexity of interaction between agency and structure. It is sufficient to mention that only in the last seventy years, Palestinians lived under different political regimes with different political and social agendas and orientations. Children and their families have found themselves dealing not only with these regimes but also with the structural power dynamics that emerged, at the level of class, gender, generation, etc., as a result of interactions with these political regimes. There is dearth of studies that, especially in anthropology, look at these dynamics in politicized contexts in general, and in the Palestinian territories in particular.

It is uncommon to look at children and children-related issues in the context of nationalism even within the interdisciplinary field of Childhood Studies. With few exceptions like the special Issue of *Childhood* devoted to Children and Nationalism, edited by Sharon Stephens and the Special Issue on 'Children's interethnic relations in everyday life' edited by Véronique Pache Huber and Spyros Spyrou in the same journal, the literature using this perspective is scarce (see Vol. 4 No. 1, 1997 and Vol. 19, No. 3, 2012 in *Childhood*).

The interaction between various social groups (e.g. women vs. men, children vs. adults, various social classes) in the context of patriarchy, provides spaces for negotiating status and position in the social structure for these groups. Interestingly, these negotiations utilized the emerging political spaces in sustaining power dynamics and privileges. An example of this is how women's engagement in paid work activities inside Israel in the 1970s and early 1980s has contributed to them negotiating the public/private sphere definition; a matter which played an essential role in their mobility that was traditionally restricted under the patriarchal

structures. Women were able to engage in these processes as the demand for female labourers inside Israel increased, and in the context of widespread impoverishment at these times.

Likewise, this unique political context was a facilitating factor for children to negotiate their status organized by the patriarchal and intergenerational order. The disobedience children showed to their parents, at the time of the First Intifada, under the cover of political activism, is an example of how this politicized context provided a space for new forms of negotiations. Another example could be observed when children utilised poverty and unemployment, which prevailed after 2000, for practicing their agency against the intergenerational structures that marginalize them.

Children's work, through this understanding, can be perceived a means for enacting this negotiation. Although I have explored a number of these negotiations in their political context, more work is needed to focus on how children, even the ones living in the most disadvantaged challenging situation, use the same conditions to negotiate their status. Such a work could significantly utilize ethnography as a tool for uncovering the multifaceted aspects of children's lives and 'giving a voice' to social groups in these 'disempowering' conditions.

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