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BEYOND A TECHNOLOGY OF SECURITY AND SEGREGATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY
ON THE IMPACT OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIANS WALL ON THE CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITIES OF BETHLEHEM AND BEIT JALA.

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SUMMARY ITALIAN

In questo lavoro ci si propone di analizzare l'impatto della barriera di sicurezza costruita tra Israele e la West Bank, conosciuta anche come il Muro, sulla popolazione cristiana palestinese dei comuni di Betlemme e Beit Jala. Conseguentemente ai disordini e le violenze scatenatisi durante la seconda Intifada esplosa a seguito della camminata di Ariel Sharon sulla Spianata delle Moschee/Haram al-Sharif il 28 settembre 2000, la separazione tra israeliani e palestinesi è diventata irrimediabilmente manifesta con la costruzione della "barriera di sicurezza" o Muro. La costruzione della barriera è stata progettata per una lunghezza totale di circa 712 chilometri. Per il novanta per cento della sua lunghezza, la barriera è formata da un complesso sistema di reti elettrificate fiancheggiate da strade asfaltate, filo spinato, e trincee. Tuttavia, i quindici chilometri di barriera analizzati in questo lavoro, rappresentano uno dei pochi tratti in cui appare sotto forma di un muro di cemento alto otto metri. Sebbene studiosi, l'opinione pubblica e attivisti interessati alla questione israelo-palestinese spesso definiscano il muro in termini di tecnologia dell'occupazione o tecnologia antiterrorismo, questa ricerca mira a mostrare una dimensione più complessa della presenza del Muro.

Difatti, si propone di adottare e adattare il concetto di assemblaggi di Bruno Latour poiché permette di sfidare la nozione che il concetto di *agency* concerna esclusivamente attori umani, mentre abbraccia l'idea che anche le cose esercitino *agency*. Il concetto di assemblaggi di Latour permette un'interazione democratica tra gli esseri umani, che di solito dominano l'attenzione degli studiosi, e le spesso trascurate cose materiali tentando di colmare il divario tra soggetto e oggetto. Inoltre, i dati raccolti nel lavoro sul campo richiedono di integrare il concetto di assemblaggio con il punto di vista di quegli studiosi che lavorano all'interno della prospettiva neo materialista. Il comune denominatore tra tali studiosi consiste nella convinzione che le cose materiali esercitano *agency* e che quindi siano meritevoli di analisi scientifica indipendentemente

dall'interpretazione che gli esseri umani danno loro. Tuttavia, in questo lavoro non si aderisce completamente l'approccio neo materialista nelle sue derive più estremiste che escludono completamente gli esseri umani dall'equazione. Si riconosce piuttosto l'importanza dell'agire umano e della sua creatività, dato l'attenzione durante la ricerca di campo per la raccolta delle percezioni corporee dei cristiani che interagiscono con il Muro. Così, attraverso il concetto di assemblaggi, è possibile incorporare le intuizioni dell'approccio fenomenologico alla prospettiva materialista. Poiché questo lavoro si concentra sui cristiani che vivono nel Governatorato di Betlemme, si ritiene che l'importanza che la fenomenologia culturale ripone sull'incorporazione (*embodiment*), concepita come condizione essenziale attraverso la quale si entra in relazione con il mondo, diviene fondamentale nell'acquisire una conoscenza approfondita dell'impatto del Muro su questo specifico segmento della popolazione.

Attraverso questo quadro analitico il muro non è solo un mero strumento nelle mani del governo e dell'esercito israeliano, ma dopo essere stato costruito, esercita una propria *agency*, che si intreccia con l'*agency* dei materiali e delle persone che vivono nelle sue vicinanze e che con esso interagiscono. In questa sede, attraverso la richiesta posta agli interlocutori di descrivere il Muro con una sola parola, è stato possibile svelare la molteplicità di attanti umani e non umani celati sotto l'etichetta "Muro". In particolare si è svelato come la sua presenza fisica eserciti *agency* sotto forma di espropriazione di terreni, di controllo e sorveglianza sulla popolazione palestinese, di separazione, di esortazione al compimento di atti di *sumud* nella popolazione cristiana, e nello stimolare lo sviluppo di un nuovi luogo di preghiera cristiani tra le sue lastre di cemento e gli alberi di ulivo.

SUMMARY ENGLISH

This work focuses on analyzing the impact of the security barrier or Wall built between Israel and the West Bank on the Palestinian Christian population of the municipalities of Bethlehem and Beit Jala. Consequently to the disorders and violence of the *Second Intifada* ignited by Ariel Sharon's walk on Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif on September 28, 2000, the separation between Israeli and Palestinians became overt through the construction of the renowned "security fence" or Wall. The barrier's total length has been planned to run for approximately 712 kilometers. For 90 percent of its length, the barrier is formed by a complex system of electronic fences flanked by paved pathways, barbed-wire fences, and trenches. However, the 15 kilometers-long segment that I analyze in this work, represents one of the few locations in which this barrier appears under the guise of a eight-meter-high concrete Wall. Although scholars, activists, and mainstream public opinion interested in the Israeli-Palestinian issue often address the Wall in terms of a technology of occupation or as an antiterrorist technology, in this research I wish to unveil a more complex dimension to the Wall's presence. In fact, herein I favor a materialist analysis of the Wall's physical presence.

In this work I adopt and adapt a theoretical framework of Latour's concept of assemblages in as much as it allows to challenge the notion that agency pertains solely to human actors while embracing the idea that things also exert power. Latour's notion of assemblages allows for a democratic interplay between the humans, who usually dominate the attention of scholars, and the frequently overlooked material things attempting to bridge the divide between subject and object. Furthermore, the fieldwork findings lead me to integrate the assemblage framework with the standpoint of those scholars who work within a new materialist perspective. The common denominator among new materialists relies on the belief that material things exercise agency thus deserving careful scholarly consideration independently from the interpretation that humans –

who thus far have been the protagonists of scholarly inquiry –give them. We dare not, however, completely follow the materialist approach to its more extreme drifts that completely exclude humans from the equation. We still recognize the importance of human agency and creativity wishing to collect the human bodily perception of the Christians who interact with the Wall. Thus, through the concept of assemblages, we incorporate the insights that the phenomenological approach to the materialist perspective. Since this work focuses on analyzing the impact of the Wall on the Christians living in the Bethlehem Governorate we find that the cultural phenomenology's focus on embodiment as the essential condition through which we enter in relation to the world through our corporality and bodiliness becomes fundamental in gaining a thorough understanding on the impact of the Wall on this specific segment of the population.

Thus, within this framework, the Wall is not just a mere tool in the hands of the Israeli government and army, but after being built, it exercises a power of its own, which intertwines with the agency of the materials and the people who live in its proximities and interact with it. Against this backdrop, we unpack the label "Wall" into its one-word definitions given by the interviewees and separately analyze the different actants that are involved in said definitions and thus exercise agency within the assemblage called Wall. In particular we address its agency in appropriating of land, in exercising control and surveillance, in causing separation, in stirring acts of *sumud* or steadfastness from the Christian population, in stimulating the development of a new Christian shrine between its cement slabs.

ABSTRACT HEBREW

מעבר לטכנולוגיה של בטחון והפרדה: מחקר אתנוגרפי של השפעת חומת ההפרדה על הקהילות הנוצריות של בית לחם ובית ג'לא

עבודה זו מתמקדת בגדר, או חומת ההפרדה, אשר נבנתה בין ישראל והגדה המערבית ובהשפעתה על האוכלוסיה הנוצרית בתחומי בית לחם ובית ג'לא. עקב המהומות והאלימות שנלוו לאינתיפדה השניה, ממשלת ישראל החלה בתכנון ובניה של מחסום באורך 712 קילומטר. למרות שחוקרים, אקטיביסטים וכן דעת הקהל המיינסטרימית המביעים עניין בסכסוך הישראלי פלסטיני, נוטים להתייחס לחומה כטכנולוגיה של כיבוש או של מגננה מפני טרור, במחקר זה אני מבקשת לחשוף מימד מורכב יותר של נוכחות החומה. לפיכך, בעבודה זו אני מאמצת ומסגלת את המסגרת התיאורטית של מושג המערך (**assemblage**) של לאטור, באופן בו הוא מאתגר את התפיסה שסוכנות היא נחלתם הבלעדית של בני אדם, ומאמץ את הרעיון שגם עצמים דוממים מפעילים כוח. בנוסף, מושג המערך מאפשר לנו לפתח שיתוף פעולה בין גישות פנומנולוגיות ומטריאליסטיות. באמצעות מסגרת תיאורטית זו, החומה מתגלית לא רק ככלי בידיים של ממשלת וצבא ישראל, אלא כממשתת סוכנות משל עצמה, הנשזרת בסוכנות של העצמים והאנשים החיים בקרבתה ובאים איתה במגע. על הרקע הזה, אנו נפרק את התווית "חומה" לכדי הגדרות בנות מילה אחת שנתנו לה המרואיינים וננתח את השחקנים (**actants**) המעורבים בהגדרות אלו, ובכך מפעילים את סוכנותם במסגרת אותו מערך הקרוי "חומה". אנו נתייחס בייחוד לסוכנותו בתהליכי ניכוס קרקעות, בהפעלת שליטה ופיקוח, ביצירת הפרדה, בעירור תגובות נגד של צומוד והצמדות לקרקע מצד האוכלוסיה הנוצרית ובהמרצת יצירתו של מקדש נוצרי חדש בין לוחות הבטון שלו.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Preface

Our understanding of Globalization as inherently exhibiting a tension between opening and barricading has moved increasingly towards closure due to the progressive erection of walls around the globe (Brown 2010: 7-8). Although in the past few years scholars involved in border studies «have become increasingly uncomfortable with the fixation...on the image of the wall» (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: viii), it can be hardly ignored that we have been witnessing worldwide a rising «spread of walls just a few decades after the celebration of the fall of the Berlin wall» (Ibid.). Let us think for instance at the walls built between Mexico and the United States; in Morocco to separate the Polisario Front; between India and Bangladesh; between North and South Korea; between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, between Zimbabwe and Botswana, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Kuwait and Iraq, the wall that in Belfast divides the protestant and Catholic neighborhoods, the wall in Cyprus that divides the Turkish from the Greek area, or even the wall built in the Italian city of Padua in Via Anelli to separate the immigrant neighborhood from the rest of the city (Farinacci and Filippini 2015; Brown 2010: 8).

The one wall that we did not mention among this plethora of walls disseminated around the globe, is the protagonist of this research, that is, the Wall running between the State of Israel and the West Bank. The history of the altercations between the developing State of Israel and the Arab Palestinian people speaks of relationships fluctuating between states of interaction and closure. In particular, following the rise in 1987 of the four-year-long unrest of the first *Intifada*, the Israeli polity and wider public started to embrace the idea of opening a dialogue with the PLO, which translated into the 1990's Oslo Peace Process aiming at exchanging land for peace (Tessler 1994; Lerner 2012; Morris 1999; Pappé 2010; 2006; 2004 [2006]). However, the climate of dialogue was

short lived. Following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the explosion in the year 2000 of the second *Intifada* the climate became more tense and policies towards Palestinians stiffened leading to the decision to gradually separate the Palestinian Territories from Israel through the erection of a physical barrier between the two: the security fence or segregation barrier, also known as the Wall.

Planned to run for approximately 712 kilometers, this barrier has been analyzed and discussed under multiple points of view. Numerous connoisseurs and scholars of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, such as Wendy Brown, address the Wall in terms of «a technique of strategic land appropriation that poses as an antiterrorist technology [or] as an offensive political military technology, posing as a pacification structure» (Brown, 29). In this work, however, we wish to unveil a more complex dimension to the Wall's presence. In fact, herein, I move away from the popular, but highly militant, position that regards the Wall on the one hand as a «passive antiterrorist measure» (Barak-Erez 2006, 541) or on the other hand as an oppressive technology of occupation, to favor a materialist analysis of the Wall's physical presence.

As Sonia Hazard states, «the humanities and social sciences have taken a “material turn”» (Hazard 2013: 58) and the common denominator among scholars involved in this field of inquiry (Latorur 1993, 1999, 2004, 2005; Coole and Frost 2010; Bennett 2005, 2010; Stengs 2014; Bryant 2011; Bogost 2012; Vásquez 2011; El Or 2012; Connolly 2013; Dolphijn and Tuin 2012; Meyer 2009) consists in the argument «that material things possess a remarkable range of capacities that exceed the purview of human sense or knowing, and therefore insist that the materiality of material things themselves must be carefully considered, not merely interpreted for their implications on human concerns» (Hazard 2013: 64). Thus, the new materialist approach allows us to understand agency as complex and «distributed across assemblages of both humans and things» (Hazard 2013: 66). The concept of assemblages challenges the notion that agency pertains solely to human actors while embracing the idea that things also exert power.

Within this framework, the Wall is not just a mere tool in the hands of the Israeli government and army, but after being built it exercises a power of its own

intertwined with the agency of the people who live in its proximities and interact with it. We wish to investigate this issue through the new materialist lens because, as we shall see, some of the narratives of the Christian population not exclusively describe the Wall as yet another means for the state of Israel to exercise its occupation, but they speak of it as a subject exercising a gamut of unforeseen actions.

The construction of the Wall developed in progressive and nonlinear stages, which were either accelerated or hindered by multiple forces and players. Hence, it appears and behaves «like a worm sliced into segments each assuming a renewed life» (Weizman 2007: 176). This fragmentation translates into diverse effects and modality of interaction between the Christian community and these distinct sections of the Wall. Hence, in this work we explore the Christians narrations of daily life experiences at the different sections of the Wall. Furthermore, because of the Christians represent an ethno-religious minority in the region, the diverse elements of the assemblage “Wall,” we will analyze its effects particularly on this segment of the population.

In chapter two, we focus on the agency of the Wall as an assemblage to expropriate land. We analyze the stories of those Christians who, because of the construction of the Wall, lost access to their lands that have been annexed to the State of Israel’s national territory while their homes remained on the Palestinian side. In particular we address the case of the Cremisan Valley. In this territory southwest of Jerusalem that falls under the Beit Jala municipality, the Wall has yet to be built. However, the IDF’s planned rout, in the effort to guarantee security to the Har Gilo settlement and to the Gilo inhabitants, will sever fifty-eight Christian families from their fields and it will separate the men’s Salesian monastery and vineyard from the women’s convent and elementary school. Herein, we present the Cremisan legal battle and the laws applied to this and other cases consequently to the present and future physical presence of the Wall and its land-expropriating agency.

In chapter three, we address the issue of the control and surveillance enacted by the Wall through checkpoints, censing, and the permit system. In particular we focus on one of the elements that the Christian interviewees cite most frequently in their narration of interaction with the Wall: the checkpoint.

Thus, herein we describe the bodily experience of having to pass through these terminals in order to travel to Israel. Furthermore, we analyze how the permit system, developed in order to regulate the passage through the Wall, classifies and controls people through its censoring agency. One of the cases we analyze is the one of the Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem and how the permit system controls who can access healthcare in Jerusalem when in need of undergoing complex surgery.

In chapter four we present the Wall as an assemblage of separation given its increasing role as the *de facto* border between Israel and Palestine. This chapter particularly addresses the impact that the separation Wall enacts on the Christian community as a religious minority. Drawing from the celebrations of Easter's Holy Week, I analyze how the assemblage Wall hinders their freedom of worship through restrictions to travel to Jerusalem where their Holy Places are located. Furthermore, the Wall affects the relationship between Christian communities that dwell on both sides of the border, meaning that due to the separating agency reinforced through the permit system, joint activities and events between West Bank and Israeli Christians becomes highly problematic. Similarly the permit system also hinders the appointment of parish priests with Palestinian citizenship in Israeli communities requiring the Latin Patriarchate to request its priests from Jordan. Moreover, this chapter deals with the controversial issue of family reunion, which affects the unity of the families whose spouses possess two different citizenship statuses. This matter also impacts the chances of the young people to find a wife or a husband given the reduced choices of a mate due to the scarce chances of a Palestinian Christian and an Israeli Christian have of living together.

Chapter five addresses the Arab concept of *sumud*, which has been translated into English with the word steadfastness. *Sumud* describes a particular way of being-in-the-world that ranges from outright resistance against the Israeli army, as in the case of the Beit Sahour Tax Revolt, to the carrying out of the more ordinary activities such as doing the laundry, going to work, that is, staying on the land in the face of duress. In particular, in this chapter we focus on the ways in which the Christian communities enact *sumud* in their everyday lives and the particular connection that this active verb has with the Christian faith. In

particular we will look at the creative initiatives developed to enact *sumud* of the Sumud Story House and one of its most successful projects: the Wall Museum.

In Chapter six we analyze how the impact of the assemblage Wall intertwines with the dimension of religious rituals in developing new Christian Shrines. Through the analysis of the case studies of the weekly celebration of the Holy Mass at the Cremisan Valley and the weekly recitation of the Rosary along the Wall near Checkpoint 300 new venues of prayer are developing. In both cases we witness how the presence of the Wall, and its bordering agency are disputed and contrasted on religious level. As we shall see, through prayer, the Christian communities not only display their dissent over the presence of the Wall, but they also voice their right as an ethno-religious minority to live on the land.

Before delving into the topics of these six chapters, let us first become more acquainted with the context of the research, the ethnographic method used to collect the data, the nature of the material collected on the fieldwork, and understand more in depth the reasons and implications of adopting the assemblage framework.

Contextualizing the fieldwork

As a result of the Oslo peace process, initiated in the 1990s, and particularly due to Oslo II, known as the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip that we mentioned above, the West Bank has been subdivided in three Areas of jurisdiction Area A where the Palestinian Authority (PA) possesses full civil and security control, Area B in which the PA retains civil control with a joint Israeli-Palestinian security control, and Area C which is under full Israeli civil and security control.

In the case of Beit Jala «Area A comprising approximately 3,500 dunums of about 25% of the town's land is under Palestinian control. On the other hand, the remaining 75% (Area C) is under Israeli jurisdiction, and 7% of the total Area C is located inside the Municipality border. Thus, many neighborhoods in a town or village are physically separated from the core part of their communities». In the Bethlehem Governorate, which also includes the municipality of Beit Jala,

approximately 6000 people dwell in 17 residential areas located in Area C, thus directly under Israeli control. Furthermore, «more than 85% of Bethlehem Governorate¹ is designated as Area C, the vast majority of which is off limits for Palestinian development, including almost 38% declared as “firing zones”, 34% designated as “nature reserves”, and nearly 12% allocated for settlement development»². This agreement essentially gave Israel military control of the «interstices of an archipelago of about two hundred separate zones of Palestinian restricted autonomy of the West Bank» (Weizman 2007: 11).

As a result of the second *Intifada* these boundaries started to solidify through the beginning of the construction of the barrier in 2002. The architecture of the barrier envisions «85% of... [its] route [that] runs through the West Bank, mainly in areas where there are Israeli settlements and industrial zones»³ and by July 2012, the progress of the of the barrier’s completion amounted to 62% of the total length.

As we previously mentioned, the preponderance of the barrier’s length (about 90%) is constituted by an «electronic fence flanked by paved pathways, barbed-wire fences, and trenches. The average width of the barrier is sixty meters»⁴. The segment that I have selected to analyze represents one of the few locations in which this barrier appears under the guise of an eight-meter-high concrete Wall. The Wall in the Bethlehem Governorate «extends across 53.5 kilometers starting at the eastern rural area north of Al-Khas village and runs south to reach Um Al-Qassies village; it then extends towards the west, bypasses the southern part of Abu Ghniem mountain north of Beit Sahour, before it continues northwest of Bethlehem and Beit Jala cities and westward to run along bypass road 60 south of Al-Khader village, it then runs southeast towards Wad Al-Nis to encompass Efrat settlement»⁵. Furthermore, the rout of the Wall

¹ The Bethlehem Governorate consists of 10 municipalities, 3 refugee camps and 58 rural districts. The municipalities included in the Governorate are: Battir, Beit Fajjar, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Bethlehem, Al-Dawha, Husan, al-Khader, Nahalin, Tuqu’, al-Ubeidiya, Za’atara.

² Bethlehem Governorate : Fragmentation and Humanitarian Concerns, OCHA, January 2015 http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_bethlehem_factsheet_03_02_2015_english.pdf

³ http://www.btselem.org/topic/separation_barrier

⁴ http://www.btselem.org/separation_barrier/map

⁵ http://arij.org/files/admin/2007-2_Geopolitical_Status_of_Bethlehem_Governorate.pdf

extends south and southwest isolating the western rural area of the Governorate along the Gush Etzion settlement Bolc⁶.

Now that we have gained a perception of the geo-political context in which our analysis takes place, we must briefly address the situation of the Christian population in this area (Kuruvilla 2013; Pinna 2005; Sennot 2001; Giovannelli 2000; Del Zanna 2011; Colbi 1988; Clarke and Flohr 1992; Cafulli 2007). In the early 1900s, the Christian population in Palestine was estimated to be around 20 percent. During the British mandate, a census calculated their proportion at 13 percent (Luz and Smith 2006). Their numbers drastically declined after the end of the British Mandate, which witnessed the emigration of half the Christian population. Toward the end of the XX century, Palestinian Christians dwelled mostly in the vicinities of the sites where the main events of the revelation took place. Approximately 30,000 live in and near Bethlehem; about 20,000 dwell in and around Jerusalem; and about 100,000 Palestinian Christians reside in and near Nazareth (Raheb 1995: 4).

Today, the majority of Christians dwell in the Galilee and in the city of Jerusalem and its vicinities. Diyar researchers⁷ found the estimated number of Palestinian Christians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem to be 51,710, making the percentage of the Palestinian Christians 1.37 of the Palestinian population. The total number of the Palestinian population used in this document (3,767,126) is calculated by adding the population of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (1,416,543) to the population of the Palestinians in the West Bank excluding Jerusalem (1,986,934), and then to the estimated Palestinian population in Jerusalem (363,649), which includes both territories administered by the Palestinian Authority and those administered by Israeli authorities. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics following the 2007 population census published these figures, describing the Palestinian population in the Palestinian Territories and Israeli-administered Jerusalem. However, the 2014 CIA census paints a much deteriorated picture estimating that the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Palestinian Christian Facts, Figures and Trends 2008.
http://www.diyar.ps/media/documents/pal_chr_booklet.pdf

Christians represent 1.0 to 2.5 percent of the population in the West Bank⁸, and about «three-fourth of all the Bethlehem Christians live abroad» (Adelman and Kuperman 2006: 1). In contrast, there is a higher percentage of Christians in Israel. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, the Arab Christians in Israel – including Israeli-administered parts of Jerusalem – on Christmas Eve 2011 were 154,500, constituting approximately 2% of the population of the state of Israel. Furthermore, in regard to Christian localities, in terms of concentration, the Bethlehem Governorate is the home to the highest percentage of Christians in Palestine (43.4%), followed by the Ramallah Governorate (24.7%), then Jerusalem (17.9%). The rest of the Christian population is distributed across the rest of Palestine as follows; Gaza Strip (5.9%), Jenin (5.7%), Nablus (1.4%), and Jericho, Tubas and Tulkarem with less than 1% each⁹.

Today, one of the most threatening factors to the survival of the Christian population in Israel-Palestine is a steady stream of emigration. In recent years the departure of the Palestinian Christians has significantly increased and reached new dimensions as the causes of flight have multiplied. A study done by Sabeel¹⁰ shows that the problem of emigration is far more acute in the West Bank than it is in Israel. This factor is due to the «political and economic situation in the West Bank».¹¹ According to this survey done in the summer of 2006, the Christians who were processing papers to leave «represent 4.5 percent of the total Christian sample population in the West Bank, which is double the annual Christian population natural growth rate».¹² The reasons for the emigration of Christians of the West Bank are for 44.7% connected with work opportunities; 42.6% connects their flight to bad economic and political situation; 8.5 % wants to leave to join family and only 4.2% to work and study.¹³

Although emigration is a normal process among all nations, the departure of the Christian population from Israel and the Palestinian Territories is

⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/we.html>

⁹ Palestinian Christian Facts, Figures and Trends 2008.

http://www.diyar.ps/media/documents/pal_chr_booklet.pdf

¹⁰ Sabeel is an ecumenical center that applies a theological approach and nonviolence to address the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

¹¹ The Sabeel Survey on Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Israel. Summer 2006. Page30. The document can be found downloaded in pdf format at this website <http://www.fosna.org/content/sabeel-survey-palestinian-christians-west-bank-and-israel-pdf>

¹² The Sabeel Survey p. 32.

¹³ The Sabeel Survey p. 33.

alarming. One of the greatest worries among the ministers of the different Christian denominations focuses on the risk of curtailing Christianity to the maintenance of the Holy Sites. The fear of reducing these sites and their communities into mere museums and destinations of pilgrimages hunts constantly the clergy of the various Christian denominations present in the land. «Christians have always felt responsible for protecting and defending these churches and sites, which made for mutual support. The fate of the Christians is bound up with the fate of their Holy Sites... [but] the stones of the Church need the living stones [as well]» (Raheb 1995, 4). As Abuna I.S. priest of the Beit Jala parish narrates «there is a reality here: the Wall, the reality of fields being stolen, the reality of people's poverty. The people here are tired, so they leave everything and they go. If you go to Latin America, in Chile there are 20000 people originally from Beit Jala; now in Beit Jala there are 10000» (Abuna I.). Furthermore, the Mayor of Bethlehem disclosed that in the past year (2014) forty families left Bethlehem.

The small number of Israeli and Palestinian Christians belong to about thirteen different denominations present in the territory. Although today the ecumenical dialogue leads towards a certain terminological uniformity and agreement which distinguishes the Christian communities into four main groups, the classifications are still unfixed and uncertain. Here is an attempt to group the astonishing Christian multiplicity found in the Holy Land: (1) the Eastern Orthodox Church which includes the Greek Orthodox Church, the Romanian Orthodox and Russian Orthodox Church; (2) the Non-Calcedonian / Oriental Orthodox which includes the Armenian Church, the Syrian Church, the Coptic Church and the Ethiopian Church; (3) the Catholic Church which includes the Roman (Latin) Catholic Church, the (Syriac) Maronite Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, the Custodians of the Holy Land, the Caldean Church, and the Coptic Catholic Church; (4) the Protestant Churches which include the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church. To this classification, Gianazza (2008) also adds a fifth subgroup, which includes Crypto Christians, expatriate workers, and Messianic Jews (Gianazza 2008; Sabbah 2003; Sudbury 2010). Furthermore, in Jerusalem reside three patriarchs dwelling in its perimeters (Greek Orthodox,

Armenian, and Latin) along with eight archbishops and bishops, in addition to another some-and-twenty titular bishops (Gianazza 2008, 5-6; Tsimhoni 1993).

In particular in the municipalities where I conducted my fieldwork, the population of Beit Jala, counts 15,670 inhabitants predominantly Christian, while Bethlehem City has a population of about 32000 people not including the population in the Refugee camps. Of the entire population 32-35% of the population is Christian: about 8000 Catholics subdivided in 1000 families; about 6000 to 7000 Greek Orthodox; and the smaller denominations of Armenian, Syrian, Coptic, Anglican, Lutherans about 1000 persons, for a total of 12-14000 Christians. If to this calculation you add the Refugee Camps of Aida and Duheisha, the Christian population decreases to 10-15% of the total population of Bethlehem municipality.

Fieldwork

My own attraction to the Arab Palestinian Christian communities started in the year 2008 when I came for the first time to the “Holy Land” during a religious pilgrimage. Little I knew at the time about what the actual label “Holy Land” concealed as well as about the quite simplistic category of “Christians”. All of a sudden, by lifting the lids of these two Pandora vases, I unleashed a world of multiplicity and intricacies beyond my expectations. Now the term “Holy Land” started to acquire the political dimensions of Mandatory Palestine, State of Israel, Biblical Eretz Israel, Transjordan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Gaza strip and West Bank, Judea and Samaria. As I traveled through these lands and met their people, also the appellation “Christians” acquired depth and complexity: Arab Israeli Christian, Arab Palestinian Christian, Arab Palestinian Latin Christian, Arab Israeli Anglican Christian.

The intricate context met during a vacation, which I could scarcely understand and barely hold together in my head, became the subject of a research endeavor starting from my M.A. and now evolving into my PhD dissertation. While my M.A. research focused on Arab Christians’ peace-building grassroots initiatives, this work focuses on the major obstacle faced by the

Palestinian section of the Christian communities in the development of said activities: the Wall. In fact, in the attempt to answer the question on whether the presence of these initiatives has a meaningful impact, two major factors arose as hampering their effectiveness: the Christian status as a religious minority both in Israel and the Palestinian Territories (with this term we indicate both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) , as well as the presence of the Wall.

The Wall, although it undeniably affects the Palestinian population as a whole, it impinges on the Christian minority in a more severe manner compared to the Muslim majority. Furthermore, scholars have so far ignored this segment of the population while focusing mostly on the predicaments of the Palestinian people as a whole and on the more popular political and humanitarian dimension generated by the separation Wall. In this research, however, I propose to examine the physical presence of the Wall and its interaction with the Christian population in the West Bank's municipalities of Bethlehem and Beit Jala from a New Materialist perspective.

Throughout this research when I use the term Christian I refer predominantly to the Roman Catholic (Latin) denomination with a minority of interviews with Melkite Greek Catholic Christians as well as Protestants. Although in Bethlehem, as well as in the West Bank and State of Israel, the Roman Catholics do not represent the largest Christian denomination, I have decided to focus primarily on them for several reasons. Firstly, during my past visits to Israel and the Palestinian Territories I was introduced to various members of this community. Secondly, my status as a member of the Catholic Church allowed me to have a more fluid introduction in the community as well as a direct admittance to the community's activities. Thirdly, and most importantly, it was a group of Catholic nuns and a Catholic priest who initiated two of the core activities developed in response to the Wall, which inspired the development of my research. The last reason is tied to linguistic concerns. The Arab Christians in Bethlehem, as well as the Palestinian population at large, speak several languages because of their high level of education, of their everyday interactions with tourists from all around the world, and of their necessity to interact with international humanitarian projects developers who invest in helping their local communities. However, the Christian Catholics among the gamut of languages

also speak Italian. Because of the predominant presence of Catholic schools in both Bethlehem and Beit Jala, which are run by Italian priests and nuns, many students learn Italian from an early age. Furthermore, the clergy of the Catholic Church is required to speak Italian, thus even the Arab Speaking priests who tend to Arab parishes are expected to speak Italian.

The linguistic aspect represents not only an additional element of connection with the community, but it also constitutes an interesting aspect of analysis. In particular it becomes relevant given that the two core activities shaping my research, namely the Holy Masses at Cremisan and the prayer of the Rosary at Checkpoint 300, have been supported and advertised by the Italian community for the former, and developed by an Italian congregation of nuns for the latter. Thus, the research has been carried predominantly in English and Italian and, when the interlocutor only spoke Arabic, an interpreter assisted me.

The fieldwork was carried out in two expeditions for a total of three months, one during the months of October and November while the second stay during the month of April. Moreover, consequently to the activation of a formal collaboration with the Hebrew University, I spent an additional eight-month period in Jerusalem visiting Bethlehem and Beit Jala during the weekends. All the ethnographic research took place in the Bethlehem and Beit Jala area, both located within the West Bank territory. I planned the first two trips in two different moments of the year in order to get a feel both for the impact of the Wall on ordinary life, as well as during a particularly meaningful and strong religious event for the Christian community: Easter's Holy Week.

The first trip was of an exploratory nature in which the first contacts were made and the data collected allowed for an understanding of the geo-political situation in these two areas. In particular, I was able to get in touch with the legal institution that dealt with the cases of land expropriation in the Cremisan Valley (Society of Saint Yves) as well as in the Palestinian Territories at large (ARIJ). The decision to focus on this geographical area resulted extremely useful in as much as it allows the investigation of multiple dimensions of the Wall's agency. I was, thus, able to identify several case studies spread along the segment of the present and future route of the Wall. These case studies shed light on diverse modes in which the Wall's agency enters in contact and intertwines with the

Palestinian Christians' lives. Furthermore this peculiar section of the Wall allows investigating its temporal dimension.

In fact, since the construction of the Wall is still ongoing, I was able to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of the people who witnessed the erection of the first cement blocks in 2002, of those who already live in the vicinities of the Wall and are forced to interact and deal with its presence, as well as of those who are threatened by the construction of the Wall and have been informed of its root and future detachment of their home from their fields. Moreover, during these first two months of fieldwork, I witnessed and participated intensively in the faith-based initiatives of protest against the already built portion of the Wall, the weekly rosary at the checkpoint 300, as well as the weekly Holy Mass in the Cremisan olive groves under threat of annexation to the state of Israel's national territory through the future construction of the Wall.

I planned the second fieldwork in order to undertake the analyses of the Christian population's relationship with the Wall during the preparations for and celebration of the Holy Week. The decision to witness this particular event permitted to collect and analyze a strong and dense ethnographic piece of data. It allowed for an understanding of the predicaments of dealing with the presence of the Wall during one of the major religious celebrations in the Christian liturgical year. If during the first sojourn I focused on the collection of legal and geo-political data, the second sojourn concentrated more on the people's embodied experience of the assemblage called Wall. Therefore a set of questions was devised to investigate human experiences and perceptions of the Christian community asking them to define the Wall with one word, to narrate their memories of the times of the construction of the Wall, investigating on how their life changed since its erection, as well as inquiring about a particular event that they clearly remember in connection to the presence of the Wall.

The imagery that arose from the interviews depicts the Wall both as being an agent of division, separation, loss control, as well as human agency and creativity. The breakthrough of the research took place when I asked my interlocutors to describe the Wall with just one word. This method forced them to think about the Wall in an unfamiliar way. As a Christian woman told me, this

question represents a challenge for the Arabs who tend to be very descriptive. Thus, when asked, they had to either condense different elements of the assemblage called Wall, or select its paramount element. As we shall see further on, a plethora of key words arose such as tomb, gate, fence, serpent, humiliation, death, art, museum, creativity, etc.

Thus, I concentrated the attention on the religious activities and communities present in the proximities of the Wall separating Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Specifically, I focused on the weekly rosary led by the Elizabethan nuns of the Caritas Baby Hospital recited in front of the Our Lady of the Wall Icon near Checkpoint 300, as well as the weekly Holy Masses celebrated in the Cremisan Olive Groves whose owners are threatened of land expropriation by the projected root of the Wall. Moreover, I also collected the narrations of Christians such as the C.A. family, whose home is surrounded on three sides by the Wall in the Rachel's Tomb area; A.W. and his family who lives in Area C; the Franciscan nuns whose convent's entrance faces the Wall in the Aida Refugee Camp; the points of view of professors at Bethlehem University; the parish priests of Beit Jala, and I also collected data from informal encounters during everyday activities. Moreover, I have recorded the narrations of the Sumud Story House members situated in the Rachel's Tomb area, as well as photographing their stories posted as part of the Wall Museum project.

Furthermore, I became an active member of the youth "Christmas Choir" of the Saint Catherine Parish of Bethlehem. I participated at their rehearsals, their field trips, and everyday life activities. I went to their homes to eat and I celebrated their birthdays. Additionally, during the Holy Week, I joined them for all the liturgical moments such as Palm Sunday in Jerusalem, the Holy Thursday nocturnal procession from mount Olive to St. Peter's Church in Gallicantu, the Holy Masses in their Bethlehem community.

In order to widen my focus, while conducting interviews, I also collected a wide range of materials. Such materials range from legal acts of expropriation, prayers, Terra Santa news clips, songs, wooden nativities with the Wall preventing Mary and Joseph from entering Bethlehem, maps, local publications about the Wall, but also very personal objects such as family pictures, products

of the land such as olive oil from the fields under threat of expropriation for the construction of the wall, rosaries for the prayer at Checkpoint 300.

Thus, via these cases and collected materials, I wish to investigate and gain insight on the meaning and embodied experience of the Wall as an assemblage, as well as on the influence of the Wall's presence on this religious minority through a collaboration between the new materialist framework and the phenomenological approach.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Since its planning, the presence the Wall became the subject of discourse among official political bodies such as the UN, nations involved in facilitating the peace process, as well as among political and social activists. Numerous are the websites and pamphlets denouncing injustice perpetrated by the state of Israel defining the Wall as an instrument of its occupation on the Palestinian people. Hence, «a plethora of scholarship and media coverage has sought to challenge the wall's legality, highlighting its associated human rights violations through the obstruction of access to jobs, public services, education and family» (Larkin 2014: 134). As Craig Larkin points out, «academic critiques have firmly situated the Wall within broader theories of state power, violence, and securitization. Such studies employ Foucauldian concepts of “biopower” or “biopoliticsc” as a means of understanding population control...[or] on Agambem's notion of the despotic “state of exception”» (Ibid.). Furthermore, there are perspectives such as Larkin's himself, which aim to analyze the «interventions ranging from protest art to political slogans to commercial advertising» (Ibid., 137) painted on the Wall, which has become, especially in the Bethlehem area «an enormous visual petition, an ephemeral forum, a pictorial rant and reprimand» (Ibid.) targeted by notorious graffiti artists (Parry 2010). We do not deny the validity of the dimensions explored by these scholars and activists, however, through my ethnographic research, rooted in extensive fieldwork, I wish to unveil a more complex dimension to the Wall's presence.

Against this backdrop, I hope to shed light on the agentic power of the Wall analyzed through its material presence. I wish to present the Wall as an assemblage of human and nonhuman actants. In this analysis I aim to unpack the label “Wall” in order to identify all those actants that exercise an impact on the Christian population. As mentioned previously, in order to achieve this objective I asked my interlocutors to describe the Wall with one word. As they were forced to define their experience of the Wall only with one term, they had to condense different elements of this assemblage into one paramount concept¹⁴. Let us look at a concrete example to understand how Latour’s theorization on assemblages, can enrich our understanding of the impact of the Wall’s physical presence.

I looked at the gate, it was closed, I felt that someone is really trying to kill me, someone is trying to put his hands on my neck (she tightens the hands around her neck mimicking someone strangling her)... I will never ever forget this feeling imagine yourself, the main entrance is closed and you don’t have the authority to open it so this is what I felt at that moment, that someone is killing me... killing, illness, serpent, a lot of ugly words, these words even cannot describe what we feel when I say it is killing me it’s not just a word, it is really killing me. So you know looking at the wall, it’s ten meters high and when you look at it you can’t even continue to look at it, you feel really afraid just sometimes I feel really afraid. (R.)

This description can be considered the engine of my entire analysis. First of all, when R. portrays the Wall as strangling her, she does not describe the Wall through adjectives such as “ugly”, “tall”, “solid” but she attributes to it an action, that of “choking”. Already, in this first observation the materiality of the Wall that is, its physical presence does not appear inanimate, but she describes the Wall as possessing the same agentic power as a human subject. Thus, if we acknowledge that the Wall has agency, what does it mean that it strangles someone? After all, the Wall might have been anthropomorphized, but it still does not have actual hands. So what is it about the Wall that strangles?

Here comes our second observation. R.’s description of a particular situation in which she felt that the Wall was strangling her answers our question.

¹⁴ In some cases, where the interlocutors had difficulties with or were unable to describe the Wall with one word they used a sentence or an example. Thus, these more extensive descriptions have been condensed in one keyword by the researcher maintaining intact, as much as possible, the meaning that the interlocutor wished to convey.

She speaks of the closure of the gate at Checkpoint 300, the main exit and entrance to and from Bethlehem, which associates the idea of the impossibility to exit to that of losing one's breath because of the lack of freedom of movement. In fact, in this work we face a group of different elements, an assemblage of parts that, because of their material presence, structure, design, architecture, and humans operating with and through them provoke the sensation of choking. For instance, R.'s description of the Wall as a "serpent", and as "killing" can be understood as alluding to the shape of a serpent and its ability to wrap its body around preys choking them with its coils, thus "killing" them by taking their breath away. Furthermore, the Wall's "serpentine" quality may come from its non-linear architecture and route that insinuates deep within the city wrapping its "body" around buildings severing them from the city's major arteries (R. refers in this case to Rachel's Tomb area where she works and where the Wall insinuates between houses to surround the tomb annexing it to the Jerusalem Israeli territory).

This short example allows us to understand the Wall neither solely as a technology of oppression and control, nor as a listless monolithic object, thus allowing us to acknowledge that humans are not the sole holders of the ability to do the choking. According to Latour, in fact, agency is not just a prerogative of humans but also of nonhumans. Precisely against anthropocentric approaches we call upon «new materialism [which] rejects a priori oppositions between subjects and objects [that] can no longer be known fully through the lenses of a human subject» (Hazard 2013: 59). As Deleuze and Guattari— who provide a philosophical landmark for new materialism (Ibid. 64) —claim: «there is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other... The self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever» (1983:2). Thus humans, nonhumans, nature, culture, subjects, objects are considered by these two authors, and in different degree by scholars working within the new materialist perspective, to coexist on the same plane of being «without hard boundaries, membranes, or containers to divide them, humans and things continuously enter into a coextensive, interdependent, and integrative relationship» (Hazard 2013: 64).

Furthermore, Latour affirms that «actors are defined above all as obstacles, scandals... as what gets in the way of domination...to put it crudely human and nonhuman actors appear first of all as troublemakers» (Latour 2004: 81). The concept that Latour uses to define such behavior is “recalcitrance”. Through this notion, Latour wishes to dispute the idea that nonhumans diverge from the free and rebellious humans in their inevitable obedience to the law of causality. By confuting this dichotomy between humans and nonhumans, he acknowledges the latter as fully-fledged actors «with whom it is necessary to reckon, as active agents whose potential is still unknown» (Latour 2004: 82). Thus, following this understanding, we find ourselves with material objects (the nonhumans) that hold a potential as agents, in this case a recalcitrance, that is still unknown and unpredictable. Let us look at the Wall through this interpretative lens.

The Israeli government started building the Wall as a security measure in response to the second Intifada terrorist attacks and fear of Palestinian infiltrations. However, the various elements of the assemblage that progressively became part of the Wall, combined with the agency of the military and that of the Palestinian people, possess a life of their own with an unknown, unpredictable, innovative outcome which the Israeli Government, Cabinet, IDF forces, architects who develop the project, etc., had not intended nor could they have predicted: choking, heart attack, psychological disorders, emigration, prayer, shrine, museum, *sumud*, art canvas, zoo, etc.

As we have thus far expounded, the dichotomy between subject and object has been discharged in favor of the more democratic humans and nonhumans, which become part of an agentic network identified by the term of assemblage. Thus, we understand that each element of the assemblage, the actant, «never really acts alone. Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces» (Bennett 2010:21). Let us look at another example. S., a Christian young man who works in the nonprofit sector used the word Zoo to describe the Wall. What is it really at stake underneath this word?

my mother mentioned it as a prison, I would mention it as a

zoo, why? Because we are really treated like animals, you know, they have all the infrastructure, they control everything, they control electricity they control the water. In a prison they control everything but you could know, you could manage, but here? Whenever they want they can cut electricity, whenever they want they could cut the water so it's not like a real prison, in a prison they have rights but here, we don't have anything so it's really a bad situation.

Hidden under the label "zoo", in addition to the status of the population living in a walled city, there is a connection to the material architecture of the Wall that stimulates this similitude. The animals are obviously caged in and behind bars in small habitats where they live their lives in captivity following the schedule dictated by the zoo operators and opening hours. They are under constant scrutiny of the zoo facility and an amusement for visitors who enjoy the tour and leave after some hours probably asking themselves few questions about the animal's well being.

Bethlehem is a pilgrimage site, a town that survives thanks to tourism. However, differently from other pilgrimage sites in the Holy Land, predominantly located in the State of Israel, Bethlehem experiences a fugacious wave of tourism. As many shopkeepers have shared with me, the organized tour buses stop in Bethlehem only long enough to visit the Nativity Church and then quickly take the tourists back to Jerusalem. The effects of this swift experience of Bethlehem allows only a few shops near Manger Square to come into contact with the tourists, leaving little to no time for the local population to share their life situation. S.'s description of their situation as inhabitants of Bethlehem reveals multiple elements of the assemblage Wall described as a zoo. Akin to the zoo, Bethlehem has restricted "opening hours", the population is fenced in and observed through the cameras and the watchtowers; also the entrance and exit to and from the city is closely monitored and registered at the checkpoints.

Thus, exploring the Wall as part of an assemblage, and therefore looking at it as possessing agency and not as a mere mediator of human action or seen simply as technology amplifying human action, brings a much more compelling and complex understanding of its impact on the Christian population. From this standpoint, the Christians' narrations of unforgettable experiences with the Wall started to make sense to me. Initially I did not comprehend why, when asked to

describe an episode involving the Wall, my interlocutors narrated an event occurred at the checkpoint, until I realized that the checkpoint was considered an integral part of the Wall. The Wall was not understood solely as a concrete barrier, but an association of many different parts each exercising agency. The concept of assemblages allowed to peel off the label “Wall” unearthing a multiplicity of concealed elements: cement slabs, watchtowers, barbed wire, gates for cars, checkpoints, cameras, lighting fixtures, metal detectors, turnstile entrances, finger printing, army who check passports, agricultural gates etc.

Latour, thus delivers to us a world where «agency is always a complex agency, unlocalizable and distributed across assemblages of both humans and things» (Hazard 2013:66) which cannot be predicted. Moreover, I venture to say, that, in addition to complex agency, Latour offers us a deeply contextualized assembly of humans and nonhumans. If we step back for a moment and look just at the definition of any wall we find that it is understood as «a structure of brick, stone, etc., that surrounds an area or separates one area from another», or «a structure that forms the side of a room or building»¹⁵. However, if we limit our understanding of a wall based solely on this definition we are missing the importance of the choice of materials used to build it and the context in which this Wall is located. «Context is of special importance in how we perceive and experience walls» (Brown 2010: 55). In fact, no one would feel suspicious or unease when encountering a four to six meter tall wall surrounding a Hollywood star’s home in Beverly Hills. Conversely, in the case of a neighborhood that has recently experienced the construction of a noisy highway in its vicinities will require some kind of barrier to muffle the constant cacophonous sound of traffic. However, the residents would greatly regret losing the view of the countryside from their windows. Hence, the wall will be made in a transparent material in order to prevent the loss of view as well as ensuring a quieter environment. Thus, the design and the architectural project may vary and its significance and interpretation differ based on the context in which the wall is located.

Furthermore, in addition to addressing the importance of choice of materials in specific contexts, we deem paramount to include the perceptions and reactions of the humans who come in contact with the Wall and how their

¹⁵ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wall>

personal life story intertwines with their experience of the Wall. For instance, the perception, description, and embodied experience of the Wall differs greatly from an elderly woman who lived in Bethlehem before the Wall was built, to a catholic priest from Beit Jala who cannot be appointed to a parish in the Galilee, or to young people who have never seen what there is on the other side of the Wall and have no ties to the city of Jerusalem. Thus, at this juncture, it's important to address one of the core debates between new materialist scholars and their detractors: the decentering of human "subjects" in favor of "passive objects".

When I was first exploring the perspectives offered by new materialism, one of my main apprehensions consisted precisely in this shift of attention from the human subjects to the Wall understood in its material "stuffness"; how is it possible to adopt a new materialist approach when the understanding of the agency of the Wall comes from the human experience and perception of my human interlocutors? It seemed a paradox to me that, even though I wanted to focus my research on the Wall itself, I was interviewing people to gain an understanding of the Wall's agency. I thus asked myself if and how the materialist framework that I wanted to adopt could somehow coexist and work together with what seemed a cultural phenomenological method of collecting data (i.e. inquiring about people's embodied experience of the Wall). Jane Bennett's work *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of things*, became crucial in untying this Gordian knot.

Bennett recounts of her encounter with an assemblage of materials on the street (a glove, a rat, pollen, a bottle cap, and a stick) and how their materiality «started to shimmer and spark» (Bennett 2010: 5) due to the «contingent tableau that they formed with each other, with the street, with the weather that morning, with [her]» (ibid.). As she explains, had the sun not glistened on the glove she might not have been able to notice the dead rat and so on. Because they were all there and positioned in that particular way, she was able to catch «a glimpse of an energetic vitality inside each of these things, things that ... [she] generally conceive as inert» (ibid.). In the assemblage that Bennett describes, these nonhumans appeared «as vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their

semiotics» (ibid). This assemblage of materials formed a “contingent tableau” with each other and with her, her mood that day and the particular weather of that day; she became an active participant in that particular assemblage.

Our decision to adopt an assemblage framework instead of only focusing on the new materialist perspective lies on the fact that our inquiry on the Wall’s agency passed through the lived experiences of the people who came into contact with it. Thus, I realized that I shared Jane Bennett’s concerns when she writes

was the thing-power of the debris I encountered but a function of the subjective and intersubjective connotations, memories, and affects that had accumulated around my ideas of these items? Was the real agent of my temporary immobilization in the street that day *humanity*, that is, the cultural meaning of “rat,” “plastic,” and “wood” in conjunction with my own idiosyncratic biography? It could be. But what if the swarming activity inside my head was itself an instance of the vital materiality that also constituted the trash? (2010: 10).

This eloquent query does not simply speak about the methodology through which investigate the agency of nonhumans, but it uncovers the challenging issue concerning the relationship between phenomenology (Csordas 1990, 1994a, 1994b, 1999, 2011; Merleau-Ponty 1968; 2002; Heidegger 1962) and materialism. Through Bennet’s work we reveal the challenge faced by the anthropologist whose «first task ... is to convey ...feelings empathetically» (Miller 41: 2010). As Bennett asserted she was the one to perceive this vibrancy and thus phenomenology cannot be eliminated from the “assemblage”. She was the one that day who, because of her mood and assertiveness, because of her being-in-the-world, perceived the tableau of objects on the street.

As anthropologists we are taught to interact with people, to interview them, to record their story, thus holding humans as the privileged entryway to conduct the fieldwork. After all scholars who focus on materiality «may agree to take material culture seriously, [but] the crucial question of methodology is never far behind» (Hazard 2013: 59). In order to access the knowledge of how the Wall acts, we could have decided to just come into contact with it, stand by it, to try to absorb its “thing power”, but the results would have had to rely exclusively on the researcher’s perceptions and understanding of the Wall.

However, investigating its agency in this manner would not have captured the true agency of this particular Wall because it is experienced by and interacts with the Palestinian people and to them its presence is embodied in a different manner than that of a European researcher. Furthermore, it would not have been sufficient since the Wall affects the Christians section of the population in even a more specific manner due to the peculiarity of their being-in-the-world as a religious minority. Obviously, there is an embodiment of the different elements that becomes vivid in the human perception, but we don't want to just stop at the perceptions of humans and understand solely the reasons behind their perceptions.

Hence, in our analysis we need to address a body that does not outshine, but that interacts with materiality, we need a framework where «“materiality” in the broadest terms, signifies ... our finitude... it refers to our inescapable physical locatedness in time and space, in history and culture, both of which not only shape us ... but also *limit* us» (Bordo 1998:90). Critiques advanced by material feminists (Alaimo 2010; Butler 1993; Hakman 2008; Haraway 1991, 2000, 2008) such as Susan Bordo and Karen Barad «point to an alternative understanding of the body, not as a unified fixed essence existing outside culture or as a passive surface that gets inscribed by power, but as dynamic complex, and intra-active» (Vasquez 2011: 150). Bordo particularly «points to the materiality that makes the process of human constriction possible» (Ibid), she asserts that «our materiality (which includes history, race, gender, and so forth, but also the biology and evolutionary history of our bodies, and our dependence on the natural environment) impinges on us —shapes, constraints, and empowers us — both as thinkers and knowers and also as practical, fleshy bodies» (Bordo 1998: 91).

Like Susan Bordo, also Karen Barad suggests a concept of the body and performativity that does not exclude materiality, but it is portrayed as an interplay among multiple forms of materiality: «experiences and knowledge are possible only through “material-discursive practices” made possible by our physical embodiment, by the interaction of our bodies with the nonhuman environment in which they are embedded and on which they depend for their existence» (Vasquez 2011: 155). Barad defines her approach “agential realism”:

It is realism because matter does matter, but it is agential in the sense that matter is never passive, as in the copy-theory of knowledge, which holds that the mind simply re-presents what is out there, standing against us. It is agential in the sense that we, as material beings, meet the world through our practices, including semiotic ones, and our artifacts, and the world meets us through its own dynamic impact on bodies (Ibid).

In Barad's framework then agential realism¹⁶ «theorizes agency in a way that acknowledges that there is a sense in which 'the world kicks back' (i.e, nonhuman and cyborgian forms of agency in addition to human ones)» (Barad 1999: 2) allowing importance both to the sensorial body and the agency of the material world, which interact with each other in an open ended encounter that reflects the unpredictability of the interaction in assemblages. Agential realism, thus underlines the «mutual constitution of entangled agencies» (Barad 2007: 33). Thus the «world is the interactive outcome of different forms of materiality –discursive and nondiscursive» (Vasquez 2011: 156) where «reality is not composed of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena, but of 'things'-in-phenomena» (Barad 2007:135).

We can thus see how Deleuze and Guattari's concept of rizhome becomes the inspiration for scholars who wish to adopt the assemblage framework. The rizhome is «a way of figuring and tracing movement and connection» (Probyn 2004: 216). These connections are called agencements, or enmeshments, or assemblages. They describe the way «an arrangement...exists only in connection with other arrangements» (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 3-4). This perception thus accepts randomness and an open-ended view of connection, or indeed disconnection where «what a body can do is, at least in part, a function of its history and of those assemblages in which it has been constructed» (Gatens 1996: 10). The body that we face in this work is thus «a moving assemblage that finds itself enmeshed with other assemblages... in its dynamic mode, a body is defined in its interaction with other bodies» (Probyn 2004: 216) «'the body' *in situ* [i]s always already implicated in the milieu» (Gatens 1999:14).

¹⁶ Since «new materialism is a fast-growing conversation» (Hazard 2013: 64), several thinkers who take up the term and its beliefs that «material things possess a remarkable range of capacities that exceed the purview of human sense and knowing» (Ibid.) have elaborated on it like Barad's "agential realism" theory.

The beauty and effectiveness of Latour's understanding of assemblages as an assembly of both humans and nonhumans lies in the fact that «it is not a matter of replacing a gamut of actions traditionally associated with the subject by a shorter range of actions that would reduce the first. On the contrary, the associations that are presented to you seek to *add* to the first list *a longer list* of candidates» (Latour 2004: 75). The interaction between humans and nonhumans is thus both democratic and collaborating, where the parting from anthropocentrism in favor of materiality does not entail a subtraction of agency from human subjects, but in an assemblage «humans and nonhumans for their part can join forces without requiring their counterparts on the other side to disappear... *objects and subjects can never associate with one another; humans and nonhumans can*» (Latour 2004: 76). The strength of Latour's theory rests in the fact that it does not call for a dictatorship or supremacy of the material versus the human or vice versa, but it allows to problematize and complicate the situation asserting that there is an interplay between humans and nonhumans.

Through this interpretative framework we find ourselves in a democratic, complex, and rich new reality where the materiality of the Wall and the phenomenological data collection become part of the same network of actants, so that phenomenology and materialism may interact and cooperate. Even the researcher, whose physical presence has been and still is at the center of anthropological discourse, now finds her place as integral part of the assemblage. Thus this research like Bennett's work is composed of «sentences...emerged from the confederate agency of many striving macro- and microactants: from "my" memories, intentions, contentions, intestinal bacteria, eyeglasses, and blood sugar, as well as from the plastic computer keyboard, the bird song from the open window... what is at work here on the page is an anima-vegetable-mineral-sonority cluster with a particular degree and duration of power... what is at work here is... an assemblage» (Bennett 2010: 23).

Accordingly, if we zoom back into our particular case of the Wall in the Bethlehem Governorate, now we can understand how the diversity of narrations and key words collected in this research are contingent upon its locatedness in a specific place and time and how it intertwines with the emotions, status, and mood of those coming into contact with it and embody its presence.

Chapter 2: The Wall As An Assemblage To Confiscate Land

Key words: gate, exclusion, discontinuity, loss, thief of land, thief of investments, impossibility of expansion, deprivation of green areas, controls access, secure land for settlers, land without people.

Spaces and Assemblages

When we look at the particular case of the state of Israel's sovereignty¹⁷, one striking and curious characteristics lies in the absence in its declaration of independence of a clear definition of territorial boundaries. Throughout its ancient and contemporary history, this territory has undergone constant mutation of ownership and bordering. During Israel's young history as a nation there has not been one agreed upon map both due to the diverging opinions of its polity, and to the outcome of the wars waged by its neighbors since its establishment (Allon 1976; Avineri 1981; Ben Porat 2008; Biger 2008; Bisharat 1994; Dayan 1955; Emiliani 2008).

In the last decade, given a lessening of international hostilities with the next-door countries, the attention has been redirected towards more domestic issues. The Wall and its route, which the Israeli government initially did not build in order to demarcate a *de-facto* border between Israel and Palestine but as a temporary security measure¹⁸, has greatly influenced the shape of the landscape of the West Bank as well as the Palestinian people's interaction with

¹⁷ Understood as «the exercise of supreme authority and control over a distinct territory and its corresponding population and resources. Jurisdiction refers to a bounded area within which the authority of a particular person, group, or institution is recognized» (Diener and Hagen 2012, 7).

¹⁸ Arrested Development: The Long Term Impact of Israel's Separation Barrier in the West Bank, B'tselem, October 2012

and access to their lands. As it turns out, the construction of the Wall and the planning of its future route do not solely constitute a technology to ensure the safety of the Israeli citizens, but its physical presence affects the Palestinian people in a multiplicity of ways. The complex issue of shifting borders, and thus of sovereignty over territory, in Israel and Palestine motivated many scholars to profusely research the topic (Ehrenberg 1978; Fischer 2006; Halperin 1969; Hassner 2006; Hussein and McKay 2003; Marzano and Simoni 2007; Newman 1996, 2005; Petti, Perugini, Hilal and Weizman 2011; Shelef 2010; Yehuda 1978; Yuval 1978; Weizman 2007; Zureik 2005), however in this chapter we will focus particularly on the agency of the Wall as an assemblage to seize land. Thus, through the narrations of Christians who inhabit in the proximities of the Wall, we wish to provide a picture that does not solely speak of occupation technology, or bordering policies, but on the interconnectedness of people's lives with the physical agentic presence of the Wall, land laws that apply in Palestine, and the Supreme Court's role in land expropriation cases.

One of the aspects concerning the presence of the Wall is, in fact, that of land expropriation (Felner 1995; Holzman-Gazit 2007). We will see how the concept of land expropriation represents a black box that we are going to open and dissect to identify all the actants that come into play when asking ourselves what the impact of the Wall is on the Christian communities when focusing on the dimension of land and the law system regulating land ownership.

Looking at the Wall as an assemblage that appropriates land enables an understanding of the multiplicity of elements and actants involved in this action. Through the concept of assemblages we can paint a much more complex picture than the label "Wall" allows us to understand. This black box once opened reveals the Palestinians' memories of their lands behind the Wall, their lives lived in the fields with their families, the taste of the vegetables and fruits of the earth, the black and white photographs of the times of harvest. There are the deeds to the land from the Ottoman Empire, the roads exclusively used by Israeli citizens, the Wall protecting the tunnel of Highway 60 and the bridge going above Christian's Lands, «young settlers, the Israeli military... human rights and political activists, armed resistance, humanitarian and legal experts, government ministries, foreign governments, 'supportive' communities overseas, state

planners, the media, the Israeli High Court of Justice» (Weizman 2007: 5). Thus there are multiplicities of unexpected human and nonhuman actants that participate in the assemblage called Wall, which becomes at times a physical barrier impeding the access of the farmers to their lands, but also a major actor in legal cases debated at the Supreme Court. Following this view, the presence of the Wall cannot be solely understood as obstructing and separating two peoples, just as much as it cannot only be treated as a machinery to enhance the agency of the Israeli government. It is a vibrant presence that deeply imposes on the Palestinians' lived experience in the landscape and their way of being-in-the-world.

When discussing the changing landscape by the Wall, we wish to elaborate on Tilley's theorization in *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*. The landscape that Tilley offers us is «a medium rather than a container for action, something that is involved in action and cannot be divorced from it» (Tilley 1994: 10), a space that «does not and cannot exist apart from the events and activities within which it is implicated» (ibid.). In his perspective we cannot speak of one cohesive, objective, universal space that disregards its interconnectedness with humanity remaining immutable throughout history. The space he presents us with «involves specific sets of linkages between the physical space of the non-humanly created world, somatic states of the body, the mental space of cognition and representation and the space of movement, encounter and interaction between persons and between persons and the human and non-human environment» (Ibid., 10). He describes social space as being defined by and as acquiring meaning through «who is experiencing it and how» (Ibid., 11) thus making it dependent to its relation to human agency.

Therefore, when entering Tilley's logic we face a space that is deeply embedded in its human phenomenological perception. Spatial experience is not a neutral slate, but it becomes «invested with power relating to age, gender, social position and relationships with others» and it is «understood and experienced [as] a contradictory and conflict-ridden medium through which individuals act and are acted upon» (Ibid.). Furthermore, through the phenomenological point of view, Tilley describes how space links «patterns of individual intentionality to bodily movement and perception...[space] is the constructed life-space of the

individual, involving feelings and memories giving rise to a sense of awe, emotion, wonder or anguish in spatial encounters (Ibid., 16). This idea of space is thus also tightly connected to the «personal significances for an individual in his or her bodily routines — places remembered and places of affective importance» (Ibid.).

Tilley's understanding of the environment deeply enriches the definition of space by addressing it as a linkage between its physical and phenomenological dimension. However, the data collected on the field, particularly the case of the Cremisan Valley, reveal that space cannot be defined and does not acquire meaning exclusively through the human interpretation and attribution of meaning, but space is defined and experienced as an assemblage of different actants. As we will examine in this chapter, researching the Wall in Israel and Palestine, allows us to understand how the human experience of being-in-the-world varies depending on which elements of the assemblage are “vibrating”¹⁹ and in which “contingent tableau”²⁰ of human and nonhuman actants they assemble.

Furthermore, although Tilley enriches the concept of space and landscape of its inescapable interaction with human agents who infuse it with meaning and emotions through their embodied experience of it, we cannot settle for its propensity towards anthropocentrism above the agency of the nonhuman elements. Through our inquiry on the presence and agency of this particular Wall we discover that space and landscape possess themselves an agency as part of an assemblage. We don't want to stop at Tilley's definition of social space forged by and dense in human senses, emotions, experiences, and memories, but we want to focus on how these being-in-the-world experiences interlock with the physicality and materiality of landscapes.

The space that we present in this chapter is not only filled by the feeling of loss of the Palestinian Christian families who live in the Wall's proximity or who are involved in the Cremisan Valley threatened by the Wall's route, but it involves also the physical separation from the trees, the prohibition of harvesting the fruits and olives, agricultural gates, the Nature and Parks

¹⁹ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*

²⁰ Ibid.

Authority; it deals with the loss of jobs for the Palestinians working in the Salesian Convent's vineyard just as much as the presence of God among the trees, Bibles, songs, and pilgrims. In order to truly understand the impact of the separation Wall in this particular context, we necessitate the assemblage framework because it allows us to acknowledge the complexity and multiplicity of different aspects involved in its presence. In this work we are dealing with a space constituted by assemblages of humans and nonhumans whose agencies interact undetected when adopting the label "Wall".

Moreover, if we think for example about the Christians living in the Cremisan Valley, during the interviews, many did not address the physicality of the Wall *per-se*, but about the future separation would affect their lives. In fact, they spoke about the vegetables that they could not cultivate on their land, the quality of the oil from their trees, the settlement that is now built on their lands. Where the people not understanding the questions they were asked or was there a dimension much greater to the Wall than meets the eye? After all in that area the Wall is not present yet, only its route is being planned on maps. Thus, we start to understand that even the Wall's construction and planning is part of the picture and has agency just as much as the dropping of fliers on the area alerting of the land seizure orders, the prohibition to construct or finish the construction of buildings on the properties, the salami tactic, the lawyers, the activists, the media. All of these agents come into play and their agency intertwines in ever mutating ways.

Malleable Maps

If our times witness constant turmoil in regard to the ownership of land in the Palestinian Territories, national borders are definitely not only an issue of recent history. For an extensive period of time, «Palestine was more a geohistorical concept rooted in historical consciousness than a defined and measured stretch of land lying within clear geographical boundaries or stable political borders» (Biger 2008: 68). As it turns out aside from the Mediterranean Sea, there are «no

geographical limits based on prominent topographical features that separate Palestine from the larger region in which it is situated» (Ibid.).

Hence, throughout history, the borders and names adopted to identify this piece of land varied frequently and this change «hinged on the outcome of a struggle between world powers for control over the entire region; in some cases, political and cultural frontiers divided the country internally, while on other occasions the land in its entirety became a part of a much larger political unit» (Ibid.). The Jewish name “Eretz-Israel” appears in the Bible (I Samuel 13:19), while the name Palestine was attributed to the geographic region situated between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River from the rule of Roman emperor Adrian in 135 C.E., (Provincia Syria Palestina). The attribution of the name Syria Palestina, came as a consequence of the Roman suppression of the Bar Kokhba Revolt indicating the desire of the Romans to dissociate themselves from Judaea. Furthermore, since «the fall of the Crusades (1299), Palestine has not been an independent state. For four hundred years prior to World War I Palestine, or Philistines as it was known to its Ottoman Rulers and the local inhabitants, was not even a separate administrative sub-division of the Ottoman Empire» (Biger 2008: 69). This term “Palestine” remains in use from this period up to 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel. In fact, up to the First World War, under the British Mandate this land, with different boundaries, still preserves its second century denomination. With the retreat of the British forces from this area²¹ and the subsequent declaration of independence of a modern Israeli State, the possibility of the future existence of an independent Palestinian nation was put into question.

With the declaration of Independence of the state of Israel, however, the question regarding national borders was still not settled. The policies regarding the borders of the Jewish homeland constituted a central debate among the Israeli polities since the very birth of the state. Questions on the extension of the borders and inclusion of territories underwent several modifications depending on the state of belligerency and views of the political parties during different historical moments. The debates oscillated from perspectives of incorporating all the land between the Nile and the Euphrates, to both Banks of the Jordan River,

²¹ See Images Chapter 2, Picture 1 to observe the change in borders of this geographical area.

to include the territory from the Litani River in the north to the international border with Egypt (Halperin 1969; Elizur 1978; Dayan 1955; Avineri 1981; Inbar 2009).

During the period between 1949 and 1967 it seemed that the Israeli polity had come to a growing acceptance of the «1949 armistice borders as the (more or less) appropriate boundaries for the nation state» (Shelef 2010: 26). However, the explosion of the Six-Day War and its aftermath challenged this shared stability of opinion concerning the boundaries of the state, especially in regard to the West Bank, driving the government to adopt a policy of “deciding not to decide”. The reasons behind the Israeli government’s decision not to adopt a clear policy regarding the West Bank is connected both to the concerns of guarantying security and a Jewish majority in a democratic state, *vis-à-vis* the post-war messianic euphoria demanding not to cede the Biblical territories of Judea and Samaria (Noar 2006; Feige 2009; Ohana 2002; Newman 2005).

Although Israel had no aspirations for territorial expansion during the Six-Day War, in June 1967 the Jewish state achieved the greatest territorial expansion in its history. The Six-Day War established the cease-fire lines, as well as annexing the whole of Jerusalem as well as the area around it «creating “large Jerusalem”» (Biger 2008: 79). This territorial expansion of Jerusalem is central to our discussion in this chapter to understand the effects of the Wall on territorial and land issues in the municipalities of Bethlehem and Beit Jala. The city area in 1967 enlarged from 35 to 105 square meters and some of the Palestinian highly populated quarters such as Abu Dis and al-‘Azariyya were excluded from the administrative boundaries of Jerusalem. In the north, south and west of the Old City inhabited areas were incorporated and allocated to the public green areas. On these lands were built the great settlements that today form the external oriental belt, which allowed the population to triple. The major settlements constituting this belt are Ma’aleh Adumim, Ramat Schelomoh, Pisgat Ze’ev, Gush ‘Eztion and Har Homah (considered in every respect as neighborhoods of Jerusalem).

In the aftermath of this war, the Labor Zionist Movement had to «come face to face with the trade-off between maintaining control of the entire land of Israel that they aspired to and the cherished Zionist goal of a Jewish majority

state» (Shelef 2010: 46). In fact, at this stage, and even more so after the traumatic experience of the Yom Kippur War, it became clear «how little the armistice lines of 1949... could be considered defensible borders» (Allon 1976: 40) which made the new territorial acquisitions quite desirable, particularly following the Kartoum summit «decisions... not to recognize, make peace or negotiate with Israel, which led to a stiffening of the Israeli positions» (Noar 2006: 245). However, the acceptance of these borders would require the annexation of densely Arab populated areas which would lead to an «emptying of the “Jewish” part of the Jewish state of its content by either reducing the Jews to a minority or weakening Jewish control of the state» (Shelef 2010: 47) leading inexorably toward a binational state. Conversely, as Allon declared, extending Israel’s rule over the West Bank without granting «political and civil rights to their inhabitants... was patently immoral» (Ibid., 48) jeopardizing the democratic nature of the state. Therefore, if on the one hand the newly obtained territories guaranteed more secure borders compared to the 1949 armistice line, on the other hand their annexation would either jeopardize the “Jewishness” of the state or its democratic aspect. These dilemmas partly explain the government’s decision to keep the status quo in the area.

As we previously mentioned, the peace agreements signed between the Israel and the Palestinian Authority in Oslo (1993 Oslo I and 1995 Oslo II) involved the transfer of certain powers to the PA; these powers apply in dozens of disconnected enclaves containing the majority of the Palestinian population. As a result of the Oslo Accords²² three zones were created: Zone A which is under the complete control of the Palestinian Authority; Zone B which consists of civilian Palestinian control and Israeli control for security²³ (entailing full Israeli

²² Also Known as the Declaration of Principles (DOP) these accords took place in 1993 which were signed by Yasser Arafat on the PLO behalf and by Shimon Peres on the State of Israel’s behalf. These accords were meant to frame the relationship between the two parties and provided for the creation of the Palestinian National Authority, which would be responsible for the administration of the territories under its control. Furthermore this accord also called for the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

²³ The Oslo Accords defined three areas of sovereignty: Israeli, Palestinian and mixed. As it turns out, however, a fourth zone imposed its presence: the border itself. Basic marker stroke on paper, in reality this strip of land becomes a juridical limbo. Thus introduce the problems A. Petti, N. Perugini, S. Hilal, E. Weizam in their article “Linea Verde il Limes Senza Legge”. In the small village of Battir, west of Bethlehem, the problem of the legal zone created by the green line drawn during the Oslo Accords. The issue was raised by Jewish settlers members of Regavim (Movement for the protection of national land) who claimed that half of a house in the village fell

control except on Palestinian civilians). The third zone, Zone C, falls completely under Israeli control, which includes Israeli settlements and security zones without a significant presence of Palestinian population. Thus, «since 2000, these enclaves, referred to as Areas A and B, have accounted for approximately forty percent of the area of the West Bank. Control of the remaining areas, including the roads providing transit between the enclaves, as well as points of departure from the West Bank, remains with Israel»²⁴.

Ariel Sharon's walk on Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif on the 28th of September 2000 sparked the explosion of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* (Second *Intifada*), which caused approximately 500,000 victims among Palestinians and around 1000 Israelis. Thus the period between the years 2000 and 2005 witnessed numerous suicide bombings and terrorist attacks against the Israeli civilian population, which propelled the development of the security barrier project. The "security barrier", or Wall's total length, both constructed and projected, measure circa 712 kilometers²⁵. Of these 712 kilometers, approximately 62% is completed while 10% is still under construction and 28% is planned but not constructed²⁶.

The section of the Wall that we focus on in this work is known as the Jerusalem Envelop. This is a 202 kilometers long segment of the barrier that surrounds Jerusalem. Even more specifically, we will look at the effects of the Wall on the Christian Population along the 15 kilometers route of the Wall surrounding the Bethlehem and the Beit Jala municipalities, as well as the planned route in the Cremisan Valley. In this area both the expansion of the municipal border of Jerusalem, «as declared on June 28, 1967, by the minister of the interior in the Jerusalem (Enlargement of Municipal Area) Proclamation, 5727-1967 and legislated by the Knesset within an amendment passed in 2000

under Zone C. With an enlargement on scale 1:100, the line that during the Oslo Accords was represented on a scale 1:20.000 gained a thickness of a little bit less than five meters, dividing the house in two parts throughout the living room and the bathrooms. Therefore the Oslo map is subdivided in four separate zones: A, B, C and the thickness of the line. If there are a set of laws and rules regulating the first three areas, there are none that so far, pertain the area enclosed in the thickness of the line. A. Petti, N. Perugini, S. Hilal, E. Weizam, "Linea Verde. Il Limes Senza Legge", *Limes* 3/(2011), 123-128.

²⁴ Land Grab: Israel's Settlement Policy in the West Bank, B'Tselem, May 2002

²⁵ <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-to-re-authorize-security-barrier-route-near-West-Bank-historical-site-on-Sunday-375827>

²⁶ http://unispal.un.org/pdfs/OCHA_Wall-HumImpact.pdf

to Basic Law: Jerusalem»²⁷ as well as the subdivision of the West Bank in the three areas of jurisdiction, and the route of the Wall interconnect as contributory causes to Palestinian's loss of land. In the Bethlehem area, the lands were classified as area A and area C; «6,007 dunums (56.6%) of which were classified as area A ... The remaining part of Bethlehem lands, 4,603 dunums (43.4% of the total area of the city), were classified as area C»²⁸. The loss of land commenced even before the Oslo Agreements: consequently to the 1967 war «3,939 dunums of land (37.1% of the total area of the city) was taken» in the redrawing of Jerusalem municipal boundaries. Within these new boundaries also fell the 1,136 dunums of land (10.7% of the total area of the city)²⁹ privately owned by Arabs and Jews seized by the Israeli government for the construction of the Israeli settlement of Har Homa (Abu Ghneim).

A similar situation occurred with the lands of Beit Jala in the case of Gilo that is identified by the Palestinian population as an illegal settlement built on Palestinians' lands, but considered one of Jerusalem's neighborhoods by the state of Israel. Established in 1973, today it counts over 40,000 inhabitants and it extends over an area of 2,738 dunums.³⁰ In addition to Gilo, another Israeli settlement we wish to mention is that of Har Gilo. Established in 1972, Har Gilo is also located on «Palestinian citizens' lands in Beit Jala city and Al Walajeh village. In 2003, Har Gilo settlement covered an area of 271 dunums of land confiscated from its Palestinian owners, and is inhabited today by more than 460 Israeli settlers»³¹. Plans to expand the settlements were devised and ratified in 2004, however later «groups of settlers living in the settlement, under the protection of the Israeli occupation army, seized over 143 dunums of Palestinian land and surrounded it by barbed wire, as a result, the total area of Har Gilo settlement became 414 dunums».³²

Herein, the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, along with the debate on their legal or illegal status, is not *per se* of interest to us, but in as much

²⁷ Cremisian Supreme Court decision

http://www.cremisan.de/cms/upload/bilder/aktuell/archiv_cremisan/Cremsian_decision_TRA_NSLATED_FINAL.pdf

²⁸ Bethlehem City profile, 2010 prepared by The Applied Research Institute- Jerusalem.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ <http://www.beitjala-city.org/index.php/en/beit-jala-city/the-occupation/major-colonies>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

as it is connected to the presence of the Wall and it determines its route. In fact, in regard to Har Gilo, the «Wall plan around Har Gilo settlement seized additional areas of about 95 dunums of land located between the current settlement boundaries and the ... Wall['s] path, which is under construction»³³. As we shall see later in the chapter, one of the Wall's affects is its capacity to include and exclude territories from one nation or the other. The Wall's route, in fact, is «determined in part by the location of many of Israel's West Bank settlements, [it] creates the infrastructure for *de facto* annexation of most of the settlements and settlers [leading to] infringements of ... property rights, the right to free movement, the right to an adequate standard of living and the collective right to self-determination»³⁴.

Following these changes in land and landscape, in this chapter we aimed to shed light on the agency of the Wall as an assemblage to appropriate land. Once again, through the narrations of Christians who inhabit in the proximities of the Wall, we wish to provide a picture that does not solely speak of security or occupation technology, but that zooms into the interconnectedness of people's lives with the physical agentic presence of the Wall.

The Wall, the land, and family investments

One Sunday morning, as I exited the celebration of the Holy Mass at the Beit Jala Parish, the Priest Abuna I.S. greeted me with warmth and introduced me to A., a seventy-nine years old woman who wanted to invite me to lunch at her home and talk to me about her life next to the Wall. As I rode in her car, she spoke of her active life as a volunteer in her community as well as expressing strong personality as one of the first women in the community who drove and wore trousers. She took me through the refugee camp of Aida where she taught for twenty years and as we made a turn, there appeared the Wall:

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ A Wall in Jerusalem: Obstacles to human rights in the Holy City, B'tselem, summer 2006. http://www.btselem.org/download/200607_a_wall_in_jerusalem.pdf

Here is the Wall; here it begins. It took the land and they didn't take houses because they have to pay for the people who are in, like social security, health service, and so and so. For the elderly to give the money³⁵ (A.).

The section of the Wall in front of us is the most renowned and visited place in the Bethlehem area, and probably one of the most significant of the West Bank: Rachel's Tomb or Bilal bin Rabah Mosque. A small tomb abutting the Muslim cemetery, it is now surrounded on three sides by the Wall that separates it from the inhabitants of Bethlehem while annexing it to the Israeli national territory through a bypass road.³⁶ A little way further Rachel's Tomb a gate stands in front of A.'s home³⁷. Her door opened into a large courtyard along with the homes of her brothers, nephews, and grandchildren. Behind their home stood the Wall, visible from the outside and from every floor of their home.

here we have a land 7 dunums it goes in this area and there and there (pointing to an invisible place on the other side of the Wall) was all my land because my father, my grandmother was taking care about the land and it is a shame for the Palestinian to sell their land. We didn't sell it, maybe some of them they sold it before they traveled outside, but all the time we took care about the land. Why? We have children and you see our children? To leave it for them, to build their houses to live from it because it is to give them to eat or to sell it and to eat and to live also. So they took it like this, not only from us but from all the Palestinian, all the land of the Palestinian ... They said "they sold the land" but nobody sold the land by the Wall, nobody sold the land, it is not true, the media for them it told, but it is not the media of the Israeli they do what they want ... Do you see what they did? You see up from our home you can take photos. And this Wall, look, they left our home and they took our land. Our land 28 dunum and they took it. This area is for my brothers, here my home and my brother's home and many houses left this area. It was the best area here. Many houses are empty now (A.).

³⁵ See Images Chapter 2, Picture 2.

³⁶ «On February 3, 2005, the Israeli Supreme Court rejected a petition filed by 18 Palestinian families from Bethlehem and Beit Jala cities against the construction of a bypass road that is aligned with the racist Segregation Wall's path, at the northern entrance of Bethlehem, near Bilal Ben Rabah mosque (Rachel's Tomb). As a result of this bypass road many Bethlehem and Beit Jala citizens will lose parts of their lands. The bypass road extends from Gilo crossing 300 to Bilal Ben Rabah mosque (Rachel's Tomb), and facilitates the movement of Jewish settlers arriving to Rachel's Tomb area. A week after the Israeli Supreme Court's decision, Miriam Adani, founder and director of "Rachel Kheifer" Fund, stated that the court's decision is "a first step towards the establishment of a Jewish community around Rachel's Tomb area" (The Jerusalem Post, February 11, 2005).

³⁷ See Images Chapter 2, Pictures 3 and 4.

Through A.'s words, many details come to light. First of all, the family land owned and tended to by her father, and grandmother before him, is located now on the other side of the Wall. The Wall rises up from what once was their backyard, now a junkyard, with no outlook on what it used to be their property. In her description also arises the importance of the land as an investment for the future generations. As she explains, as well as many other Palestinians, all the family savings went into buying more land to secure the children's economic future as well as giving them a plot to eventually build the homes for their new families.

Here in this area Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahur was the rich family how they did with the money? They didn't put it in a bank, the money, the habit of a Palestinian, they build houses, they went to Jerusalem and they built their houses in Jerusalem to rent it for the people and to have money to live with it, not to put the money in the bank (A.).

Herein A. reveals another significant piece of information about the particular connection between the Palestinian people as a whole and the land. As we will see further in the chapter, the generational investment in the land is a theme that arises time and again. It is no surprise that one of the symbols of the Palestinian people's struggle, which I found printed on less touristy t-shirts, is the word Palestine in Arabic intertwined with the roots of a tree. Both the concept of the trees and the roots are central. They represent the indissoluble connection between the people and their land. It is no surprise then that the selling of the land to the Jewish people is considered a scandal even punishable by death. Thus we understand A.'s interest in explaining that "nobody sold the land". A. also brings up another issue that we will see more in depth in chapter four, that is how the Wall not only "steals the land" but it also separates the people from their real estate. Some possess real estate properties that are now in two different nations under two different legal system and taxation policies. Furthermore,

You see what happen. All my life war, for that when they began to build the Wall they do strike they do curfew, not the people go from their homes, not to see what they are building, how they took the land. You see, my brother, we used to have land

near the checkpoint, near the checkpoint, it wasn't a checkpoint,
it was all land trees of olives near the checkpoint (A.).

A., who was born in 1934, has lived through all the wars and conflicts that involved the birth of the state of Israel. Here she explains how the building of the Wall that separated her family from their property took place: the soldiers would declare a curfew so that the people could not interfere while the cement slabs were placed on the ground. Through the concept of assemblages, also the curfew becomes part of the Wall's action to steal land. In fact, a curfew action consists in denying people's actions to intervene while their land is being "sealed off" —let us just think of the name "Jerusalem Envelop" given to the Wall, which suggests the sealing of the letter inside with the glue on the envelop. So the increasing presence of the Wall, one concrete slab after the other, brought the curfew among the homes where its material presence developed as well as impeding the land owner's resistance against the theft.

When I choose to discuss the Wall in terms of a theory of assemblages it allowed to discover the multiplicity of elements that interact with it. Differently from a pure materialist theory, where the Wall would be the only actor involved and in which its agency would have even caused the Israeli government to built it³⁸, a theory of assemblages allows for multiple and diverse agents to be included in the picture. All of a sudden in the concept of the Wall's ability to appropriate land, we have the physical twenty-eight dunums belonging to A.'s family, the impossibility to guarantee earnings from these fields, the deprivation of prospect construction of a home for the children and grandchildren's future families. Thus, A.'s narration, when asked about the presence of the Wall in her life, through an assemblage point of view does not appear off topic or incoherent because it does not speak only directly about the Wall. The fact that in one instance she says that «it took the land» referring to the Wall and subsequently she attributes the acts of stealing to the soldiers or the Israelis «they left our

³⁸ This concept emerges from Latour's critique of the pure materialist concept «what does the gun add to the shooting? In the materialist account *everything*: an innocent citizen becomes a criminal by virtue of the gun in her hand. The gun enables, of course, but also instructs, directs, even pulls the trigger –and who, with a knife in her hand, has not wanted at some time to stab someone or something? Each artifact has its script, its potential to take hold of passersby and lure them to play a role in its story» (Latour: 1999, 177).

home and they took the land» does not deny the agency of neither of the parties. The concept of assemblages, in fact allows humans and nonhumans to interact with each other and recognizes both of them as actants, as possessing and exercising agency. In this case the Wall is not the sole actor just like the Israelis are not the sole actors. The Israeli government ordered the erection of the Wall to create a separation between them and the Palestinians to implement security. However, it is now the Wall's physical presence that stands in the way amid the lands and their owners effecting their lives and outlooks.

On this particular issue we distance ourselves from Latour, who asserts that on a construction site «while the wall is being built, there is no doubt that they [works and the wall] are connected... Once built, the wall of bricks does not utter a word—even though the group of workmen goes on talking and graffiti may proliferate on its surface. Once they have been filled in, the printed questionnaires remain in the archives forever unconnected with human intentions until they are made alive again by some historian» (Latour 2005, 79). On this issue we rather take a more materialist point of view, which preserves the agency of the object despite its interconnectedness with the human agents. In fact, we believe that the completion of this particular section of the Wall does not decree the end of its agency, it actually just modifies the participation of the different actors within the assemblage. Now the soldiers are no longer enforcing the curfew while the Wall is being built, but they still observe that the population does not attempt to defy its presence through cameras and watchtowers.

Hence, the Wall's presence modifies and transforms the landscape in which it stands. This space that it creates, however, is neither just a physical space constituted of cement and reduced green areas and flora, nor it is a space meaningful only because of the significance given to it by its inhabitants. The Wall acts both as part of the landscape and it modifies it at the same time. It creates a space that is an assemblage of the agency of its physical elements as well as the embodied experience of the Christian population.

Now we will look at H.'s story as well as that of her sister S. These two middle-aged women live in Beit Jala near the Cremisan Valley. This valley became the object of international attention due to the legal issue involving the planned route of the Wall cutting between the inhabited area and the adjacent

olive groves belonging to fifty-eight Christian families. I met H.³⁹ at the weekly Holy Mass among the olive groves that Abuna I.S. has been celebrating every Friday since the seizure order for the land in the Cremisan Valley has been issued. While we will discuss in depth the legal aspects later in the chapter, now we will focus on H.'s and S.'s story.

Look at the land here; here three years ago the Israelis cut off all these trees, they left just the trunks because they were planning to make a wall, to come from that area which is called Malcha to come here and to put the gate here to close here (H.).

The area that H. is pointing at during our walk is the contested Cremisan Valley. This area overlooks Gilo the Israeli settlement/neighborhood of Jerusalem built on the hill in front of Beit Jala. Three seizure orders⁴⁰ under the Emergency Land Requisition (Regulation) Law 5710-1949 have been issued for the lands where H. and I are standing: «first, a seizure order from March 2006 (62/06); second, a seizure order from 2007 (75/07); and third, a seizure order from 2011 (02/11)»⁴¹.

You can see there the small cottage, the gate is there⁴², and from there we have to cross to go to our land, but they wont let us go to pic the olives from our land and our trees aren't far from that cottage, but there is a gate there is very very high wire and there are cameras on the bridge if anybody comes close they shoot (H.).

³⁹ See Images Chapter 2, Picture 5.

⁴⁰ Here is a quick clarification of seizure orders explained by a functionary of St. Yves association «There are 2 different orders, seizure orders, this is what we have in Cremisan and there are confiscation orders. The difference is that seizure order is taking land away for using it for another purpose which it has to be military, security, you know, for a bigger purpose, but the land ownership stands with the land owner he doesn't loose the land on paper, he just loses the right for using it. While, if you get a confiscation order you also loose the land title, then your land become state land for example. Cremisan got a seizure order which is also politically the only way what they could get because also Israel and Israeli lawyers, state attorney, also said that it is just a temporary solution. So when we don't need the wall anymore for security reasons the wall will be dismantled and you would have the land back. We know of course that this isn't really happening and this is the legal difference between the two. So they received a seizure order for the land».

⁴¹ Cremisan Supreme Court decision

http://www.cremisan.de/cms/upload/bilder/aktuell/archiv_cremisan/Cremisan_decision_TRA_NSLATED-FINAL.pdf

⁴² See Images Chapter 2, Picture 6

Although the Wall has not yet been built in the Cremisan Valley, because of the seizure orders that have been issued, the owners of the lands in this area, H. included, cannot access the land in some areas. H.'s lands are now under surveillance and fenced off by an agricultural gate. As we will discuss more further on, agricultural gates are a common procedure following the seizure of land. It is the first step in a process set forth for security reasons, but which will eventually lead to declaration of the property as state's land and ultimately annex it to Israel proper⁴³. The plot of land owned by H. and her sister S. is also part of a controversial issue *vis-à-vis* the construction of Highway 60's bridge⁴⁴.

I have been working in Ramallah very hard work, housekeeping for 15-16 hours daily and I saved some money and bought the land in the valley, the olive tree land. We picked a few years the olives and then, five years ago they put the wire and they didn't allow us to enter... And then the bridge, you have seen the bridge, all the land underneath the bridge it's our olive tree land they have pulled 85 fahini, Romanian we call it Roman trees, before Christ all there and 2010 years old each olive tree. The trunk so big so big so big, very very big. They used to pull and throw to pull and throw (H.).

The bridge H. refers to here, is also know as Bypass Road 60, which constitutes the «main north-south road that runs the length of the West Bank»⁴⁵. Segments of this road were diverted after 1993 around the major Palestinian urban centers, meaning that, if before it «passed through the cities of Hebron, Bethlehem Ramallah and Nablus», now the new route avoids passing through these urban centers through an intricate series of tunnels and bridges to ensure an easy access for the settlements to the Israeli national territory of Jerusalem. The presence of these settlements fragmented the geography in such a way as needing to be «woven together by lines of infrastructure routed through three dimensional space: roads connecting Israeli settlements are raised on extended bridged spanning Palestinian routes and lands, or dive into tunnels beneath

⁴³ more on the legal aspects in the next section of the chapter.

⁴⁴ See Images Chapter 2, Picture 7

⁴⁵ "The Humanitarian Impact on Palestinians of Israeli Settlements and other Infrastructure in the West Bank", OCHA, July 2007.
http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/thehumanitarianimpactofisraeliinfrastructurethewestbank_ch2_old.pdf

them, while narrow Palestinian underpasses are usually bored under Israeli multi laned highways» (Weizman 2007: 12).

The relevancy of reporting this particular detail of the interview lies in the fact that it is directly connected to the presence and planning of the future presence of the route of the Wall. In fact, in Israel and the West Bank we are facing a geography that is first fragmented by the Wall and successively re-patched together to reconnect Israeli land with Israeli land and Palestinian land with Palestinian land «where territories appear to be hermetically sealed in by Israeli walls and fences, Palestinian tunnels are dug underneath them» (Weizman 2007: 7).

Just as A. stated, also H. tells us that all the life savings and the hard work are destined to buying a piece of land. Once again the land is not merely a means to subsistence for H. and S. who are now too old to tend to it, but, as it was for A., it represented the future for the rest of the family to build their homes.

You see all these settlements are in my mother's land, my mother's family. My brothers wanted to build up on the mountain where now there's a settlement for the Israelis, because he wanted to build a house they put him in prison and they caused him all sorts of beating, beating by the shoes, beating by the gun, and they put him in a sack and beaten him from wall to wall because he wanted to built in his land, in his father's land. And maybe you have heard, we were going to pick some vegetables from our land and the Israelis took my mother and my sister by the tank and took us to prison (H.).

Their land partly became inaccessible due to the seizure order for the future route of the Wall, parts of it was lost during the Six-Day-War becoming part of the Jerusalem Municipal area were now Gilo stands. Another part of the land was lost because of the presence of the Har Gilo settlement. This settlement is built on the Palestinian side of the 1949 Armistice Line, better known as the Green Line. The presence of this settlement is crucial to the Cremisan case argued for several years in the Supreme Court regarding the route of the future section of the Wall. As we mentioned previously, we are not directly interested in the debate regarding the legality or illegality of settlements in the West Bank, but in this case the whole debate over the route of the Wall, and therefore with the "theft" of land from fifty-eight families, interconnects with the security concern

and the annexation of said settlement within the Israeli national borders. H. and S. narrate these greater political schemes in terms of heritage, land deeds from the Ottoman Empire, and family memories.

It was my father's land and some for my mother's land but they took it now all, Har Gilo and Gilo and under the bridge and just now we have nothing. Imagine...

S- [the land] in the valley, they took it they said this is Israel's land because of the Wall, I think now the Wall will come from there. But they still didn't take it, but they are going to take it.

H- the Israelis don't believe in papers, they don't believe in anything they believe just to help themselves and take and put away and to put a Wall, that's all.

S- we have the papers for Har Gilo for 130 years. My grandfather bought it.

H- yes since the Turkish rule. We have the papers from the Turkish... we use to plant the vegetables and there were grapes and wine trees and fig trees and everything up in Har Gilo. We used to go and pick them and we used to go when my brothers were not at home and every time we used to go up, we had a very very big quarrel and once they brought all, maybe about 200 soldiers Israeli soldiers for us three women.

S- [this was] maybe in 1976 after they took the land, the same year they took the land. We were, my mother and H. and me, and they came with the tanks and they took us and they said "you are not allowed to go back without a permit" ... we used to go every other day and that year we picked the vegetables and finished, we were not allowed to go back. And now look at Har Gilo.

H- and you know we bought our land Har Gilo five minutes walking just we climbed like goats [she chuckles] Yes we climbed just a few little fields one after another and then we are inside our land but we can't. We used to go and get grapes in the summer for three months. We used to spend there three months, we were children, not in a house but in a shelter without a roof we use to put pieces of wood and branches of grapes onto of this shelter and we used to stay there for three months to pick the grapes to make resins to make Arak, to make dry figs and it was lovely time, we were children playing in the evening it was very beautiful to visit each other and to talk together and to sit together. It was like a paradise. We are missing it very much but we can't ... So this is our life here.

While narrating their memories of living on and experiencing the land, H. and S. take out an old family album with a collection of black and white pictures

depicting harvest time with their extended family.⁴⁶ The landscape that H. and S. paint for us is filled with their experiences of farming their lands, with the many hours of work in Ramallah to buy the fields, with the deeds of the land from the Ottoman period, with Highway 60's bridge, with cameras and barbed wire, with the agricultural gate keeping them away from the olive trees, with the olive oil from the Cremisan Valley that they gave me as a gift, and with the photographs of a lost past.

The complexity arisen by the interviews and encounters depict a territory in which the Wall is not the mere outcome of a unified source of power or master plan. Its architecture «cannot be understood as the material embodiment of a unified political will or as the product of a single ideology. Rather the organization of the Occupied Territories⁴⁷ should be seen as a kind of 'political plastic', or as a map of the relation between all the forces that shape it» (Weizman 2007: 5). We will see just how complex the interaction between all these different forces and elements becomes through the Cremisan Valley's legal battle.

The Wall goes to Court

The first day I was in Bethlehem I came in contact with Abuna M. an Italian priest whom I had met in my hometown in Italy during a photo gallery about living behind the Wall in Palestine. Abuna M. a joyous and affable men in his forties told me in an exited tone that that was my lucky day⁴⁸ because in the Cremisan Valley an international event was to take place in a couple of hours: the picking of the olives. The harvesting of the olives in this area had been a common praxis among the families of Beit Jala who own and farmed this fertile terraced valley. This event took place in correspondence with the weekly Friday Holy Mass celebrated among the olive groves by Abuna I.S, Latin priest of the Beit Jala

⁴⁶ See Images Chapter 2, Pictures 8-11.

⁴⁷ There is controversy about the usage of this term, as well as a general debate over the terms used to identify the territory of Israel-Palestine.

⁴⁸ October 11, 2013

parish. This special occasion⁴⁹, mostly of symbolic character, gathered representatives from different nations⁵⁰ as well as members from JAI (Joint Advocacy Initiative) and YMCA. This initiative was organized in order to raise awareness on the imminent threat of land seizure by the completion of the construction of the Wall at the time debated at the Supreme Court. Leaving the discussion on the celebration of the weekly Mass as a protest against the construction of the wall to the chapter six, let us now look at the Wall as a participant to the legal case.

As it turns out, especially during the 1960s and 80s the Israeli High Court has been transformed into an arena in which «government agents, military officers, settlers, Palestinian landowners and Israeli peace and rights groups battled over land exploitation and the establishment of settlements» (Weizman 2007, 87). This is the case in numerous villages⁵¹ whose location crosses the planned path of the Wall. It is important to mention the issue of the establishment of settlements, not only because it remains a central concern in the peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine, but also because they are «constructed in an attempt to influence the path of Israel's separation Wall that... is carving a circuitous route through the West Bank, the logic being that ... state planners would reroute the Wall around them in order to include them on the 'Israeli' side» (Ibid., 3). The Cremisan Valley, as I briefly mentioned above, exemplifies this situation since the Wall route is planned to provide security to Gilo and Har Gilo guaranteeing also to the latter's inclusion within the Israeli national territory⁵².

⁴⁹ See Images Chapter 2, Pictures 12-13.

⁵⁰ Germany, England, Norway, Sweden, Chile, Brsil, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Portugal, Belgium, and a representative form the UN.

⁵¹ AC 738/06 Abd Raba v. The Ministry of Defense – Walaja area, November 9, 2006, from Ein Yael towards the Cremisan monastery; AC 738/06 Al-Atrash v. The Ministry of Defense, October 29, 2006, Walaja area; HCJ 1769/10 Beit Jala Municipality v. The Commander of the IDF Forces in Judea and Samaria, March 16, 2010, in which a request for an injunction order against route 1/06 was dismissed; HCJ 5330/11 Walaja Village Council v. The Minister of Finance, September 27, 2011, petition dismissed; HCJ 9516/10 Walaja Village Council v. The Commander of the IDF Forces in Judea and Samaria, August 22, 2011, petition against the route from Walaja to Batir Village dismissed. Cremisan final decision

http://www.cremisan.de/cms/upload/bilder/aktuell/archiv_cremisan/Cremisan_decision_TRA_NSLATED-FINAL.pdf; See also <http://saintyves.org>

⁵² While Gilo is built within the expanded 1967 Jerusalem municipality boundaries, Har Gilo is built on Beit Jala area C lands, thus part of the West Bank territory.

Fifty-eight families will lose their lands, 7500 acres will be lost. Beit Jala used to be the biggest area in the whole Bethlehem area, now they have taken away two thirds of Beit Jala and it has become the smallest municipality. It used to be bigger than Beit Sahur and Bethlehem, now Bethlehem is the biggest. The Wall was supposed to take the nuns and the school on the Israeli side while now they changed and all the nuns' lands would stay in Israel, while Wall will go around and they will stay in the Palestinian side. The Wall will pass between the nuns and the monks and they will be separated. The vineyards will be on the Israeli side and the nuns with the school on the Beit Jala side, on our side ⁵³ (Abuna I.S.).

Abuna I.S. priest of the Beit Jala Parish describes the situation concerning the route of the security fence planned to run through the area of Nahal Gilo and Beit Jala, which represents the last unconstructed section of the Jerusalem security fence⁵⁴. This 1.5-kilometer long route runs «opposite the Gilo neighborhood, which is part of the city of Jerusalem, and nearby the community settlement of Har Gilo». ⁵⁵ While the route concerning the Cremisan area, which recently underwent its final hearing before the Supreme Court, has been initially drawn in such a way as to provide a secure zone for the Jewish settlement of Har Gilo and the inhabitants of Gilo, at the same time, such project as designed by the Ministry of Defense⁵⁶, envisions the annexation of the lands belonging to fifty-eight Christian families, as well as separating the Salesian men's monastery and

⁵³ The interview was originally conducted in Italian «58 famiglie perderanno i loro terreni, 7500 ettari saranno persi. Beit Jala era la zona più grande di tutta la zona di Betlemme ora hanno tolto due terzi da Beit Jala, è diventato il comune più piccolo della zona. Era prima più grande di Beit shahur e Betlemme, ora Betlemme è la più grande. Hanno tolto due terzi del commune... Il muro doveva prendere le suore e la scuola dalla parte di Israele, mentre il cambiamento è che tutti i terreni delle suore rimangono da Israele, mentre il monastero stesso e la scuola farà il muro il giro e passerà dalla parte della Palestina. Passerà il convento delle suore e il convento dei frati saranno divisi. Le vigne saranno dalla parte d'Israele e le suore con le scuole saranno dalla parte di Beit Jala, dalla nostra parte» (Abuna I.S.)

⁵⁴ for elaboration regarding the background for the building of the security fence, see HJC 2056/04 Beit Surik Village Council vs. Government of Israel, Ruling 58(5) 807, 816-818 (2004); regarding the background for the building of the fence in the Jerusalem envelope area, see for example, HCJ 5488/04 Alram Local Council vs. The State of Israel, paragraph 2 (President (ret.) A. Barak (13.12.2006); As part of the efforts for completing the fence in the Jerusalem area, Respondent 1 has issued on 19.3.2006 a land seizure order according to Section 4(1) of the Law (490-06-62) (Ibid.).

⁵⁵ Cremisan final decision

http://www.cremisan.de/cms/upload/bilder/aktuell/archiv_cremisan/Cremisan_decision_TRA_NSLATED_FINAL.pdf; See also <http://saintyves.org>

⁵⁶ Colonel Ofer Hindi who is head of the Colour spectrum directorate who is responsible for the security fence route.

vineyards from the nun's convent⁵⁷ and elementary school.⁵⁸ This area, which represents the last remaining green area of the town of Beit Jala⁵⁹, is a valley composed of terraces intended for agriculture.

The seizure order's purpose «was to enable the completion of the fence south of Jerusalem near the Har Gilo settlement, in front of Beit Jala and near two monasteries close to it both Monasteries include a number of structures, including a winery and an olive press, and their lands, which are also used for various agricultural growths, are located in the Beit Jala Ridge»⁶⁰. We start to see how the planned rout of the future Wall can be defined as a black box. Thanks to Latour we can unearth what hides beneath the label "security Wall": a variety of elements invisible at first glance. Through the Cremisan case, we understand how pervasive the agency of the Wall truly is. Since in this particular area we are not even confronting the actual Wall and its unavoidable materiality—because it still only in the planning phase—we must dig deeper. The agency of the Wall that we are facing here is the agency of multiple actants within the assemblage Wall. Thus far we have already mentioned a plethora of both human and nonhuman actants taking part in the debate: the supreme court, the Salesian nuns, Salesian monks, both their convents, the monk's vineyard, the olive press, the nun's

⁵⁷ "New Segment of West Bank Security Fence May Separate Nuns From Monks", Ha'aretz, January 5, 2012; Sandionigi, Giampiero, "Torna a giudizio il muro israeliano a Cremisan," [Terrasanta.net](http://www.terrasanta.net), Maggio-giugno 2013, http://www.terrasanta.net/tsx/articolo.jsp?wi_number=6476&wi_codseq=HL007%20&language=it (8 July 2015); Franciscan Media Center, "video- No al muro a Cremisan," [Terrasanta.net](http://www.terrasanta.net), 25 ottobre 2012, <http://www.terrasanta.net/tsx/articolo.jsp?wi_number=4446&wi_codseq=HL012%20&language=it>(8 July 2015); Giorgi, Carlo, "Nelle vigne di Cremisan," [Terrasanta.net](http://www.terrasanta.net), agosto-settembre 2010, <http://www.terrasanta.net/tsx/articolo-rivista.jsp?wi_number=2423&wi_codseq=EC1007&language=it>(8 July 2015); Pentin, Edward, "Anche un'impresa vinicola salesiana vittima del Muro," [Terrasanta.net](http://www.terrasanta.net), 30 giugno 2008, <http://www.holylandreview.net/tsx/articolo.jsp?wi_number=1195>(8 July 2015); "Cremisan: il Davide cattolico contro il Golia israeliano," Blog Centro Studi Giuseppe Federici, 11 dicembre 2014, <<http://federiciblog.altervista.org/2014/12/11/cremisan-il-davide-cattolico-contro-il-golia-israeliano/>>(8 July 2015); Lafontaine, Christophe, "Le lacrime di Cremisan," *Notiziario informativo Gerusalemme: Amare la Terra Santa e farla amare*, Maggio 2013, <<http://www.oessgsezioneroma.it/images/Lettre-Info-23-IT.pdf>>(8 July 2015). Hasson, Nir, "Court to State: Explain refusal to alter security barrier that splits Palestinian town," *Haaretz*, 4 February 2014, < <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.572267>>(8 July 2015).

⁵⁸ See Images Chapter 2, Picture 14.

⁵⁹ The majority of lands belonging to the people of Beit Jala have already been confiscated for the construction of Gilo.

⁶⁰ Cremisan final decision

<http://www.saintyves.org/uploads/files/Cremisan%20Final%20Ruling.pdf>

elementary school, fifty-eight Christian families, the Ministry of Defense, the Har Gilo settlement, Gilo neighborhood.

Furthermore, «the aforesaid order was issued with the purpose of allowing building of the fence for a length of about 1,500m, connecting between the sections of the fence already built in the JSA. According to plan, the fence section for which the aforesaid seizure order was issued would pass close to Highway 60 (the “Tunnels Road”) while leaving the bridge on which this route passes in the “Israeli” side of the fence, to be connected with the route passing through JSA»⁶¹ Thus, the area under debate measures just 1.5 kilometers of the full length of the Jerusalem Envelop (140 kilometers). This fact reveals another interesting characteristic of the Wall that is revealed to us by the St. Yves organization dealing with the Wall’s participation in the legal system known as “salami tactic”. This term describes how

The court is never hearing any case that is more than seventy meters [long], maximum 150 meters. You know the court has never seen the whole dimension of the rout of the Wall in this valley. They don’t see the case of Walajeh, that the Wall encircles Walajeh on four sides, the Wall will go around the village on all four sides, except one that is a checkpoint in direction of Beit Jala. So the court has never seen that because it is always only hearing pieces like 70-80 meters, so if you just decide on these 70 or 80 meters of course there is no big impact on the population living in the village because these 80 meters don’t effect anybody, you know. So there is never the bigger picture seen, there is never decided on the bigger picture (St. Yves).

The Wall, as described in the “salami tactic” is thus not a cohesive unified entity, but it is fragmented in smaller vectors and each piece becomes the main actor in separate legal cases, which will implicate a whole different assemblage of human and nonhuman actants. In fact the outcome of the Cremisan legal case also depends on the outcomes of the legal battles involving other sections of the south Jerusalem Wall «we lost the first petition... they cannot destroy many

⁶¹ Ibid.

kilometers of the Wall because it has already been built. Thus, we lost because the people in Al- Walajeh lost⁶²» (Abuna I.S.).

Since a seizure order does not entail the loss of the land's ownership, the farmers would still be allowed to cultivate their lands but the access would be granted only through an agricultural gate⁶³ operated by the military.

Israelis will operate the gates and will open them whenever it's needed for agriculture, of course it's not happening and behind the Wall it's not just olive groves but they also grow fruit trees which need far much more care than the olive trees of course and what will most probably happen is that the gates will open twice a year in spring and in autumn for harvest and people cannot go there and work the land. We had cases where people get a permit to work there but not the machines they need to bring so we don't see that as really happening (St. Yves).

Thus, in this case we understand how the assemblage Wall also includes a particular devise called agricultural gate. We mentioned the fact that the Wall does not appear everywhere as an eight-meter-high concrete barrier (ten percent of the total length), but is also includes a variety of fences and openings among which also the agricultural gate. However, the agency of the assemblage Wall does not only impose a selective and controlled access to the farmers to their lands, it also includes the Ottoman law system.

So now Ottoman law comes into play because Israel is using this Ottoman rule on land that is not worked on for more than 10 years goes back to the Sultan or in this case they interpret it as the authorities. In the Ottoman times this was a totally clever law because whoever is not working the land and not growing something and selling something would be exempted from paying taxes. This was why the law was put in place. Israel is not using it for exempting areas like this but, you know people cannot enter their land anymore they don't have access anymore, and mostly out of these reasons can't work their land anymore and after 10 years that the land is not worked on it becomes state land. This is the great fear here as well, if the Wall gets built as planned... then it could happen that the land is

⁶² Origina interview in Italian «la prima istanza è stata fatta abbiamo perso... non possono distruggere chilometri del Muro perché è già stato fatto. Dunque abbiamo perso perché quelli di Al-Walajeh hanno perso» (Abuna I.S).

⁶³ See also: Arrested Development: The Long Term Impact of Israel's Separation Barrier in the West Bank, B'tselem, October 2012;

expropriated because the people can't work on it anymore (St. Yves).

In other words, St. Yves advocate is describing the possible outcome, if the IDF's route of the Wall were to be approved, of the aftermath of the adoption of agricultural gates on confiscated lands. This situation arises due to the five basic components comprising the Israeli legal system, that is, «Ottoman Law ... British Mandatory regulations; British common law; the legislation of the Knesset; and religious law» (Mahler 2011, 194) as well as Martial law for Area C of the Palestinian Territories in the West Bank.

In more technical terms, when dealing with issues concerning land, there is a specific Ottoman legislation⁶⁴ that is used: the 1858⁶⁵ Law developed during the agrarian reformation of the Ottoman Empire. This law «recognized a plot of land as 'miri' (privately owned) land, if it had been continuously cultivated for at least ten years. If a landowner failed to farm the land for three consecutive years, the land changed its status to 'makhul', which came then under the possession of the sovereign» (Weizman 2007: 116-117). While it had been devised in order to incentivize cultivation and increase the wealth of the Empire through taxation, during Begin's government it became a device to locate public lands to be claimed by Israel. In fact, «any piece of land that Palestinians could not prove was privately owned, any privately owned land that Palestinians could not prove was actually in use at the time of the survey, i.e. public Palestinian land, was declared 'state land' and seized by the state» (ibid., 116). We will stop here our brief description of the intricate Israeli legal system upheld within the national state boundaries and within the West Bank because our concern lies primarily on understanding how the present and future presence of the Wall intersects and interacts with unexpected human and nonhuman actors which unpredictably become part of the assemblage.

⁶⁴ «Turkish Jurisprudence was the major legal system in Palestine until the British Mandate began, and there are many indications of Ottoman Law to be found in Israel today. The Turkish *Majelle* ("civil code") was passed in 1869 and continued to exist in the Israeli legal system until its total repeal in 1984» (Mahler 2011, 194)

⁶⁵ See also Ruth, Kark. "Consequences of Ottoman Land Law: Agrarian and Privatization processes in Palestine, 1858-1918", to be published in: Raghbir, Chand (ed.), *Marginalization, Globalization and Regional and Local Response*, New Delhi (Forthcoming)

Thus far we have understood that the fifty-eight families as well as the Salesian nuns and monks have joined the appeal to the Supreme Court. However, they were not the sole human actors involved in the case. On March 6, 2009 the Council for Peace and Security (CPS) joined the case as *Amicus Curie* (Friend of the Court). In August of the same year also the Local Council of the Har Gilo community joined the case supporting the route proposed by the IDF. Furthermore, the Nature and Parks Authority also joined the case in order to assess the environmental impact of the different Wall's routs proposed to the Court. The CPS proposed an alternative route that could satisfy the security need as well as leaving the Cremisan Valley attached to the Beit Jala municipality,⁶⁶ but on July 19, 2010 requested that its affidavits be removed from the file. Despite the fact that the CPS removed its affidavits, the route they had proposed had been accepted by the nuns and the families as the lesser of two evils.

In order to appease the complaint of the nuns who deemed unacceptable the separation from the men's convent as a consequence of the previously proposed route, the State of Israel suggested that the road between the two monasteries be kept operational but surrounded by a wire fence and accessible exclusively through an operational gate known as the "Sleeve Alternative."⁶⁷ In this scenario, a wire fence would surround the monk's monastery and the monks would be held responsible for the inspection and security of the gate, disrupting the relationship between the two monasteries as well as the mission and lifestyles of the monks. In fact, in addition to having to perform «the gate control under the security system»⁶⁸ their monastery would need «security elements and cameras to be installed on the gate and reserving the possibility to perform spot checks by the security system»⁶⁹ As the map shows the solution presented by the Ministry of Defense, in the attempt to ensure the connection between the women and men's congregation, still envisions the separation of the monk's vineyards from the monastery.

⁶⁶ See Images Chapter 2, Picture 15.

⁶⁷ See Images Chapter 2, Picture 16.

⁶⁸ Cremisan final decision

<http://www.saintyves.org/uploads/files/Cremisan%20Final%20Ruling.pdf>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

The fact that the wellbeing of two Salesian religious communities is involved in the legal case brings forth another interesting aspect connected to the route of the Wall. As explained by Zvi Avni, the St. Yves Jewish attorney following the case on the nuns' behalf, «the case is not yet complete, and a final decision has not yet been given. However, the decision of the Court is an indicator of the interest that the Court shows in a matter concerning religious freedom and freedom of religion regarding monasteries»⁷⁰. As it turns out one of the arguments that has been debated in the Supreme Court involved the Fundamental Agreement Between the Holy See and the State of Israel. This document states that «the State of Israel, recalling its Declaration of Independence, affirms its continuing commitment to uphold and observe the human right to freedom of religion and conscience, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in other international instruments to which it is a party⁷¹» (Article 1), furthermore «the State of Israel recognizes that the right of the Catholic Church to freedom of expression in the carrying out of its functions» (Article 8) and it declares that «the Holy See and the State of Israel jointly reaffirm the right to the Catholic Church to carry out its health care and social welfare institutions» (Article 9) as well as «jointly reaffirm[ing] the right of the Catholic Church to property... [and] will negotiate in good faith a comprehensive agreement, containing solutions acceptable to both Parties, on unclear, unsettled and dispute issues, concerning property, economic and fiscal matters» (Article 10a). In addition to the Fundamental Agreement, also the

⁷⁰ "A positive but non-definitive answer on Cremisan by the Israeli Supreme Court," Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 12 agosto 2014, <<http://en.lpj.org/?s=A+positive+but+non-definitive+answer+on+Cremisan+by+the+Israeli+Supreme+Court&x=0&y=0>> (8 July 2015); "Following a 9 years legal battle: Israeli High Court Accepts Cremisan Petition, Rejects Building the Wall in Cremisan," Society of Saint Yves, 2 April 2015, <<http://saintyves.org/index.php?MenuId=3&Lang=1&TemplateId=news&catId=1&full=1&id=66>> (8 July 2015); See also "Cremisan, una vittoria del diritto e della preghiera", Terrasanta.net, 2 aprile 2015, <http://www.terrasanta.net/tsx/articolo.jsp?wi_number=7402&wi_codseq=HL012%20&language=it> (8 July 2015); "Israeli Supreme Court is hearing the Cremisan case on Wednesday," Society of Saint Yves, 27 January 2014, <<http://www.saintyves.org/?MenuId=3&Lang=1&TemplateId=news&catId=1&full=1&id=56>> (8 July 2015); "Israeli Supreme Court Decided on the Route of the Separation Wall in Cremisan valley," Society of St. Yves, 4 September 2014, <<http://www.saintyves.org/?MenuId=3&Lang=1&TemplateId=news&catId=1&full=1&id=7>> (8 July 2015).

⁷¹ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/archivio/documents/rc_seg-st_19931230_santa-sede-israele_en.html

Assembly of the Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land wrote a formal condemnation of the planned route of the Wall.⁷²

The nine year long legal battle has come to a partial conclusion⁷³ on April 2nd, 2015 when the Court ruling in light of «not see[ing] fit to determine at this time whether the rest of the injuries of the building of the fence are proportionate... renewed examination of the fence's route is needed»⁷⁴ therefore, «the Respondents must reconsider, soon, the various alternatives of the separation fence's route in the section at the heart of this Petition».⁷⁵ However, while this chapter is being written a new development has arisen. It seems that with small changes applied to the rout of Wall, now the Supreme Court has given its permission to resume the construction of the Wall in the area⁷⁶. Thus the legal battle is still ongoing and far from being resolved and the Wall, because it «is constantly rerouted, its path will keep registering like a seismograph the political and legal battles surrounding it» (Weizman 2007: 7) and it will keep interlocking with multiple new and unpredictable actants.

⁷² <<http://en.lpj.org/2012/10/23/the-assembly-of-catholic-ordinaries-of-the-holy-land-condemns-the-planned-route-of-the-separation-wall-in-cremisan-valley/>>; See also "Dai vescovi cattolici di Terra Santa un nuovo appello per Cremisan", [Terrasanta.net](http://www.terrasanta.net), 9 dicembre 2014 <http://www.terrasanta.net/tsx/articolo.jsp?wi_number=7097&wi_codseq=HL012%20&language=it>(8 July 2015); Carefulli, Giuseppe, "Domenica a Betlemme la vertenza di Cremisan alla tavola del Papa," [Terrasanta.net](http://www.terrasanta.net), 23 maggio 2014, <http://www.terrasanta.net/tsx/articolo.jsp?wi_number=6476&wi_codseq=HL007%20&language=it>(8 July 2015).

⁷³ "St. Yves Celebrates the Victory in the Cremisan Case," [Society of St. Yves](http://www.saintyves.org/), 1 May 2015, <<http://www.saintyves.org/?MenuId=0&Lang=1&TemplateId=news&catId=1&full=1&id=72>>(8 July 2015); "Cremisan: Translated Final Court Ruling," [Society of St. Yves](http://www.saintyves.org/), 10 April 2015, <<http://www.saintyves.org/?MenuId=3&Lang=1&TemplateId=news&catId=1&full=1&id=71>>(8 July 2015); Beaumont, Peter, "Israel's top court blocks extension of separation wall through Cremisan valley," [The Guardian](http://www.theguardian.com), 2 April 2015, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/02/israels-top-court-blocks-extension-of-separation-wall-through-cremisan-valley>>(8 July 2015); Knell, Yolande, "Israeli court rejects Cremisan Valley West Bank barrier," [BBC News](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32171577), 3 April 2015, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32171577>>(8 July 2015).

⁷⁴ Hon. President (ret.) A Grunis. Cremisan final decision <http://www.saintyves.org/uploads/files/Cremisan%20Final%20Ruling.pdf>

⁷⁵ Judge N. Hendel. Ibid.

⁷⁶ "The Israeli Supreme Court Gives the Green Light to Begin Building the Separation Wall in the Creisan Valley," [Society of St Yves](http://www.saintyves.org/), 8 July 2015, <<http://www.saintyves.org/?MenuId=3&Lang=1&TemplateId=news&catId=1&full=1&id=88>>(8 July 2015); "Muro a Cremisan, il voltafaccia di Israele," Terra Santa Link, 10 July 2015, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqFme3j8zpY>>(13 July 2015).

Conclusions

In this chapter we have tried to present the Wall as an assemblage, thus a physical thing that enacts the appropriation of land and property. Through A.'s story we understood that the presence of the Wall has brought a variety of different effects on her and her family. First of all, it separated her home from the fields that belonged to her family for generations. The expropriation of these lands is connected to the loss of sustenance and income that came from farming as well as to the deprivation for future generations to build their homes for the new families. As A. states, Palestinian families were used to invest their life savings in the purchase of land, which now are precluded to them and hidden on the other side of the Wall.

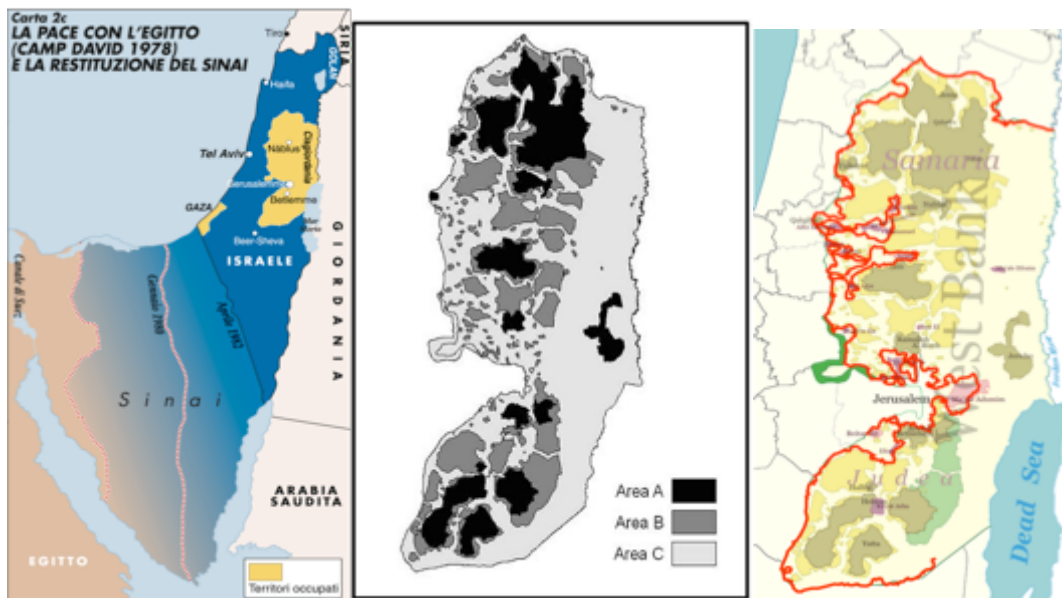
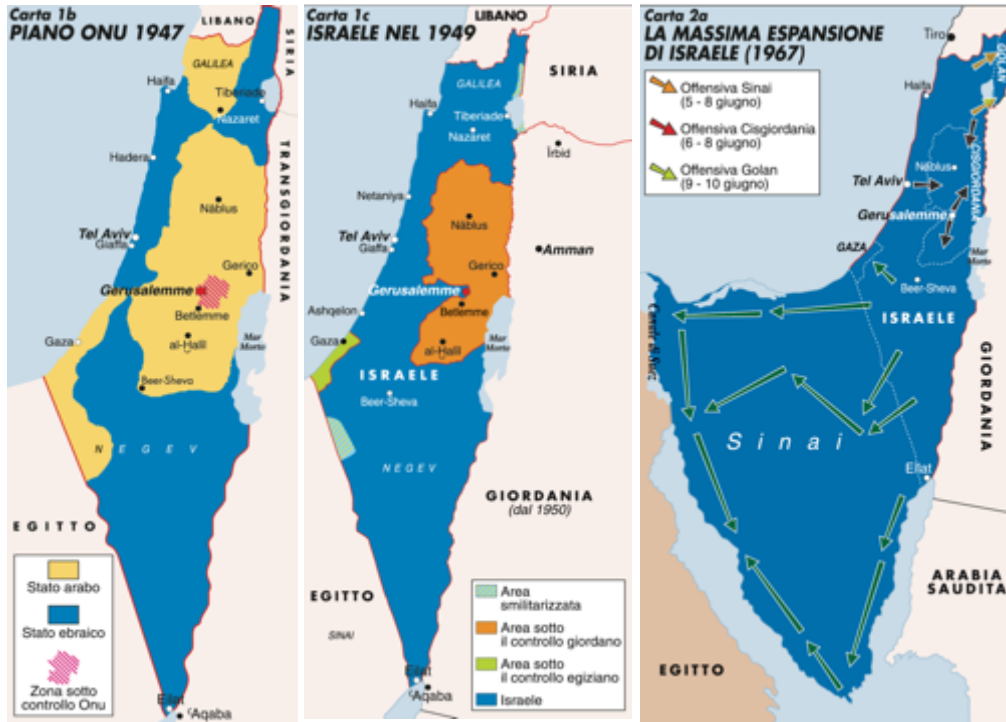
H. and her sister S. allow us to comprehend that even just the planned route of the Wall on a map already exercises agency. Because their lands are located on the future route of the Wall, they are already denied access to them. Furthermore, their lands are also located under the Highway 60 bridge—locked away through an agricultural gate— as well as where now Gilo and the Har Gilo settlement are built making also them inaccessible. This fact may not at first glance appear to be connected with the Wall *per se*, but, as we have thus far witnessed, the concept of assemblages enables us to embrace a wider and more complex scenario. Actually, where the Wall encircles and disconnects the landscape, bridges and tunnels stitch it back together creating a multilayered geography. This complex landscaped permits the Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be connected to the Israeli national territory via reserved roads to Israeli cars only without having to travel through the major Palestinian centers under Area A. Thus, like in the case of the Highway 60 Bridge, the road under Israeli control passes over Palestinian lands (H. and S.'s lands) and then it passes through a tunnel under Beit Jala, which is under Palestinian jurisdiction. Therefore, the Wall in this area, in order to guarantee security to the inhabitants of the settlements it separates them from their Arab neighbors (annexing also their lands to create a big enough buffer zone), then in order to reconnect them to the Israeli national territory it forces the construction of special roads above and below Palestinian lands.

Hence, through these two narrations, we can perceive how the Wall not only exercises agency by expropriating the lands and annexing them to the state of Israel, but it also assembles with the agency of other nonhumans —such as the lost monetary investments, the taste of the vegetables, the impossibility to harvest, agricultural gates, olive trees, hours of work as a housekeeper to buy the land, bridges, tunnels, Israeli-only roads— as well as humans —A.’s children and grandchildren, the Israeli soldiers who fenced off H.’s and S.’s lands, the Wall’s and Road’s construction builders, the settlers, the extended family who cannot gather in the olive groves during harvest season, the lawyers who fight in the supreme court against the route of the Wall.

We have seen, in fact, that the Wall also becomes one of the major players in Supreme Court legal cases. Through the case of Cremisan, which is by no means the only one, we discover how the Wall’s planned route in the valley implicates also the agency of lawyers, the Salesian nuns and their elementary school, the Salesian monks and their vineyards, the Israeli Ministry of Defense, the Peace and Security Council, the Har Gilo Council, the Supreme Court judges, the Salami Tactic, Ottoman Law, olive trees, etc.

Thus, we begin to understand the complexity we are facing when wanting to investigate the “impact” of the Wall on the Christian community in this area. The intentionality behind the Israeli’s decision to build the Wall might be tied to security, but the Wall also holds an agency of its own that depending on which human and nonhuman actants it interconnects with, generates different outcomes. The Wall molds and becomes part of a landscape that is not meaningful only when infused by human intentionality, perception, feeling, and memories. The Wall allows us to understand that the new space it creates, or threatens to create, is filled both by the embodied experiences of loss and memories of the Palestinian Christians, but also by the many nonhuman physical elements constituting it. All these elements assemble together in a vibrant tableau each possessing their own trajectories and properties. The Wall in this particular context thus directs us towards a theory of assemblages because it can contain and embrace both its agency as a material object as well as all the other actants that interconnect with it.

Images Chapter 2



Picture 1: Maps of the changing boundaries of Israel from the 1947 ONU plan of subdivision to the aftermath of the Oslo Peace Process subdivision of the West Bank in area A, B, and C and the construction of the barrier.



Picture 2: While on the way to A.'s home we face the Wall and gate separating the shrine of Rachel's Tomb from Bethlehem annexing it to Israel.



Picture 3: A.'s home with the Wall in the background



Picture 4: View from A.'s home balcony of the backyard where once there were the families fields.



Picture 5: H. participates at the Weekly Holy Mass among the Cremisan olive grove.



Picture 6: The gate separating H. and her family from entering their property and harvest the olives.



Picture 7: The controversial Tunnel road that connects Israel with the settlements in southern Israel without passing through West Bank inhabited areas such as Beit Jala, whose territory it surmounts.



Picture 8: H.'s extended family spending the time of the harvest together on their land.



Picture 9: H.'s extended family spending the time of the harvest together on their land.



Picture 10: H.'s extended family spending the time of the harvest together on their land.



Picture 11: H.'s extended family spending the time of the harvest together on their land.



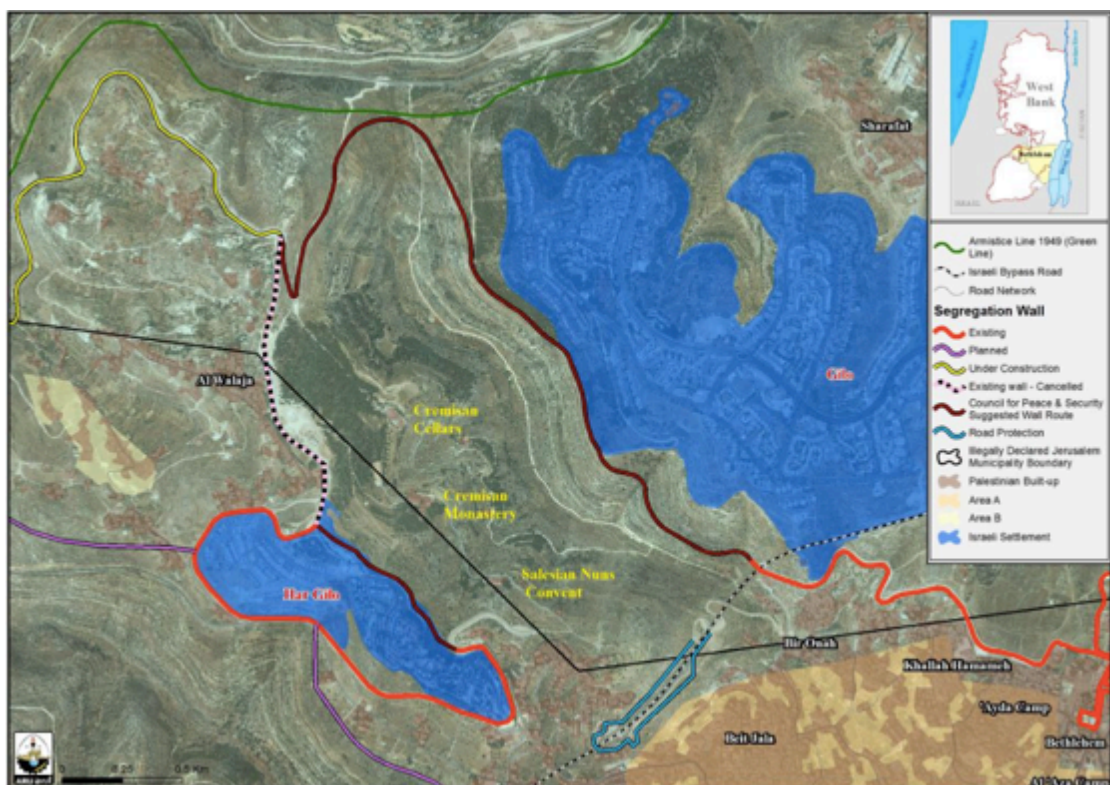
Picture 12: Olive Harvest at the Cremisan Valley witnessed by international dignitaries.



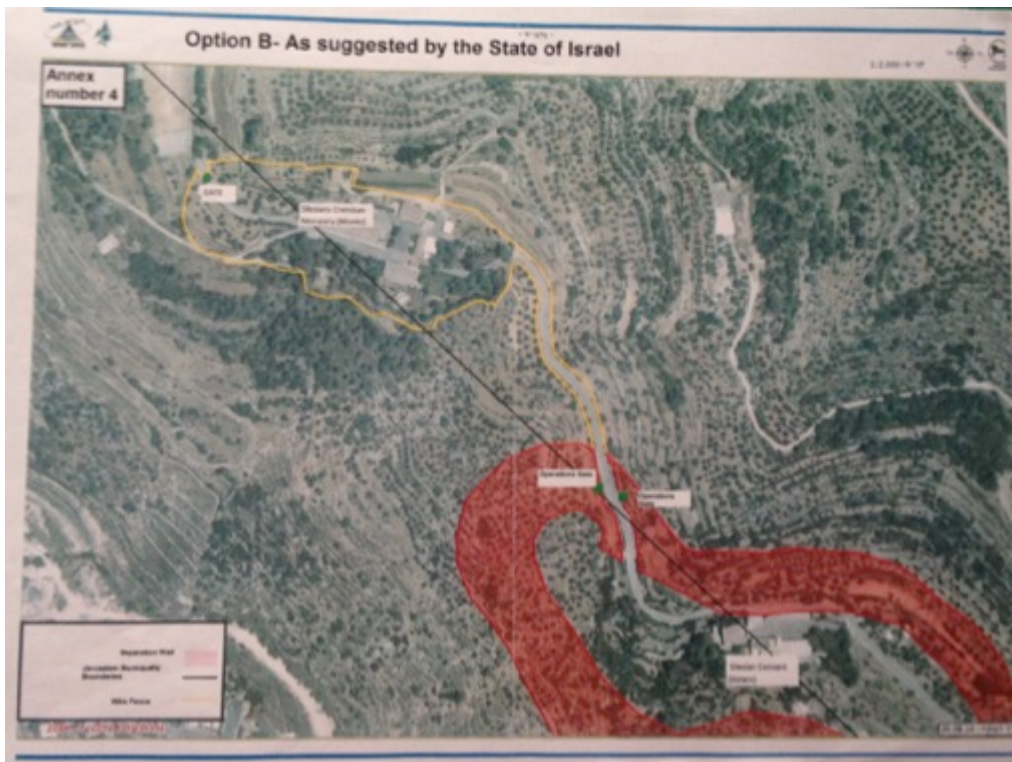
Picture 13: Olive Harvest at the Cremisan Valley witnessed by international dignitaries.



Picture 14: The Salesian women's monastery and elementary school in the Cremisan Valley.



Picture 15: Solution for the Cremisan Valley proposed by the Council for Peace and Security.



Picture 15: Sleeve Alternative for the Cremisan Valley proposed by the IDF.

Chapter 3: The Wall As An Assemblage Of Control

Key words: cage, prison, zoo, controls access, repressive and daily practice of occupation, surveillance, cameras, humiliation, smells, queues, sewage, gate, fingerprints, magnetic ID cards, turnstiles, blockage, metal detectors, dehumanization.

Introduction

When asked to describe the Wall with one word, the majority of the Palestinian Christians I interviewed used the term 'prison'. This term both defined their experiences in a town surrounded by the Wall, as well as describing their condition of lack of freedom of movement. The response to my subsequent invitation to describe an unforgettable episode in relation to the Wall, the majority of Christians who had defined the Wall as a prison would narrate an experience at the checkpoint. It became quite clear that the Palestinians who necessitate passing through the 'terminal' in order to enter and exit Bethlehem, considered it as an integral part of the Wall. Thus, once again, we could not just describe the Wall as a physical barrier guaranteeing security on one side and occupation on the other. The Wall constitutes a complex assemblage gathering human and nonhuman actants such as watchtowers, full-body turnstiles, glass-window booths with soldiers, electromagnetic ID cards, metal detectors, fingerprinting devices, red and green lights signaling an open or closed passageway, cattle-chutes-like corridors with thousands of people pushing and shoving to arrive to work on time, and sewage stench. Identifying and analyzing each of these actants becomes crucial in understanding fully the impact of the Wall on the Christian population as an assemblage of control.

As we have become increasingly aware, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been constantly moved away from outright head on war towards a subtler format defined as a low-intensity conflict (Lederach 1995; 1997). The way Israel is progressively increasing its sovereignty and control over territories that it does not wish to annex⁷⁷ due to its concern over the demographic imbalance that the inclusion of densely Arab populated cities would cause to the 'Jewishness of the state', is through «biopolitical practices of mobility regulation» (Parsons and Salter 2008: 701-702). As we will see more in depth later, as a result of the Oslo I Agreement (officially known as Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or DOP), a Palestinian interim self-government known as the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was created in order to assume responsibility for the administration of the territory under its control.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the PNA did not acquire sovereignty over the entire West Bank, but over the Oslo II agreed upon Area A and partial control over Area B. The IDF retained full civilian and military control over Area C⁷⁸ that today counts for 60% of the entire West Bank⁷⁹. The Israeli state has thus been investing in «bifurcated infrastructure, checkpoints, identity documents and a permit system...underlin[ing] the centrality of closure» (Parsons and Salter 2008: 702). All these actants partaking in the assemblage Wall are deployed in the endeavor to both acquire sovereignty over the largest amount of land as well as exercising surveillance over the people not officially under their rule. In fact, «according to this logic of governance, Israel remained in control of the Palestinians by regulating their movement through space, without resorting to managing their lives within the separate enclaves it sealed around their towns and villages» (Weizman 2007: 141).

Particularly, the State of Israel engages in surveillance activities such as «citizen construction, border policing, and people counting» (Zureik 2001: 205).

⁷⁷ See also Zureik, Elia, and Salter, Mark, eds. 2005. *Global Surveillance and Policing: Borders, security, identity*. Portland: William Publishing.

⁷⁸ In this particular work we purposefully do not address the additional «Hebron Protocol of 1997 added Areas H1 and H2 (Palestinian and Israeli jurisdiction); the Wye River Memorandum of 1998 led to the informal subdivision of Area B into B+, B and B- and then added Israeli-administered "nature reserves", in effect 'Area D', south of Hebron» (Parsons and Salter 2008:708).

⁷⁹ West Bank Movement and Access Update, OCHA, September 2012, <https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_movement_and_access_report_september_2012_english.pdf>

The majority of Palestinians, as Elia Zureik explains, have been enduring an existence under constant surveillance: «their numbers and demography are continuously discussed and debated, their movement across international boundaries closely monitored, their activities are routinely scrutinized for political content, and their identity and citizenship status are a perennial topic of discussion» (Zureik 2001: 206). Thus, given its pervasive presence, the Wall enacts surveillance through its delimitation of the space where Palestinians in general, and Christians in particular, are allowed to dwell on and move through. Its physical presence allows the Israelis to determine who, when, and where Palestinians can enter Israel. The Wall, in fact, channels all the movement in and out of the country in specific openings (gates and checkpoints) that in the Bethlehem Governorate take one of their most architectonically complex forms: Checkpoint 300. Thenceforth, it is no surprise that these more technologically advanced checkpoints are defined as terminals, shadowing the structure of airport security measures. Hence, the agency of the actants within the Wall assemblage to control the entryway to and from the city of Bethlehem sheds light on one of the reasons why the informants refer to the Wall, and particularly to the checkpoint system, as a prison. Furthermore, as Elia Zureik states in his article *Constructing Palestine Through Surveillance Practices*, the power of the checkpoint relies in its ability to classify people through the granting or denying of passage, determining who and how many people are entering the State of Israel every day and for what reasons. As Foucault asserts, «in the modern era power is productive of knowledge and knowledge is productive of power» (Hirst 2005: 167).

The Wall, and the checkpoint as one of the actants of the assemblage, is somewhat reminiscent of Bentham's Panopticon, which Foucault has profusely referred to as the emblem of his theories on disciplinary power (Foucault 1995; 1977), in its «architectonical form... as a system of power based on surveillance, where individuals are brought under ... the 'eye' of power» (Hirst 2005: 169). In the quest to understand the impact of the Wall on the Christian population, we must go beyond its most renowned characterizations as a security/occupation technology derived mostly from the agency of the checkpoints, which obscures all the other actants at work underneath. Thus, mindful of the greater complexity

intrinsic in the Wall's agency, we wish to delve deeper and truly understand what is at stake for the Palestinian Christians when they face the Wall understood through its checkpoints; we wish to unveil each element that exercises agency and control within the assemblage. We aim to discuss not only the more obvious elements of the Wall assemblage such as the gate and the soldiers patrolling the area near the Wall, but to dive deeper into all the subtler human and nonhuman actants involved in the action of surveillance.

As we will discuss much more in depth in chapter five, here we will not only focus on acknowledging the agency of the usually neglected nonhumans, but we will also address the embodied experience of the Christians whose bodies physically stand in line at the checkpoints for hours, bodies that are subject to public strip-search, that are selected, looked over, controlled, denied or allowed entrance into Israel. These bodies often risk losing their lives while waiting to be transferred in a specialized hospital of Jerusalem; they are bodies of the young who stay behind during the celebration of the Christian Holydays in Jerusalem; these are bodies that get in line in the middle of the night to reach their workplace on the other side of the Wall in the morning; they are bodies who prefer to turn back rather than being humiliated by the soldiers at the checkpoint; and there are bodies who decide to leave beyond what lies on the other side of the Wall and migrate abroad.

Thus, when analyzing the Wall as an assemblage that exercises control and surveillance, we ask ourselves what kind of agency do the human bodies enact when they interact with the nonhuman actants in the assemblage? Are those Foucauldian bodies «object and target of power- the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds»? (Foucault 1955: 136) Or can and do the Palestinians exercise resistance and *sumud* (see chapter five) against the surveillance enacted by the assemblage Wall? The purpose here is to draw attention to how considering the Wall as an assemblage that exercises control and surveillance allows us to understand why the majority of interlocutors described living in the vicinities of the Wall as living in a prison. When analyzed in depth, the concept “prison” conceals a complex assembly of elements that through their interaction produce the effect on the Christians of feeling like they are living behind bars.

Actants of closure

One of the striking characteristics of the Israeli/Palestinian territory for a visiting and unknowing foreign is its fragmentation and multiplicity of control devices on it employed. Due to the primary focus of Israeli society on security and defense, numerous assemblages of technologies, devices, and the soldiers' pervasive presence are deployed in order to achieve knowledge on the movement of the potentially dangerous Palestinian population. Such control devices may vary from the permanent checkpoints known as 'terminals', which are recognizable by their imposing articulate architectural structure resembling that of airport terminals, to the subtler earth mound, or to a flying checkpoint (also known as "random checkpoint", "mobile checkpoint" or "hasty checkpoint") comprising a «mobile truck-mounted infantry or police units in order to disrupt unauthorized or unwanted movement or military activity»⁸⁰.

The presence of surveillance devices to monitor and control the Palestinians' movement is pervasive in as much as «people make the wry joke that every Palestinian street is a potential checkpoint. They know literally hundreds of 'checkpoint stories' –cruel of funny, mundane or surreal, profound or banal» (Van Teeffelen and Biggs 2011: 27). In a land with unclear and ever-shifting boundaries, where it would be more suitable to speak of frontiers instead of actual borders (chapter four), the sovereignty and security of the State of Israel is exercised and guaranteed through the control over the flow of people. According to the 2012 OCHA survey, in the West Bank there are 542 obstacles hindering the movement of the Palestinians⁸¹. Comprised within this obstacles there are «61 permanently staffed checkpoints (excluding checkpoints on the Green Line), 25 partial checkpoints (staffed on an ad-hoc basis) and 436 unstaffed physical obstacles, including roadblocks, earth mounds, earth walls, road gates, road barriers, and trenches⁸²» (OCHA 2012: 32).

⁸⁰ Global Security. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/call/call_93-8_chap9.htm> (7 October, 2015).

⁸¹ West Bank Movement and Access Update, OCHA, September 2012, <https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_movement_and_access_report_september_2012_english.pdf>

⁸² Ibid., 32. Also specified in the report the quantity of each obstacles on the territory in percentages: Earthwall 4%; Trench 2%; Road Barriers 9%; Checkpoint 12%; Partial Checkpoint 5%; Earthmound 38%; Roadblock 12%; Road Gate 20%.

Throughout the young history of the establishment of the State of Israel, not only the sovereignty over territories mutated a considerable number of times, but also freedom of movement for the Arab Palestinians fluxed: «Palestinian movement was tightly restricted within Israel from 1948 armistice agreements up until 1966. Closure was then imposed on the newly occupied territories after the Six-Day War in 1967» (Parsons and Salter 2008: 704). Then from the 1949 armistice agreement up until the breakout of the Six-Day War, the restrictions in place on the West Bank depended on the fact that at the time Jordan controlled this territory and the enmity between the two states made it difficult for people to move between them. After the 1967 War, Israel successfully won against the three invading nation of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan acquiring respectively from each the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, while East Jerusalem was *de facto* annexed to Israel proper, in the West Bank Israel adopted the position of “deciding not to decide’ concerned with the demographic imbalance it would create in the Jewish State. The period after the Six-Day War, however witnessed the concession of passage between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and consequently «the area around Rachel’s Tomb was frequently visited by bargain-hunting Israelis who objected to Jerusalem prices. Shop and garages began to open in the Hebron Road. Bethlehem’s inhabitants saw their income starting to grow with the steady influx of tourists and pilgrims who poured into Bethlehem from Jerusalem» (Van Teeffelen and Biggs 2011: 16). This period, which saw Israel’s issuing of «general exit orders» (Parsons and Salter 2008: 704) in 1972 did not perdure; in fact not even two decades later, in 1991 to be precise, this order was revoked when the Israeli Government decided that «Palestinians had to have individual exit papers» (Ibid.). Since the annulment of said general exit orders, we witness a steady increase of movement restrictions up until the Oslo Agreements.

As we have previously mentioned, the 1995 (Oslo II) Agreement establishes the Area A, B, and C subdivision of sovereignty of the West Bank. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) framework at Oslo «did not modify the closure system in a positive sense: rather, under Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

pressures, Oslo both deepened and entrenched it» (Ibid.: 705). Consequently to the territorial and sovereign fragmentation of the West Bank, aggravated by the establishment of a constellation of settlements this entrenchment was «realized physically through the construction of an extensive network of bypass roads and checkpoints, bureaucracy developed in tandem through an elaboration of the permit system governed by the IDF administration in the territories, the Civil Administration» (Ibid.).

As early as 1993, in fact, «a makeshift checkpoint between Jerusalem and Bethlehem... was set up» (Van Teeffelen and Biggs 2011: 18). Not nearly comparable to the architectonically complex terminal that we know today as the 'Gilo checkpoint' or 'Checkpoint 300', this first control assemblage is herald of the physical closure to come.

Actants of control: the checkpoint

One morning I accompanied Sister A.S. to Jerusalem. Sister A.S. is a Palestinian Nun born in Jenin who had been assigned by her congregation to the convent in Bethlehem. On that particular day she planned to meet one of her fellow sisters from Nazareth who was leading a pilgrimage trip to the Holy City. Since Sister A.S. is a Palestinian citizen, who based on her principals and Palestinian pride always refused to request a special permit from the Vatican to cross more easily the checkpoints, she had to pass through Checkpoint 300 instead of the tunnel checkpoint near Beit Jala through which Palestinians with Jerusalem ID are allowed to pass. Instead of allowing crossing into Israel by bus, Checkpoint 300⁸³ requires Palestinians to pass through a series of queues, turnstiles, and metal detectors on foot.

That was a regular morning of no particular day of the week or of the year and we approached the checkpoint around 10:30. As we walked towards the Rachel Tomb area we encountered the usual group of taxies awaiting passengers entering Bethlehem, a few fruit and vegetable street venders and no intense

⁸³ See Images Chapter 3, Picture 1

crowding at the entrance⁸⁴. The first step inside the security facility requires people to walk in line between either the Wall and a shoulder-high stone-block wall or the aforementioned stone-block wall and another one exactly like it but on the exterior side. An iron fencing that reaches a roof protecting the people and preventing disorders tops both these stone-block walls⁸⁵. At the end of this pathway there is a turnstile that is used both by those who wish to enter into Israel and those who are entering Bethlehem creating a situation of waiting and necessary politeness on both parties. Monitoring the flow of people is usually a soldier controlling inside a small gatekeeper's booth with a glass window overlooking the turnstile⁸⁶.

After passing this first control point, Sister A.S. and I had to walk through an empty parking lot towards another building. At that time fortunately there were only few of us walking and there were no attempts at running in front of each other to arrive sooner at the next checking area. Once again we entered a corridor formed by short metal banisters all the way to the main hall of the checkpoint. There were quite a few people standing there. There were two choices of entrance through turnstiles. On top of them a light indicating either that the gate was operational (green light) or closed (red light). We, like the other people, went back and forth between the two entryways to assess if they were open and how many people were already lined up before us. It can happen that one moment the light is green and the next it turns red with no warning and all the people standing in that line must turn around and rapidly move to the other entrance. This big room (that looks more like the open space of a loft) is not as tightly structured as the first entry; the only separations meant to create some order are three lanes of hip-high iron banisters and the rest is open for chaos. Already with very few people, the climate was tense since, once in line, everyone started pushing and passing in front of one another, especially the workers who were in a hurry to get to the other side as soon as possible. As we patiently waited in line, Sister A.S. and I tried to remain calm and not give in to the impulse to start pushing and protesting for the impolite behavior of people around us.

⁸⁴ See Images Chapter 3, Picture 2

⁸⁵ See Images Chapter 3, Picture 3.

⁸⁶ See Images Chapter 3, Picture 4.

As we stood, I saw a man with a carton full of flowers, who arrived sometime before us who came back from where he entered and left the checkpoint. The man was probably refused entrance in the State of Israel for a variety of plausible motives, either an expired permit, a possible involvement in activist activities, or other reasons. Finally it was my turn to pass through the turnstile, I started pushing the metal bars and, as I was halfway through, the turnstile blocked and I remained stuck in between. I tried to push harder but nothing moved. Then I started looking around and staring at the camera in front of the turnstile to make my situation known to the soldiers checking the entry. Probably a minute went by and then the light turned green again and I was able to pass through just to find myself in front of a metal detector like the ones at the airport to check carry on bags. There I rejoined with Sister A.S. who had gone through before me. I placed my bag and belt and shoes to go through the machine without the presence of any soldiers. The soldiers were in a room behind a mirror glass observing while people who provoked a beeping sound when passing through the metal detector went back and forth taking off garments and trying to find what was causing the beeping.

I was able to get through uncertain whether it was all right for me to do so and through the door I found myself in the final step of the checkpoint where soldiers were both sitting in booths checking IDs and fingerprints and standing near the exit with their hands fasten on their guns alert for any threat. I observed what the people in front of me were doing and I pressed my Italian passport against the glass of the booth waiting for a sign by the female soldier checking the document. After she looked at the Passport she also asked to see the Visa, a paper slip that records entry into the State of Israel given to any visitor at the Airport. Luckily I kept everything with me and as she saw the Visa she gestured me to move along. I was finally through but an additional corridor separated me from the Arab busses waiting to drive people to Jerusalem.

I decided to start this chapter through the narration of the different steps needed to pass across the checkpoint because it represents on the one of the core elements of the Wall assemblage, on the other hand it sheds light on the numerous control actants involved in the checkpoint system. Furthermore, the checkpoint constitutes the most cited location mentioned during interviews

concerning the Christians' interaction with the Wall. As we mentioned in the introduction, the interviews conducted aimed at understanding the Christians' perceptions of the Wall and the description of an event or episode taking place in connection to or in the vicinities of the Wall; the most recurrent narrations involved the experience of going through the checkpoint.

What I have described above is my personal experience of passing through the checkpoint. However, since Sister A.S. decided to leave Bethlehem later in the morning to avoid the chaotic and possibly violent circumstances that take place earlier in the morning when thousands of Palestinians clump together pushing and shoving in the attempt to arrive at work or at school on time, this was certainly not the most common experience of passing through the checkpoint. Conversely, V.B., an Italian man in his forties who married a Palestinian Christian woman moving to Bethlehem, gives a potent image of what it means to go through the checkpoint every morning to reach the workplace in Jerusalem

I became secretary of the Patriarch and every morning I would pass [through the checkpoint] as all the Palestinians from Bethlehem, then with public transportations [I would get to Jerusalem]. The mornings [getting in line] at 5:30/6:00 in the midst of hundreds of people from the Palestinian villages. Then the military would open the sewage outlet to flood the inside of the checkpoint with its stench. The dumps they opened were IMOF, that is, these very large camping-type latrines that they open to fill with stench [the checkpoint area]. However, there is a concentration of filth all packed in a row one after another [under the] rain, ice, hot... these are powerful images. On one hand the inhumanity of these kids twenty-twenty-five years old Israelis angry with themselves because they have to do a thing perhaps they do not understand and they do not behave in the best ways with the Palestinians then, when you learn Arabic you hear them calling [the Palestinians] "dogs" treat them badly insult them in Arabic. These probably are the images and sounds and smells that I can hardly forget and it is an experience that many should do to understand the difficulties on the other hand the Palestinians who resigned to this way of doing instead of being nice with each other when they fight while standing in line. The general nervousness of the situation the crowdedness, they cut in front of the elderly and do not respect the women. [This situation] brings out the worst in them. There is a loss of humanity that leaves a mark on you... in

a place like this, how can there be a normal humane behavior?⁸⁷
(V.B).

The deeply sensorial image painted by V.B. describes the ordeals that thousands of Palestinians face every morning to work in Jerusalem. Many described to me their necessity to wake up extremely early to arrive on time at their workplace risking to be fired if they do not. In order to reach Jerusalem, which is located only seven kilometers from Bethlehem, many get in line as early as three in the morning. The bodies that wait in line are crammed together, closely packed just to get one step closer to the exit. In the summer heat, or in the winter snow these human bodies channeled through the different corridors and turnstiles await their passage and are scrutinized, undressed and censored by the checkpoint assemblage.

O. a Palestinian Christian woman, whom we will meet more in depth in the next chapters, also describes an episode that took place at the checkpoint when asked to narrate an event that she will never forget in conjunction with the Wall

well, I have a very hard experience that happened to us and my family. Once me and my husband got a permit to go to Jerusalem and my two sons were little not having a permission and when we passed a young lady, she was a soldier, and she was pointing with her feet to the Palestinian faces and my husband, I could remember this clearly, my husband he said "I am very disappointed and humiliated, with this lady having put her feet toward our faces she has the same age as my sons so I can't hold it anymore so let's go home" I said "but we reached the checkpoint, let's go" he said "no, I don't want to so let's return

⁸⁷ Original interview conducted in Italian: «le mattinate ad aspettare alle 5:30/6 del mattino in mezzo a centinaia di persone che poi vengono dai villaggi palestinesi i militari che ti aprono lo scarico della fognatura per fare puzza dentro i checkpoint, aprono loro hanno le fogne IMOF praticamente queste tipo da campeggio molto grandi, latrine quindi loro aprono le bocchette così viene proprio la puzza dentro. Comunque c'è una concentrazione di sudicio in fila uno dietro l'altro pioggia ghiaccio caldo queste sono immagini forti che da un lato l'umanità di questi ragazzi della nostra età ventenni, venticinque anni israeliani incazzati con loro stessi perché devono fare una cosa che forse non capiscono non usano i modi migliori con i palestinesi poi quando impari l'arabo senti che dicono «cane» trattati malissimo insultati anche in arabo. Queste probabilmente sono delle immagini e dei suoni e degli odori che difficilmente riesco a dimenticare ed è un'esperienza che molti dovrebbero fare per capire le difficoltà d'altra parte i palestinesi che rassegnati a questo modo di fare invece che essere gentili gli uni con gli altri nelle file litigano tra di loro e nel nervosismo generale della situazione si accalcano, ti passano davanti non rispettano le donne gli anziani, tira fuori il peggio quindi una perdita di umanità che ti segna in realtà in un posto così come può esserci un'umanità normale? Non speciale ma normale?»
(V.B.)

back". So in the other hand we stopped having the trip because of this action of this lady on the other hand it's humiliating the people by let them pass even they don't have the right to, to control their passes (O.).

This description, we are able to perceive another situation in which the feeling of disrespect shown by the young soldier (showing the sole of ones shoes in Arab culture is considered a great disrespect) towards O.'s husband allows to understand the kind of body that becomes part of the assemblage and the way it decides to behave once in contact with the different actants of the assemblage. In O.'s husband case, we are not facing the docile body that, in order to visit Jerusalem in the few occasions when permits are issued, bend to the insult and abide to the rules of the checkpoint. Herein, the body refuses to endure and almost near the end of the long wait in line, decides to return home. This is a body that respects its dignity over the freedom to visit Jerusalem one of the Holiest cities for Christianity.

Through this event, O. was with her husband, in some ways she was under his protection. In a patriarchal society such as the Christian and Muslim Arab Palestinians, the Wall and its checkpoints has a peculiarly deleterious effect on the female population that is more vulnerable and exposed to harassment.

At checkpoints we as women are more vulnerable than men. When I reach the checkpoint I am worried. Girls are verbally abused and sexually harassed. It depends on the group of soldiers at the checkpoint. I work overtime and at night they sometimes let me pass home and sometimes not. They humiliate me. Because of all this you reach a kind of turning point after which you feel too depressed to leave home. This is the main issue for me. You feel obliged even not to come at work as you might be hurt by the abusive words of the soldiers. Our traditions do not accept this kind of behavior. (Wall Museum Panel Maysa, from Doha).

Especially in regard to young girls who need to go to school every morning the crossing of the checkpoint can become particularly unpleasant. Furthermore, if their parents were to find out that they suffered from harassment they would rather not send them to school than to have them humiliated and exposed to endangerment. Another example illustrating the effects of the assemblage of control deployed in the West Bank particularly on girls comes directly from the

convent where I was accommodated. The mission of that particular religious institute is offering room and board for young girls who study at the University of Bethlehem but do not reside in the city. Because the girls (both Christian and Muslim) would have had to travel for long distances everyday returning home at late hours risking to encounter roadblocks or flying checkpoints, or as it had happen to me, become the target of settlers stone throwing while riding in a taxi or them placing burning tires on the road, the Nuns decided to offer them a safe place to stay during the week. I was told that mostly they were afraid to be stopped in the evening by soldiers while traveling by themselves or that they may not be able to arrive on time in the morning because of turmoil along the way to the University.

Herein, we face two examples describing the peculiar embodied experience of young women with the assemblage Wall. In a society that already dedicates particular attention and imposes particular codes of behavior onto their female population, Women are particularly affected by the actants that come into play in the Wall as an assemblage of surveillance and control. Here we face the bodies that have to travel long ways through settlement areas, bodies that are denied access and have to find a place to spend the night outside their home, and have to endure harassment and humiliation with the possibility of losing their right to go to school. Both these situations not only hint to the peculiar situation of women in the West Bank, but it also sheds light on how the surveillance devices such as the checkpoints and the presence of soldiers inside the Palestinian territory are integral part of the Wall as an assemblage of control. The Wall, as we wish to show, does not only have an impact as a set of cement slabs, but its agency is distributed across a multiplicity of actants that interact with it.

One last example that we want to explore is another story printed on a Wall Museum panel entitled “Stand- off”

I went to the checkpoint with my children after getting my Easter permit at the parish. As always, our rings and jewelry had to be put in the basket to go through the metal detector. My nine-year old daughter took off her bracelet. She went in and out of the metal detector several times, each time taking off something new but the machine kept beeping. Then the female soldier asked her to take off her pants, right there, in public.

Would you allow your daughter to take her pants off just like that, with everybody around? I told the soldier, "Why can't you take her somewhere private to search her?" She asked me to go back to Bethlehem. I told her, "You have nothing to do here, go back yourself to Tel Aviv." (Wall Museum Panel *Mary, from Bethlehem*)

This is another recurring checkpoint story. Mary's daughter had to take off her pants in full view of all the people standing at the metal detector section of the checkpoint. The humiliation for a young girl to appear half naked in front of strangers and the resilient body of the mother who did not feel intimidated and decided not to turn back to Bethlehem, but to reply briskly to the soldier's statement.

Thus in this section we were able to investigate and dissect the numerous nonhuman actants involved in the Wall assemblage. At the same time we focused our attention onto the types of agency that the bodies at the checkpoint enact. It is no wonder that the majority of the people interviewed recounted an episode that took place at the checkpoint as their unforgettable memory of interaction with the Wall. The checkpoint is one of the most complex assemblages of surveillance within the greater Wall assemblage. It controls and decides who has the freedom and privilege to exit Bethlehem in particular and Palestine in general, and who is forced to stay within the Walled city. However, as we will see in the next section, the checkpoints are not the sole actants of surveillance disseminated throughout Palestine.

Actants of control: Roadblocks, and Agricultural Gates

Checkpoints, although they attract the most attention and are most visible assemblages of control and surveillance, there are numerous more subtle devices. In this section we would like to briefly address roadblocks and agricultural gates. Officially defined by OCHA, roadblocks «are constructed from one or more concrete blocks of about one cubic meter and, like earth mounds, are used to prevent vehicle access to land or roads. In all other respects, they

are the same as earth mounds»⁸⁸. Examples of this type of blockages can be found on any road to which the Israelis wish to restrict passage like in the case of F. a facilitator of the Sumud Story House (see chapter five) who used to be involved in educational programs and workshops bringing together Christians, Muslims, and Jews at the Tantur peace center

So I used to go... because I am forbidden for security reasons to go to east Tantur Theological Peace Center up there —I used, as an educator, to go for workshops to formulate these educational materials about the three religions with hundreds of workers — I had to smuggle from place to place so many times and it happened once that the Israelis saw me and there were blocks of stones on the way to Tantur. “Stop! And move these” so this young 17 maybe 19 years old soldier... “I am like your father, what are you doing? Please, I have to go to this place because I meet Muslims, Jews, and Christians in this place up there and we are promoting education through knowing the religion of the other” and I started giving him a piece of my mind. He said “I have orders” see the brainwashing of this army? So I stood shocked what to do I couldn’t of course because of my age and my health I wont be able to, but at the end after refusing and being steadfast and not doing what he wanted me he was fed up and he saw other young people and they saw me and they started to help in moving these stone and in the end I was able to manage and enter and to continue (F.).

In this case the roadblocks were both used to prevent people from “smuggling” around the Wall that has yet to encircle completely the Jerusalem Envelop area, and to deter people from even wishing to go to the other side. Asking a middle-aged man to move the massive stones placed on the road preventing him from driving through with his car obviously constitutes an indirect way to prevent him from reaching his destination through one of the many “side” roads present in the territory. This story also brings forth the concept of *sumud* and a body that refuses to surrender and stays “steadfast”, a concept that will be at the core of chapter five.

The second actant of control we have already encountered in the last chapter but under a different guise is the agricultural gate. This device, in chapter two represented one of the steps of land seizure eventually leading towards expropriation as a consequence of applying the Ottoman Law. In this section we wish to focus our

⁸⁸ OCHA, *West Bank Movement and Access Update*. September 2012.
https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_movement_and_access_report_september_2012_english.pdf

attention particularly on the way in which agricultural gates can be understood as part of the Wall as an assemblage of control and surveillance. First of all, it is the Israeli soldiers who are in charge of opening and closing the agricultural gate to allow or deny the access of the farmers to their lands⁸⁹. This access is limited to particular times of the day and to particular seasons. Thus the gate, being of agricultural nature, is operational twice a year in autumn and spring, coinciding with the period of the harvest. This means that the farmers are prohibited from accessing their fields at any other time of the year preventing them from actually caring for their crops. This way of controlling the access to the fields forbids the farmers from actually benefitting to the fullest from their crops that cannot be cared for through the year. Secondly, not the entire family is granted permission to work on the land. Often times only one or two members of the family are issued permits to access the fields making the task of farming exponentially harder and limited by the “number of arms” who can work on it. Moreover, it can happen that the farmer can enter the field, the plow can enter the field, but the tractor is forbidden from passing the agricultural gate.

Thus, through the agricultural gate, the Israeli army determines which human and nonhuman actants can pass and which cannot; i.e., which members of the farmer’s family and tools to work the land can access the field. Furthermore, the gate controls the times of the year in which the access is granted and therefore it modifies the ways in which the people and their bodies can interact with their fields and more vastly with the landscape. Obviously also the types of crops that can be planted and that can survive such restricted care are also dictated by the agency of the agricultural gate. It appears more clearly now that also the agricultural gate, which we consider an actant in the Wall assemblage, exercises control and surveillance over the people’s access to the land, over the tools that can enter with the farmers, over the types of crops that can now survive, and subsequently over the use that can be made of the crops that once fulfilled the daily needs of the families; more broadly we can say that it controls the way the people interact with the landscape and the environment that is now inaccessible to them.

⁸⁹ See Images Chapter 3, Pictures 5 and 6.

ID's and permits: controlling people through censing

Settlements, roadblocks, agricultural gates, earth mounds, and Checkpoints are not the sole manners in which the assemblage Wall exercises surveillance over the Palestinian people. Parsons and Salter propose to apply Foucault's concept of biopolitics to the study of Israeli control over Palestine. Considering closure in terms of biopolitics, they argue, «leads us to examine the tactics and practices of population control and points to an Israeli "governmentality", a strategic approach, to shaping Palestinian mobility» (Parsons and Salter 2008: 702). The stimulating aspect of their study rests on their understanding of the barrier «not solely in terms of its foundation in Israeli decree or its enclosure of territory. The barrier does not incarcerate the OPT⁹⁰; rather, it radically constricts the flow of the population (and goods). The Palestinians can still pass through the barrier – the issue is then not enclosure, but control of porosity» (Ibid.: 103). Thus, we face a Wall that also exercises its «biopolitical control» (Ibid.) through a complex system of permit issuing. At the moment of crossing, but also when randomly stopped on the streets once in Israel, the type of ID or permit that one carries determines the level of security applied to the person, the period of time that one can sojourn in a place, and to which ethno-religious group of people they belong.

The Oslo agreements allowed «the PA the right to issue two basic travel documents, the *bataqa hawiyya*, a personal ID card, and *Jawaz safr*, a passport. The *hawiyya* was issued in a light green plastic wallet embossed with the Palestinian eagle, two symbolic changes intended to distinguish it from the old Israeli *hawiyya* issued by the Civil Administration⁹¹» (Ibid.: 110). Despite these signs of P.A.'s gains in self-determination, Israel yet does not completely relinquish its control as both the Palestinian ID and passport still bore the Israeli-issued *hawiyya* number. Furthermore, at the «time for transit, neither PA document is likely to suffice: actual movement requires a magnetic ID card (*hawiyya mumagh'nata*) authorized by the Civil Administration but possible to obtain sometimes from the P.A.» (Ibid.: 711).

In addition to the aforementioned gamut of IDs, there is a most cherished and desired blue ID card. This particular color ID denotes the right for

⁹⁰ Occupied Palestinian Territories.

⁹¹ Red Wallets for Gaza, Orange for the West Bank, and dark green for released prisoners.

Palestinians to reside in East Jerusalem. The right to reside in East Jerusalem, and therefore the possession of said blue ID, represents a treasured commodity that confers «a range of privileges denied ordinarily [to] residents of the West Bank» (Ibid.: 713). We will address more in depth the scope of said advantages as well as the strict requirements to renew the residency ID in the next chapter, while herein we will focus on a particular aspect: entry and exit to and from the West Bank.

While I was living in Bethlehem to conduct my field research, the quickest way to reach Jerusalem required taking bus 21 from the main road. This particular bus, instead of having to stop at Checkpoint 300 and leaving all the passengers outside Bethlehem, can enter the territory traveling on a different route that passes through Beit Jala and then arrives in Jerusalem using the tunnel road. The first time I took the bus to visit Jerusalem, I observed intently the view from the window. People started filling the seats and settled inside the bus; there were a variety of people, workers, students, tourists, nuns. As the bus passed Beit Jala, the smaller road on which we were traveling joined with a multilane highway. This is route 60, the road connecting Jerusalem to the Israeli settlements and southern Israel without passing through Palestine. As the bus slowed down everyone started taking out his or her ID. The doors of the bus opened and people exited forming a line on a boardwalk next to it. The driver seeing my confusion told me that I didn't need to get out of the bus because I had a foreign passport. Thus, I understood what was happening. Two soldiers arrived and entered the bus checking both for any suspicious cargo that people might have brought, and the international passports of the people who stayed on the bus. Once they were done onboard, they addressed the line of people standing outside and checked their papers one by one. As the last passenger entered the bus, the driver closed the doors and through the tunnel road quickly reached Jerusalem.

This was definitely a different checkpoint from the infamous Checkpoint 300. Here only people with a foreign passport or Jerusalem residency could pass. With most of my Palestinian friends I could not travel through this particular checkpoint; I realized then, with a bit of embarrassment, that I was privileged because I held a foreign ID, because I was not Palestinian. Thus, with a simple

bus ride I started to become aware of how «Israel distinguishes between permanent residents of Jerusalem, Palestinian-Israelis with an Israeli passport, Palestinians with foreign passport, non-Palestinian spouses of Palestinian ID holders, Christians and Muslims» (Van Teeffelen and Biggs 2011: 28).

One of the young members of the choir I.H., when asked how he would describe the Wall referred to the loss of freedom

If I had to describe the Wall with one word... I think I'd choose "inhuman". It's so hard to find a word that can actually describe what we go through as Palestinians, but every time I see the Wall, I can't help but feel imprisoned and sometimes I feel like a helpless animal in a cage... everyday we are growing more in number and the opportunities we get are always smaller and the worst is that you can't do anything about it. I think one of the hardest things in life is not being free... I believe that one of the first rights a person gets is liberty... I want to be free! I want to be able to go wherever I want and do whatever I want... I want to be able to dream and achieve my dreams, but unfortunately the Wall has made our lives so hard that recently the only thing that matters is surviving instead of achieving dreams! The Wall has forced many to give up their passion, their talents and their loved ones. The saddest thing is when you see children who don't even know what freedom is because they have lived their entire lives in a prison (I.H.)

I.H. is a second year engineering student at the University of Ramallah who had the opportunity during high school to study abroad for one year in the United States. He describes the Wall as making him feel like a "caged animal" and as taking away his freedom of movement. This lack of freedom that he so strongly demands relates both to the enclosing architecture of the Wall, that with its physical presence prevents the inhabitants from leaving capturing them inside as in a prison, and also with the permit system, which regulates the circulation of people and enforces the concept that freedom of movement cannot be taken for granted. Interestingly, I.H. also expresses his concern for the young generations who, unlike he who lived abroad and experience a different lifestyle, do not even realize that they lack freedom. If living in a prison is all they have known, they cannot know that they are missing freedom. As Latour tells us (2004), the assembly of diverse actants produces unknown and innovative outcomes. In the case that I.H. describes, the control that the assemblage Wall exercises when the younger generations partake in the assemblage the unpredictable outcome that

develops is the loss of cognition of lost freedom, which is an aspect that we will discuss further in the next chapter. Thus, we are able to understand how the keyword “prison”, shared by many of the interviewees, allows disclosing the complexity of the Wall’s impact on the local population and unearth the unpredictable outcomes that its long-lasting presence is slowly causing.

Additional restrictions on an already complex system of classification and limitation of movement concerns privately owned vehicles. Firstly, as Father J. tells me, in 1994 Palestinian cars, that is cars with a white license plate, could not travel in Israel. Furthermore, in the year 2002 «West Bank Palestinians were forbidden from traveling in Israeli-registered vehicles» (Parsons and Salter 2008: 714) that is «the new regulations determined that yellow plated vehicles were not permitted to carry passengers without blue IDs» (Ibid.).

During the 80s up until the 90s, actually until 1994 we could go easily to Jerusalem. They built a checkpoint close to Tantur, then they told us that Palestinian cars could not enter Jerusalem. The other roads were open so I would travel on a back road to Tantur or through Beit Sahour while it was still open but slowly they started building the Wall in order to control the access to Jerusalem. At that time I had a laissez-passer from the Apostolic Delegation and with an American driving license I drove an Israeli car with an Israeli license plate but with great difficulty because they could not see any Palestinian ID. If they didn’t see any then all went well... but now they check much more “if you have this document, where is the visa?” Because if you are not carrying a [Israeli] visa that means that you must have a different ID and so on. So I gave up, because it is too tedious especially sometimes they stopped me for two or three hours without allowing me to pass. So now I have a Palestinian car and thus I cannot go to Jerusalem with my car⁹² (Father J.).

⁹²Original interview conducted in Italian «Allora negli anni '80 fino all'inizio degli anni '90, fino al '94, potevamo andare facilmente a Gerusalemme, poi hanno fatto il Checkpoint vicino a Tantur non erano regole però dovevano controllare all'inizio. Poi ne '94 hanno detto le macchine Palestinesi non possono entrare a Gerusalemme. Le altre strade erano aperte allora ho fatto una volta dietro Tantur dall'altra parte, oppure da Beit Sahur quando era aperto e piano piano hanno costruito il muro piano piano per controllare gli accessi a Gerusalemme e lì avevo ho sempre un laissez passé dalla delegazione apostolica qui e con una patente americana e guidavo anche una macchina israeliana con una targa israeliana perché sì, vedevano non dovevano vedere una carta di identità palestinese allora e questo va bene... ma alcune volte controllavano, adesso controllano molto di più se hai questo documento dov'è il visto? Perché se non hai il visto allora vuol dire che hai un'altra carta di identità eccetera. Allora ho lasciato questo perché è troppo noioso soprattutto alcune volte mi hanno fermato lì per due o tre ore ecc e non mi hanno lasciato passare allora adesso ho una macchina palestinese dunque io non posso andare a Gerusalemme con la mia macchina, ho un permesso eccetera eccetera» (F. J.).

As we saw in regard to crossing the checkpoint, one of the decisions that people take in response to this biopower of control is renouncing their intents to travel to the other side of the Wall. This regulation imposed on Palestinian vehicles especially affects the elderly population who, in order to visit Jerusalem, must stand for hours and change public transportation or pay expensive taxi rides as in the case of A. an elderly Christian lady from Beit Jala

since they closed their door, but when we have a permit, I was going to Jerusalem by my car, quickly 10 minutes I was there, but now what can I do? In my age now? I am 79, how I want to go walking it's difficult for me because if I want to take a car from here, I told them send me to the checkpoint, when you go from there, not the entrance of the bus, but from down you have to be walking, and walking until you arrive there, it means, I will be tired slowly slowly and after I show them my permit, my ID my ID with the stamp, put your finger, but my finger from sometimes since you are working, it doesn't stay when I do my ID, and also they make me turn back, but I have a permit but "no! go and change your stamp(fingerprint magnetic chip)", because the stamp has changed you know the one where you put you hand, everything we have ointment for my feet sometimes for pain, the stamp doesn't stay(fingerprint devise doesn't work) the same you know? "Go and change it", but I have a permit, "no" But you know me, here is my photo and here is my ID without a stamp, and here is my ID, I have 2 ID, this is with the stamp, but the stamp changes I don't know what happened, they told me no. When I went Kafr Etzion far away from here 15 km (A.).

Here A., an active member of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem, in order to travel to Jerusalem and visit her Church she must abandon her car and on foot go through the terminal of checkpoint 300. She laments that at her age she, lacks the strength to stand in the strenuous queues inside the terminal. Furthermore, she hints to the fingerprinting systems that the magnetic cards necessitate: pay a good deal of money and endure the long renewal procedure that must be done at the Israeli Administration office in Kfar Etzion.

Thus, in this section we have become familiar with the intricate dimension of permits and control over people's movement, which are all elements of the gamut of actants involved in the Wall as an assemblage of control and surveillance. As Foucault reminds us in his work *Security, Territory,*

Population «the territorial sovereign became an architect of the disciplined space, but also, and almost at the same time, the regulator of a milieu, which involved... above all and essentially, making possible, guaranteeing, and ensuring circulations: the circulation of people, merchandise, and air, etcetera» (Foucault 2009: 29). The permit system acts precisely in controlling circulation, however, in the Israeli/Palestinian case the limitations on circulation allows Israel to exercise sovereignty over a territory where it is not officially the ruler. Thus, what we witness today is the intricacy of the security system developed by the Israelis, which layers multiple elements set in place through the years in response to the diverse geopolitical predicaments arisen through history.

Furthermore, this section allows us to uncover yet another dimension of the Wall's agency. As its physical presence becomes increasingly permanent, that it is solidifying into the *de facto* border between two nations, also the ID system becomes more sophisticated. Thus the assemblage Wall necessitates additional actants to regulate the circulation of people that now possess two different citizenships. The analysis of the Wall in terms of assemblages allows us to detect the gradual increase in complexity of the impact of the Wall on the local Christian community. In this section, through the concept of assemblages, we are able to realize that the term prison does not solely refer to control of movement through the erection of a the series of cement slabs, but it uncovers also the dimension of the censoring and classifying agency of the permit system.

However, control over people is just one aspect of the controlling agency of the Wall; let us look at how the Wall impacts also the landscape where it exercises control.

Area C and surveillance

When the Oslo Agreement determined the division of the West Bank in three areas of jurisdiction, all the areas under complete Israeli military control became labeled as Area C. A substantial amount of land became part of Area C due to the construction of the Wall. The formation of the space surrounding the Wall assemblage, thus including also the checkpoint area and some of the other

staffed territorial closure technologies, is a highly militarized space. This militarization is due chiefly to the presence of the surveillance actants, but also to the frequent manifestations and rebellions organized by Palestinians against the Wall's presence in the form of stone throwing. This area is thus under constant surveillance, which imposes strong restrictions on the people living in it.

We spent fifteen days, during the period of the Holy Week, with an Israeli tank here outside our gate because there were people throwing stones... thus they came with the tank and the jeeps, twenty of them came out with tear gas...They told us that the Jews, when those people [the Palestinians] throw the stones [against the Wall] they are photographed, they [the Jews] have machineries on these watchtowers that each stone that is thrown becomes one year in jail. This week they already took away five or six of them because they come here every night and every night we have the Jews who pass, we hear screams and they take someone away⁹³ (Franciscan nun).

The Wall's presence elicits revolts in the neighborhoods where it stands and at the same time it provokes a counteraction from the Israeli military because the Wall constitutes a security device under their control. The Wall in the above narration shared by the Franciscan nuns dwelling in the Aida Refugee Camp explains this twofold agency: the Wall because of its presence provokes violent protests and at the same time it deploys surveillance through the cameras spread across its length and calls for the presence of the military who is in charge of the Area C that Wall delineates.

Not far from Aida Refugee camp, in the Rachel's tomb Area that we will discuss more in depth in chapters five and six, the A. family, whose home is surrounded on three sides by the Wall⁹⁴, recounts the experience of the control exercised on their family right before the Wall was constructed, when the second

⁹³ Original interview conducted in Italian «Abbiamo fatto 15 giorni, settimana santa con il carrarmato ebreo qui fuori dal nostro cancello perché questi buttavano le pietre, quelli qui non stanno a guardare di prendere le pietre, quindi escono con il carrarmato, escono con le camionette vengono fuori una ventina con i lacrimogeni, e adesso poi hanno inventato la nuova arma che ti sparano il concime addosso per cui non si può resistere dall'odore, perché loro hanno dei macchinari e sanno da dove partono gli spari. Per esempio ci hanno detto che gli ebrei, quando questi vanno a buttare le pietre, vengono fotografati, hanno dei meccanismi su queste torrette ogni pietra che uno butta, è un anno di prigione che questo farà e in questa settimana ne hanno già portati via 5 o 6 perché vengono qui di notte, tutte le notti noi abbiamo gli ebrei che passano, sentiamo gridare portano via qualcuno» (Franciscan nun)

⁹⁴ See Images Chapter 3, Picture 7.

Intifada was raging in the area, and when their house became surrounded by the cement slabs

In 2002 they put blocks here and surrounded our house before they put the Wall in 2004. In 2002 it was a military zone and nobody entered this area, only the soldiers and they changed it into a military base. Especially on the roof of our building they put a military base and they caged us in one room so they stayed here in our building. We stayed in this situation maybe for a month, not one day or two days. After that they started to dig for the Wall and they put the Wall in 2004...now the Wall separates the Israeli side and the Palestinian side. Now we are with the Palestinian side but under Israeli control, because it is Area C. So everything turns back to Israel. We cannot do anything. It is forbidden to go to the roof of our building ya, it is forbidden for us, we have to take permission from the Jewish soldiers to go to the roof of our building. So as you see, our life here is like animals, we cannot do anything even in our house inside our house. They put cameras, they surrounded our house with three cameras and one camera in front of my private room so you can imagine everything (C.A.).

The place where the A. family lives, during the second intifada became a war zone and the Israeli army used the rooftop of their home as a military base since it represented a vantage point in the area. The family had to endure the presence of the military and became subjected to constant surveillance even when carrying out their daily activities such as doing the laundry as C.A. recounted below in her story written on a panel of the Wall Museum

It was during the second intifada, or uprising, when the conflict was hot. One day in 2002, while it was curfew, I was putting up my laundry on our balcony. Suddenly, the soldier opened a small window and put out his gun. I tried to communicate with him to ask what was going on but he refused to speak. I was obliged to go inside but I observed him from my bedroom window until he went inside his tower. So then I returned doing my laundry again. Unfortunately, the soldier again climbed out of the window and I moved quickly inside. This happened no less than ten times and in the end I really drove him crazy and made him loudly screaming inside his watchtower (Wall Museum Panel- Laundry by C. A.).

The family had to reshape their life and daily activities in relation to the location of their home in Area C. They are observed through the watchtower and the cameras that still today, with the ultimate construction of the Wall, overlook the

family's bedroom and living room while the soldiers monitor their every activity. Thus, this area witnessed the construction of the Wall in 2004, which did not bring a reduction of surveillance over the family

they still come from time to time and they used to come to take a look. Our children they can't play freely here because they are always screaming «don't make noise, don't do anything» you know, because behind the Wall always. If they do anything you know also they put rules on our family that if anything happens to the Jewish side it will turn back to us; it is our responsibility. You know we cannot live freely like the other places; we are surrounded on the three sides like a tomb. We are buried alive (C.A.).

Even with the presence of the Wall, the daily life of the family is under constant surveillance, the children cannot make noise or play outside in the vicinities of the Wall because the Family is held accountable by the Military of any disorders caused on the Israeli side especially since on the other side of the Wall the presence of Rachel's Tomb constitutes an extremely sensitive venue in the area. The life experiences of C.A.'s family is emblematic of the situation in which all the families who dwell near the Wall or in Area C face the agency of this assemblage: they are subjected to constant surveillance, they have to endure the presence of the Israeli military, and often they are caught in between the Palestinians' protests accomplished through stone throwing.

Controlling Healthcare

Talking about the Wall as an assemblage of human and nonhuman actants allows us to observe how their interconnection with one another brings unpredictable outcomes. When we break down the black box checkpoint, as observed above, and we acknowledge the assembly of the turnstiles, the metal detectors, the people standing in line for hours we perceive the agency of closure and control over movement enacted by the Wall. On the other hand, if the actants involved are the Palestinian IDs, the foreign passports, the fingerprints scanners, the special permits issued during specific times of the year to selected citizens, we recognize how the resulting agency concerns control over people through

censing and through the selection of who is deemed suitable for entry in the State of Israel.

On the other hand, in this section we want to present the outcomes of the agency of control that the Wall enacts when the actants assembled are the sick children of the Caritas Baby Hospital. This Hospital, which is run by the Elizabethan nuns, is the only pediatric hospital in Palestine. Established in the 1952 by Father Ernest, a Swiss Priest sent to Bethlehem to assess the situation following the 1948 War, the Caritas Baby Hospital is located in the area near Checkpoint 300. Moved by the encounter on Christmas night with a man in the streets digging a grave for his lost son, he decided to open a pediatric hospital.

In the beginning, the project started in a single room with seven cribs available and due to the rapid increase in demand, they added more and hired a doctor and a nurse to attend to the children. This represented the first cell of the Caritas Baby Hospital that today hosts 82 beds divided in three wings, one for pediatrics, one for neonatology, and the more recently developed intensive care wing. However, as Sister D. tells the numerous pilgrims visiting the hospital when Father Ernest

created the hospital, he also pondered to see if it was worth adding also the surgical wing. He realized that there were in Jerusalem, and there still are, highly specialized surgical departments of pediatrics so he said: "I'm not going to build a duplicate when 7 kilometers away from here with an ambulance I can transfer the child and than do the post-operative here"⁹⁵ (Sister D.).

Thus, Father Ernest made his decision not to create a surgical wing because of the trusted synergy and cooperation developed with the more advanced hospital facilities in Jerusalem. This concept worked well until the first Intifada, but with the insurgence of the second Intifada the situation started to crumble.

⁹⁵ Original interview conducted in Italian «Quando ha pensato all'ospedale ha fatto anche un po' di calcoli per vedere se valeva la pena fare anche la parte chirurgica. Si era accorto che a Gerusalemme c'erano, e ci son anche tutt'ora, dei reparti di pediatria chirurgica altamente specializzati per cui ha detto: "non vado a fare un doppione quando a 7 km da qua con l'ambulanza trasferisco il bambino e il post-operatorio lo facciamo qua e andiamo via tranquilli» (Sister D.).

Since the construction of the Wall... no Palestinian can cross the checkpoint except with a particular permit and this also applies to our children. Thus when children come here, especially infants, just yesterday we had three children who died of cardiac malformation, three in one day ... Thus when children who need highly specialized surgery ... I mean, Palestine offers us [minor] surgeries like appendectomies, this type of surgeries, but for open heart surgeries here, Palestine, does not help us. Thus we must transfer the baby and so we start with the paperwork to ask for a permit. For these practices we need at least six or seven hours before they can be processed and if there is a black spot in the family, a black dot means that maybe someone is a political activist or did something for their country, it might even take a week or eleven days. So you can imagine what it means when a child needs surgery, even these seven hours can be fatal⁹⁶ (Sister D).

The situation that Sister D. recounts, reveals aspects already exposed regarding the Wall assemblage. The actants that come into play on a regular basis when trying to “pass through” the Wall, that is the request for a permit and the thorough scrutiny exercised upon the applicants of no back marks on their record, also applies to the children necessitating medical care. In this case however, the success in obtaining a permit to receive medical care in Jerusalem involves a background check on the entire family, whose potential or suspected involvement in any type of political activism, can obstruct the granting of the permit. Yet, in the case of life-threatening medical conditions where timing is crucial, the paperwork is not the sole element playing a crucial role in patient-care

If we can get permission, it is not, however, certain that the baby makes it [to the hospital in Jerusalem], because the ambulance has to stop at the checkpoint and wait for the Israeli ambulance, transfer the child on it in order to allow him or her

⁹⁶ Original interview conducted in Italian «Questo discorso è andato bene fino alla prima intifada e la seconda intifada sono incominciate a scricchiolare un po' le cose, dopo la costruzione del muro... nessun palestinese può attraversare il checkpoint se non con un permesso particolare e questo succede anche con i nostri bambini, per cui quando ci arriva un bambino, specialmente se neonati, dicevo abbiamo avuto solo ieri tre bambini deceduti per malformazione a livello cardiaco, tre in un giorno solo... allora quando ci arrivano bambini che hanno bisogno di intervento chirurgico di alta.. che la Palestina ci offre la parte di appendicectomia cioè ci assicura questo tipo di intervento, ma per intervento a cuore aperto ecco, la Palestina non ci aiuta in questo, allora dobbiamo trasferire di là il bambino e allora cominciamo con le pratiche per il permesso, pratiche ci servono almeno sei o sette ore prima di avere il permesso e se dopo c'è un punto nero nella famiglia, un punto nero significa che magari qualcuno è attivista politico o ha fatto qualcosa per la patria, ci serve anche una settimana o undici giorni. Potete dunque immaginare cosa significa che il bambino ha bisogno di un intervento chirurgico e anche in quelle sette ore possono essere fatali» (Sister D.).

to get to the designated hospital that helps us with these cases. [The doctors and staff] at the Israeli hospitals are very capable and understanding. So these aspects when a little child's life can be saved only with a transfer [to another hospital] and this chance to be cured is prevented by a concrete slab, it truly hurts. (Sister D.)⁹⁷

If and when the permits are acquired by the hospital, the Wall still exercises its controlling agency, not only on the people who can transit, given that the child was granted permission to pass, but also on the materials, that is the nonhumans, that can pass. As Sister D. explains their ambulance cannot cross the Wall, but the child needs to be transferred on an Israeli ambulance. As we have seen in A.'s case above, one of the consequences of the separation between Israel and Palestine, enforced by the presence of the Wall in all its shapes and forms, is that of preventing vehicles with a Palestinian license plate to be driven on Israeli roads. Here we can truly observe how the separation and distinction between the two people and between "allowed" and "prohibited" comes down to materiality. In this case the Wall determines the limits of peoples movement based on the colors of the license plates on the ambulance.

Once again we face the importance of considering with attention the materials or nonhuman actants that are involved and exercise agency when they intertwine with the assemblage called Wall. Control and surveillance in this section acquire a unique denotation, i.e., who can access healthcare. If in the beginning of the chapter we analyzed the elements of control of movement that the Wall deploys, here we explored how the assembly of its control actants with the sick children of the Caritas Baby Hospital, with the surgical wing present only in Jerusalem, with the clearance status of the family members of the children, with the license plates of the Palestinian and Israeli ambulances, unearth the dimension of the Wall as an assemblage that controls healthcare and the survival of children needing surgery.

⁹⁷ Original interview conducted in Italian «Se riusciamo ad avere il permesso, non è detto comunque che il bambino arrivi, perché l'ambulanza si deve fermare al checkpoint e ha bisogno dell'ambulanza israeliana perché deve fare il trasferimento per permettere al bambino di arrivare all'ospedale di riferimento che ci da una mano, negli ospedali israeliani sono molto bravi e comprensivi. Ecco sono tutti aspetti questi che quando ti trovi un piccolino la cui vita può essere salvata soltanto per un trasferimento e vedere quanto una lastra di cemento possa incidere sulla vita di un bambino davvero fa male» (Sister D.).

Conclusions

In this chapter, we developed an analysis of the Wall as an assemblage of control. The reason behind this decision lies in the desire to understand the profuse definition of the Wall as a “prison” that the Palestinian Christians gave during the interviews. Delving deeper into the interviews that referred to the Wall in these terms, we realized that most of the recounted episodes connected to the concept of prison are related to the everyday experience of people at the checkpoint. Thus, for my interlocutors the checkpoint with all its elements, architecture, materials and humans, was considered an integral part of the Wall. It became clear that, in order to truly understand all the aspects involved in the Wall’s impact on the Palestinian Christian population, we had to explore all the actants enacting control and surveillance. The human and nonhuman actants that we presented in this chapter consist of the various elements of a checkpoint, watchtowers, full-body turnstiles, glass-window booths with soldiers, electromagnetic ID cards, metal detectors, fingerprinting devices, red and green lights signaling an open or closed passageway, the masses of Palestinians queued in line as early as three in the morning to go to work on the other side, the sewage stench.

In addition to the more visible and infamous checkpoint, we also explored several subtler, but by no means less effective, actants of control such as earth mounds, roadblocks, and agricultural gates. These elements impose control over the circulation of people not only between Israel and Palestine, but also between territories within the West Bank. Furthermore, in the case of agricultural gates the assemblage exercises control also on the tools that the farmers can bring inside their fields, and likewise it exercises control over the type of crop that can survive the limited access of the farmers to the land. These actants uncover how the Wall exercises control not only over people, but also over materials and landscape depending on which elements interact in the assemblage.

Moreover, we looked at how the physical presence of the Wall modifies the status of the territory in its vicinities, which falls automatically under military rule defining the landscape as Area C. The definition of a territory as Area C imposes particular rules and control measures that the military enforces through their physical presence and surveillance devices such as the

watchtowers and the cameras that overlook the homes of the Palestinians as discussed in the case of the A. family.

One of the most effective ways to expand control over a population, without directly governing over them is through the monitoring of their movement or, in Foucauldian terms, their circulation. This surveillance is most effectively exercised through the system of censing and permit issuing. The Palestinian people are subjected to numerous classifications depending on their status in Palestine and Israel: Palestinians with West Bank IDs, Palestinians with a Jerusalem residency ID, Palestinians with a foreign passport, Palestinian Arab Catholic clergy with special *laissez-passer* from the Apostolic Delegation, Palestinian Christians with temporary permits to visit the Holy Places during the Holy Days.

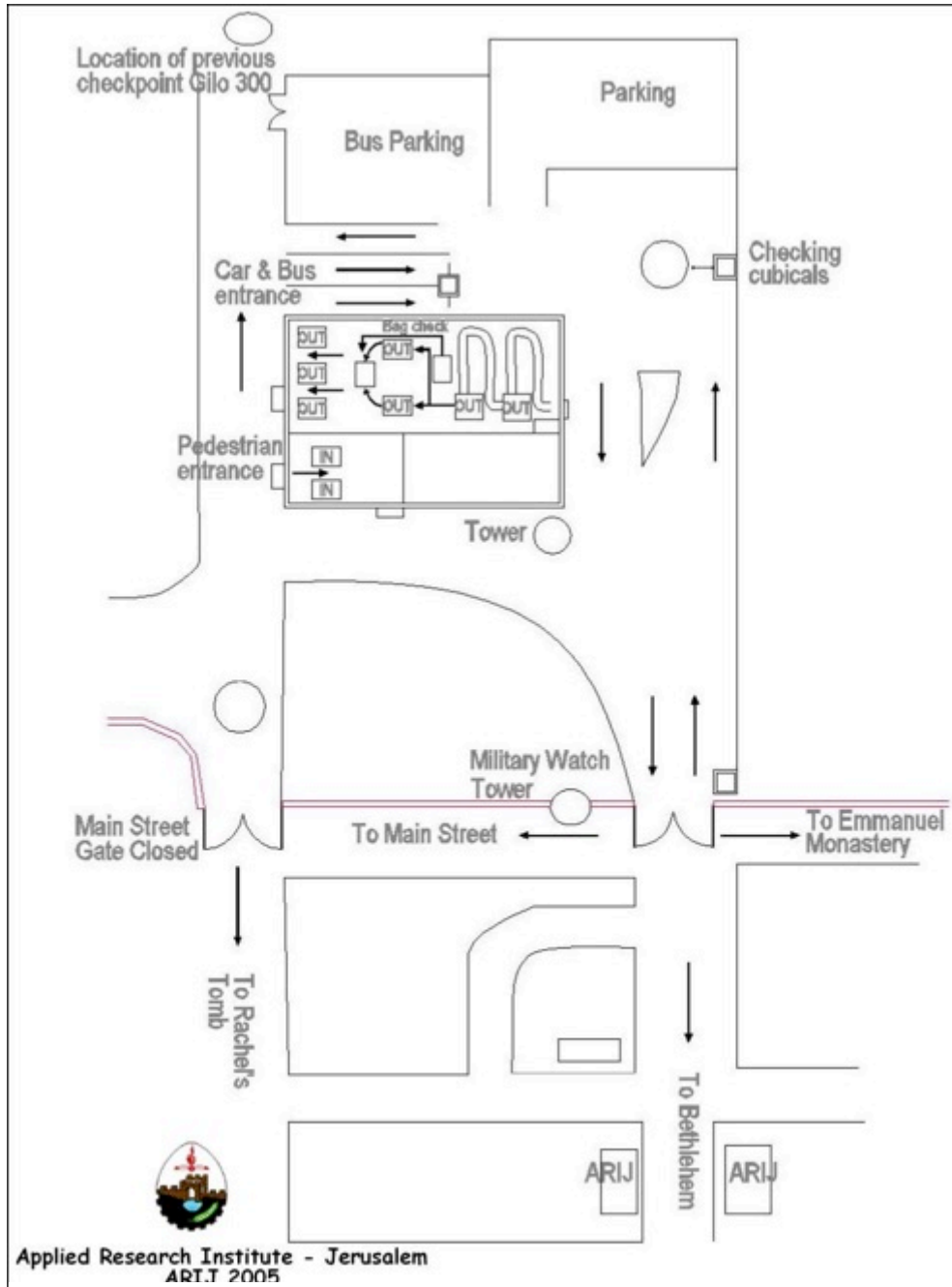
Moreover, we discussed how the acquisition of a certain ID or privilege of receiving a permit relies heavily also on the “family record”. As we have seen in the last section dedicated to the effect of the Wall as an assemblage of control on healthcare, even the suspicion of involvement of a family member in political activism may jeopardize the issuing of a permit for the sick child who, from the Caritas Baby Hospital, needs to be transferred to Jerusalem to undergo surgery. The issuing of a permit may take from a few hours to several days endangering the conditions of the child who, even after being cleared to travel, needs to wait at the checkpoint to be transfer on an Israeli ambulance. To no avail were the requests that the nuns submitted to open a humanitarian corridor through the Wall in order to transfer patients directly to a qualified facility without jeopardizing their lives.

Throughout this chapter we also address the type of human actants that become part of the assemblage. They are not the Foucauldian docile bodies «that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved» (Foucault 1995: 136). Although these bodies are censed and categorized through the permit system, they do not succumb to the «machinery of power that... breaks it down and rearranges it» (Ibid.:138). Theirs is a body that endures long hours in line among the stench of humanity packed in line at the checkpoint, a body that is searched at the metal detectors, but also a body that refuses to undress in public at the orders of the Israeli soldiers; it is a body that prefers to turn around and return

home rather than endure the disrespect that the soldiers display. This is a body that, as we will analyze in great depth in chapter five, exercises *sumud* that is to say it chooses to stay steadfast in the face of duress.

In the next chapter we propose to analyze how this complex matrix of actants not only exercises control over the population but it also provokes separation. Particularly, the Wall as an assemblage of separation affects the Palestinian Christian population in a more detrimental way due to its status as a religious minority. As we will see, in addition to disrupting their access to and freedom of worship in their Holy Places (the majority of which is located inside the state of Israel), the assemblage Wall also disconnects them from the larger communities found in the Galilee.

Images Chapter 3



Picture 5: Blueprint of the structure of the Checkpoint 300 terminal.
<http://www.poica.org/upload/images/2005/1132486546.jpCheckpoint>



Picture 6: map of the location of Checkpoint 300
<http://www.poica.org/upload/images/2005/1132486547.jpg>



Picture 7: Lane to exit Bethlehem and enter the terminal to arrive to Jerusalem.
<http://www.stopdebezzetting.com/berichten/bethlehem-attendance-at-checkpoint-300.html>



Picture 8: Turnstiles at the end of the external lanes (picture 3) where Palestinians take turns to go in and out of the terminal. <http://www.averyreview.com/issues/11/the-politics-of-narrowness-when-walls-tighten-on-bodies>



Picture 9: Example of an agricultural gate. <https://eappiblog.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/k-osterblom-akkaba-gate-240414.jpg>



Picture 6: Farmers waiting to access their lands at the agricultural gate
<http://mptinpalestine.blogspot.it>



Picture 7: Home of the A. family surrounded on three sides by the Wall.

Chapter 4: The Wall As An Assemblage Of Separation

Key words: Family unification, exclusion, discontinuity, loss, loss of freedom of worship, impossibility of planning for the future, land without people, redraws borders, fragmented Christian community, unfamiliar neighbors, unfamiliar landscape, fear of the other, shattered relationships.

Introduction

In order to gain a thorough perspective of what it means for Christian communities to deal with the presence of the Wall, in addition to observing their everyday interaction with it, I researched its agency during the extra-ordinary celebrations of Easter's Holy Week. While Christians around the world prepare themselves to celebrate one of the most important moments in the liturgical calendar in their parishes, Christians living in the Holy Land await the chance to relive the events exactly in the places where they happened. Christians in Israel/Palestine, in fact, have the unique opportunity to actually follow in the footsteps of Jesus and celebrate the Holy Days⁹⁸ among the sites described in the Gospels.

Especially during Christmas, which obviously is the moment of most significance for the Christians of the Bethlehem Governorate, and Easter the Arab Palestinian Christians of Bethlehem and Beit Jala exhibit their presence and

⁹⁸ I decided to write Holy Day as two words in order to emphasize not so much the meaning, as we more commonly associate with the term written as one word, of suspension from work and school and a time of vacation, but as the days when Religious celebrations are held.

pride through flamboyant and joyous parades with the local scouts and clergy along the city's streets displaying crosses and images of Jesus, Mary and various saints⁹⁹. In these particular moments of the year, Christians wish to affirm their presence and right to be in the Holy Land despite their ever-diminishing numbers.

If during Christmas the West Bank Christians have free and indisputable access to the Holy Place of the Nativity Church, during Easter's Holy Week the presence of the Wall becomes unavoidable. As we have already observed in the previous chapter, during the Holy Days Christians in the Bethlehem Governorate hope to obtain a permit from the IDF in order to celebrate in Jerusalem the last events of Jesus' life that lead to his death and resurrection. In particular, it is through the Parishes that the Christians await the long sought documents to enter the State of Israel. In order to obtain the permit there must be no 'black dot' by the name of the applicant, and by no means it is guaranteed that all members of the same family will obtain said document. An example is narrated by R. who had travel to Jerusalem without her children because, for a reason that she did not share, were denied a permit,

For example my son and my daughter, their names have a black spot or a black dot on their list so they were blacklisted and nowadays not just on Sunday I took my daughter's permit and it was written that she is forbidden to enter... In the past they were really, I was going without them, like on Friday I went to Jerusalem celebrating the Holy Friday but without my children because the Israelis didn't issue the military permit. And we were waiting and waiting and they gave them on Sunday this is the plan that they give Christians like maybe 40% of the Christians permits, the other part, some they give them, but the rest no, but when they give them they give them after the Easter which means Sunday and there is no need for them on Sunday (R.)

Here we witness how the permit system, which is an integral aspect of the Wall's regulation of entrance in the State of Israel, impacts the unity of the family during the celebration of the most important Holy Days in Jerusalem. R., in fact, laments that her children could not accompany her to Jerusalem to attend either a regular Sunday Mass or the Holy Friday celebration.

⁹⁹ See Images Chapter 4, Picture 1-3.

Furthermore, the guarantee of visiting Jerusalem cannot be expected even for all the members of the youth choir group that I joined throughout the celebrations. During one particular event that took place on the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday (April 17 and 18, 2014) the Wall's presence prevented some of the choir members from participating at the remembrance of the events following the Last Supper. This remembrance entailed a night procession starting from the Gethsemane Church of the Agony and continuing on foot all the way to the Church of Saint Peter in Gallicantu (which takes the name after Peter's three denials of Jesus before the cock-crowed) where, according to tradition, Jesus spent the night after his arrest.

The celebration started around nine at night and the bus was waiting in Bethlehem near Star Street ready to take us to Jerusalem. At the time of departure Father L., the Franciscan Monk accompanying the group, realized that not all the members of the choir who came to join the celebration received a permit. His initial response was not to worry and allow everyone to get on the bus. It was not the first time that the monk dealt with the soldiers at the checkpoint on the occasion of the celebration of Christian Holy Days and he did not foresee any strict controls. Thus, Father L. appealed to the driver to take all of them anyways, but he refused afraid that his license might be revoked if the soldiers were to find out.

The event briefly described above, by no means unique, displays several elements that allow us to introduce the focus of this chapter: the separating agency of the Wall on the Christian population. From the previous chapters, we learned that the Wall considered as an assemblage, depending on the actants that are involved, it expropriates land isolating the farmers from their fields, and it also enacts control through a series of devices disseminated on the Palestinian territory that aim to regulate and monitor the circulation of people. Both of these assemblages share a common denominator: the Wall enacts a separation. It is no surprise, in fact, that one of its designations is that of 'separation Wall' or 'separation barrier'.

The establishment of a permit system connects to the fact that the Wall is gradually losing its presence as a temporary security measure and becoming the *de facto* border between two different nations. In addition to the shared

opinions of several of the people I encountered, one of the material signs of the increasing permanency of the Wall is the replacement of the previous metal bars separating the lanes at the checkpoint with hip-length brick walls. This architectural “renovation” sends the message that there is no plan of dismantling the Wall and checkpoint in the near future. Parallel to the territorial separation, thus, different legal and political systems are applied to those territories located on either side of the border. Hence a complex permit and residency system to regulate what has now become the immigration of people to the State of Israel has been put into place. Thus, in order to gain a thorough understanding of the multiple levels of the Wall’s impact as an assemblage of separation on the Christian communities of Bethlehem and Beit Jala, we must address it as increasingly becoming the future *de facto* border between Israel and Palestine.

If we acknowledge borders «as manifestations of territoriality, [that] provide a means to assign things to particular spaces and regulate access into and/or out of specific areas, this innately social and political process links to the idea of ownership or rightful and permanent possession of land» (Diener and Hagen 2012: 6-7). By the same token, this assignment of territory to one people necessarily entails the loss of these areas by the other. Particularly in the case of Israel and Palestine where a territorial continuity and social and economical interconnectedness of cities and villages with one another existed, the Wall creates a separation that particularly affects the Christian population, even more so than the Muslims, due to its status as a religious minority in the area. We are going to analyze particularly how the Wall’s agency as a border, in particular the limitations over peoples circulation and residency, not only exercises surveillance over their movement, but also how it slowly severs any relations that the Christians of the West Bank used to have with other Christian communities in the Galilee, with family members who are now living on the other side of the Wall, and with the Jewish neighbors. Furthermore, the acknowledgment that the Wall acts as a border assembling with the permit system allows us to discover how it prevents them from visiting their Holy Shrines producing an unfamiliarity with the landscape and places that used to be part of their daily lives.

Thus, herein, we necessarily must also address the dimension of the embodied experience of separation of the Christians from certain territories and the unfamiliarity that this separation causes with the landscapes today detached from their experience of being-in-the-world. In fact, the Wall has certainly interrupted streets that, like the Hebron Road, constituted one of the main arteries, which not only has been preventing the flourishing of commerce but it especially interrupts the embodied experience of people on both sides to roam the landscape that used to be part of their everyday life experience. As Ingold and Vergunst tell us, being able to walk through the landscape «comprises a suite of bodily performances that include observing, monitoring, remembering, listening, touching, crouching and climbing. And it is through these performances *along the way*, that their knowledge is forged» (Ingold and Vergunst 2008: 5).

This knowledge of the land where the Palestinians lived for generations is filled with memories of past experiences in a territory that is gradually transforming according to the wishes of its “new owner” inevitably becoming foreign to those living on the other side of the Wall. This obstruction of movement, or in Ingold’s logic of walking, has a profound impact also on social life «that is, their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others. Social relations, we maintain, are not enacted *in situ* but are paced out along the ground» (Ingold and Vergunst 2008: 1). Thus, in our case, instead of analyzing the ability to walk, as Ingold and Vergunst propose in their edited volume *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice of Foot*, we are facing the reversed situation: the impossibility to access places that were once part of a routine, of a shared sociability, and of cherished memories.

The Christians of Bethlehem and Beit Jala, for instance, have either lost completely or have restricted access to the city of Jerusalem that is just seven kilometers away, which results in a loss of familiarity with a city that used to be a retreat for an evening ice cream or a place of pilgrimage to pray in the places where Jesus lived. In short they are slowly losing their experience of being-in-a-world that has now become part of the State of Israel. Thus, this chapter will analyze the Wall as an assemblage of separation, encountering actants such as the Holy Sepulcher, the Gethsemane Church, the permits issued only during the

Holy Days, the young men training to become priests at the Beit Jala seminar, the evening strolls in Jerusalem eating ice creams, Jerusalem IDs, unregistered children, unfamiliarity with the landscapes, family reunification legal procedures, denied access for Jews to enter Palestine, unmarried young women and men. All these actants when assembled together speak of the separation that the Wall enacts on the Christian community.

The Wall as a Border

While I was conducting my fieldwork came Palm Sunday. This peculiar celebration entails the retracing of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem to celebrate what we remember today as the last supper. Thus, Christians from all over the world join local Christians in an effervescent procession –filled with music, energy, and palm branches –that descends from the top of Mount Olive to Lions Gate to enter the Old City¹⁰⁰. At the Saint Catharine parish in Bethlehem there was great enthusiasm and many were eagerly questioning the Franciscan Monks about their request for a permit to participate at the festivity. I was invited, once more, to join the choir on the bus, which would have departed to Jerusalem in the early afternoon. In the morning after participating at the Holy Mass with the choir group, I had schedule and interview with one of the members of the Sumud Story House project (see chapter five) who invited me to her home. When I enquired about her experience of the Wall she replied

O- you mean how does it affect our daily life? Well we got the experience that, like today, I had the plan to go to Palm Sunday and I prepared myself like I have to go and everything was settled but I discovered that I didn't have a pass paper to go, so I am feeling so angry of not going

Me- do you remember what it was like when the Wall wasn't there?

O-No borders, let's say it's a border, no borders. It was a very open area we could see some Israelis coming to our parts and we also did go there but because of the struggle we had together [not anymore].

¹⁰⁰ See Images Chapter 4, Pictures 4-6.

O.'s description of the role of the Wall in her life reveals two interesting aspects of its agency and presence. First of all, she reveals that her plans to join the parish's organized trip to Jerusalem to celebrate Palm Sunday had been disrupted because the IDF had not issued a permit for her to enter Israel. Secondly, she describes the situation before the constructions of the Wall as borderless, as a continuous territory where people from both sides were free to move around the region.

Following the work *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* written by Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2013),

The most acute architects and urbanists who have studied one of the most physically intimidating walls the world currently knows—the one that runs through the occupied Palestinian territories in Israel—have shown how it produces an elusive and mobile geography, which is continually reshaped by Israel's military strategies (2013: 8)

As we delineated in chapter two, the borders of the State of Israel have greatly varied throughout its history thus presenting us with a context where territories had not been clearly delimited by fixed borders, but rather they have been characterized by an ever-shifting frontier influenced by historical, legal, and political, circumstances. Thus, as Petty states (2007), «Far from marking the linear border of Israel's sovereignty, the wall functions as “a membrane that lets certain flows pass and blocks others,” transforming the entire Palestinian territory into a “frontier zone”» (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 8)

Thus, for those intending to become acquainted with the Israeli Palestinian issue, one of the most complicated aspects consists in reconstructing through maps the modifications of the frontier in this region. Even if we do not start from the more ancient Biblical history, we realize that keeping track of the changes, and finding the most up-to-date map of the territory becomes a daunting task (Emiliani [2007] 2008; Marzano and Simoni 2007). It is no wonder that a United Nations' organization called OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs) is focused on and dedicated to mapping the changes in frontiers and borders. I use here both terms because I believe that today the Wall is

increasingly moving away from its original temporary intent towards becoming the *de facto* border between Israel and Palestine.

Hence, this acknowledgment necessitates a few considerations on the characteristics of borders. Once a population draws fixed borders over a certain territory it appropriates them, slowly modifying the landscape to the point, as we will see further down, that it becomes foreign to the others who lost it. However, borders not only separate the landscape physically as the Wall does, nor do they represent a geopolitical separation between nation-states on a map, but incorporate «the multiple (legal and cultural, social and economic) components of the concept and institution of the border» (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 3).

The enforcement of the role of the Wall as a border is implemented by the permit system, which represents a common denominator of most of the interviews I conducted,

So it happens that the Israeli authority established an agreement with the authority of the Palestinian local Churches. The Local churches compile lists of names of their parishioners and they are the ones who request the permits for Christmas and Easter time and during some of the major Holy Days around the year dedicated to the most important Saints in order to allow the Christians to go Jerusalem's Holy Sights. This list is sent to a mediation office of the Palestinian Authority and then the Israeli soldiers of the IDF has special offices where they have these machines that print the permits for the previously registered residents, because Palestinians in addition to having an ID card they also have the famous *mumagh nata* that is a magnetic card where also your fingerprint is registered. This is a sad situation because there are people who crowd one over the other to receive this permit and thus be able to visit their places and families, to see something that is theirs, that the entire world tells them that its theirs but that they cannot have... because the UN says that Jerusalem is also for the Palestinians and not only for Israel¹⁰¹ (V.B.)

¹⁰¹ Original interview conducted in Italian «succede che l'autorità israeliana è in accordo con i rappresentanti dell'autorità palestinese delle chiese locali le chiese locali fanno le liste di nominativi degli appartenenti alle parrocchie e quindi chiedono il permesso per il periodo natalizio e pasquale e durante le festività di qualche santo importante durante l'anno per permettere ai cristiani di andare a pregare a Gerusalemme nei luoghi santi. Questo permesso viene mandato in questo ufficio di mediazione dell'Autorità Palestinese e i militari israeliani poi l'IDF ha degli uffici appositi dove hanno queste macchinette e stampano questi permessi dei residenti già precedentemente registrati perché qui i palestinesi oltre ad avere una carta di identità palestinese hanno anche la famosa mumangheta che è questa carta magnetica dove c'è anche, per farla, la tua impronta digitale. Quindi questi permessi arrivano già stampati con

The above detailed description that V.B. gives of the process to obtain the permit sheds light onto O.'s disappointment for the impossibility to celebrate Palm Sunday. The process is long and sometimes even if the permit is issued it may arrive too late for the Christians to celebrate the Holy Week in Jerusalem. Interesting is also learning that the Church acts as a middleman between the parishioners and the IDF's office in charge with issuing the Holy Day permits since, as we are going to discuss further in the chapter, a chief effect of the Wall as an assemblage of separation concerns the unity of the Christian community as well as their separation from the Holy Places.

The importance in addressing the concept of frontiers and borders allows us to operate an analysis both on how they impose a «modification of our real landscape, transforming the territory that we physically occupy and inhabit [and] at the same time, [how] they deeply influence the places and spaces that they impact and [how] they shape our mental horizons, our more or less authentic identity¹⁰²» (Zanini 2000: XIV). In fact, in the next section we will focus on the legal implications of considering [how] the Wall enacts separation among family members through the assembly of novel laws regulating the Palestinians' citizen status, permanent residency, Jerusalem IDs.

Residency, Citizenship, and Jerusalem IDs

Thus far we have considered the Wall as enacting separation through considering its border agency. Considering the Wall as a border instead of a frontier means both fixing the extension of territory over which a certain nation

impronte digitali e fotografie tutto fatto, bisogna andare dall'esercito per potersi registrare. Questa è una pagina triste perché c'è gente che si accalca per avere un permesso, c'è anche gente di settant'anni che si accalca per avere questo permesso per andare a visitare i loro luoghi le loro famiglie per andare a vedere una cosa che è loro, che tutto il mondo dice che gli appartiene che però non possono avere perché le Nazioni Unite dicono che Gerusalemme è anche dei palestinesi e non solo di Israele» (V.B.).

¹⁰² Translation by the author from original in Italian «Confini e frontiere hanno entrambi a che vedere con la modificazione del nostro paesaggio reale, trasformando il territorio che fisicamente occupiamo e abitiamo. Allo stesso tempo, influiscono in maniera profonda con i luoghi e gli spazi che segnano e danno forma ai nostri orizzonti mentali, alle nostre identità, più o meno autentiche» (Zanini 2000: XIV).

declares ownership and authority, as well as setting the limit over which a certain law and welfare system applies. In the previous chapter we analyzed the permit system as one of the actants of the Wall as an assemblage of control that determines who is allowed to circulate across it, in this chapter we will analyze how this permit system affects families whose members possess different statuses on both sides of the borders and we'll examine the legal procedures needed to overcome this situation. Thus, we will explore how considering the Wall as a border reveals its agency of separation between people that before its constructions could interact with each other freely.

Addressing the Wall's bordering agency means that in addition to separating territories geographically, thus regulating the circulation of people, it

also define[s] spaces of differing laws and social norms. In this way, borders create and signify varied legal obligations, social categories, and behavioral expectations for different areas... [they] signal authority over space and differentiate between groups of people... borders [act] as dividers of space, symbolic markers of control, and social processes of daily life (Diener and Hagen 2012: 2)

On this account, the section of the Wall constituting the Jerusalem Envelope represents a unique case study to observe both the impact of establishing a novel border between cities that were once connected and to explore the legal system developed to regulate access and immigration between them. Hence, let us first reconstruct the principal historical predicaments connected to the establishment and definition of the residency status in Jerusalem.

The particularity of this territory derives from the aftermath of the Six-Day-War when Israel acquired East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza strip. Jerusalem was soon after the war annexed and the government «decreed the application of Israeli international law on the city¹⁰³». Subsequently, Israel «conducted a general population census... [and] only those who were physically counted within the newly delineated Jerusalem municipality boundaries were considered as Jerusalem residents»¹⁰⁴. The population counted during the census

¹⁰³ Society of Saint Yves, Catholic Center for Human Rights, "Palestinian Families Under Threat: 10 Years of Family Unification Freez in Jerusalem", December 2013, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p.6.

within these newly redrawn boundaries of the city were attributed the legal status of “permanent residency”. This status «incurred from extending the application of the “Entry Into Israel Law 1952” which gives the discretion to the Minister of Interior to accord various types of visas to reside within Israel for persons who do not fulfill the requirements of the Jewish “Law of Return 1950” and the “Nationality Law 1952”¹⁰⁵».

The legal status of permanent resident does not guarantee the same stability and assurance that the citizenship status affords. In fact, «it does not confer a nationality or civil and political rights»¹⁰⁶; it allows residents to «participate in municipal elections, but not in the elections on national scale... they are entitled to social benefits, pay all taxes, and receive travel documents from the State»¹⁰⁷. Furthermore, the precariousness of the permanent residency lies on the fact that it «can be revoked if Jerusalem is not, or no longer, considered by Israeli administration as the “center of life” for the concerned person¹⁰⁸». This regulation interconnects with the application of article 14 of the “Entry Into Israel Law 1952” that creates a scenario in which «permanent residency status is considered as expired... if for the period of seven years the resident has been absent from his Israeli address, or if he or she obtains nationality or permanent residency in another country»¹⁰⁹. On these premises the revocation of residency, and thus also the withdrawal of the Jerusalem Identity Card, applies not only to Jerusalemites who lived in third states for seven or more years, but also to those who «resided in areas of the West Bank outside the municipal borders of Jerusalem or in the Gaza Strip. Between 1967 and 2012, 14,260 Palestinians lost their residency»¹¹⁰ based on these grounds.

This regulations of residency do not appear uncommon especially in regard to their attribution to immigrant populations with a particular status, however, the status of Arab Palestinians is completely unique based on the fact that «they are not immigrants and do not, for most part, have another nationality. They are the indigenous population of the land and did not

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

immigrate into the State of Israel; in fact the State of Israel came to them»¹¹¹. The situation of the Palestinians can be described through the slogan of Latinos in the United States, which declares «we did not cross the border, the border crossed us» (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: xi).

Thus, we understand how the setting of boundaries between territories and people that once belonged to the same “nation” and who for decades weaved relationships and ties with one another, now find themselves separated not only on the physical level, but also through the allocation of a new legal status. This appointment of diverse legal statuses based on residency to people living on its two sides affects the decisions to get married to someone holding a different ID. In fact, marriage between people with mixed residency or citizenship status would have to face two delicate matters: family reunion and child registration.

There is a serious issue of family reunion as many couples are from Jerusalem and the West Bank or Israel and the West Bank, so the man and the woman are from the other side and they cannot meet, sometimes the Palestinian side gets a permit. My niece is married for 15 years and she has a permit that she renews every 6 months to go to Jerusalem. She lives in Jerusalem, has family in Jerusalem, the three children are in Jerusalem and here we have hundreds of cases including Christians (Father J.).

Father J., a Catholic priest and professor at the University of Bethlehem states that family reunion represents one of the most pressing effects of the construction of the Wall on the Christian community. Below we will discuss briefly its historical development and the steps that family need to take in order to obtain it.

The issue of family reunion did not appear as problematic from 1967 to 1990 since «Israel gave permission for the residents of the West Bank and Gaza to freely circulate, this was called “the open bridge policy”. However, in the aftermath of the Gulf war this permission was revoked¹¹²» given the support that Arafat displayed for Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait (Tessler 1994 [2009]: 738-740). This support for Hussein «commander of the most powerful army in the Arab world and an Arab leader who declared himself ready to fight on behalf

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.6.

¹¹² Ibid., 8.

of the Palestinian rights» (Tessler 1994 [2009]: 140) brought denunciations from officials of the Israeli government who shifted their attitudes towards the Palestinian issue. Through this revocation, numerous families consisting of a spouse holding a West Bank or Gaza Strip residency and a spouse with Jerusalem ID, had now to find a justification for their presence in the city and apply for residency status under the Israeli family unification procedures»¹¹³. In the beginning, until 1994 to be exact, the Ministry of Interior denied all the requests made by wives holding a Jerusalem ID in order to reunite with their husbands in Jerusalem since the Israeli government was under the assumption that «a woman in an Arab society would always follow her husband and not vice versa»¹¹⁴. In 1995, the requests for family reunification increased substantially compelling the State of Israel to gradually initiate the process towards obtaining the permanent residency; this system «applies to both, Israeli citizens and residents... It does however affect Jerusalem residents much more as they are more numerous to apply for family unification»¹¹⁵.

The process of family reunification, which should be completed within a period of five years and four months but usually ends up requiring an average of ten years, consists of four phases. In the first phase «the spouses applying for family unification need to prove the sincerity of their marriage, center of life for the citizen or resident, and have to present a clean criminal record for the applicant spouse»¹¹⁶. Usually from the moment of the submission of the application until the reception of the approval, the applicant spouse does not hold any legal status meaning that for a period of five years the spouses cannot legally reside together. The second phase starts once the application is approved; «the applicant receives a B1 permit for 15 months, renewable for additional 12 months –which means in total for a theoretical period of 27 months. This permit allows the spouse to reside in Israel, but without obtaining any social or civil rights»¹¹⁷. During the third phase the applicant «receives an A1 visa, or what is called a temporary Identity Card for three years, renewable each year. It

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 9.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

provides the applicant with almost the same rights as the permanent resident»¹¹⁸. Finally, in the fourth phase the applicant receives the same status of the spouse who made the request, which means citizenship if the requester is a citizen or residency for a resident.

Conclusively, this section provides a picture of how the growing recognition of the Wall as a border affects the legislation regarding the status of Israel's Arab population and that of their spouses. Below we will investigate how these legislations apply to the Christian people I interviewed, and analyze how their family unit has been affected.

The Wall and the Separation of Families

In this section we aim to analyze the Wall that, when associated with the permit and ID system and the matter of marriages, can be understood as an assemblage of separation affecting peoples who once were considered part of the same social fabric and "marriage basin". Let us listen to AW's narration of his concrete lived experience of what it means to have a spouse who is from a different side of the Wall and thus holding different legal status:

My wife is Israeli, she is Israeli citizen she is Christian, but she is Israeli citizen, she got the nationality and my son too. So when they cross the border every day because my son studies in Jerusalem he is in St. George School and my wife is working in Lutheran Church, Lutheran Union. Daily they went in this checkpoint. Now the soldiers began to know them because they are there daily until the soldiers change. So for them it's very very difficult to cross a border daily in the morning and in the afternoon and she is staying here illegally; my son and my wife are illegally with me. You see in the border when you came from Jerusalem from the other part, there is a sign, it is not legal for Israeli citizens to pass, it's Palestinian Authority. So my wife and my son are illegal (AW)

A.W. a middle aged Christian man who works for the municipality of Bethlehem narrates his personal experience with the difficulties of building a family with his wife who is a citizen of Israel and works in Jerusalem. As we have discussed

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

above, the process of family reunification may require from a minimum of five years to as long as ten years during which the spouse who applies to receive either a citizenship or a permanent residency she, or he in this case, would not be permitted to reside with the rest of the family and would not obtain any social and civil rights before receiving the first of several permits. It may happen that for any of the reasons listed in the first phase the process for family reunification may not even commence. Furthermore, the long periods of waiting may discourage the new family from embarking in this process, which may at any step be interrupted or delayed. Thus, in many cases that I had the opportunity to record, people who live in Bethlehem with a spouse in Jerusalem try to override the system and illegally live in the West Bank while still holding a Jerusalem ID or citizenship as in the case of A.W.'s son and wife.

Additionally to the family reunification process, the matter of families composed of spouses with mixed IDs often results in an additional issue that must be dealt with: children registration.

G., the organ player of our Parish, his son David cannot be registered, why? Because G. is Palestinian, G.'s wife is from Jerusalem, thus they have IDs of different colors, they are different. So if they register the child, on the other side (Israeli side) they would discover that they are married and she could not live with him anymore. In order to keep that blue ID, which gives some privileges like more freedom of movement and you can cross the Wall, thing that you cannot do with a green ID, if they discover her they would take away her blue ID and give her the green... so they decided not to register the child and this child does not exist¹¹⁹ (A.M).

The decision of David's parents not to register their child can be read as an attempt to avoid the danger of being either separated or losing the advantages of holding a Jerusalem ID. The family, probably reluctant to initiate the expensive and long procedure of family reunion, which would either face the long

¹¹⁹ Original interview conducted in Italian «come David, il figlio di G., l'organista della nostra parrocchia, non può essere nemmeno registrato, perché? Perché G. è palestinese, la moglie di G. è di Gerusalemme quindi hanno una carta di colore diverso da noi. Sono due cose diverse. E allora, se registrano il figlio, dall'altra parte scoprirebbero che sono sposati, quindi lei non potrebbe vivere più con lui, dovrebbe, per mantenere questo colore blu che le dà alcuni privilegi in più, con il blu puoi muoverti, puoi attraversare il muro, con il verde no, se la scoprono le toglierebbero il blu e le darebbero il verde Allora la scelta è stata non registrare il bambino e questo bambino non esiste»(A. M.)

procedure described above thus necessitating that the husband and wife live apart until the practices are processed, decided to start a family and having the wife live secretly on the Palestinian side of the Wall with her husband and son. However, the latter scenario required that the child not be registered in order to safeguard the mother's ID. Let us quickly look at the Israeli legislation to better grasp the child registration procedure.

Between the years 2004 and 2013 «the Ministry of Interior received 17,616 applications for registering children out of mixed marriages... those children are born in Jerusalem, yet due to the status of the parent from the West Bank they need to go through an additional procedure. If they are fourteen years old or younger at the moment of the application and born within the Jerusalem municipal boundaries or within Israel «they follow a child registration procedure and obtain full residency¹²⁰». If they are fourteen years old or younger at the time the application is presented, but are born outside Israel or the boundaries of Jerusalem's municipality they follow the procedure for the family reunification process. In this case, the child registration and the family reunification processes are linked together and both files need proof of center of life for the family unit. As a result of the interconnectedness of the two applications, many children «live in Jerusalem without a legal status, which [would] entail basic provisions like health insurance and school education»¹²¹. However, if at the time of the application, the child has already turned fourteen, «regardless of their place of birth, they are only entitled to a permit to remain within the “family unit” without any social rights»¹²². Given the previously described long waits and postponements «if those children with permits get married to spouses with a West Bank ID, they lose their right to hold a permit or to stay or even enter legally Jerusalem. They have no other choice than to live with their spouses in the West Bank and to acquire papers through their spouses»¹²³.

The law concerning family unification and child registration are critical issues that do not only speak about Israel's concerns for security in granting potentially hostile Palestinians citizenship or permanent residency, with all the

¹²⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 17.

right and obligations attached to these statuses, but they also concern a very sensitive matter, that is the maintenance of the demographic balance. Thus, these laws are constantly mutating and at times frozen depending on the historical occurrences that the State of Israel has been facing as we have seen above.

Furthermore, the presence of the Wall produces additional effects in regard to finding a spouse and building a family. As the territory of the West Bank shrinks and the closure and separation between not only Jews and Arabs but also between Israeli Arabs and Palestinian Arabs increases, while marriage opportunities decrease especially for the Christian community. During my fieldwork I noticed more and more that despite the Arab cultural imperative of marrying young, which applies for Muslims and Christians alike, many beautiful and intelligent girls were unmarried. As I became closer to some of them I learned that the presence of the Wall hindered the “selection” of potential husbands. This aspect is amplified by the endogamy of the Arab Christian community. It is not just highly discouraged, but if a Christian young adult were to marry with a Muslim, he or she would be disavowed by the family; as I had been told one time the family of a Christian girl who married a Muslim young man printed on the local paper the news that their daughter was dead to them.

Another solution, thus, for the Christian youths would have been to marry Christians from other communities, which are more numerous in the Galilee or in Jerusalem with whom they are able to meet only during particular religious celebrations or initiatives organized by the parishes (obviously if and only if they are granted a permit). However, as in the case of J. a Christian young man who met and fell in love with a girl from Nazareth during the youth Franciscan March held every summer in Israel, and cannot dream of being able to marry her unless she renounces her Israeli citizenship or they both are able to migrate abroad. Thus, if and when young Christians meet a potential husband or wife, they have to face the consequences of the “border” quality of the Wall, which separates them both physically and legally.

Families and young adults looking for a spouse are not the only affected parties of the Wall as an assemblage of separation. In the next section we will look at how the assemblage Wall affects the lived experience and familiarity of

the Christian population with the territories behind the Wall, which are progressively becoming foreign landscaped.

Disconnected familiarity with places

In the previous section, we discussed the effects of separation that the Wall enacts as a border. The physical presence of the Wall and its increasing entrenchment in the territory for over ten years becomes gradually acknowledged by the collectivity not as a temporary security measure. As the nature of borders, in opposition to the more fluid and elastic nature of frontiers, entails an appropriation of the territory that it embraces, we have seen how the subjects who held the same status, acquire new standings, as permanent residents or citizens, and receive the rights granted by the state of which they are now members. The other side of the coin, however, comprises all those who are left on the other side of the border, a border that has expropriated their lands drastically reducing the landscapes belonging to the West Bank. Thus in this section we wish to address the effects of separation that the Wall exercises on the relationship between the Christian inhabitants of the Bethlehem Governorate and the landscapes that now belong to Israel.

Valentina Napolitano and Nurit Stadler, in a special section edited for the journal *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* (2015) dedicated to borderlands and religion, reports the description that human rights campaigner and lawyer Raja Shehadeh gives of *sarha*. As Shehadeh tells us in his book *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape*, *sarha* in Arabic describes a walk in which one «roam[s] freely, at will, without restraints... A man going on a *sarha* meanders aimlessly, not restricted by time and place going where his spirit takes him to nourish his soul» (Shehadeh 2007: 1-2). The word, when taken in its verb form, literally means «to let the cattle out to pasture early in the morning leaving them free to wander and graze at liberty» (Ibid.). In his work Shehadeh describes the changing landscape, which is gradually disseminated by actants of control and closure restricting and the diminishing the available territory to go

on a *sarha*. The «new borders, fences, and military checkpoints ... marking the land and impinging on and restricting the right of movement» (Napolitano 2015: 91) are placed across the Palestinian territory deeply mutating Shehadeh's and the Palestinians' way of being-in-the-world and experiencing the physical territory as a known and cherished landscape that used to allow free roaming.

The familiarity with the landscape is gradually lost because it ceased to be the scenario of the activities that characterize the lived experience of daily life. The lands once constituting the farming fields of Palestinian families, which now rest behind the Wall, slowly fall out of the memory of the new generations and assume the guise that the State of Israel desires. What once were fields for the cattle of the people of Beit Jala is now known as Malcha Mall, a multistory shopping center; what was once part of the olive groves of the Cremisan Valley, today has been turned into the Biblical Zoo of Jerusalem.

Our relationship with Jerusalem, before [the Wall], we had a tight relationship with Jerusalem, which is so close. We would go to eat ice cream in Jerusalem and come back: we would go there for dinner, go for a walk, it was the easiest thing. As a seminar student I used to go there to buy books at this bookshop near Jaffa Gate, it was easy and they had really good books. I have not been there in thirty years. This relationship is very important for us, for religious reasons, but also as a center for us, Jerusalem, for everything. Many students and young adults of Bethlehem, they used to go every day to Jerusalem to attend school to go to Schmitt School and the Terra Santa school etc. Now the new generations don't know Jerusalem anymore. Two weeks ago I went to lead a youth meeting, which dealt with the situation of occupation, of our situation as Christians etc., etc. then I started talking about Jerusalem and they listen attentively. At the end a young man came to me and said, "for you and my father, yes Jerusalem is a part of your life, but not for me, I don't know Jerusalem". He did not have the experience of Jerusalem [in his life]¹²⁴ (Father J.).

¹²⁴ Original interview conducted in Italian «il nostro rapporto con Gerusalemme. Prima il rapporto con Gerusalemme così vicina andavamo a prendere il gelato e tornavamo da Gerusalemme, per una cena, per una passeggiata la cosa più facile e andavo come seminarista in una libreria lì alla porta di Giaffa e comunque era la cosa più facile perché avevano libri buoni libri eccetera. Da trent'anni non sono andato lì. E questa relazione è molto importante per noi per ragioni religiose, ma anche come centro per noi Gerusalemme, per tutto. Moltissimi studenti e ragazzi di Betlemme andavano ogni giorno a Gerusalemme alle scuole a Shmitt, Terra Santa eccetera. Adesso le nuove generazioni non conoscono Gerusalemme. Due settimane fa ho fatto un incontro con giovani parlando della situazione, dell'occupazione e della nostra situazione come cristiani eccetera eccetera poi parlavo di Gerusalemme; hanno ascoltato bravissimi. Alla fine un giovane è venuto e ha detto, "ma per noi Gerusalemme non dice niente, non significa niente" per voi, sono l'amico di suo padre, ha detto" per te per mio padre, sì Gerusalemme è una parte della

Father J. reveals both his loss of connection with Jerusalem and the nostalgic memories of his embodied experience of being able to freely access the city, and at the same time he compares his situation with that of a young man who reveals the complete absence of ties with Jerusalem. Father J. shares the nostalgia of being free to access Jerusalem even for an evening stroll and to eat ice cream. He recalls his steps around the city; he still holds the memory of his footprints around places that were embedded in his being-in-the-world. As Ingold and Vergunst state

For inhabitants footprints are traces of memory. Knowledge and footprints are not then opposed as mental to material. The relation between them is rather tantamount to one between bodily movement and its impression. If knowledge and footprints appear equivalent, it is because knowing is doing, doing is carrying out tasks, and carrying out tasks is remembering the way they are done» (Ingold and Vergunst 2008: 7)

If Ingold and Vergunst analyze the relationship between the knowledge of the landscape acquired through the “footprints” or marks we leave after our passage and how the praxis and lived experience of the landscape leave traces of memory, we have to deal with the opposite situation. We have to understand what it means and what are the consequences of not being allowed to leave footprints on a certain landscape. The young man who speaks to Father J. clearly exemplifies the outcomes of separation from Jerusalem: a loss of familiarity with the city to the point that the younger generations do not even miss it; where the footprints are lost also the memory and the desire of leaving a footprint there ceases to exist. As I spoke to young adults many dreamed of traveling beyond the Wall, however, not to the territories now comprising the State of Israel, but directly abroad, beyond the lands that they do not even know nor desire to know.

An additional example that we wish to discuss herein deals with a personal friend of mine. I.H. a member of the youth choir group of the Saint

vostra vita, per me no, posso vivere senza Gerusalemme perché vado raramente a Gerusalemme, non la conosco Gerusalemme” non ha questa esperienza. Allora questo è grave» (father J.).

Catharine parish of Bethlehem who received a permit to enter Israel, and knowing that at the time I was living in Jerusalem he suggested meeting beyond the Wall. Excited at the prospect of him visiting me in Jerusalem, I invited him to come to eat lunch at the apartment where I was renting a room. At first he was enthusiastic at the idea, however as soon as I explained to him where I lived, he changed his mind. My apartment was located in a neighborhood called Nayot, which is part of West Jerusalem just below the Israeli Museum and the governmental area. As we spoke, I.H. revealed being scared of going to West Jerusalem since he is Palestinian and I realized that he considered a safe trip only to East Jerusalem or to the Old City. His lived experience of Jerusalem, his footprints were thus only in the Arab part of the city and there was neither familiarity nor wish to explore a landscape that he considered foreign.

I.H. is a well-educated student who had the opportunity to travel and study abroad in the United States. However, not everyone has the capability and opportunity to “get out” of Bethlehem. Thus for those who are forced to stay the separation from the places behind the Wall becomes closure inside their ever-shrinking territory.

The social emergency [here], unfortunately it is not so evident, it is depression and the emotional depression caused by closure. We have many cases of emotional depression meaning that people are demotivated and this demotivation derives from the inability to plan for the future, which in turn becomes an incapability to manage ordinary things causing a loss of control... one of the effects of the Wall is that families do not have a perception of what the outside is anymore. They lost this perception, emotionally they do not realize this and they fall into depression because every small issue in the family becomes a drama and a trauma that lasts for months¹²⁵ (V.B.).

Through the words of V.B, who works in the social sector in Bethlehem, we understand that separation entails also the dimension of closure. What is

¹²⁵ Original interview conducted in Italian «L'emergenza sociale più purtroppo non è palese è la questione della chiusura è la depressione è l'emotional depression abbiamo tantissimi casi in concreto di depressione emotiva cioè la gente è demotivata è una demotivazione che deriva dall'incapacità di pensare al futuro quindi che trasforma in una incapacità di gestire le cose normali e perdere proprio il controllo. Una delle ricadute del muro è che le famiglie non hanno più coscienza di cosa sia l'esterno hanno perso questa coscienza emotivamente loro non se ne rendono conto e quindi cadono in depressione perché ogni cazzata che succede in famiglia diventa un trauma o un dramma da poterne parlare macinare in discussioni incontri per mesi» (V.B.)

appropriation of terrains and expansion for one people, in this context, inevitably translates as loss and enclosure for the other. The sense of closure that the presence of the Wall and its unflinching presence turned into a lack of perspectives and hopes for the future,

the family [here] has become what in Arabic we call *musas*; every family today becomes a soap opera, the *musas* is a soap opera. The Turkish and South American soap operas here are very popular, and today they have reached every family in Bethlehem, they are the reality in which they live. This happens also because here on Saturdays and Sundays you cannot decide to stop working and go somewhere, get out and visit Jerusalem or go to the seaside or plan a hike in the mountains. You don't even wait for the weekend or for the holydays to go out. Here people don't take vacations anymore; there are people here who have three or four years of overdue vacations; where can they go? Here the University of Bethlehem does not close in the summer anymore because everyone enrolls in summer courses. What else could they do? Where would they go? They have some holes that they call swimming pools and go swimming together... this is the true invisible tragedy you know... this is the invisible tragedy that to those who wanted to build that cement construction called Wall was a clear project because in this way they destroy the community¹²⁶ (V.B.).

Thus, V.B.'s words give us a feeling for the consequences of being unable to "roam freely" the country. Not only the territories that now lay beyond the Wall have become inaccessible, but also the mental horizons have shrunk to the point of developing depression. The closure enacted by the Wall as an assemblage of separation has erased the footprints and memories of lost landscapes, but it also deleted the desire to go out. The generations who have lived the loss of freedom of movement have also lost the knowledge of the outside world; the younger

¹²⁶ Original interview conducted in Italian «diventa quella che in arabo chiamano *musas* ogni famiglia oggi diventa una telenovela, la *musas* è una telenovela. Le telenovela turche e sudamericane che qui hanno un grande successo, oggi sono a Betlemme in ogni famiglia sono la realtà in cui loro macinano. Anche perché qui il sabato o la domenica non è che decidi di smettere di lavorare e te ne vai, esci ti fai un giro esci vai Gerusalemme una volta vai al mare una volta vai in montagna, una volta spetti il weekend aspetti le vacanze per andare fuori qui la gente non si prende più le ferie c'è la gente qu che ha 3 o 4 anni di ferie arretrate ma dove va? Non sa cosa fare, non sa cosa fare. Adesso l'università di Betlemme non chiude più, fanno tutti i corsi estivi, ma dove vanno? Cosa fanno? Hanno qualche buco che chiamano piscina dove nuotano tutti insieme e non c'è altro e questo è il dramma invisibile sai.. è il dramma invisibile che però per chi ha voluto quella costruzione di cemento chiamato muro questo era un progetto perché così tu distruggi la comunità» (V.B).

generations who do not even know what they have lost, dream of flying over the Wall and abroad because they cannot see a future inside their Walled cities.

Thus, in this section we were able to analyze the effects the Wall when understood as an assemblage of separation cases on the level of familiarity with landscapes. In the next section we will explore the separation affects the Christians as a community, focusing on the effects that the Wall has particularly on the Christians given their status as a religious minority.

Separation of the Christian community

Thus far we have analyzed the Wall as an assemblage of a separation that in many cases cannot be understood solely as affecting the Christian community. Also the Palestinian Muslims who live side by side with the Christians of Bethlehem and Beit Jala face separation from family and friends who today live on the other side of the Wall, just as much as they are affected by the Wall that acts as a border and requires special permission to pass through. Conversely, in this section we wish to focus especially on the consequences of separation that peculiarly the Christians face as a religious minority.

The situation of the Christians as a religious minority represents an extremely serious situation. In Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East in general. Firstly, because around the world there is little awareness of the presence of a local Arab Christian community; secondly given their status as an ethno-religious minority both compared to the Jews and the Muslims inside the State of Israel, and they also represent a religious minority in the West Bank comparing to the growing Muslim population. Thus, trying to maintain a unity among the different communities in the face of a constant increase in emigration represents a challenge that the Wall's separating agency amplifies.

Then there is an effect on churches as the faithful people, the lay people are present on both sides. So the same church for example my church the Latin Patriarchate covers all the Holy Land and Jordan so people from both sides do not meet. What about Catholics living in Nazareth I have no idea, I don't meet them. So there is divisions within you know between these

communities that live apart from each other. Another effect on the Church is appointing parish priests. I'm Palestinian and I have a Palestinian ID and my bishop cannot appoint me to a parish in the Galilee for example because I would not be able to be there. So the priest should be Jordanian here with a visa so he can be a parish priest in Galilee. Another difficulty specifically for the Church is vocations. We have very few seminarians in the seminary right now from Israel. (Father J.).

As Father J. tells us the presence of the Wall exercises two types of separation within the Christian community. The first involves the lay people. Where the Christian community already registers only a presence of 2% in Israel and 1.3% in the Palestinian Territories, the Wall's separating agency deals a potent blow to the unity of this already dismal and diminishing community. Christians from the Galilee have very little opportunities to meet and encounter their brothers and sisters in faith from the West Bank, «We do not know what happens there, how Christians live [because] we don't meet and this impoverishes the Church, both communities because we need them and they need us. This impoverishes the Church and the Christian community, we are divided already and this is a new division; so this for me is the experience of the Wall, it has all of these consequences¹²⁷» (Father J.).

One of the few opportunities, especially for the young people, is the Franciscan March that we spoke about above. However, the friendships and romances developed during this moment of union between Christians from all over the Holy Land are short lived because it becomes challenging to maintain them due to the permit system. Moreover, this separation causes, as Father J. states, a growing dismemberment of the Church: In addition to the forced amnesia, from Father J.'s words emerges the issue of the extreme variety of the Christian denominations present in this land and how the Wall further divides a community that is already fragmented.

The second target of separation that Father J. describes is the training system for the future priest and the parish appointments. The appointment of

¹²⁷Original interview conducted in Italian «si esattamente. Non conosciamo quello che succede lì, come vivono i Cristiani, non ci incontriamo e questo impoverisce la Chiesa tutte e due le comunità, perché noi abbiamo bisogno di loro e loro hanno bisogno di noi, e questo impoverisce la Chiesa, la comunità Cristiana, siamo divisi già e allora questa è una nuova divisione ecco per me questa è l'esperienza del muro, ha tutte queste conseguenze» (Father J.).

parish priests, given the border nature of the assemblage Wall, depends not only on the suitability of the priest with a certain community, but also on the permit system that we have discussed. Often the clergy can benefit from special permits from the Vatican, however this does not always happen and after a certain amount of years they may not be renovated. Thus, a common praxis has become calling priests from Jordan instead of those autochthonous of these territories.

Furthermore, Father J. tells us that in Beit Jala «we have a minor seminary and we stopped many years ago accepting seminarians from the Galilee because of different vocational systems because they go back to their schools they will lose the hope and for major seminarians they experience problems at the checkpoint. If you are an Israeli you cannot go ... etcetera. So it affects also the seminary» (Father J.). When the Wall is understood as an assemblage gathering actants such as its border dimension, the needs of training for future clergy, the permit system, we can see how its separating agency even comes to affect the possibility for future Palestinian priests to serve their Holy Land communities located in Israel.

If in the last section we described how the closure and separation from the outside world enacted by the Wall is causing a loss of hope towards the future for the individuals, the same can be said on a different level for the Christians as a community. Once again, Father J. gives us a discerning insight onto the effects of the Wall on planning for events involving the whole parish

Then another difficulty for the Church is planning for projects, planning for the future. One small example next month we will have a small celebration in Nazareth to conclude the year of faith declared by the Pope and we cannot gather all the faithful the Catholics in one place. They chose Nazareth and now they need visas for Jordanians and they need permits for the Palestinians to participate in that event, an overnight event, Saturday and Sunday but no way Palestinians can get an overnight permit. So it's a small example. They wanted a big celebration but a big celebration of one day cannot be planned. And people applied for permits and they promised to give them on Friday. I was talking to a parish priest and he said "what should I do? How many people will get permits for that day? Should I reserve one bus? Two busses? Three busses? Can I look for busses at the last moment?" you know this is a season for pilgrimages and if you don't reserve a bus ahead of time you cannot get one. We have an experience here at the department of religious studies [in which] we planned for a pilgrimage for

the students for two days, we got the permits and at the last moment, we got the permits and we could not find a bus and we had to cancel everything. So you know the most simple things, how can we plan for the future? (Father J.).

There is an objective difficulty that the Church experiences on a pastoral level when planning events that, organized anywhere else, can gather people from all around the world but here it cannot even gather the few Christians living in this land due to the Wall's presence. Any event that calls for the unity of Christians from all parishes inevitably poses the question as to where this event shall take place. Deciding to host it in Israel will unavoidably prevent many Palestinian Christians from participating, while holding it in Palestine would hinder the Arab Israeli Christians from participating. Furthermore, as Father J. explains, the most basic planning such as the reservation of buses becomes problematic since the lay people won't know whether they will receive a permit to travel until the very last minute. In this case we can see how all the elements that come into play in the Wall as an assemblage create separation on many different levels and affecting in some ways the Christian community even harder due to its status as a religious minority.

Among the Christian community of Bethlehem and Bet Jala I discovered an abundant participation in advocacy, peace building, and interreligious dialogue projects. Many of those active in these sectors lamented that the Wall has separated them from their Jewish neighbors hindering their attempts to develop a dialogue between them. In the next section we will, thus, focus on the separation that the Wall enacts with the "other".

Separation from the Jewish Community

The Christians I interviewed did not only address the separation that the Wall enacts between Arabs living in Israel and in the West Bank, but they also described the separation created between them and the Jews. Most of the people who discussed this aspect of the Wall's agency were mostly involved in projects aimed at creating dialogue between the two communities. In the Beit Jala area in the 1990s there used to be a fervent participation in activities of this kind; Father

J. recounts his involvement in a one of these projects hosted at the Jerusalem Center for Jewish Christian Relations (JCJCR)

Once they organized a meeting between the students of Religious Studies here in Bethlehem and the Jewish students of the Hebrew University. The first question was “where can we meet?” because we couldn’t go there. Thus I suggested Tantur, although even to go to Tantur we need a permit, so they sent us an invitation letter and with this letter we went to request permits. So they issued [permits] to most of the students, not to everyone, and not to that student who was supposed to give a presentation [because] there should have been a presentation and then a discussion. The second question [we asked ourselves] was on which topic to discuss. We said about religion and politics. Since they are students of Religious Studies we decided on the topic “men created in the image of God” since it could be shared both by Jews and Christians and [it was a topic] which had consequences on our current situation: “what does it mean that the other is created in the image of God?” So we went there and discussed for 3 hours and one thing really struck me at the end, when we asked the students what they had learned from that meeting, a young Israeli said “I am new at the university because until a month ago I was with the military in Nablus. I was at the checkpoint and I never thought that the Palestinians are created in the image of God. Then a female Palestinian student said “this is the first time in my life that I see a Jew who is neither a soldier or a settler, but who is a normal student like us”. That was the first time because now with the Wall, the Israeli, the Jew is a soldier or the settler; this does not give a true human image of the other and this also goes for the Israelis visiting the Palestinians, they are so far from us and we can’t see them... here we have a culture of the face, I cannot write an e-mail or have virtual contact with them, no, I need to see the person, see his reactions, his smile and so on. So the Wall is also a psychological division, the other is a number, it does not have a face nor a name. This is very dangerous for the majority of young Palestinians who know the Jews only as soldiers or settlers... this is why the dialogue with the Jews is important, but we don’t have the opportunity to meet because it is too complicated¹²⁸ (Father J.).

¹²⁸ Original Interview conducted in Italian «Jerusalem Center for Jewish Christian Relations (JCJCR) Una volta hanno organizzato un incontro con gli studenti di scienze religiose qui a Betlemme con gli studenti ebrei dell’Università Ebraica e la prima domanda era dove possiamo incontrarci? Perché non possiamo andare. Allora ho detto a Tantur. Anche a Tantur abbiamo bisogno di un permesso ci hanno mandato una lettera di invito eccetera e con questa lettera siamo andati a cercare i permessi. Allora hanno li hanno dati alla maggior parte, non a tutti, almeno non a quello studente che doveva fare la presentazione, perché c’era una presentazione e poi una discussione, va bhe. Allora seconda domanda di che cosa dobbiamo parlare? Di religione di politica, sono studenti di religione, siamo studenti di scienze religiose allora abbiamo scelto un tema “l’uomo creato ad immagine di Dio” questo vale per Ebrei, per Cristiani, ma questo ha anche delle conseguenze sulla nostra questione di adesso, cosa vuol dire che l’altro è creato ad immagine di Dio per il Palestinese e per l’Ebreo, l’Israeliano? Noi siamo andati lì, abbiamo fatto 3

This rather long citation of Father J.'s words speaks eloquently both on the effects of the Wall as a border, that is the issuing of permits for the students to pass through the Wall to go to Tantur, and on the effects of the physical presence of the Wall, meaning the loss of encounters between the Palestinians and the Jews. Loosing the opportunity to see and meet Jews that are neither soldiers nor settlers (meaning Jews who reside in settlements within the West Bank territories) creates a situation where the other becomes only the enemy and not the student similar to me who may share the same hopes and dreams. As Abuna M. tells us,

unfortunately the Wall also hides reality; it shatters relationships. I call it "diabolical" exactly for this reason, because it severs relationships. There was friendship before, among the simple people, between the Palestinian side and the Israeli side, among the Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The Wall broke these relationships. There are diabolical laws that, for example, don't allow a Jew to come to Bethlehem, why? Because I believe that there is a plan, that the intent is to divide and the other should not be met. Thus, if you don't know the other, you fear him because there is an Arab proverb that says "there aren't those who make you afraid, there are those who are afraid". When there is someone who is afraid, when we do not know each other, if I don't know you maybe I am allowed to be a little bit afraid, but after I have met you, I cannot be afraid of you anymore¹²⁹ (A.M.).

ore di discussione eccetera e una cosa che mi ha colpito alla fine, quando abbiamo chiesto agli studenti cosa hanno imparato, quasi una valutazione di questo incontro, un giovane israeliano ha detto "io sono nuovo all'università perché un mese fa ho finito il mio servizio militare a Nablus, sono stato ad un checkpoint e non ho mai pensato che anche i palestinesi sono stati creati ad immagine di Dio. Per me non erano, non li trattavo come esseri umani" un soldato. Poi una studentessa palestinese ha detto "questa è la prima volta nella mia vita che vedo un ebreo che non è né un soldato né un colono, ma uno studente normale come noi" è la prima volta perché adesso con il muro, l'israeliano, l'ebreo è il soldato o il colono israeliano; questo non dà un'immagine veramente umana per l'altro e questo vale per gli israeliani per visitare i palestinesi, sono così lontani da noi e non li vedono... qui abbiamo una cultura del viso non posso scrivere e-mail o contatti virtuali con l'altro no, devo vedere la persona vedere la reazione, il sorriso eccetera. Così si creano le relazioni, le relazioni umane. Ecco con il muro è una divisione psicologica anche, l'altro è un numero, non ha un viso un nome. Questo è molto pericoloso per la maggioranza dei palestinesi dei giovani che conoscono gli ebrei soltanto come soldati o coloni e questo è importante. Io come vedo quanto è importante il dialogo con gli ebrei, non c'è la possibilità di incontrarci; abbiamo smesso di incontrarci perché è troppo complicato» (Father J.).

¹²⁹ Original interview conducted in Italian «purtroppo il muro serve anche a questo, a nascondere la realtà, serve a spaccare le relazioni. Io lo chiamo diabolico proprio per questo, perché spacca le relazioni. C'era tanta amicizia prima, tra le persone semplici, tra da una parte i palestinesi e da un parte gli Israeliani, i Musulmani, Ebrei, Cristiani. Il muro ha spaccato queste relazioni. Ci sono alcune leggi diaboliche che, per esempio non permettono a un Israeliano di

Abuna M. is very active in the case of the Cremisan Valley and participates assiduously in concelebrating the Weekly Holy Mass among the olive groves (see chapter six). In this narration, he describes the Wall as an agent that shatters relationships, that it is “diabolical” in its action of severing relationships. These broken relationships derived not only from the restricted access of the Palestinians to Israel, but also to the prohibition for Jews to exit Israel and enter the Palestinian Territories. These restrictions, according to Abuna M., subsequently translate into the development of fear for the other who cannot anymore be either seen, due to the materials and architecture of the Wall made of eight-meter tall cement slabs, or met due to the movement restrictions imposed on both sides. As F., the Sumud Story House founder (see chapter five), tells me «I have been suffering from the lacking of communication between the two communities, because of the Wall and also with my neighbors, the Israelis, who some of them have good will and they want peace, I can’t communicate with them»(F.). Here F., who is very active in the field of interreligious dialogue goes as far as saying that the lack of communication enacted by the Wall prevents the building of peace among the two sides.

Conclusions

Through this chapter we wished to uncover a dimension of the Wall that, when understood increasingly as the *de facto* border between Israel and Palestine, constitutes an assemblage of separation. From the interviews emerged frequently the issue of the permit system. If in the previous chapter we analyzed the permit system as an actant within the Wall as an assemblage of control, here

venire a Betlemme. Perché? Perché io credo che ci sia un disegno, che si voglia dividere, l’altro non deve essere conosciuto. Allora se tu non conosci l’altro hai paura perché, c’è un proverbio arabo, “non c’è chi fa paura, c’è chi ha paura” e quand’è che uno ha paura, quando non ci conosciamo, se io non ti conosco forse un po’ di paura me la posso permettere, ma quando ti ho conosciuto non posso più avere paura di te» (Abuna M.).

we focused on how this actant enacts separation among the Christian community.

Analyzing the Wall in these terms allowed us to uncover the multiple dimensions affected by the separating agency of the Wall. Firstly, the Wall severs the already small Christian communities of Beit Jala and Bethlehem from the more numerous communities found in the Galilee. Due to the increasingly understanding and action of the Wall as a border, in a territory that once enjoyed continuity, the ties between the Christians of the West Bank and of Israel are gradually loosening and becoming harder to nurture given the necessity to receive a special permit to enter Israel.

Secondly, through understanding the various segments of the Wall as a borders, thus «not merely [as] geographical margins or territorial edges... [but as] complex social institutions, which are marked by tensions between practices of border reinforcement and border crossing» (Mezzadra and Nailson 2013: 3), we discover that it impacts the “marriage basin” of the young adult population. The limited contact between young Christians who live on different sides of the Wall, and the long and complex legal process that young mixed couples must undertake to unite their family (i.e. Both Christians but holding different citizenships or permanent residency IDS) results in numerous unmarried youth.

Thirdly, understanding the Wall as an assemblage of separation allowed us to consider the relationship between the Christians’ loss of lived experience of being-in-the-world and the landscape that gradually falls behind the Wall. When we acknowledge that «as people, in the course of their everyday lives, make their way by foot around a familiar terrain, so its paths, textures and contours, variable through the seasons, are incorporated into their own embodied capacities of movement, awareness and response» (Ingold 2011: 47); we understand that the loss of the capacity to move on and through a certain landscape, due to the physical presence of the Wall, the Palestinians do not only lose freedom of movement and property, but also the knowledge and memories of those places. Once people cannot experience their everyday lives in a place, as they cannot leave their footprints upon it, they become gradually less familiar with such landscape, which has become inaccessible and at the same time governed and transformed by another nation. Without the ability to walk,

landscapes cannot weave into everyday life experiences anymore, and at the same time, lives cannot weave into the landscapes interrupting a process that should provide a continuous and never-ending exchange between the physical environment, the experience of being-in-the world and people's knowledge of the landscape (Tilley 1994: 29–30).

Lastly, those Christians who are actively involved in advocacy and interreligious dialogue initiatives during the interviews accused the Wall of shattering their relationship with the Jewish community. The separating agency of the Wall prevents the two ethno-religious groups from meeting and interacting with each other. This lack of interaction, according to the interviewees, brings both sides to fear one another and dehumanize each other hindering the few initiatives developed to engage in peace building activities.

If in these first three chapters we explored the impact of the Wall in its crossing and analyzing its agency in regard to the interaction or lack of interaction between the two sides, in the following chapter we will direct our gaze inward focusing on how Christians living inside the West Bank remain steadfast in a city surrounded by the Wall and find innovative ways of being-in-the-world.

Images Chapter 4



Picture 10: Parade in Beit Jala of the Christians celebrating Holy Saturday.



Picture 11: Image of the Resurrection of Jesus carried during the parade held in Beit Jala.



Picture 12: Participation also of the Greek Orthodox Christians at the parade held in Beit Jala.



Picture 13: Palm Sunday procession from the top of mount Olive to Lion's Gate of Jerusalem's Old City.



Picture 14: Palm Sunday procession from the top of mount Olive to Lion's Gate of Jerusalem's Old City.



Picture 15: Entrance of the procession through Lion's Gate.

Chapter 5: The Wall As An Assemblage Of Steadfastness

Key words: sumud, resistance, prayer, singing, tomb, art, museum, silence, dead area, fear, impenetrable, wall chokes you, missed opportunity, cement monster

Introduction

The first time I visited Bethlehem the Wall made its presence immediately known. Right from the moment of entrance into town, one needs to reckon with its encircling and unavoidable presence. As I visited this place year after year, the Wall's abruptness began to fall into the background allowing the gaze to focus on the different elements that interact with it across different sections of its length. Thus, during my fieldwork, as I walked by the edge of the "City of the Nativity" along the concrete slabs, I encountered a series of panels with stories written on them. As I began to read, I realized that they were a collection of women and youth's narrations of life in the West Bank. In particular, they either described life with the Wall or vignettes recounting acts of *sumud* (steadfastness) in the face of duress, which came to be known as the "Wall Museum." All of a sudden the Wall appeared once again as more than a technology of security or an inert cement barrier; the Wall became part of an assemblage that connected stories, songs, resistance, poems. Thus, if on the one hand the Wall became an opportunity to enact resistance when assembled with the Rachel's Tomb area, the Sumud Story House, watchtowers with dancing soldiers, manure bombs, closed shops, Banksy's murals, tear gas, a kindergarten, the sumud bodies of the Palestinian Christians, and other numerous human and nonhuman actants.

Thus, in this chapter my intention is to focus on the Wall as an assemblage of steadfastness. Through the fieldwork, I encountered the Arab word “*sumud*” which is, in this case, a Palestinian way of life and form of resistance that may be translated into English as “steadfastness,” “rootedness,” and “perseverance”. In the current context, this concept developed into two main formal initiatives: the Sumud Story House (from now on SSH), a building dedicated to women and youth’s gatherings and narration of stories, and the Wall Museum project, which transformed these oral stories into panels posted on the Wall.

These projects formally identified as practices of *sumud* do not however, exhaust the acts of *steadfastness* of the Christian citizens as well as the Christian way of being *samed* (being steadfast). Thus, in order to wholly understand what impact the Wall has on the everyday lives of the Christian population, and to unravel what is at stake underneath the overarching narrative of the Wall as a technology of security and occupation, in the following pages I will firstly analyze the ways in which Christian families and individuals stay *samed* whilst living and interacting with the Wall; secondly we will discuss the peculiar Christian way of practicing *sumud*, that is, what it means for a Christian to enact *sumud* on the “Holy Land”; and thirdly we will look at the development of the SSH focusing particularly one of its projects, meaning the panels and aims of the “Wall Museum”.

Since we wish to focus on the Wall as an assemblage of *sumud*, it becomes imperative to address and problematize the role and definition of the body within this assemblage. In fact, the definition of *sumud*, as we will see in the first section, ranges from staying on the land and continuing life in its day-to-day activities, to outright resistance such as the tax boycott in Beit Sahour. In this assemblage we clearly face a peculiar way of being-in-the-world that forces us to discuss the relationship between new materialism and phenomenology.

I follow the observations of new materialism when it argues that humanities and social sciences necessitate centering their attention on material things as possessing agency while turning away from privileging the human subjects. This perspective, asserts that up to now humanities and social sciences considered the human experience, thoughts, and body as the center of analysis at the expenses of «things [that] retain[ed] analytical importance only in so far as

they pass[ed] through the body's interface as sensations and perceptions [and] they need[ed] never be studied as exterior to the human experience of them» (Hazard 2013: 63; Miller 2010; Morgan 2010). Conversely, phenomenology—which «take[s] human experience and consciousness as its central category of analysis» (Hazard 2013: 62) «seek[ing] to know how things impact our lived experience» (Ibid., 63), and allowing us to read «phenomena as they appear to the consciousness of an individual or a group of people» (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 88) —fears that the materialist's perspective will essentialize the body to a «discrete organic entity» (Csordas 2011: 137) or to that «bare life», which Agamben attributes (1998) to species and individuals understood as simple living bodies (Ibid., 140). Csordas prefers rather to speak about “raw existence” that, conversely to “bare life” entails that «our-bodies-in-the-world are neither passive nor inert –they are not “just there”» (Ibid.).

However, I argue that new materialists and phenomenologists are not as discordant and antithetical as they would like to believe. In fact, «more like phenomenologists, new materialists show that things must be understood as sensuous entities that do cultural work in ways not reducible to ideation or signification» (Hazard 2013: 67). Furthermore, I believe that another aspect that brings the two perspectives closer to each other lies in fact that «phenomenologists already blur the assumed separation between subject and object by emphasizing the bodiliness —that is to say the materiality— of the human» (Ibid.), which is one of new materialism's concerns. Yet, «new materialists seek a more radical decentering of the human subject that even phenomenologists allow. Phenomenology takes as its central category of analysis the human subject, that is, the consciousness and experience presumed to be contained within the limits of the epidermis» (Ibid.). With these premises, it is quite a shame that the two frameworks, which jointly could offer a fuller and more complex understanding, have become entrenched against each other.

Hence, I believe that in my own work through the unpacking of the concept of assemblages, which aims to diminish the dichotomy between subject and object, the divide between phenomenology and new materiality can be bridged. Through an elaboration of the concept of assemblages cooperation can be established between these two frameworks enabling us to deeply understand

the full impact that the Wall in this specific context has on the Christian community keeping together the material agency of the Wall and the embodied experience of the humans who are forced to reckon with it.

Thus, the analysis must focus both on the human body as the locus of consciousness and experience, the subjective interface with the exterior material world (Morgan 2010), as well as on the “things” composing the material world that interact as part of an assemblage as humans and nonhumans. So with what kind of body do we have to reckon as the human actant of a theory of assemblages?

In order to understand the complexity of the impact of the Wall on the Christians of Bethlehem and Beit Jala, we necessitate to consider Csordas’ theories that acknowledges embodiment to be the «fundamental existential condition, our corporeality our bodiliness in relation to the world and other people» (Csordas 2011: 137) as «a matter of shared, mutually implicating, and never completely anonymous flesh» (Ibid.). Hence, we come to deal with human bodies that are not anonymous but through which the world is experienced. This aspect is fundamental because, as we mentioned previously, this research investigated material agency through the eyes of a particular segment of the Palestinian population: the Christians. It is their bodies in that world that have to interact with the Wall, that have to deal with its unavoidable presence. It is the humans who have to reckon with this Wall, their bodies experience the Wall everyday, that feel its concreteness, see its ugliness, and interact with its parts (i.e goes through the checkpoints, is observed through the watchtowers, is forced inside by its gate, prays next to it). The agency of the different elements of the Wall inscribes itself on their bodies. The bodies become part of the assemblage. As we will see it is a body that is rooted on the land, it is a body that stays in the face of expropriation, a body that withstands the curfews and military threats, a body that inhales tear gas and manure bombs, a body that feels choked by the Wall, a body that sings next to the Wall, a body that guards the Holy Places. In this chapter we will shed light on the agency of the Wall that intertwines with the agency of a *samed* body and the agency of the material world in which it is embedded.

Defining *sumud* in past and present events

In order to understand the multiplicity of meanings attributed to the word *sumud* and the events where *sumud* is enacted, I decided to commence this section with a discussion on the tax boycott in Beit Sahour. On this particular issue I spoke to Mazin B. Qumsiyeh who extensively discusses this event in his work *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of hope and Empowerment*. The decision to address this historical event helps us for three main reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on the context in which our research is rooted, giving a precious insight on the activeness of the Palestinian community in the Bethlehem governorate; secondly this episode describes an action of resistance and *sumud*; thirdly, this case was reported in one of the panels of the “Wall Museum” thus highlighting the importance that it holds for the Palestinians in the area.

Let us start then with the narration of the Tax Revolt printed and posted on “Wall Museum” panel entitled “Tax Revolt”

During the first Intifada the people of Beit Sahour had quite a lot of verbal confrontations with Israeli soldiers. The people organized a tax revolt under the banner of American civil war: “no taxation without representation.” They refused to pay taxes and after some weeks, the Israeli army came to each of their houses, one by one, to confiscate household items. After their houses had been emptied some of the Beit Sahouri women told the soldiers “please stay, you forgot something. You cannot leave without my curtains” (Rana, Beit Sahour).

More precisely in 1988, the residents of Beit Sahour, which is located east of Bethlehem and Beit Jala, refused to pay the taxes to the Israeli authorities and subsequently decided to discard their Israeli ID cards. Both these initiative «came from *Lajnet Al-Fasa’el*, a committee of the four main factions (Fuad Kokaly of Fatah, Rifaat Quassis of the PFLP, Walid Al-Hawwash of the DELP and Lutfi Abu-Hashish of the PPP» (Qumsiyeh 2011: 143). The discarding of the Israeli ID is particularly significant since each Palestinian needed it in order to attend to any official affair «from obtaining a birth certificate or a permit to travel outside the country, to getting a marriage or death certificate» (Ibid., 144). Thus the IDs represented, and still represent today, a vital element of the population’s

livelihood in the West Bank. The first major tax collection incursion occurred on July 7, 1988 in the early morning.

The Israeli officials who were sent to gather the money «hauled people out of bed and presented [the] heads of households with bills (of an arbitrary amount) and told [them] they had to pay within a week. The people of Beit Sahour responded with defiance to this first threat and by mid-morning of that same day, they collected nearly 1000 Israeli ID cards» (Ibid.). The Israeli soldiers responded to the Beit Sahour's disobedience by «arresting people and by suddenly opening fire with rubber bullets and tear gas bombs directed toward the crowd»¹³⁰ (Ibid.). Furthermore, the town was consigned under uninterrupted curfew for ten days until it was definitively lifted on July 18, 1988.

The second tax raid took place on September 19, 1989. This time the people of Beit Sahour were under curfew and blockade for forty-two days during which no food, telephone, electricity and other services were suspended. Moreover, «hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of goods— including manufacturing equipment, domestic appliances, cash and jewelry —have been carted off by Israeli bailiffs escorted by armed soldiers»¹³¹ (Ibid.: 146)

The residents of Beit Sahour and the surrounding area responded by organizing parallel institutions. They planted “victory gardens” and began to harvest their own food. “Popular Committees” were formed to clean streets, collect garbage. Educate children, resolve disputed, and distribute assistance to the needy. A medical clinic started during this period grew to receiving fifteen hundred patients a day in the Bethlehem area¹³² (Powers et al., 2011: 40).

According to the definition that Mazin Qumsiyeh gives of *sumud*, which includes act[s] of ... incredible resilience and resistance (*Sumud*) in actions ranging from

¹³⁰ See also White, *Children of Bethlehem*, p.66

¹³¹ Qumsiyeh cites this passage from original article by Black, Ian. (1989). “Israeli Bailiffs Enlisted to Pay Rates Turns “Christian Triangle” into Symbol of Resistance”. *Guardian* (October 20, 1989).

¹³² For similar initiatives see also the case of Bar’Am in Chacour, Elias. (1984). *Blood Brothers*. Terrytown (NY): Chosen Books; Chacour, Elias. (1994). *Apparteniamo tutti a questa terra. La storia di un israeliano palestinese che vive per la pace e la riconciliazione*. Milano: Jaca Book (ed. Or. *We belong to the Land*), University of Notre Dame Press, 1990. Chacour, Elias. (2003), *Ho fiducia in noi. Al di là della disperazione*. Milano: Jaca Book (ed. Or. *J'ai foi en nous. Au-delà du desespoir*), Homme de Parole, 2002; De Simony Pia, and Maria Czernin. 2009. *Elias Chacour: Israeliano Palestinese Cristiano*. Venezia: Marchanum Press.

boycotts, public statements» (Qumsiyeh 2011: 127), Beit Sahour's tax boycott can be read both as an act of resistance and as an act of *sumud*, that is voicing the right of the Palestinians to exist on the land and exercise their sovereignty on their territories. Precisely because of this ambiguity between the concept of *sumud* and resistance, in order to understand what being *samed* entails, a more in depth discussion on these terms is necessary. As Toine van Teeffelen and Biggs recount, the concept of *sumud* is not the Arabic equivalent of resistance: «sumud is about keeping people on the land; resistance is about fighting the occupation of the land» (van Teeffelen and Biggs 2011: 91). While resistance entails a direct and open challenge to the opponents, *sumud* involves creative expedients to keep on living despite the circumstances. However, «divorcing sumud from resistance entirely can present problems of its own, causing people to dismiss sumud as something second-rate, a lifestyle that does not require the conscious courage of creativity of active resistance» (Ibid.). *Sumud*, translated in English with the term "steadfastness," embraces a variety of activity ranging from the simple physical presence on the land enforcing the motto "to exist is to resist," to keep cultivating fields under threat of expropriation, to refuse to pay taxes to Israel, to be vocal about the conditions of the Palestinian people thus reaffirming their right to stay on the land.

The concept of *sumud*, however, embraces both the more blunt acts of defiance, as well as of everyday life activities. Under the former category fall actions such as the story on a panel of the "Wall Museum" called "The Baby and the Soldier,"

Israeli soldiers were beating up a man in a crowded street. From all sides people rushed to the scene. Suddenly a woman with a baby came forward to the man and shouted: "Why is it always you who makes problems and goes to demonstrations! I am fed up! Take this baby of yours! I don't want to see you ever again." She laid the baby in the hands of the man, and ran away. The soldiers left the scene in confusion. When quiet came, the man returned the baby to the woman. They had never seen each other before. *A story from Nablus during the first Intifada (the late 1980s)*

In this story we witness a dynamic form of *sumud* (in Arabic *sumud muqawim*) in which the woman actively and creatively engages with the soldiers in order to

save the man's life from the soldiers' beating. We also previously encountered this active form of *sumud* in the account of the Beit Sahour tax boycott. The latter, more static *sumud* can be understood through the panel entitled "I am Steadfast"

I am a town councilor. I work hard inside my house: cooking, doing my daily tasks at home, taking care of my husband and children while at the same time working to earn a living. I also try to volunteer and participate in public activities. My friends and family strengthen my *sumud* (steadfastness) and encourage me, as a woman, to work in the fields of peace-building, Christian-Muslim living together, and interreligious and intercultural communication skills (*Fayza, From Doha, south of Bethlehem*)

Fayza, here describes tasks that are part of daily life: cooking, taking care of family members, going to work. However, these apparently non-extraordinary actions are carried out in the context of land expropriation, limited movement in the city, riots and demonstrations against the Wall with rubber bullets and tear gas. Hence, because of the particular setting of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, «*sumud* is about much more than basic survival» it is an active verb in Arabic that implies a conscious agency in every act of holding steadfast to the land, «*sumud* brings out human will and agency» (van Teeffelen and Biggs 2011: 6).

Another telling example is that of A.'s granddaughter L. We met A. in the second chapter when describing her loss of land in the Rachel's Tomb area due to the construction of the Wall. While I was having lunch with A., her young granddaughter came to meet me. She is an active and athletic girl who was about thirteen years old at the time. After making my acquaintance and breaking the ice, she brought me a medal. Her grandmother very proudly explained to me:

she was born in 2000 she is with the 2000s, in Palestine she is the first, she went to Ramallah, to Hebron, she goes to Bethlehem, Beit Sahour... she is the first for all Palestine... and she trusts herself that now she will be the first...maybe in Beit Sahour there is a big swim, or in Ramallah where all of Palestine all of her age to find who will be the first. Today she has practice, at 3:30 in Bethlehem (A).

Here we find how one way to keep steadfast is to continue performing all the activities that a young girl L.'s age may wish to pursue such as sports. The fact that despite the Wall, she still has the dream to become the best swimmer and aim to compete also outside Palestine is an act of *sumud*. The medal that L. proudly wears around her neck becomes part of the Wall's assemblage, as do her dreams, and the hours of practice that she dedicates to swimming. Part of the assemblage is also the dynamic *sumud* practiced by the woman whose being-in-the-world in that moment made her put the life of her child on the line to stand up to the soldier, an action that speaks of a body that is not afraid but stands its ground in the face of danger. Moreover also Fayza who practices *sumud* through the body's ordinary tasks such as cooking, taking care of her family, working, earning a living enters the assemblage.

As Qumsiyeh states:

We could write volumes about resistance by simply living, eating, breathing in a land that is coveted. We resist by going to school, by cultivating what remains of our lands, by working under harsh conditions and by falling in love, getting married and having children. Resistance includes hanging on to what remains and doing all the mundane tasks of trying to live (survive) in what remains of Palestine when it has been made crystal-clear in words and deeds that we are not welcome in our lands. That is what is called *sumud* in Arabic (2011: 235).

The term *Sumud* «began to appear in discussion during the 1970s and 1980s, it [sic] used to refer primarily to the outcomes that Palestinian people were striving for as a community...The term was popularized [sic] in 1978 by the creation of an Amman-based organization [sic] called Sumud Funds, which had a very practical mission: to provide financial support to residents of the Occupied Territories who needed help to stay. » (Ibid.: 41). Hence, *sumud* emerged out of the specific Palestinian experience; it is drenched in their shared sense of identity, their story as a people «struggling to cope with the many different aspects of daily life in Palestine» (Ibid.: 54-55) and the temptation to give in.

One of the specifically Palestinian experiences that most frequently Christians narrated to me is the experience of being-in-the-world during the second *Intifada*. This body is a body that, despite the harsh milieu in which it finds itself, continues to keep steadfast:

40 days playing music and trying to make music high to let the children not be afraid and have fear of the high sound bullets. I know it was really nonsense because it never can cover the high bullets and bombs outside, but it makes differences and it helps in a way, it helps. That's what we could do at the time. And we set always in a circle and pray and praise the Lord in high voices that's also another help with the prayers records as well, when we could have electricity (C.A.)

C.A, a Christian mother of two young adults, here describes her family's experience in the midst of the fighting. Their bodies kept *samed* in the midst of the clashes enduring the sound of the bullets and bombs and yet they found the strength to remain steadfast by playing loud music and praying. Also C.A. narrates her frightening experience when her sister came from Jerusalem— despite the curfew, the checkpoint and the soldiers— to bring her and her starving family some groceries. C.A speaks of her courage and her body that went out of the home with the soldier's guns pointed at her to run in between her sister's car and the tank:

[My] sister who lives on the same street in Jerusalem, before the forty days ended, we were really crying and starving, she had Jerusalem ID also, she was crying with her family, her husband's family, what was going on with us she entered the checkpoint by force it was really bad situation, that was one of the dangerous stories I faced death to save my family members and my sister. She said to the soldiers "I am going to go to my family just across the border nearby on the left side" and the soldier warned her "don't go strait or you'll be killed, it's dangerous there," she went strait ... I looked from the balcony, I saw my sister coming from the Jerusalem side I could see over there far away, before they built the Wall. And I could see from far away that this was my sister's car coming ...and a tank with a sniper on top of it opened the door and [pointed] a gun. He was a sniper and from far distance he could kill her. When I have seen them yelling and ready to drive and shoot her...they think that she is going to make some troubles or kill herself or whatever. What I did to save my sister's life? she had 4 babies I couldn't let her hurt herself just to bring us food. I went run away I didn't speak with any soldiers, they were crowded putting the guns and they all had the guns when I went out, they were yelling ... I didn't speak with anyone I just ran, ran, ran just to reach the tank, the tank was driving slowly and my sister was driving fast. They were facing each other I could be in the last moment in the last 4 meters to stop in between them (C.A).

Herein, we are becoming acquainted with the “*samed* body” a body that is not just a “discrete organic entity” or “bare life,” but a body that with its materiality, its physical presence and daily practices enacts *sumud*. However, this body is not the sole protagonist of the analysis, it also interacts with the nonhuman actant assembling under the concept of *sumud*: the cooking with all its supplies and foods; the going to work with a taxi or by bus; the baby and the soldier; the tanks; the prayers; the loud music; the medal and the numerous hours of swimming practice all become actants within the assemblage of steadfastness.

Therefore *sumud* possesses a generative force, «sumud does not only mean reflecting on a shared past experience, but opening the door to a shared future. It means creating a space for more stories, enabling their tellers to discover new horizons and possibilities. It is an empowering act. It is the breaking down of walls» (2011: 10). Here *sumud* speaks of the generative force of a particular people that of the Palestinians as a whole as they possess a shared past and similar stories of their experiences of the encounter with the Israelis. However, in the next section, our intent is to focus on reporting and analyzing the stories of *sumud* that particularly the Christian people of Bethlehem enact, because, as Van Teeffelen and Biggs tell us, «the best way to understand what sumud means to the residents of Bethlehem is to listen to their stories. In so doing, the listener does not only gain a better understanding of sumud as a concept; he or she helps the sumud of the teller to grow deeper» (Ibid., 35). In particular we will be looking at their *sumud* in relationship to the presence and agency of the Wall and we’ll try to understand their *sumud* as part of an assemblage that includes the interaction of the agency of their steadfast bodies, with the songs they sing by the Wall as a form of protest, the watchtowers and the soldiers, the deadness of the Rachel’s Tomb area, the “Wall Museum”.

The Christian concept of Sumud

It was not my first sojourn in Bethlehem. I visited the city several times before with a group of pilgrims. I had seen the Wall and I passed through the bulky gate with a tour bus. However, this time I was traveling alone. My flight landed in the

late afternoon at the Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv and by the time the taxi dropped me off at the Arab bus station it was dark. The nun that was going to host me during the field research warned me that the last bus to Bethlehem left from the station at 7 pm and, as I saw it backing up from its parking spot, I ran to catch it. There are two buses that from Damascus Gate in East Jerusalem travel to Bethlehem. One of them takes you to the checkpoint while the other one goes through the Gilo Tunnel and rides through Beit Jala reaching the end of the line directly inside Bethlehem.

As I got off the bus, I realized that I would have to go through the checkpoint in the dark. I had a big suitcase that a Palestinian man helped me carry through the turnstiles. I walked through the deserted main building where just a couple of Israeli soldiers were keeping the night watch. Then I walked through a second turnstile and down a corridor between a high fence and the Wall. As I reached the bottom a cluster of taxis were waiting to take the Palestinians from this terminal to their homes. That was the end of the road just a few lights illuminated the deserted street. No people, just a souvenir shop, and a restaurant both closed. The Wall enclosed the area that terminated at the other end of the street with a house surrounded on three sides by the Wall. As the taxi turned left in front of the trapped house, life started to swarm in the streets again.

As I found out in the following days, and in the broad daylight, that ghost area is know as the Rachel's Tomb area. The house that I had seen on my first night in Bethlehem belongs to the A. family. I thus decided to make an appointment to meet the mother of the family C.A. who welcomes pilgrims and tourists in her small souvenir shop¹³³. She greets me and while I drink a hot mint tea, she agrees to tell me her story:

I got married in 1998, and I came here and we grew up more big business here with my husband who was a mechanic, a car mechanic he is a professional in fixing cars and selling new spare parts for cars which it was worth it for all Jewish and Palestinians from Jerusalem, because it is very close to Jerusalem...he fixed their cars in a great way, at a very low prices, because here we owned the shop we didn't pay rent, and

¹³³ See Images Chapter 5, Picture 1.

my husband always took care of his professional work to make it extra with the special quality material he used so many Jews and Palestinians used to come and leave it here and fix it and send it back. And also we used to sell here vegetables and fruits planted by women, because here our women, especially the old women, love to plant their gardens and benefits from it... Also we used to sell home collections, gifts and souvenirs from each religion, each month they have different holydays, it was worth it for ... [now] it's all gone because this street it used to be the main biblical roots and the main entrance to Bethlehem, so for all pilgrimage Jewish, Palestinian (C.A.).

This first account deals with the years before the second *Intifada* (exploded in 2000), when the Wall's construction was yet to commence. C.A. speaks of a time when the family business was flourishing and the borders between Jerusalem and Bethlehem were still open and their economies interconnected. Conversely, now there are strict rules that prevent the "importation" or "smuggling" of food and goods from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. The groceries and merchandise are considerably cheaper in Bethlehem thus, those Arabs that can cross the border because they possess either Israeli citizenship or, in the case of the Jerusalem area, a Jerusalem permanent resident ID, are forced to purchase mostly products from the state of Israel at a much higher price.

The situation of C.A.'s family greatly changed with the eruption of the second *Intifada*:

So at the end of 2000 the military blocked the main road after they built a way to Rachel's Tomb to put the gate in front of our building just in front of the road beside my uncle's family so we have been caged in that corner. When they put the blocks and blocked the main door completely, logically we were in a very wrong place, because we were obliged to live in the middle of a military [zone] and have all dangerous life here for many years, till 2004. Since 1996 to 2004 we were living in a most horrible time, but the most hard time was in 2002 if you heard about the war time, the war time were really awful because we have been caged for 40 days, and they caged people inside the nativity Church, they caged for us for 40 days starving (C.A)

C.A. here recollects three different moments that are a common starting point as the catalyst to narrate the experience of living with the Wall: the first step to the enclosure of Rachel's Tomb to the Israeli side; 1996 as the beginning of turmoil since it's the period after December 1995 when, as a result of the Oslo Accords, Bethlehem fell under the Area A; she recollects the time in April 2002 when the

siege of the Nativity Church started preventing Father Ibrahim Faltas¹³⁴—whose memoir of the events reports in detail the events that took place during the siege—the Franciscan monks of the Custodiae Francescane, a group of journalists and Palestinian guerrillas from exiting the Nativity Church for forty days.

Interestingly, when probed about the presence of the Wall and about the episodes connected to the Wall, many Christians like C.A. linked their narration to the times of the second *Intifada*. This aspect is definitely curious since it deals with events prior to its construction. C.A.'s narration is even more fascinating since she explains that the time previous to the construction to the Wall was the most dangerous and most difficult for her and her family's experience. In fact, before the Wall was built, their home stood in the mist of the crossfire and her home was frequently used as a base for the Israeli soldiers. However, her declaration that somehow the Wall brought quietness by putting an end to the times of invasion, crossfire, siege, starvation, night visits from the military, and curfews can be better understood when tied to the following account:

when they built the Wall one day the children went to school and they returned back by themselves surrounded in high Walls and be buried alive in a big tomb that's their description, that's how they described it and they said "mom, for sure we will leave" and I couldn't answer and I told them, just give us the last chance please and I started making more media, I used to refused some, but I continued and more big TVs (C.A.).

If, according to C.A. on the one hand the construction of the Wall enabled the decrease of clashes, on the other the quietness and tranquility was achieved through division and enclosure, which translated in the case of the A. family into being surrounded on three sides by the Wall. The Wall hides their home away from the main access road to Bethlehem through checkpoint 300. In fact, unless one is acquainted with C.A. and her family, one would never know of their presence there. Thus, the image of the tomb evoked by the children of the family describes both the encircling act of the physical presence of the Wall, as well as

¹³⁴ Faltas, Fr. Ibrahim. 2012. *Dall'Assedio della Natività all'Assedio della Città: Betlemme 2002-2012*. Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press.

the outcomes of such enclosure: a social, economical, and psychological death of the family members, who however still struggle to keep living in their home.

Furthermore, the Wall's presence also provokes a few "bureaucratic" confusions. As we discussed in the previous chapters, the presence of the Wall changes the area surrounding it into Area C since it is considered a security measure requiring military presence at all times. Area C is thus under Israeli Control inside the West Bank.

they asked us to pay property taxes twice, which is illegal and the Israelis wanted us with interests for the twelve years ago and the siege time and the occupation time, nobody asked for the property taxes and the Palestinians as well, as we came to Palestine, even though the prime minister signed the Oslo Agreement, it killed here the civilians like us and they hurt us, and this is how it effected us... we are unknown as Israelis, [they] said "you are not in Palestine and not in Israel, and we are controlled by the Israelis, but we are inside a Palestinian city. It's so complicated and we still pay taxes for the Israelis but the Palestinians forces us to pay them another time. Some of our neighbors did it, but I know from our experience from all that happened the politicians from both sides, for getting money, money, money they want money so I fought this issue (C.A.).

Hence, the Wall in the Area C where the A. family lives also imposes the Israeli jurisdiction as well as the Palestinian municipality's taxation system. In this way as C.A. affirms they are neither fully in Palestine nor in Israel, but they have to answer to both authorities. C.A.'s narration is not the only one; AW, a man working for Bethlehem Municipality, also tells a similar story

my home is in C area. I don't know if I have a problem where to go. Now we go to police authority or Palestinian police and they help us. Two or Three months ago, my wife's car was stolen, they stole our car, before six months ago they stole our radio from our car, we don't know whom. We called the police and they said "sorry, we can't do anything" (AW).

Thus, the Wall when assembled with the Christians' *sumud* of refusing to leave their homes standing in its proximities, with the classification of those lands in Area C, and with the Israeli and Palestinian jurisdiction establishes an ambiguous situation in which C.A. is asked to pay taxes twice and AW does not know to whom to report the stolen car.

Although for C.A. the construction of the Wall around her home brought the silence of a tomb, our conversation with AW. reveals also another dimension of the presence of the Wall:

from my house I see the Wall. Any time there is some kind of revolution or problem, all the time we smell gas in our home, and it is very difficult for my son he is 10 years old and when he was 3 years old there was bombing and shooting, he heard the noise and he began to be afraid, so when the problem began, we put songs on TV make it loud (AW).

In this section of the Wall, as well as the segment that runs through Aida Refugee Camp that we'll see later, the presence of the Wall attracts protesters who throw stones against it as a sign of dissent. In response to their stone throwing, the Israeli army retaliates with the use of tear gas. The Christians who decide to continue dwelling in the proximities of these "hot" sections of the Wall have to endure an assemblage of the Wall that includes the stones, the protesters, the tear gas, on occasion the presence of the Israeli army, the shooting of rubber bullets, the children's fear, the loud music or television. Consequently, the presence of the Wall demands a *sumud* body, a body that stays steadfast in the face of the agency of all these numerous actants that take part in the assemblage called Wall.

Herein we can look at the emblematic narration of R. the coordinator of the Sumud Story house that we mentioned in the first chapter.

when I face this Wall, when I am sad, when I am tired, when I am happy, sometimes it differs between the glasses that you are wearing like if you are sad, you see the wall that it is really killing you, and sometimes when you are happy you are not looking at the Wall, you are looking at the land between the two Walls, so it depends on your psychologically how you feel and regarding the Wall itself in general, it is really killing me, it's not just killing people psychologically, but it is also killing and taking a lot of land... it is really not a word, *sumud*, it's how I really want to continue living but not to accept what is going on like the Wall, because I feel that the Wall is killing me, me myself because many times my children are asking why they are surrounding us with this Wall, and what is behind the wall and we are not terrorists why are they surrounding us with this Wall (R.).

If in the first chapter we analyzed this description as the engine that started the reflections on the Wall as an agent within an assemblage of human and nonhuman actants. R.'s words also help us to understand how this assemblage involves a very specific type of body. The body we face is not an exclusively a physical presence, it is not the body as a «brute fact of nature» (Csordas 1994: 1) Through R.'s description of the Wall's agency that chokes her and kills her, we understand just how much the framework of assemblages becomes essential. It is undeniable that R. describes the Wall as possessing agency, but this agency is perceived through the body as the locus of consciousness and experience. Adopting embodiment as the fundamental existential condition through which the body enters in contact with the sensuousness of the material world, we can capture R.'s felt experience of being choked, out of breath. With materiality alone we would have lost both the agency of the Wall, as well as the sensorial experience of the body whose material presence is set against the physical presence of the Wall. We believe that this particular fieldwork allows the understanding of how valuable the concept of assemblages becomes, especially in its capacity to allow the material and phenomenological frameworks to cooperate.

An additional insightful account of the bodily agency interconnected with the Wall is printed in a panel hung inside the SSH:

I usually try to be and present myself as a courageous woman, but to tell you the truth, sometimes when I am driving and it is evening, this Wall (near Kalandia, Ramallah) really frightens me. It looks cold, long, and winding like a snake. When I am driving alongside it, it is an endless road. Although I am not claustrophobic, that Wall makes me feel as though I am in a bottle. I want to shatter it into pieces. Then I feel as if I can't wait until I reach the end of this road. Whenever I drive, the Wall is either on my left-hand side or my right-hand side. It really gives me a feeling of suffocation. I just want somebody besides me in the car to make jokes about the Wall, to laugh, to sing aloud. We try to avoid looking at it directly. We try to continue with our lives, but it is always there. (Hania- Journalist and founder of Palestinian youth media).

Once again, the Wall considered as an assemblage of human and nonhuman actants sheds light on how complex its agency on the local population is. Hania's narration uncovers the interplay between the car, evening drives, the coldness of

the Wall, its snake-like shape that when understood as an assemblage all interact in frightening her, in making her body feel like in a bottle that evokes the idea of being trapped and silenced, her fragility like that of the glass, feeling of suffocation. Her body is also a key actant of the assemblage both in being the locus through which she sensuously perceives the world as well as the medium through which she meets this world and keeps *samed* by continuing to drive by the Wall everyday and making jokes about it.

Thus, through the cases presented here we have started to discover how looking at the Wall as an assemblage of steadfastness discloses aspects of its agency otherwise concealed. The concept of *sumud* and the praxis of being *samed* do not exclusively apply to the Christians section of the population. However, this steadfastness acquires a very peculiar meaning for the Christian population because of the importance of the “land” they are staying steadfast to: the land where Jesus was born, lived, died, and resurrected.

As a Christian to stay in the Holy Land ... we need a good effort to stay also because we are living in between Israeli society and Muslim society and we are starting to be much little in the Holy Land so for us it will be a very big problem of struggling and staying in the Holy Land... A huge number of Christians emigrated outside the Holy Land. So by leaving the Holy Land it makes it empty from Christians (O.)

Enacting *sumud* for the Christians means having to deal with their decreasing number in comparison to the striking majority of Muslims on one side and the Jews on the other.

For those Christians who are still dwelling in Bethlehem and in the “Holy Land,” exercising *sumud* also means saying goodbye to family members and relatives who left, and to preserve the Holy Sights:

well I have this experience with my parents actually. After the first uprising started they decided to immigrate outside... I am missing my parents on one hand, they emigrated to the USA to my sister's place and on the other hand, I hate it because for example in the coming years no Christians would stay in the Holy Land so we have the nativity Church, who is going to stay? Who is it going to guard it? If we are empty from let's say staying here so the Israelis will be the winners. And I have the link like actually Jesus asked us like to hold your crosses and

follow him so we are holding a very heavy cross and we are following, but those who have fears in their hearts will leave (O.)

Here O., the choir director at the SSH, recounts the sadness she feels living far from her parents due to her desire not to abandon the place where Jesus was born. O.'s Christian beliefs both require her to practice *sumud* and also give her a reason as to why stay steadfast to the land. As van Teeffelen and Biggs state, «steadfastness is keeping a connection to one's beliefs, to the cause one stands for» (2011: 39). Thus, through focusing on the Christian population we understand that in the Wall as an assemblage of *sumud* we must also include the Nativity Church, the birth of Jesus, the passages of the Gospels that they interpret as urging them to stay *samed*.

Thus far we have presented examples and narrations of *sumud* enacted by Christians, the way they are coping with the presence of the Wall and how the Wall forces them to become perseverant. In the following section, we will focus our attention on the ways Christians remain steadfast. Thus we will discuss both how the Christian faith enables people to be *samed* as well as presenting the *sumud* of Christian ordained priests and nuns.

Christian *sumud* against the Wall

One of the questions that soon became relevant during the interviews deals with the peculiar Christian way to enact *sumud*. As inhabitants of the West Bank, the Christians do share the aims of *sumud* with their fellow Muslim neighbors, however, they also find a particular Christian commitment to enact *sumud* rooted in their faith. Since God chose to incarnate in this particular land, thus identifying it as the "Holy Land", for the Christians who decide not to leave their homes the enactment of *sumud* acquires a specific meaning and serious mission: guaranteeing a Christian presence in this territory.

Although in the Bible the word *sumud* does not appear as such, being steadfast is definitely a concept that according to members of the SSH project transpires in the scriptures. Furthermore, while conducting the interviews a particular way to be *samed* for the Christian community clearly surfaced. F., one

of the facilitators leading the meetings at the Sumud Story House connects *sumud* as the perseverance required by the Gospel in the verse: “I am the wine and you are the branches”, which he understands as God asking to «be constant in Him» (F.). As F. tells «faith as a Christian helps me go ahead to live my life which is very difficult because of occupation [which] the Wall and the construction of the Wall, makes [it] difficult [for me] to cope with the present circumstances: I have been isolated as a Palestinian Christian to go to Jerusalem» (F.). Thus through his faith he finds the strength to keep steadfast in the face of the odds, and grow in the hope for a better life.

Moreover, the coordinator of the aforementioned project, also addresses the importance of the dimension of faith in the concept of *sumud*:

Sumud for us, for all human beings is very important, to you to me because *sumud* is not just a word, but it's a way of being. It is how everyone faces the problems and continues living with hope and faith, this is *sumud*, this is for all human beings. For Christians it is also in the Bible, it is written in different ways, not the same word *sumud*... when we depend really on God, if we are Christians or Muslims I think this is the only way this is what really *sumud* means. So I think we should really keep this in mind, what keeps us, Christians and Muslims, still living under such difficult circumstances, is our faith in God as well as our faith in our case (R.).

While connecting the experience of both Muslims and Christians in the endeavor to hold steadfast, once again transpires both the call to «depend on God» thus staying steadfast to him in the face of adversities, and the need to keep living with hope and faith through these adversities.

As Father J, Catholic priest at the Beit Jala seminary and professor at the University of Bethlehem, asserts «we [Christians] always have to ask ourselves this question “what does God want from us today in this land?”»¹³⁵ (J.). This is a concept that surfaces in numerous interviews, the connection between God's choice to be born in this particular place and the mission that the local Christians must fulfill:

¹³⁵ Original interview conducted in Italian: «ma chiedendoci sempre questa domanda “che cosa vuole Dio da noi oggi in questa terra» (F.J.)

we were not born here by chance, but because God wants it and wants us to be Christians here on this land; God has a plan for us, a task, a mission that we try to accomplish. It is not just as Christians, that we can do in any part of the world, but to live as Palestinian Christians this is the important thing... trying to see or find our mission here, this is the only important thing¹³⁶ (F.J.).

Central here is the fact that F.J. emphasized the specificity of being Christian in Bethlehem, to be Palestinian Christians in this particular time and place. Thus being a Christian in this area requires a steadfastness that is not divorced from faith, because being Christian in this land, just like being Muslim, defines the cultural identity of people. As *sumud* is deeply connected with staying on the land despite the adversities, for the shrinking Christian community becomes both extremely hard as well as an important mission because Jesus is seen as having «chosen this place and it was a very beloved place for his heart because he otherwise could have chosen what? Italy or USA or whatever, very freedom country very open places but he has chosen this Holy Land so I think it's very precious for his heart like he chose this place so as a follower we have to follow what he is asking us to do» (O.). Staying on the land, and thus being *samed* for the Christians of the Bethlehem Governorate is deeply intertwined with the fact that Jesus lived in this particular land and, even more importantly, that he was born in that particular place:

the project which is left for us as Palestinian Christians, it is the *sumud* project, which means the perseverance, the staying on the land, and not leaving the land and why not leaving the land? Because to me I have to be a Christian when I go back to follow Jesus' steps in part of my Holy Land in which he has been preaching and teaching so the same with me... sticking to the land because of geography and history... this is my Church the early Church of Jerusalem (F.J.).

Once again, F.J.'s words reinforce the deep feeling of connection with the land, a land that is not merely a farming field or a private property where the home is

¹³⁶ Original interview conducted in Italian: «non siamo nati qui per coincidenza, così, ma perché Dio lo vuole quindi essere Cristiani qui su questa terra e Dio ha un piano per noi, un compito, una missione per noi che cerchiamo di viverlo non solo come Cristiani, quello possiamo farlo in tutto il mondo, ma di vivere come Cristiani palestinesi, questo è importante ... cercando di vedere o trovare la nostra missione qui è l'unica cosa» (F.J.)

built, but a land that is Holy because it was chosen by Jesus to deliver His message. It can be inferred that exercising *sumud* for those Christians who have decided to stay on this land is almost felt as a duty to their God.

The mission of the Christians, in addition to staying on the land to protect and guard the holy places, is also described as:

being present, a presence that is at the service of the community. For example the schools and the hospitals [are Catholic], or Bethlehem University for example it is a Catholic university where two-thirds of the students are Muslims. Thus we are here to serve everyone, to give hope to the new generations, to help the weak and the poor¹³⁷ (F.J.).

Father J.'s description of the mission of the Christians, understood here as that of the Church, is being present, meaning being there on the land both to deliver hope and to provide the community with infrastructures to guarantee them health and education. Through the establishment of such institutions the Church tries to provide for the Christians the means to survive and thus trying to avoid their emigration abroad «the Church is always trying to help them to stay here and we cannot ask people to live constantly under difficult circumstances, but what we can do is to help those who are most weak and the poor and to give meaning to our presence, but some young people decide to leave unfortunately»¹³⁸ (F.J.)

Part of my fieldwork was accomplished during the celebration of Easter. So it was that on Easter Sunday I went with sisters A.S., a nun of the convent where I was hosted, to visit the Franciscan nuns at Aida Camp. I had visited the refugee camp before, but I was not acquainted with the nuns whose community had been established in 1960 and recently, in 2011, added a kindergarten for the children of the area. As we walked through the camp, mostly inhabited by Muslims, we started smelling a very intense and ghastly odor as we approached

¹³⁷ Original interview conducted in Italian: la nostra presenza è una presenza di servizio anche perché vediamo le scuole per esempio o gli ospedali o l'Università di Betlemme per esempio è un'università Cattolica con due terzi di studenti Musulmani allora siamo qui al servizio di tutti, per dare speranza alle nuove generazioni per aiutare il più debole e il più povero (J.)

¹³⁸Original interview conducted in Italian: «La chiesa cerca sempre di aiutarli a rimanere qui e non possiamo chiedere alla gente di vivere sempre in una situazione difficile ma quello che possiamo fare è di cercare di aiutare questi più deboli poveri ecc e dare un significato alla nostra presenza ma alcuni giovani decidono di andare, purtroppo sì» (F.J.).

the convent. The reason why I wanted to talk to these nuns lies on the fact that the Wall was constructed right in front of the entrance of their convent,¹³⁹ which had become a dump full of rubble and garbage.

As we start talking sister A.S. and I find out the origin of the pungent odor that had accompanied us through the streets of the refugee camp. The nuns tell us that they had passed the last two weeks, including the Holy Week, with an Israeli tank standing right in front of their gate because some people from the camp were throwing stones. The nuns were forced indoors due to the use of teargas and of this new “weapon” the Israelis have invented: the shooting of manure: «yes, it is a weapon that they have just started using recently... here a woman died of asphyxiation from the smell and we here couldn't resist anymore. Well the teargas make you cry, you close the windows a bit and then it goes away, but that smell... it took four days for it to go away»¹⁴⁰ (F.S. 1). Just like AW's narration of what it is like to live in proximity to the Wall, also the sisters confirm that the area can potentially become a place of disorders and violence. The nuns reveal that at the camp arrive young men who are paid to create disturbances and throw stones against the Wall. These riots are soon sedated by the intervention of the Israeli army who, like during the Holy Week, arrives with tanks and responds with teargas and manure bombs.

The meeting with the Franciscan nuns corroborates the assertion that the mission of the Church and ordained priests and nuns, is being a “presence” on the territory both to guard the Holy Places, such as the Nativity Church, as well as providing help and strength to the community. We are facing yet again another example of how a particular *samed* being-in-the-world of the nuns and priests' bodies is an essential actant within the Wall assemblage. Additionally, in the case of these Franciscan nuns, the idea of Christian *sumud* is deeply rooted in the steadfastness in God: «*sumud* resistance, we resist, we must resist sister with God's help we must resist, but if we don't have Him we cannot»¹⁴¹ (F.S.2).

¹³⁹ See Images Chapter 5, Pictures 2 and 3.

¹⁴⁰ Original interview conducted in Italian: «è un'arma che usano da poco... qui è morta una asfissata dall'odore e noi qui dentro non riuscivamo più a resistere. Va beh i lacrimogeni ti fanno piangere un po' chiudi le finestre e poi passa, ma quell'odore lì ci ha messo 4 giorni a farlo andare via» (F.S.1)

¹⁴¹ Original interview conducted in Italian: «sumud resistenza, resistiamo, dobbiamo resistere sorella con l'aiuto di Dio dobbiamo resistere. Ma se noi non abbiamo lui non possiamo» (F.S.2).

The nuns response to the question concerning the way in which they exercise *sumud* as Christian Catholic nuns reflects the previous statements of Father J. concerning being present in society: «last week during an interview a Muslim woman, when asked what she thought of this kindergarten, defined it an oasis of peace. This means that our presence here is a sign even if we cannot do much else for the neighborhood. We cannot even go out, they tell us that does who start these riots are not even people from here, but they are paid to do this»¹⁴² (F.S.1). We are facing the steadfastness to the land, but once again immersed in the notion of serving the population in this case through the provision of a kindergarten for the camp's children. As one of the sister's recounts, this kindergarten represents a small response to the enclosing and frightening presence of the Wall, a small «oasis of peace» to house the children: «many ask us to sell this home and to leave, but the few Christians who live here, if we also leave what hope do we give? Our testimony here is one of presence, a presence of hope to give hope, that should give hope¹⁴³» (F.S.1).

Thus, herein, we can observe the importance of developing a discourse on the materiality of the body as an actant that needs to reckon with the Wall as an assemblage of *sumud*. Through these examples we find ourselves in front of a steadfast body, and not anonymous flesh. The bodies of these Christians through their materiality meet the world by means of the senses staying steadfast, and at the same time, the world «chicks back» (Barad 1999: 2).

Bordo argues that, this materiality, which includes «history, race, gender, and so forth, but also the biology and evolutionary history of our bodies» also «shapes, constraints, and empowers us –both as thinkers and knowers and also as practical, fleshy bodies» (Bordo 1998: 91). This outlook allows us to look at these bodies particularly as Christian bodies that are entrusted with staying on this land because Jesus' body lived on this land. Being steadfast passes through a

¹⁴² Original interview conducted in Italian: «una musulmana che la settimana scorsa, un'intervista che le ha fatto Telepace mi sembra, che le hanno chiesto che cosa pensa di questo asilo l'ha definita un'oasi di pace. Allora vuol dire che la nostra presenza qui un segno è, anche se non facciamo quasi niente per il quartiere. Non possiamo neanche uscire, perché ci dicono che chi fa questi disordini non sono neanche la gente che abita qui ma è gente che è pagata per fare questo» (F.S. 1).

¹⁴³ «Tanti ci chiedono di vendere la casa e di andare via, però i pochi cristiani che ci sono qui se andiamo via anche noi che speranza diamo? Non lo so la nostra testimonianza qui è presenza, una presenza di speranza che dà speranza, che dovrebbe dare speranza» (F.S.1).

perseverant body, a body that stays and represents a mean to resist, a body that is both “materially” present with its biological functions (breathing, eating, standing, sitting, passing through the checkpoint, refusing to leave, etc.) as well as a body that is deeply embedded in the geography, in the history, and the politics of the place where it live; a body that also embodies and enacts the belief that «God’s message is: I am here... in this land where I was conceived and in this land I was born and here I died, but I won thus you also can win like the Berlin wall fell also this Wall will fall; when we do not know, but it will happen¹⁴⁴» (F.S.1).

The Sumud Story House

Throughout this chapter we have mentioned the presence in the Rachel’s Tomb area of the Sumud Story House¹⁴⁵ (SSH) especially citing the narrations of some of its members and staff. Going back to the manners different agents in the field define as *sumud*, I have highlighted how it has helped Palestinians not to lose hope when facing difficulties bringing out human agency in a creative and nonviolent way when facing the reality of the Wall. In this section I will analyze the aspect of *sumud* that speaks «about [the] rooted Palestinian narrative challenging the many attempts to suppress or deform it» (van Teeffel & Biggs 6), thus *sumud* as «an act of existence and of assertion» (Ibid).

The objective of the SSH is to collect the narratives and stories of local youth and women in as much as they represent tools to enact steadfastness. The Arab Educational Institute (AEI), which is a member of the international peace movement Pax Christi, under the solicitation of its members in the Rachel’s Tomb neighborhood, in 2009

opened the Sumud Story house... in which four women groups... came together for weekly meetings and various social activities. Among those activities were cultural events like the formation

¹⁴⁴ Original interview conducted in Italian: « il messaggio di Dio è che io ci sono, per me è questo noi stiamo vivendo la Pasqua no? In questa terra sono stato messo al mondo qui sono nato e qui sono morto però ho vinto quindi potete vincere anche voi come è caduto il muro di Berlino cadrà anche questo. Quando non si sa, ma cadrà» (F.S.1).

¹⁴⁵ See Images Chapter 5, Picture 4.

of a large human Bethlehem star; the singing and praying from roofs and balconies along the streets; a concert from down under a military watchtower; meditative and interreligious sessions, and the establishment of a women's choir performing next to the Wall (The Wall Museum, 4).

The reasons behind the wish to develop such initiative arose from the need to revive the Rachel's Tomb area, which, after the construction of the Wall annexing the shrine to the Israeli territory, emptied from its inhabitants, a land that originally was supposed to be a Palestinian territory. Before the construction of the Wall: «merchants, used to gather from north of Israel to Gaza, they used to gather in our wonderful nice restaurants in the streets. It was the best, if you ask people... who were here how was this street, they would tell you “we were jealous of the families who used to live here”» (C.A). However, the situation drastically changed «nowadays all that street that were busy for building the Wall now is dead, completely dead. You can't have anything, just the people passing to go through the checkpoint» (O.'s son).

Hence, the establishment of the SSH precisely in this area aimed to encourage people «to keep on, continue your life, get out of your ghettos your island and houses» (F.), to invite the people to come out of their homes and reengage with each other and with the neighborhood that had so drastically changed because of the presence of the Wall. However, in the beginning finding the courage to open an office in the Rachel Tomb area and to convince the inhabitants to participate was not an easy task as R. narrates below,

after the building of the Wall, the area became almost dead and from that time, when I begun working here they told me that I would work in this office and when I begun working here, I felt really frustrated and disappointed because I was really afraid. When I opened the door and closed the door I was alone by myself it wasn't like this...it was really dead because some of the people have chosen to close their shops and emigrate, some of them chose to cry and heal and do nothing, and some of them decided to close their shops and re-open them in the center of Bethlehem. So I was really frustrated. I wasn't really thinking that I would be able to have any contact with anyone here, living here or try to build something. But I decided to do it like I begun collecting data about the people who were living here: names, phone numbers, who are living there, what is their situation. Then I begun knocking at doors, calling them and visiting them at their houses, this is the way I begun because you cannot just

open an institute and ask people to come while they are frustrated and disappointed... I went to these women at the Rachel's Tomb area and then some people were really frustrated and disappointed they said "we will come to the house, to the Sumud Story House if you can end the occupation, if you can destroy the Wall" I told them "what? It's not really logic, I cannot do it myself but together we can do a lot, when we are all together"... Then of all the people who were living here, five of them just came to the house and I began with five, we begun by praying, by writing our plans, what we are aiming at, what we want to do (R.).

Then, after that challenging beginning, the project grew and «during the weekly meetings they started reading their stories so we [called it] Sumud Story House» (F). The first stories that the women wrote became part of what is know as the internal Wall Museum, which became the forerunner of the "Wall Museum" that we will discuss in the next section. As the number of women coming to the weekly meetings kept increasing through time, the SSH developed more creative activities to perform *sumud*. Here O., who became the SSH choir director describes one of these events organized by the Wall:

we did take part in prayer day, we have a special prayer day for peace, so we have been invited to sing close to the Wall, and well I have a very nice story actually with the soldiers like he was on the top of the tower and when we started singing the soldier was looking at us and pointing at us with his gun, so he saw, he thought like it's a demonstration but with singing. So after a while, while we were singing he opened the window, and also after a while he put is gun away and he started smiling and he started waving with his body. So we thought like we are moving the angry of this guy but in a very smooth and rhythmically way of moving his body by earing the music. I love this idea (O.).

As Toin van Teeffelen and Biggs explain: «sumud is human resistance. Singing can be a form of resistance, which connects to humanity, which expresses some kind of resisting, human joy under impossible circumstances» (2011: 38). Thus, activities such as singing next to the Wall constitute both an act of *sumud* as well as a way to reclaim the space next to it and to celebrate life. F., the facilitator during the SSH meetings, tells me another story that took place by the C.A.'s home (the house surrounded on three sides by the Wall)

it is not my story but the story of one of the women... N. a woman from Beit Jala. She was singing and singing folkloric and peace songs. They were happy etc. and then one week ago or two weeks ago she and her son went to Kfar HaZion the Israeli government to take permits. Israeli soldiers and guards move from one place to the other so it seems [that] one of the young soldiers started to sing this folkloric and peace song which he heard from the group including this woman N. So her son was surprised and she was also surprised and she looked into the face of this young soldier and he said [to her] "I do remember you some weeks ago you were near Rachel's Tomb singing sumud and peace songs". He was in the tower of the Wall and it seems that he recognized her face so she [told him what they were doing] "this is our way of expressing our feelings regarding this ugly Wall which you created, it's advocacy. Did I use machine guns? Did I resort to stone throwing etcetera?" It seems that he was happy and enjoying... see how he behaved and expressed his feelings to this woman who was singing by the Wall? It may help to reflect more on behavior of people and especially the soldiers' (F.)

The SSH represents a creative response to the agency of the Wall in the Rachel Tomb area. It allows us to unearth the particular dimension of the Wall's assemblage concerning steadfastness. This AEI project strengthens and valorizes the *sumud* of its participants. In fact, through the initiatives developed by the SSH new actants become part of the Wall's assemblage. Since its construction, the Wall's agency enclosed Rachel's Tomb separating it from the Bethlehem and Beit Jala's citizens; it provoked the closure of shops and restaurants; it emptied the homes and streets in its vicinities. The SSH developed as a response to these effects, and through its initiatives engaged new actants, the choir of women directed by O.; the dancing soldier on the watchtower; the traditional Palestinian songs; the sumud bodies who sang beneath the Wall; human joy under impossible circumstances; the fear of R. when she first opened the SSH in the area; the women weekly meetings; their stories; the publications about Palestinian stories of *sumud*; the advocacy and a way to vocalize fears and hurts; the bodies who exited their homes, faced their fears and stood by the Wall; the panels of the "Wall Museum".

The Wall Museum

When looking at the Wall, one can observe how its surface has become a canvas both to express indignation, to leave a message of hope, or to advertise their restaurants. In December 2007, British street artist Banksy even brought a great deal of attention to the Wall through an initiative called Santa's Ghetto. Along with the London-based organization "Picture on Walls", he relocated the «annual squat art concept called Santa's Ghetto from London to Bethlehem» (Parry, 2010: 9) inviting along fourteen other international street artists to work side by side with Palestinian artists¹⁴⁶. The idea was not merely to raise money to donate to local charities, but to bring people to Bethlehem and witness with their own eyes the presence of the Wall. In fact, in order to acquire the works of art produced by the artists on this occasion, the interested buyers had to travel to Bethlehem and bid in person at the auction. The artists located the headquarters for selling their work in a former chicken shop on Manger Square in Bethlehem in front of the Church of the Nativity. The initiative was very successful and, within a few weeks, Santa's Ghetto raised over one million dollars, but most importantly, it drew the world's attention to the social and political implication of the Wall.

During my fieldwork in Bethlehem, Banksy's graffiti still constituted an element of pride among the people; they had even become a sightseeing attraction for tourists. However, not all the graffiti are still visible and the locals have modified some of them. What really catches the eye now is one of the SSH projects: the "Wall Museum." Thus, in this final section of the chapter, I wish to present this project that represents both a creative actualization of the concept of *sumud*, and constitutes an integral and material part of the Wall as an assemblage: the "Wall Museum"¹⁴⁷. This creative cultural activity holds a very peculiar meaning already starting from the choice of its name:

One side remark about the name: the use of inverted commas around "museum" is on purpose. The museum is not intended to become permanent. It is in fact our hope that the Wall museum

¹⁴⁶ Among them Souleiman Mansour, Abed al Rohan Mousain, Sam 3, Ron English and Sir Peter Blake. Artists from Ramallah, Gaza and Bethlehem's Dehaisha refugee camp are well represented. Others have come from as far afield as Washington DC, Madrid and East Sussex <http://amandagore.wordpress.com/2007/12/05/banksy-moves-santa's-ghetto-to-the-west-bank/>

¹⁴⁷ See Images Chapter 5, Pictures 5-12

stories contribute to cracks in the Wall, to its breaking down, and in fact to the collapse of all Walls around us and around Palestinian people in particular... we hope that the “Wall Museum” by its very success will once destroy itself (AEI- Open Windows 2012: 4-5).

The description of the project alone, which is also printed on one of the panels, reveals a multiplicity of elements that constitute the assemblage called Wall. The inverted commas around the word “Museum,” the stories written on the panels that through their vitality and “liveness” — we can even venture to say through the steadfast bodiliness of the women and youth who lived them and wrote them— are set against the unyielding cement of the Wall.

The “Wall Museum” becomes important to our discussion for two main reasons. First of all it constitutes one of the material elements that takes part in the Wall assemblage. Secondly, it incarnates the multiplicity of meaning of *sumud*. Thirdly, it becomes the way people express their steadfastness in its active connotation, which comes to life through the telling of their stories and by covering the rigidity of the Wall’s presence with the fleshiness of their lives lived in its proximity. Dima, an architect who lives just opposite the Wall describes the “Museum” in this way:

I think that to live your daily life and come to your work is already a way of resistance. We have to continue to live, which a lot of us are doing of course, and to tell the world ... The Israelis basically want us to stop life, so any sign of life that we give is great, I think. It doesn’t have to be political. You can organize a concert, or another cultural activity. These activities make people want to stay here, as it enables them to do and see something else than daily troubles. I think it is good for the mind and spirit. There are many things happening ... Our existence is in danger; we are disappearing ... But by these activities we can show the outside world that we exist and that we continue our lives. We have to reach the world and the world has to reach us. (van Teeffelen & Biggs 2011: 89)

The “Wall Museum” developed in different stages: «three stages passed historically, first the internal, then the second women’s groups wrote other 50-60 [stories] and now our young people, young males and females, wrote also other 50 so now we added that on the other parts of the Wall women’s stories as well as youth stories» (F.). What F. calls the internal “Wall Museum” is the very

first stage in which the women hung their stories inside the SSH. The second stage surrounds the Wall in the Rachel's tomb area and it extends also around the Wall surrounding C.A.'s house. The youth stories are just on the other side of the Wall encircling C.A.'s house where a Banksy's shop is located as well as a small gas station. Furthermore, there is an additional, more recent section of the "Museum" on the section of the Wall near checkpoint 300, along the road where the nuns of the Caritas Baby Hospital recite the Rosary weekly.

Let us look at some of the stories that deal with the presence of the Wall. As we have seen in the second chapter, many of these accounts center on the loss of land, like the panel that Aida from Bethlehem wrote entitled "Olive Harvest":

Because of the Wall the Israelis confiscated our land full of olive trees. We cannot cultivate it anymore nor build upon it. In the past we used to harvest the olives with all the family together, young and old. Schools were closed for a couple of days and everyone was on holiday. All the family went to the land and put down blankets under the trees. During the picking we sang traditional songs. We left a part of the olives for oil and salads, and the rest we kept but now we are buying instead of selling oil. In fact, we can barely buy oil because of the economic situation.

This story, as did the narrations with H. and her sister S. in chapter two, discusses the issue of land expropriation. The Wall as an assemblage to steal land, either in the cases where the Wall has already stolen the lands or where they have been taken in order to construct it, has become one of the stories on the "Wall Museum." This illustrates how all the actants of the different subgroups of assemblages that we have delineated can intertwine in an unpredictable way. In this case, for example, where the actant "land" can be part of both the Wall as an assemblage of steadfastness and the Wall as an assemblage to steal land.

Ghada from Bethlehem, in addition to describing the Wall in its imposing and unwelcoming agency that took away the land that her family owned for generations, also reinforces how initiatives developed by the SSH are part of the assemblage because they represent life in the face of death and expulsion:

The Wall is like a sign to say: "Go away from here". It is intimidating. If you go from the checkpoint toward Gilo you can see all the land that was taken for its construction, and the land

that we can no longer access. Some of the land had belonged to my grandparents. Despite everything, we must continue to resist. To continue with our daily life is a form of resistance. One example of resistance is coming every day to the Sumud Story House. The Israelis want to stop our lives by pushing us out. We can resist with any sign of life, and any activity helps, because activities make people want to stay here. You can organize a concert or another cultural activity. These are ways that we can reach the world and the world can reach us (Reaching out by Ghada, Bethlehem)

This panel depicts Ghada's need to stay *samed* in the face of the stolen family land. Through the activities organized by the SSH, she has the opportunity to remain steadfast through «any sign of life» which can range from the mere «to exist is to resist¹⁴⁸» meaning breathing, growing up, getting married having babies, going to work and making coffee, to resisting through participation in initiatives of advocacy.

Adding to the agency of the Wall instigating Palestinians to leave through intimidation, we have George's story recounting his dreams of moving to a foreign country

Getting out of here, that is what I dream said a boy after tawjihi [matriculation exam]. Why? Because I want to study in a foreign country. A specific subject? No, I just want to get out of here. There is no future here and when I study in a foreign country maybe I can stay there. Maybe build a future there. I don't want to be locked up here with a degree but no job and no money. I want to go and have a better life. Lots of young people want to get out of here, we see no future with the wall. Our parents are against our dream and want us to stay, but with the occupation we want to live in another country and be free (George, from Bethlehem).

In George's account, the Wall speaks of degrees, of many years of studies, of lost job opportunities, of foreign countries seen as treasure islands where dreams can come true. In this Wall assemblage there is a lost future, a sense of being «locked up» and the confrontation with parents who do not want to see their children leave and live separated from them. Herein, where the assemblage includes the youth, it seems that rather than an assemblage of *sumud* the Wall becomes an assemblage that excludes *sumud*. Interestingly, many of the young

¹⁴⁸ See Images Chapter 5, Picture 13.

generations— the ones who have vague or no memories of what it was like when there was no Wall, or who do not remember what life was like before 1948— do not look for a solution either on their side of the Wall or on the Israeli side of the Wall. There is somewhat of a disconnect between the young Palestinians and the territories now belonging to the State of Israel. Thus, for them the solution is abroad, not over the Wall but across the sea.

Conclusively, the “Wall Museum” through its intention to juxtapose the «participants’ beauty of spirit and the wall’s grim ugliness; their human frailty and the military’s metallic might; their gratitude in living and the army’s arrogance in taking; their voices raised in song and the wall’s crushing grip on the throat; their devotion to life and the wall’s predilection for death» (van Teeffelen & Biggs 2011: 89) represents a creative expression of *sumud* in reaction to the Wall’s presence. The “Wall Museum” incarnates materially the oral narrations of the inhabitants of the Bethlehem governorate, and some from other parts of the West Bank, that written and posted as panels on the Wall are meant to inject life in an area “killed” by the Wall. The members of the SSH in order to narrate their stories had to face their fears and come out of their homes and by sharing them on the “Wall Museum” they claim their right to exist and live on this land.

Furthermore, the “Wall Museum”, as a component of the assemblage Wall, allows us to further understand how impact of the Wall on the local population cannot be exhausted through the label of technology of security and occupation. Instead, the “Wall Museum” reveals to us the dimensions of *sumud* and resistance that the Christian people enact to keep living on the land in the face of adversities.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter we tried to illustrate the impact that the Wall has on the lives of the Christian population and to discern what is at stake hidden underneath the overarching narrative of the Wall as a technology of security and occupation. Thus, through the analysis of the ways in which Christian families

and individuals stay *samed* in the face of the Wall's agency and presence; the peculiar Christian way of practicing *sumud*; the Christian way to be *samed* as members of a religious minority; through the establishment of the Sumud Story House and through the elaboration of the of panels of the "Wall Museum" we point out how the Wall became part of an assemblage of steadfastness that connected stories, songs, resistance, the Rachel's Tomb area, the Sumud Story House, watchtowers with dancing soldiers, manure bombs, closed shops, Banksy's murals, tear gas, a kindergarten, the *sumud* bodies of the Palestinian Christians, and other numerous human and nonhuman actants.

The themes expressed in the stories collected in the Sumud Story House report acts of *sumud* in the face of loss of land and the decline of the economic situation of those families who owned businesses in the proximity of the Wall especially in the Rachel's Tomb Area:

The wall affected our economic situation in a terrible manner. As we say in Arabic, "We lost below zero." My brother and his wife had a drugstore and a store in Bethlehem for different kind of products. They had 23 people working for them; 23 families lived from their business. But because the stores are close to the Wall, and people do not like to come there, there are no employees anymore». (We lost Below Zero by Malvina, Bethlehem).

In addition to the narrations of the detrimental action the Wall has on the economy of the businesses in a zone that before the inauguration of the SSH had become a dead area abandoned and avoided by the inhabitants of the Bethlehem, the stories on the panels also speak of the youth's stolen dreams for the future:

Today I was walking through the streets and saw a young boy. The young boy was standing on a wooden board. I walked up to him and asked him what he was doing. I'm surfing he said with a big smile. I sat next to him and asked him why are you surfing? I want to become a surfer. I dream about it every night. I want to be on the ocean. Could you tell me your dream I asked him. He looked at me very strange but he told me his dream. Every night I dream the same dream of being by the ocean. Taking my surfboard and running into the ocean. Feel the waves, feel the water, feel the wind. Seeing nothing but ocean. Then I wake up facing the wall (Adel, from Bethlehem).

As we have also previously observed, the theme of the stolen future recurred in George's wish to go abroad because the Wall obstructs his chances to cherish his talents, to find a job that gives justice to the years spent earning a university degree. The Wall understood as an assemblage of steadfastness accounts both for George's hindrances in achieving one's goals in life and for the boy's impossibility to surf in the sea, as well as L.'s *sumud* in continuing to go to the swimming pool to practice in the hope to become a professional swimmer despite the difficulties that the Wall brings to her life.

Furthermore, presenting the Wall as an assemblage of steadfastness enabled us to address and problematize the role and definition of the body as an actant of this assemblage. In fact, the definition of *sumud*, as we have shown in the first section, ranges from the more static action of staying on the land while leading life in its daily activities, to acts of resistance such as the tax boycott in Beit Sahour both of which require a peculiar way of being-in-the-world. Moreover, the presence of the Wall and its agency is described as an embodied sensation inscribed on the Palestinian's bodies:

After the Wall around Rachel's Tomb was built, I felt terrible. Nobody was walking here, only the cats and dogs. The wall creates a feeling... the feeling that it surrounds you; that you are not permitted to move. Every time, every day you see the Wall. When I look outside through the window to see the sunrise or the sunset the Wall is in front of me. When I go to the Wall I feel that something closes in on my heart, as if the Wall is on my heart... When I see the Wall I also feel ashamed of myself, because it is created by human beings (Malvina, Bethlehem).

This panel entitled "The Wall is on my heart" as well as R.'s description of the Wall that physically chokes her, demonstrates the importance of adopting the assemblage framework. In fact, in order to understand the complexity inherent to the impact of the Wall on the Christian population, the new materialist prioritization of the agency of nonhumans over the humans has to join with a phenomenological approach, which Latour's theorization on assemblages allows.

In this assemblage, the different nonhuman elements that come into play when speaking about steadfastness can join with the body that physically experiences and faces the presence of the Wall. Furthermore, through this

framework we do not lose the agentivity of the Wall and the other nonhuman materials that interact with it, but we can add the human body both understood as a material being —with its locatedness in time and space, in history and culture, with its gender, and biology —and as the locus of consciousness and experience. In fact, it is through embodiment, understood as the fundamental existential condition through which the body enters in contact with the sensuousness of the material world, that we can capture Malvina's felt experience of something closing in on her heart when she approaches it. Thus we consider the body as a «moving assemblage that finds itself enmeshed with other assemblages» (Probyn 2004: 216).

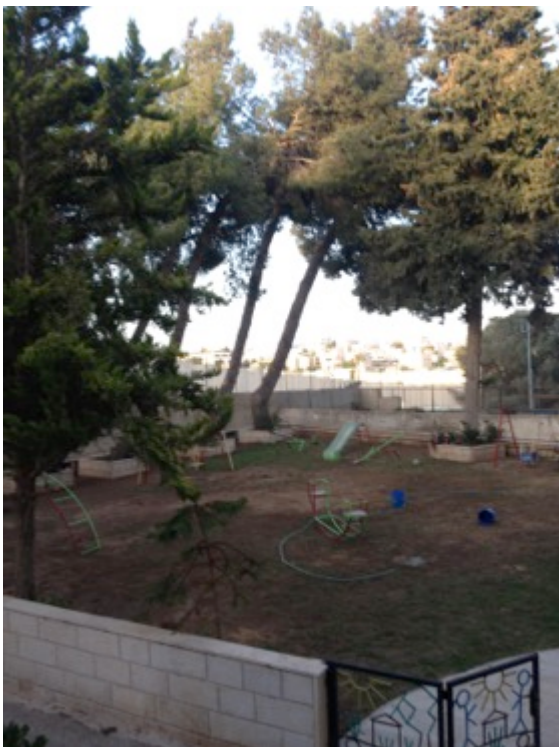
Images Chapter 5



Picture 16: C.A. welcomes me in her family's souvenir shop.



Picture 17: Entrance of the Franciscan Nun's convent in the Aida Refugee Camp that faces the Wall.



Picture 18: Kindergarten of the Franciscan nun's



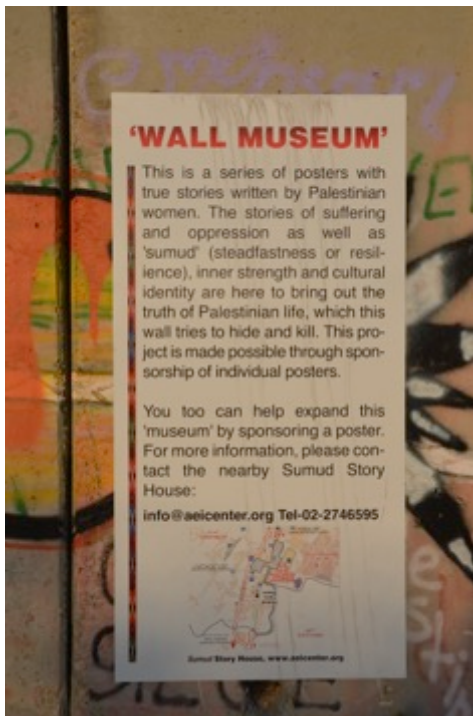
Picture 20: Gathering of the choir at the Sumud Story house.
<http://images.huffingtonpost.com/2014-02-25-sumudhouse.jpg>



Picture 19: Panels composing the Wall Museum



Picture 21: Panels composing the Wall Museum.



Picture 22: Panels of the Wall Museum.



Picture 8: Panels of the Wall Museum.



Picture 9: Panels of the Wall Museum.



Picture 10: Panels of the Wall Museum.



Picture 11: Panels of the Wall Museum.



Picture 12: Panels of the Wall Museum.



Picture 13: Graffiti near Checkpoint 300, which has been erased by the Israelis on occasion of the visit of Pope Francis to Bethlehem.

Chapter 6: The Wall as an Assemblage of Sacred and Profane

Key words: silence, hides from sight, fear, dead area, illness, death, stupidity, selfishness, psychological division, incites hatred, makes you feel impotent, spiritual provocation,

Introduction

As I approached the edges of Bethlehem, the smell of car exhausts became more intense. I met Sister D. at the Caritas Baby Hospital who was going to accompany me toward the checkpoint where we would recite the Rosary. As we strode on the narrow sidewalk we had to pay attention not to bump into the review mirrors of the numerous cars lined up waiting to exit Jerusalem through checkpoint 300. Right before the gate leading to Israel, stood two soldiers controlling the permits of the drivers and opening the trunks of the cars. As they saw us approaching on foot, they fixed their gaze on us, but as soon as Sister D. showed them her Rosary they relaxed and went back to their duties.

It was a late Friday afternoon, 17:30 to be precise, and although in the Middle East autumn delayed its arrival, the evenings at the edge of the desert were already quite chilly. The sun was beginning its descent behind the checkpoint's watchtower and the small group of Christians, mostly foreign nuns who were serving in local communities; Abuna M.; Clemens and a couple of Italian pilgrims, quieted down to begin the prayer. Abuna M. gave me his Rosary and after the introduction of the first sorrowful Mystery, intimated me to start. As I began reciting the Hail Mary we commenced our walk next to the Wall,

beneath its daunting concrete presence. I held on tightly to the Rosary's wooden beads afraid that I might skip one and ruin the moment of prayer. My solo recitation came to an end and the group continued in a polyphony of different languages: Arabic, French, English, and Italian.

As we approached the end of the fifth Mystery, we stopped in front of an icon of a pregnant Virgin Mary painted on the corner slab at the end of the Wall's route. Here Sister D. started singing the *Salve Regina* in Latin and everyone joined at unison. After a minute of silence in front of the Icon, we moved away from the Emmanuel Convent's lamp post that made Mary's golden halo glisten and started heading towards the dark route of the Wall and dispersed at the inquisitive checkpoint spotlights.

This brief narration describes the first time I joined the weekly Rosary at checkpoint 300. This event, in addition to the weekly mass in the Cremisan Valley, represents the *incipit* to the development of my entire research. These two case studies open an interesting outlook onto the agency of the Wall. At the checkpoint, where the Wall is most potently seen and perceived as a barrier that forecloses, a prison that negates movement, as well as a thief separating the people from their fields, a sacred space develops. A similar reaction erupted at the Cremisan Valley that, as we discussed in chapter two, is located in a contested area risking annexation through the construction of the Wall. On the border between Israel and the West Bank municipality of Beit Jala the Holy Mass is celebrated every Friday in a clearing among the olive groves to invoke God's help in preventing the construction from happening.

Thus, when we investigate the impact of the Wall on the lives of the local Arab Christian community in order to understand what is really at stake underneath the overarching and cloaking narrative of the Wall as a technology of occupation, we must insert these events within the logic of the Wall as an assemblage. In this case the assemblage embraces an entanglement of religious practices and rituals and materialities interacting within venues that are not considered official sites of the sacred geography of the Holy Land, but that nonetheless are visited by pilgrims and activists.

Scholars such as Nurit Stadler and Nimrod Luz have been analyzing the particular venue of Our Lady of the Wall in terms of a new Christian shrine

developed as a «political tool by various actors... in a dispute over borders» (2015: 127). This particular research belongs to a wider branch of studies (Alvarez 1995; Anzaldúa 1997; Lugo 2015; Nabhan-Warren 2010; Napolitano 2015; Hernández and Campos-Delgado) addressing the «role of sacred places and pilgrimage centers in the context of contemporary geopolitical strife and borders disputes» (Stadler and Luz 2015:127), which understands shrines and sacred sites as «becoming more influential in processes of determining physical borders» (Ibid.). Thus, through our assemblage framework we witness the resurfacing of our previous findings on the Wall's agency as an assemblage to steal land in connection to the development of the religious based initiatives to contest its presence and construction—a dimension that we disclosed as the agency of the Wall as an assemblage of *sumud*. The actants of both of these assemblages recombine in an innovative way within the dimension of prayer and sacred spaces. Hence, in this chapter we present the Wall's agency as an assemblage of religious bodies; *sumud* bodies; olive trees; Holy Masses; the Eucharist; a shrine developed around the Our Lady of the Wall Icon; a prayer written especially to be recited at this icon; Rosary beads; a road donated by Clemens to the Emmanuel's convent isolated by the Wall; soldiers; guns; checkpoint 300's gate; nuns; activists; foreign pilgrims, Hail Maries.

Material Religion

The *fil rouge* among the entire research is the placement of the agency of the Wall within a new materialist framework. As we previously mentioned, this perspective places at the center of its analysis «material things and phenomena—objects, practices, spaces, bodies, sensations, affects, and so on» (Hazard 2013: 58). Scholars of religion, although with some delay and caution, have also embraced this material turn. The difficulty faced by scholars in this field lies in the category of religion itself: «religion, as constructed in Western discourse from the sixteenth-century reformations onwards, remains defined largely as a set of beliefs to which individual adherents give thoughtful assent... that is, religion is described often as mental and spiritual but only seldom or secondarily as material» (Ibid.).

Religion as a private affair understood exclusively as a set of beliefs, dogmas, doctrines, and scriptures fails to acknowledge the importance of «forms of materiality ... sensations, things, spaces, and performance» (Morgan 2010: 8) that need to be considered as «a matrix in which belief happens as touching and seeing, hearing and tasting, feeling and emotion, as will and action, as imagination and intuition» (Ibid.).

The two case studies that we analyze in this chapter reveal exactly how the new materialist perspective becomes central in understanding the depth and plurality of the Wall's agency. In the case of Cremisan we see how the future route of the Wall gathers a variety of vibrant materials that assemble in unexpected ways. We are referring to the school desk used as an outdoor altar brought to the site dangling outside the priest's car; the Eucharist which becomes the embodied presence of Jesus protecting the olive trees threatened to be eradicated; the Palestinian flag among the branches; the bodily presence of pilgrims, local Christians, photographers, government dignitaries; the Israeli soldiers on their jeeps. All these actants stand democratically assembled responding to and interlocking with the future construction of the Wall allowing sacred and profane to intermingle on the same arena.

However, our understanding of the new material approach does not neglect the importance of the embodied experience of the human actants that still find their space within the concept of assemblages. We agree with Morgan when he says «materiality refers to more than a concrete object or to this or that feeling. Sensation is an integrated process, interweaving the different senses and incorporating memory, and emotion into the relationship human beings have with the physical world» (Morgan 2010: 8). Furthermore, we concur with his understanding that «most believers live their religion in the grit and strain of a felt-life that embodies their relation to the divine as well as to one another. The transcendent does not come to them as pure light or sublime sensations in most cases, but in the odor of musty shrines or moldering robes or the pantry where they pray» (Ibid.). In our ethnographic accounts these two dimensions coexist and cooperate through the adoption of the assemblage framework. However, we part ways with Morgan, when he still displays too much of a bias towards anthropocentrism at the expense of things that in his work «retain analytical

importance only is so far as they pass through the body's interface as sensations and perceptions» (Hazard 2013: 63).

Giving space and recognition to both the incorporated bodily experience and bodily presence of the Christian population as well as focusing our attention to the nonhuman actants tangled with the Wall's agency, in this chapter we show how the impact of the Wall intermingles with the dimension of the sacred developing rituals and shrines in opposition to its construction.

Weekly Rosary at Our Lady of the Wall

After participating at the Holy Mass among the olive trees of Cremisan, I would usually head downhill towards checkpoint 300. At 17:30 in the afternoon in the winter and at 18:00 in the summer, every Friday the Italian Elizabethan nuns of the Caritas Baby Hospital gather near the entrance for vehicles to and from Bethlehem. This passage point consists of a gate that can close in case the Israeli military feels threatened (as we will see later in the chapter), a watchtower with military presence at all times, surveillance cameras, and potent light fixtures. The recitation of the Rosary begins there in plane view both of the Israeli soldiers and of the many Palestinian drivers who wait in line to exit from the checkpoint¹⁴⁹. Regularly the participants, similarly to the Mass at Cremisan, are few in number and are rarely local Palestinians. In fact, as Sister D. discloses «last week it was just the two of us [sister D. and Abuna M] praying together at the Wall, but we prayed anyways because it is by now a fixed appointment that we care about¹⁵⁰» (Sister D.). The reason behind this absence tightly connects to the policies regarding permits to enter Israel

Initially it was only we nuns from our community. Then we tried to invite the Christians living in the neighborhood, but they were afraid of coming close to the checkpoint. At that time, ten years ago, there was a stricter security especially

¹⁴⁹ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 1.

¹⁵⁰ Original interview conducted in Italian «I palestinesi vorrebbero venire con noi ma hanno paure di avvicinarsi al checkpoint. La scorsa settimana eravamo solo io e lui [padre Mario] a pregare insieme al muro però preghiamo lo stesso perché ormai è un appuntamento fisso al quale ci teniamo» (Sister D.).

concerning the inhabitants, thus they were afraid that the soldiers might recognize them...thus there was not, and still there is not a strong Palestinian presence exactly because there is this fear of coming close to the checkpoint and being recognized especially since there is always a soldier in the watchtower who controls thoroughly who goes there¹⁵¹ (Sister D.).

As we saw in the previous chapters, any type of participation to activities connected to or suspected to be connected to political protests or uprisings often leads to the future denial in obtaining a permit to enter the State of Israel. Already the Christians benefit from special permissions almost exclusively in conjunction with major religious festivities and any suspicion of political dissent may prevent, for example, individuals from joining their family in Jerusalem during Easter's Holy Week. This behavior corroborates the assertions developed in the next section, which analyzes the iconic space of Our Lady of the Wall as a developing shrine.

The initiative of the weekly Rosary commenced in the year 2004 when a priest visited the Caritas Baby Hospital, overseen by the Elizabethan sisters, submitting a provocation. In fact, in that year the first cement slabs were placed without anyone truly understanding the meaning and magnitude of this barrier: «we yet did not understand what this barrier meant because its dimensions were unknown; we could guess the route because they were digging the gutters especially here. There were clues even if they were not very clear you could understand that it was enclosing something¹⁵²» (Sister D.). Thus this priest prompted them with this question «and you? What will you do to face the construction of the Wall?¹⁵³» (Sister D.).

As the priest left, the nuns to brood on this question and developed this idea

¹⁵¹ Original interview conducted in Italian «Poi abbiamo deciso di andare, inizialmente eravamo soltanto noi suore la nostra comunità poi abbiamo fatto un po' di proposta ai cristiani qui del vicinato però in loro c'era la paura di avvicinarsi al checkpoint per cui a quel tempo, 10 anni fa, c'era molto più controllo anche dal punto di vista delle persone per cui c'era la paura da parte loro che magari i soldati li riconoscessero... quindi non c'è stata e non c'è tutt'ora una presenza abbastanza significativa dei palestinesi ma proprio perché c'è questo timore di avvicinarsi al checkpoint e di essere riconosciuti visto che comunque nella torretta c'è sempre il soldato che controlla bene chi c'è» (sister D.).

¹⁵² Original interview conducted in Italian «ancora non si riusciva a capire bene cosa significava questa barriera anche perché non si conoscevano le dimensioni si intuiva il percorso perché stavano facendo le canalette soprattutto qua, c'erano degli indizi anche se non erano ben chiari però si capiva che chiudeva, che chiudeva qualcosa» (Sister D.).

¹⁵³ Original interview conducted in Italian «e voi cosa fate di fronte alla costruzione del muro?»

Why not finding something to show that we oppose this thing? But something that will not provoke, something that will not make the Israelis and the soldiers retaliate; something that will become a moment of meditation both for us and for them and that will draw us in the spiritual dimension and in that of prayer... then if we believe in prayer we may ask the Lord to decide what to do. Thus we chose to recite the Rosary. Then we tried to find a day and we decided to do it on Friday also to be in communion with the Muslims [and the Jews] who pray [on that day] as to develop “an ecumenical prayer”.¹⁵⁴

Thus the idea that the Elizabethan nuns devised took form and the first trips to the checkpoint and ongoing construction of the Wall, begun under the suspicious and aggressive supervision of the Israeli soldiers

Thus we began and for a period of time the soldiers gave us quite a bit of problems meaning that they did not want to let us go, so they used to come with their vehicles and would drive back and forth following us with their machineguns pointed at us as if to say “the next time you will not come here”. However, we knew that they apparently couldn’t do anything to us since we weren’t going to do anything particular so we continued like this for a bit until the Wall was being built and then we were able to see the whole construction of the Wall¹⁵⁵.

In addition to my presence, the weekly Rosary gathered a few international nuns from different countries around the world, always at least one Elizabethan nun, EAPPI volunteers, sometimes some aspiring priests and Franciscan monks, many Italian pilgrims, and almost always Clemens, a middle-aged woman whose house has been severed from the family land by the Wall. This initiative has been described by Sister D. as «our pacific *intifada* this is how we have defined it in

¹⁵⁴ Original interview conducted in Italian «perché no? Perché non trovare un qualcosa dove far vedere che noi non ci stiamo con questa cosa? E che sia però una cosa che non provoca per cui non fa reagire appunto gli israeliani e soldati israeliani perché diventa motivo di riflessione e da parte nostra anche da parte loro e anche far mettersi davvero nella dimensione spirituale e la preghiera e di dire se ci crediamo nella preghiera forse chiedere al Signore che veda lui cosa fare” per cui abbiamo deciso di fare il Rosario, di andare al Rosario abbiamo cercato di vedere il giorno ho parlato con alcune persone qua e così proviamo se va. Andiamo il venerdì anche per metterci anche un po’ in comunione con i musulmani che pregano, quindi far sì che diventi, tra virgolette, una preghiera ecumenica

¹⁵⁵ Original interview conducted in Italian «Per cui abbiamo cominciato e per un periodo di tempo i soldati ci hanno fatto parecchi problemi nel senso che non volevano farci andare e venivano con le camionette avanti ed indietro per seguirci con i mitra puntati e proprio come per dire “la prossima volta voi non ci verrete qua” però noi sapevamo che non potevano farci niente apparentemente visto che non eravamo intenzionate a fare chissà che cosa e abbiamo continuato così per un periodo finché il muro veniva costruito e lì si è visto tutta quanta la parte del muro» (Sister D.).

order to exhort from Mary this miracle: that the Wall might fall, that there could be peace in this land, that these children and families might live in peace and be able to move around as they please¹⁵⁶» (Sister D.).

Every Friday in the wintertime at 17:30 and in the summertime at 18:00 the group of Christians starts reciting the Rosary that on this day of the week remembers the Sorrowful Mysteries¹⁵⁷. Depending on whether the soldiers are newly assigned to guard the checkpoint or already familiar with this weekly appointment, the arrival of the faithful and pilgrims may result as more or less smooth. If the soldiers are not yet aware of this initiative, the nuns reassure them by “unsheathing” their rosaries and explaining that they are going to pray. My usage of the term “unsheathing” is not unintentional since Sister D. tells the pilgrims that «there are those who throw stones and those who throw rosary beads». This statement truly reveals the significance of focusing the inquiry on materiality. The beads of the Rosary not only assist the Christians during prayer by embodying each Hail Mary, but it also becomes a *laissez-passer* upon approaching the checkpoint, as well as becoming a “weapon” to be thrown against the Wall.

The moment of prayer is structured as follows: one person throughout the recitation remembers the Mysteries, while different people taking turns in different languages recite half of the Hail Mary while the rest, each one in his or her own language, declaims the second half. As the fingers work their way through the ten beads of the wooden rosaries, the group walks back and forth from the checkpoint to the end of the road where the gates of the Greek Catholic convent of the Emmanuel faces the Our Lady of the Wall icon. Thus, so far we have seen how the Wall as an assemblage of sacred and profane gathers a variety of actants, the nuns, the volunteers, priests, pilgrims, rosary beads, the checkpoint, the watchtower, the machineguns, the Our Lady of the Wall icon, which all become actants assembled in response to the agency of the Wall.

¹⁵⁶ Original interview conducted in Italian «nostra Intifada pacifica ecco così l'abbiamo definita per strappare a Maria questo miracolo che possa cadere il muro che ci possa essere la pace in questa terra che questi bambini e queste famiglie possano vivere in pace di poter muoversi come vogliono» (Sister D.).

¹⁵⁷ The agony of Jesus in the Gethsemane; the scourging at the pillar; Jesus crowned with thorns; Jesus carried at the cross, and the crucifixion of Jesus.

There is another intriguing assembly of human and nonhuman actants that come into play during the prayer of the Rosary. As it turns out, when the Wall was built, the Emmanuel monastery became isolated from the main road and entrance to and from Bethlehem. Clemens, one of the few local Christians who participate at the Rosary, donated a strip of her own land in order to pave an access road for the convent that is also being used for the prayer of the Rosary¹⁵⁸.

Then Clemens joined us; she is a woman with a peculiar story. Basically, when they started building the Wall, she owned all the land on the other side of the Wall that was part of her olive garden and they [Israeli soldiers] without asking anything expropriated her land and uprooted the olive trees. Her husband a year and a half later, after they built the Wall, gave a piece of his land, the piece where the paved road passes in order to allow the nuns [of the Emmanuel convent] to enter otherwise they would not have had an access [to their property]¹⁵⁹.

A few years after the construction of the Wall, Clemens husband who had lost most of his possessions died of a heart attack, «he could not stand looking every morning at this Wall» (Sister D.). Clemens suffered greatly for the loss of her husband who she remembers often when meeting new pilgrims. However, her husband's death became the catalyst to her overcoming the fear to approach the Wall and pray the Rosary with the nuns. As she explained to me for nine years now she became a devoted participant to this weekly prayer.

The ethnography on the Rosary allowed us in this section to unearth a compelling dimension of the Wall. Since its embryotic stage of construction its presence began to exhort a response of dissent, which manifested itself in religious terms. The human and nonhuman actants that the Wall assembles include the gutters sketching its future route, the first cement slabs, the priest who exhorted the nuns to become involved, the soldiers and their machine guns,

¹⁵⁸ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 2.

¹⁵⁹ Original interview conducted in Italian «si è aggiunta Clemens che è la signora che appunto ha una storia particolare. In pratica quando hanno cominciato a costruire il muro, lei aveva tutto l'appezzamento di là del muro che faceva parte del suo giardino con gli ulivi e tutto quanto quindi senza chiedere senza niente loro hanno espropriato la sua terra e divelto gli ulivi e il marito dopo un anno e mezzo da questa cosa, dopo che è stato costruito il muro, da dovuto dare un pezzo di terreno quello che è la strada asfaltata per permettere alle suore di poter entrare perché se no non avrebbero avuto nessun accesso» (Sister D.).

the Elizabethan nun, the wooden rosary beads, the Hail Marias uttered to request a miracle, Clemens and her husband's "broken heart," the strip of land they donated to the Emmanuel's convent, the watchtower and their floodlights, the *Salve Regina* in Latin, pilgrims, the Our Lady of the Wall icon. Hence all of these actants become part of an assemblage that connects the Wall's agency with the elaboration of a ritual that in turn is developing a new Christian shrine among its cement slabs.

A new Christian shrine at a profane Wall

As mentioned above, the weekly appointment on Fridays to recite the Rosary at the Wall commenced in 2004. This year corresponds to the placement of the first slabs of Cement in the checkpoint 300 area. Since that year, the Elizabethan nuns of the Caritas Baby Hospital punctually gather at the entrance of the checkpoint to pray for the demolition of the Wall. In 2010, «at the request of some nuns living near the Wall, a British iconographer painted an icon of Mary on the Palestinian side of the barrier. This icon, known as Our Lady of the Wall, is becoming a site of pilgrimage and veneration» (Stadler and Luz 2015: 129).

This icon portrays a pregnant Virgin Mary instead of the most common Mother and Child image¹⁶⁰. This particularity can refer on, the one hand, to the Book of Revelation (12: 1-5) in which it is «a pregnant woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads» is mentioned (Stadler and Luz 2015: 134). This hypothesis can be corroborated especially given that, before the Wall had been repainted gray for the arrival of Pope Francis in 2014, a large serpentine dragon graffiti was painted on the Rosary's Wall route. On the other hand, there could be a tie to the increasingly popular images, among which one allegedly painted by British graffiti artist Banksy¹⁶¹, of a pregnant Mary accompanied by Joseph that cannot give birth in Bethlehem because the Wall

¹⁶⁰ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 3.

¹⁶¹ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 4.

blocks their way¹⁶². This impediment of movement caused by the Wall obstructs Mary from giving birth to Jesus connecting to the idea that the Wall, in opposition to which Christians pray the Rosary every week, blocks life from being born.

Furthermore, there are a few other peculiarities that the iconographer Ian Knowles portrayed in this image. Mary has her right hand drawn near to her ear. Since the Elizabethan nuns explain that the aim of the Rosary is that of exhorting Mary to grant them the miracle of dismantling the Wall, it can only be assumed that Mary has been painted in a listening attitude. Furthermore, underneath the image of Mary, Knowles has painted cracks on the Wall evoking the Virgin's power to shred this Wall to pieces. Moreover, beneath the image of Mary there is an open door depicting the view of Jerusalem that is now concealed by the Wall and next to the door a key which is the symbol adopted by Palestinian Refugees to invoke their right of return¹⁶³. There is also a pair of boots, hanging on the Wall, a symbol of those Palestinians who await the chance to walk once again on their land that the Wall's construction has stolen (Stadler and Luz 2015: 134).

Thus, the icon of Our Lady of the Wall constitutes a dense element of the assemblage. Firstly, its presence on the Wall resembles in certain ways the same idea of the "Wall Museum" that we described in the previous chapter. Both the Icon and the panels of the "Wall Museum" are integral part of the Wall and both aim to crack it and make it crumble. Secondly, the Virgin Mary has a central role in the Middle East. As Stadler tells us, «Mary is being portrayed as the mother of the timid, landless, and oppressed. At times of unrest, female themes like fertility and motherhood are increasingly broached within the framework of local politics» (Stadler 2015: 751). Particularly important thus is the role of Mary in the Christian communities more generally in the Middle East and particularly in Israel and Palestine. Given the status of the Christian population as a religious minority in the West Bank and an ethno-religious minority in Israel, Mary represents the «defender of oppressed minorities in Israel/Palestine, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt» (Ibid.: 727).

¹⁶² See Images Chapter 6, Picture 5.

¹⁶³ Particularly, on top of the entryway to the Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem has been placed the largest sculpture of a key in the world that has been traveling to foreign countries to divulge the Palestinian situation.

Thus, according to Stadler and Luz, the presence of the icon and the weekly recitation of the Rosary have developed this space into a new Marian shrine. Furthermore, the Virgin Mary is also a key figure because it draws a bridge between Christians and Muslims. For instance, the convent where I was living, hosted young female students of the Bethlehem University both Christian and Muslims. The nuns renting the rooms organized monthly interreligious dialogue among the students. During these meetings, the moments of prayer were dedicated to Mary in order to allow both religious groups to participate.

Given the politically charged message that animates the Rosary at the checkpoint, our work acknowledges and wishes to align with Stadler and Luz's recognition that Our Lady of the Wall is a venue that challenges the «Israel/Palestine's volatile borders and political order» (Stadler 2015: 726). Since this activity was developed in confrontation to the construction of the Wall, demonstrates not only that «ethno-religious struggles over space and resources are altering Jerusalem's sacred landscape» (Stadler 2015: 726), but also that sacred sites have become the battlefields of border altercations and venues that channel the attention «upon the oppression and liberation of... the nation» (Chidester and Linenthal 1995: 3). Thus, having established how the sacred nature of the space produced¹⁶⁴ at the border is a venue not only of spatial contestation but where the prayer itself is uttered as a plea for political change, every visitor «use[s] rituals to press for changes to the landscape in the face of ongoing confrontations» (Stadler 2015: 728) «with the objective of calling attention to their plight as ethno-religious minorities in areas and landscapes dominated by Jews and Muslims» (Ibid.: 740). Furthermore, every year on March 1st the local community organizes a celebration of the anniversary of the placement of first cement slab. Once more, pilgrims and activists from various countries participate and through their bodily presence affirm their dissent for the construction of the Wall. Moreover, on these occasions unique prayers are devised. For example on occasion of the 2015 anniversary, the association "Un Ponte per Betlemme" modified Psalm 86 to fit the Palestinian situation and

¹⁶⁴ We adhere to the idea that « sacred is nothing more nor less than a notional supplement to the ongoing cultural work of sacralizing space, time, persons, and social relations. Situational, relational, and frequently, if not inherently, contested, the sacred is a by-product of this work of sacralization» (Chidester and Linenthal 1995: 6)

distributed it to all the participant to recite in front of Our Lady of the Wall. One of the most meaningful and explicative sections of the prayer reads «Listen to the prayer that potently rises from our communities, /on the day in which we remember this odious wall that generates hate/ that transforms Bethlehem into a prison. /Help us to transform the generic invocations for peace / in strong words of condemnation and annunciation, /of proximity and indignation, / of faith in you, God who saves and consoles¹⁶⁵». This short paragraph both invokes God's help in tearing down the Wall as well as calling to all the participants present at the celebration of the anniversary to give voice to the injustice that the Wall brings to the inhabitants of Bethlehem.

Thus, if the arising of new shrines or revitalization of ancient ones enact as bordering (Napolitano, Luz, Stadler 2015) and cultural identity claims, then the ritualization and presence of pilgrims becomes fundamental to said claims. We concur with Chidester and Linenthal when they state that «although ritual might enact a myth, signal a transition, reinforce political authority, or express emotion, ritualization is perhaps best understood as a particular type of embodied, spatial practice» (1995: 9). It is the bodily presence of the believers who participate at the weekly Rosary, their physicality that stands in those contested spaces praying that reaffirm their right to exist on that land as a Christian minority. We will see further down how the presence of 200 pilgrims from Italy who celebrated the Mass at the Our Lady of the Wall icon influenced and interacted with the other elements of the Wall using «rituals to press for changes to the landscape in the face of ongoing confrontations between agents of Judaization, Islamization, and Christianization of Israeli/Palestinian spaces» (Stadler 2015: 728).

The agency that the Rosary prayer enacts, in addition to developing a shrine, brings visibility to the presence of the Arab Christians and their plight as Palestinians that the physicality of the Wall obstructs. In fact, groups from abroad (predominantly from Italy) are invited to schedule their pilgrimages in

¹⁶⁵ See Appendix Image 6 Original text in Italian «Ascolta la preghiera che si leva potente dalle nostre comunità, / nel giorno in cui ricordiamo questo muro odioso e generatore di odio/ che fa di Betlemme una prigione. Aiutaci a trasformare le generiche invocazioni alla pace /in forti parole di denuncia e annuncio, / di prossimità e indignazione, / di affidamento a te, Dio che salva e che consola».

such a way as to arrive in Bethlehem on Friday to participate both at the Celebration of the Holy Mass in the Cremisan olive groves, and at the recitation of the Rosary at the Checkpoint. Thus both these sites are starting to be included among the Holy Places to be visited during a pilgrimage. The narrative that the Elizabethan nuns deliver is to share with the outside world what the pilgrims see, to communicate experience of being-in-the-world in a Walled city and the precarious conditions in which the local Christians are dwelling. There is an attempt to charge the pilgrims with the responsibility of what is happening in Israel and Palestine because «this is the land of the Christians, and not just of the Christians who live here in the Holy Land, so they [pilgrims] must feel this as their own home and ask with one Hail Mary per week that there could be peace here¹⁶⁶» (Sister D.).

The effervescence that emerges from the development of this initiative, which in turn gives rise to the surge of a new Christian shrine, springs in response to the presence of the Wall. The more the Wall imposes the more the world pushes back. The Wall itself in its physical presence has become the surface upon which the sacred has been materially “posted”. The sacred was even wedged in the crevices of the Wall as the icon of the Virgin Mary of San Luca¹⁶⁷ has been literally pushed in between the two concrete slabs¹⁶⁸. Moreover, Sister D. cemented two additional icons¹⁶⁹ to the Wall, aiming to increase the agency of Mary against the Wall, as well as expanding the shrine itself demonstrating how important it is to focus our gaze on the “power” of materials. Furthermore, the materiality of the tints used to paint the icon, and the bodily presence of the pilgrims all represent human and nonhuman actants that surface underneath the overarching and overbearing label of the Wall as a technology of occupation. Via looking at the Wall as an assemblage of human and nonhuman actants we, thus, uncovered a space in which sacred and profane, symbolic and material coexist and intertwine in response to and in interaction

¹⁶⁶ Original interview conducted in Italian «è la terra dei cristiani quindi non è solo la terra dei cristiani che vivono qui in Terra Santa ma di tutti quanti i cristiani e quindi la devono sentirla come casa loro e quindi devono chiedere una preghiera alla settimana, un Ave Maria alla settimana per appunto questa intenzione, che ci sia la pace».

¹⁶⁷ A sanctuary in Bologna, Italy.

¹⁶⁸ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 6.

¹⁶⁹ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 7.

with the agency of the Wall creating an actual shrine.

Two hundred pilgrims pray at the icon of Our Lady of the Wall

On April 10, 2014 a group of 220 pilgrims and local nuns made their way to the checkpoint 300 in order to witness the presence of the Wall and celebrate the Holy Mass at the icon of Our Lady of the Wall. As we mentioned above, the religious activities that sprung from the presence of the icon have become for the pilgrims who visit Palestine a way to familiarize themselves with the political situation in this land as well as soliciting God's intervention to bring peace and justice. As Abuna M., the Italian priest who has lived in this area for ten years, said "we call upon the Lord because, if horizontally our voice is heard by no one, because this Wall truly breaks everything, they have not yet closed the top, they have not yet built a roof and therefore we believe that by addressing the sky someone will listen to us". On the morning of April 10, the great number of pilgrims arose suspicion among the Israeli soldiers who were guarding the checkpoint. They arrived¹⁷⁰ and asked the priests what was happening. In response the priests replied that they were not doing anything wrong, that they just wanted to pray at Our Lady of the Wall and they would pray for them as well. The soldiers said that if they wanted to pray, they would have to do so inside the gates of the monastery of the Emmanuel and not by the Wall. The argument lasted sometime, but in the end the priests agreed just to move one meter away from the Wall refusing to abide to the soldier's request. As the Holy Mass started, more armed soldiers arrived at the sight. However, none of them tried to interrupt the moment of prayer. They seemed intrigued by this event and they started taking pictures and videos of the Mass. At the conclusion of the celebration all the pilgrims went to the soldiers¹⁷¹ and shook their hands and hugged them wishing peace upon them¹⁷².

¹⁷⁰ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 8.

¹⁷¹ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 9.

¹⁷² Ethnographic account published on the website created by the Hebrew University on researches on sacred shrines <http://sacredplaces.huji.ac.il/sites/our-lady-wall>

This unordinary event further corroborates the influence of pilgrims present at a venue involved in bordering disputes such as Our Lady of the Wall. Similarly to any large gathering happening in the vicinities of the Wall, because of the pilgrims' intention of celebrating the Mass there, the soldiers perceived it as a threat to the militarized section of the Wall eliciting the closure of the gate at the checkpoint. However, given the international status of the majority of the pilgrims present, they could not enforce their request to get away from the Wall and pray within the premises of the Emmanuel monastery. Furthermore, also on this occasion, a special prayer was written to invoke the help of Our Lady of the Wall and made into a *santino* (a holy picture). The prayer was recited at the end of the Mass and distributed to all the pilgrims. Thus, the pilgrims imposed through their prayer the right to claim that venue as a Christian sight and more broadly to reaffirm the right of existence of the local Christian community and their national objectives to liberation.

Weekly Mass in the Cremisan Valley

As I quickly learned, Fridays in Bethlehem and Beit Jala are the busiest days of the week when it comes to dissent against the Wall. In addition to the Rosary at checkpoint 300, another case that caught my attention was the weekly Mass at Cremisan. This religious based initiative also developed in opposition to the Wall, but this time objecting to its proposed route. We became familiar with this case study in chapter two. Herein, I described my first approach to the Cremisan case during the official event on the occasion of the olive harvest, which entailed the participation of representatives from a multiplicity of foreign countries, journalists, and activists. However, this public occurrence represents only a small fraction of the activities taking place among the Cremisan olive groves. From that Friday onward I participated at the weekly Mass organized by former Beit Jala parish priest Abuna I.S.

The Cremisan valley today¹⁷³ represents the outermost zone of Beit Jala's municipality. Its location at the outskirts of town defines it as the border area between the West Bank and Israeli West Jerusalem. As it turns out reaching Cremisan from where I was housed entails either one hour of uphill walk or taking the bus that connects Bethlehem to Jerusalem, or in my case, meeting the priests at the Beit Jala parish and ride with them by car. I decided that it would be more enriching for my research to develop a closer relationship with the local clergy, plus I was still unfamiliar with the surroundings and concerned with the possibility of getting lost. So it was that on Friday October 25th, 2013 I walked up to the parish of Beit Jala. I arrived plenty in advanced eager and somewhat tense for the commencement of my relations with the local clergy.

Around 3:15 Abuna I.S. exited from the rectory and met me with warmth. He then opened the trunk of his white car and swiftly a young seminar student brought what looked like an elementary school desk and set it in the trunk with the four legs sticking out¹⁷⁴. Then he hung the chasubles on the backseat safety handles. As I squashed in the backseat, Abuna I.S. informs me that also a group of pilgrims from Italy was going to join the Holy Mass that day accompanied by Abuna M. Once we parked the car a handful of parishioners greeted us and helped to unload the car and start to set up the temporary altar in a clearing amidst the olive trees. They covered the small desk with a white cloth with red embroidery and oriented it in such a way as to allow the assembly to see the Gilo settlement in the background while looking at the priest¹⁷⁵. On the "altar" also were placed a small silver crucifix, a candle, a golden urn containing the wafers for the Eucharistic ritual, two small glass bottles, three song booklets, the Holy Scriptures, and a ceramic chalice. The chasubles, while waiting for the pilgrims to arrive and begin the Mass at 3:30, were hung on the branches of an olive tree¹⁷⁶.

To my surprise very few locals joined the celebration. Among them consistently participating were M. a young girl who was in charge of reading the scriptures (first reading from the Old Testament and the Psalm); W. a family

¹⁷³ We specify today in as much as the territory of the Beit Jala before the 1967 was extended on the lands where Gilo is built.

¹⁷⁴ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 10.

¹⁷⁵ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 11.

¹⁷⁶ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 12.

father of two who was entrusted to keep a record of each Mass by taking pictures and posting them on the parish Facebook page; a middle aged monk and a government executive. It was quite common for this event to attract many foreigners that were both pilgrims visiting the Holy Land aware of the Cremisan legal battle and sensible to the Palestinian cause, as well as volunteers of EAPPI or of the Hogar Nignos Dios. Sometimes, especially in occasion of special events also the local scouts would participate as well as the Sumud Story House choir.

The Mass is celebrated completely in Arabic and, if there are foreigners joining this moment of prayer, a few word of welcome would be spoken either in English, Italian, or French. Sometimes even the homily, which is usually omitted, could be delivered in a language other than Arabic explaining the issue concerning the surrounding area as well as delivering updates on the ongoing legal battle.

Abuna I.S. explains the vicissitudes that lead to the decision to start celebrating the Mass at Cremisan.

“we decided to study the legal case. We studied and we discovered that we are alone. America is useless, Europe does nothing, the Church and the Salesians some are with us, some are against. What can we do? We turn to God because he listens to us and gives us justice.

As we already expounded in chapter two, the Cremisan valley faces the future construction of the Wall threatening to sever 58 Christian families from their lands. Similarly to the case of the Rosary at Checkpoint 300, the objections towards the Wall’s trajectory are manifested in Christian terms. Once again we face a situation in which issues of bordering are fought on the field of religion. Unlike the space that Our Lady of the Wall demarcates, here we do not face an iconic space; once the celebration of the mass is over, nothing remains among the olive trees to create a sacred space. However, every Friday afternoon, the bodily presence of Jesus comes to comfort the faithful and to encourage the trees

We searched in the Bible when God was alone. Someone said on the cross but we said “no, it is true that Jesus was abandoned on the cross but under the cross there was one disciple and the two Mary and also other women and disciple followed in the distance”. Thus in reality He was not alone, He was alone only in

the Gethsemane. In the Gethsemane He and the olive trees were there. No one else was there because the three disciples who had been summoned fell asleep; they couldn't stay awake even for one hour. So what do we do? Even in that moment Jesus wasn't truly alone, he was with the olive trees and now the olive trees are alone. No one does anything, they are in court, which is not working, we need to pressure people at international level. What do we do? Jesus was present in the Gethsemane and the olive trees encouraged him, now it is Jesus who comes to encourage the olive trees of Cremisan. This is the reason why we celebrate the Mass there even if we risk not being joined by the Orthodox and the Lutherans, but we decided to do it this way because the Mass is the complete physical presence of the Lord of his body and blood. So be it. Thus we started celebrating the Mass and in that moment we discovered that everyone is with us because through prayer the Lord made many journalists come, many bishops, many priests and friends from all around the world, even many from the American Congress followed us and helped us. This is how it began¹⁷⁷ (Abuna I.S.)

Following the definition given that Napolitano, Luz and Stadler (2015) give of borderlands as phenomena as «translocal phenomena that emerge in situated political, economic, religious, and affective conjunctures, amplifying translocal as well as transnational prisms... [That] are informed by multi-sensorial ways to be in the world and by ethical and imagined landscapes, horizons, and theologies» (Napolitano et. All 2015: 94), we can analyze the Cremisan rituals as a Christian venue embedded within political strives challenging national borders. The physical and material presence of the participants to the Mass celebration become part of an assemblage that speaks of policies of border definition in

¹⁷⁷ Original interview in Italian: “Abbiamo deciso di studiare la causa. Abbiamo studiato, abbiamo scoperto che siamo soli. L’America non ci serve, L’Europa non fa nulla, la Chiesa, I Salesiani, alcuni hanno detto siamo con alcuni hanno detto siamo contro, cosa possiamo fare? Ci rivolgiamo al Signore perché lui ci ascolta a e ci dà giustizia. Abbiamo cercato nella Bibbia quando il signore era solo. Qualcuno ha detto sulla croce. Abbiamo detto no, è vero che Gesù è stato abbandonato sulla croce, ma sulla croce c’era un discepolo e le due Marie e anche altre donne seguivano e altri discepoli che lo seguivano da lontano. Dunque non era solo in realtà; era solo solo nel Getsemani. Nel Getsemani era lui e gli alberi di ulivo Davvero in quel momento anche Gesù non era solo, era con gli ulivi e ora gli ulivi, gli alberi di ulivo sono soli, perché nessuno ci sta facendo nulla sono in comune con il tribunale che non serve a nulla, noi dobbiamo fare pressione sulla gente a livello internazionale. Che facciamo? Gesù era presente nel Getsemani e gli alberi di ulivo l’hanno incoraggiato, ora Gesù viene ad incoraggiare gli alberi di ulivo di Cremisan ed è per questo che noi celebriamo la messa là anche se rischiamo di non avere ortodossi e luterani, ma abbiamo deciso di fare così perché la messa è presenza completa del signore fisica del suo corpo e suo sangue. E così sia. Abbiamo incominciato la messa e abbiamo scoperto in quel momento che tutti sono con noi, perché sapendo bene che il Signore con la preghiera ha fatto muovere tanti giornalisti, tanti vescovi, tanti e preti e tanti amici da tutto il mondo, anche tanti dal congresso americano che ci hanno seguito e ci hanno aiutato Questa idea come è stata iniziata”.

religious terms. Every Christian that stands on this contested land under threat of expropriation affirms both the unjust appropriation of land by Israel as well as the right of property and, more broadly of existence of the Christians in the Holy Land. As with the weekly Rosary, also here we find ourselves in front of customary rituals within the Catholic Church that have been reshaped to challenge the presence of the Wall. Acting in this assemblage are thus the priest who celebrates the Mass, the chasubles hung on tree branches, the school desk employed as an altar, the volunteers, the new interpretation of the scripture of Jesus in the Gethsemane, the olive trees, the plans for the Wall's route, the Eucharist that embodies Jesus physical presence. All these human and nonhuman actants are assembled in reaction to the affect of the Wall, which is not an inert tool in the hands of the Israeli government but an assemblage of sacred and profane.

Holy Friday Procession at Cremisan

A peculiar event at Cremisan took place on Holy Friday while I was conducting my fieldwork in April 2015. The appointment was set in the morning around 10:30. On this occasion, conversely from the weekly Masses, the participants were almost exclusively local¹⁷⁸. This event was intended for all the parishioners of Beit Jala and mostly it was families participating with their children who carried wooden crosses during the Via Crucis procession and waved a Palestinian flag. The habitual participants to the weekly Masses were also present: W. to document also this event brought his two children and M. also came and accompanied me. A young Palestinian who had been lately reporting the news about the case and taking pictures during the celebrations also was present. The procession started on top of the road leading to the Cremisan Valley that coasts the olive groves and ends by the Salesian convent. When the function started about thirty to forty people were present. As the route of the Via Crucis progressed alternating walk and genuflection more people joined including the Muslim Imam of Beit Jala. All of a sudden hanging on one of the wooden crosses

¹⁷⁸ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 13.

appeared a black and white checkered *keffiyeh*¹⁷⁹. The solemnity of the procession ended with a convivial *falafel* snack¹⁸⁰ brought by two members of the scout organization of Beit Jala.

The presence of the Muslim Imam, the Palestinian flag, as well as of the black and white checkered *keffiyeh*, which is the symbol of Palestinian resistance, confirms the importance and potency of religion in bordering disputes. These national symbols are incorporated with one of the chief religious events in the Christian Liturgical calendar: Holy Friday. The choice of performing the Via Crucis on the road that will mark the border between Israel and Palestine through the construction of the Wall in its proximity becomes a clear spatial challenge imbued with religious meaning, praxis, and materials. The wooden crosses, the Palestinian and *Keffiyeh*, the priest, the Imam, the prayers, the Christian bodily being-in-the-world that through walking, genuflecting, and making the sign of the Cross affirming their right to exist all take part in the assemblage, all act in response to the «Israel/Palestine's volatile borders and political order» (Stadler 2015: 726) and consequently to the future presence of the Wall.

Conclusion

Through the description of the two ethnographical case studies of the weekly Rosary at checkpoint 300 and the celebration of the Mass at Cremisan, we wished to reveal an alternative understanding of the impact of the Wall on the Christian community. Following the new materialist approach, we discern how the world kicks back in response to and in connection to the Wall's agency while, at the same time, including the embodied experience of the Christian population. In this particular chapter, we analyze the religious sphere that becomes an element of the assemblage. Through the development of these two Christian activities we see how the sacred in the shape of rituals, beliefs, and materials intertwine with the more "profane" affairs regarding border disputes. After all,

¹⁷⁹ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 14.

¹⁸⁰ See Images Chapter 6, Picture 15.

the Wall, despite the spread idea that it represents only a temporary security measure, it will become *de facto* the permanent border between Israel and Palestine. In fact, Chidester and Linenthal tell us «sacred space is inevitably contested space, a sight of negotiated contests over the legitimate ownership of sacred symbols» (1995: 15), and we might add the contention in our case over the safeguard of the Arab Christians cultural identity and their narrative.

Following Stadler and Luz these two venues developed, although somewhat differently, into sacred spaces that through all their materials and bodily presence of local Christians and pilgrims challenge the construction of the Wall and react to its agency. Just one question arises from this acknowledgement: what will be the future of these two venues if, in the case of the Rosary, the Wall will fall? Can we truly talk about a shrine if, in the case of the Rosary, the aim is to see its very “architecture” fall as the prayers request? And what will happen to the Mass celebrations at Cremisan if and when the Wall will be constructed? Should we talk about temporary shrines?

Images Chapter 6



Picture 23: Gathering of the Elizabethan nuns near the gate of checkpoint 300 on Friday afternoon to recite the Rosary.



Picture 24: On the Left Clemen's home facing the Wall and in between the street that was built on the land she donated to help the nuns of the Emmanuel Convent.



Picture 25: Icon of Our Lady of the Wall.



Picture 26: Banksy's graffiti of Mary and Joseph who cannot reach Bethlehem because of the Wall

<http://imgur.com/8Jiz7Wh>

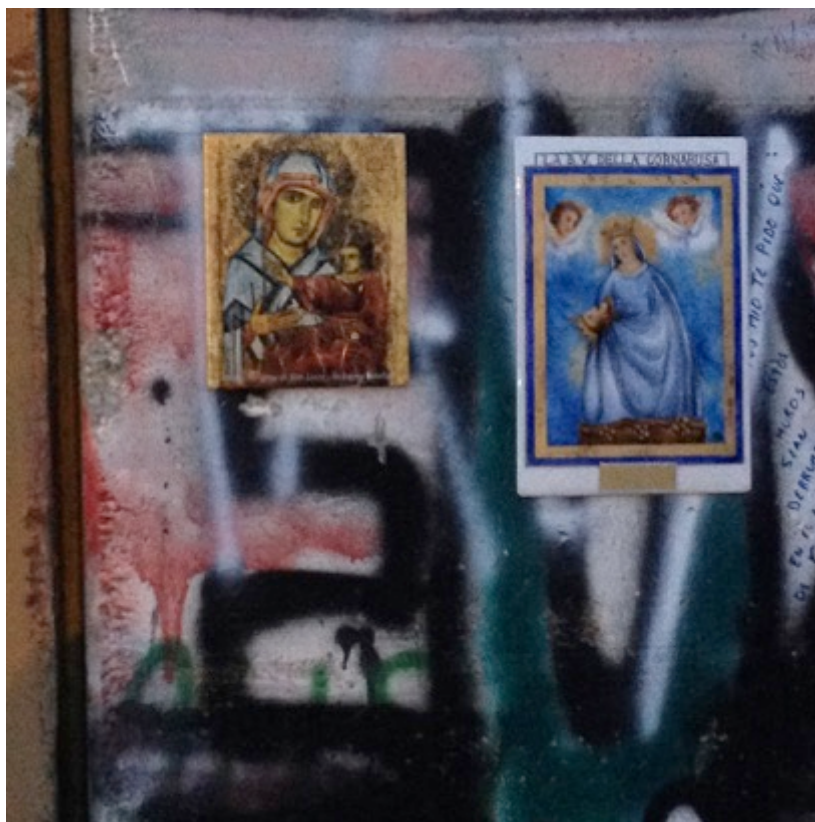


Picture 27: Illustration of Mary and Joseph stopped and searched at the checkpoint to enter Bethlehem.

<https://desertpeace.files.wordpress.com/2012/12/bethlehem-cartoon-mary-joseph-israeli->



Picture 28: Icon of Mary of Saint Luca wedged in between the slabs near the Icon of Our Lady of the Wall



Picture 29: Two additional icons cemented to the Wall by the Elizabethan nuns near Our Lady of the Wall Icon.



Picture 30: As the priests get ready to celebrate the mass at Our Lady of the Wall, the alarmed Israeli soldiers come to assess the situation



Picture 9: At the end of the Holy Mass the pilgrims went to shake the soldiers' hands and wished peace upon them.



Picture 10: Abuna I.S.'s car ready to go to the Cremisan Olive groves to celebrate the Holy Mass using a school desk as an altar.



Picture11: Abuna I.S. and Abuna M. ready to start the Celebration of the Holy Mass. In the background the Gilo settlement/neighborhood.



Picture 12: Preparation before the beginning of the celebration of the Holy Mass among the olive trees in Cremisan.



Picture 13: Gathering of Beit Jala parishioners for Holy Fridays' procession at the Cremisan Valley.



Picture 14: The Palestinian flag and *Keffiyeh* present as symbols of the Palestinian cause in this valley.



Picture 15 Falafel sandwiches are brought for all the participants to the Procession.

Conclusions

Through the pages of this work we aimed at exploring the impact of the Wall between Israel and Palestine on the Christian communities of Bethlehem and Beit Jala. Instead of addressing the most popular point of view that political activists, policymakers, and advocates of human rights have thus far voiced regarding the construction of this Wall, we chose to adopt an innovative framework. In order to capture the complexity of the context under inquiry we realized that it was necessary to embrace a framework, which could account both for the physical presence and impact of the Wall, and for the embodied experience of said agency by the Christian communities. We found that through the adoption and adaptation of Latour's concept of assemblages both the Christians (the human actants), and the Wall composed of its numerous elements (the nonhuman actants) receive equal dignity and attention in the analysis. By the same token, we translated this concern both for the humans and the nonhumans as a cooperation between two unfriendly frameworks, that is, phenomenology and new materialism.

We have discussed how this interpretative frame allows the uncovering of a multiplicity of dimensions pertaining to the Wall's agency. Analyzing the Wall in terms of an assemblage of humans and nonhumans unearths the unpredicted actions of confiscating land, of exercising control and surveillance, of enacting separation, of soliciting creative responses among the Christians to exercise *sumud* despite the struggles they face, of developing new Christian shrines among its cement slabs where the celebration of Holy Masses and prayer of the Rosary aim to contest the Wall's present and future construction.

The contributions brought by this particular research to the anthropological debates are manifold. Firstly, this investigation discloses the importance of focusing anthropological research on materiality. Given the fact

that the increasing concern with materiality and material culture «seems to have hardly anything to say about materials» (Ingold 2007: 1) and that the engagement of scholars is not «with the tangible stuff of craftsmen and manufacturers but with the abstract ruminations of philosophers and theorists» (Ibid.: 2), we demonstrate that adopting a new materialist approach in the study of the barrier between Israel and Palestine adds a vital dimension to the understanding of the effects of its physical presence on the territory and the local population, by delving underneath the overarching and overly popular political and human rights discourses.

Secondly, I believe that this work opens the way towards a dialogue, and hopefully to a future outright cooperation, between those scholars who adopt a phenomenological approach and those who defend the right of things to enter scholarly analysis. This investigation, due to the complexity intrinsic to the fieldwork, has unleashed many questions regarding the efficacy of adopting solely one theoretical framework and has tried to find a solution through the adoption of the notion of assemblages. Hence, we believe that this research may become a point of departure in triggering future debate over anthropological knowledge and analytical effectiveness.

Thirdly, through the exploration and analysis of the Wall between the Bethlehem Governorate and the Jerusalem Municipality, we show the possible contribution that anthropology can provide to the discussion on the rising presence of physical barriers between peoples. In fact, the analysis of the manifold agency that the Wall exercises through an assemblage framework bespeaks of the growing number of walls and fences erected around the world. As a matter of fact, today, we are facing a moment in history in which we witness the crumbling of the premises of globalization. Where social networks have bridged the distances between people and borders have been opened to allow people's movement, the presence of walls are slowly starting to constellate the globe once again. How, then, does this research address this incumbent issue? Does this work address only one specific wall remaining at a microscopic level or can it shed some light onto the more macroscopic events taking place around the globe?

I refrain from promising predictions on the effects that the erection of

walls will have on our ways of perceiving and thinking about the others, on our societies and on the interactions between nations. However, what I wish to discuss is the notion of responsibility. A major question that arises when dealing with assemblages concerns the attribution of responsibilities. As Jane Bennett rightfully inquires in her study on the North American Blackout of 2003 «how does the agency of assemblages compare to more familiar notions, such as the willed intentionality of persons, the disciplinary power of society, or the automatism of natural processes? How does recognition of the nonhuman and nonindividuated dimensions of agency alter established notions of moral responsibility and political accountability?» (2005: 446). Thus, in other words, who is to blame? Is the Israeli government to be held accountable for all the aforementioned effects enacted by the Wall on the Palestinians in general and on the Christians in particular?

The critique that the usage of the concept of assemblages in controversial political issues such as the presence of the Wall between Israel and Palestine rests on the fear «that to distribute agency more widely would be to jeopardize attempts to hold individuals responsible for their actions or to hold officials accountable to the public» (Ibid.: 452). What is at stake here is the distributive notion of agency inherent to the concept of assemblages. If the agency and the capacity to exercise an effect are distributed across a gamut of human and nonhuman actants, what happens to accountability? This framework «presents individuals as simply incapable of bearing *full* responsibility for their effects» (Ibid.: 463) thus interfering with «the project of blaming» (Ibid.). Let us look at how Latour addresses these queries.

Latour discusses (1999) this issue analyzing the slogan divulged by the NRA stating that “guns don’t kill people, people kill people”. He tells us that in adopting a purely materialist perspective «an innocent citizen becomes a criminal by virtue of the gun in her hand. The gun enables, of course, but also instructs, directs, even pulls the trigger –and who, with a knife in her hand, has not wanted at some time to stab someone or something? Each artifact has its script, its potential to take hold of passersby and lure them to play a role in its story» (Latour: 1999, 177). Conversely, he continues, the «sociological version of the NRA renders the gun a *neutral* carrier of will that *adds nothing* to the action,

playing the role of a passive conductor, through which good and evil are equally able to flow» (Ibid.). In other words, in the materialist claim, the upright citizen is actually transformed into a murderer by the gun suggesting that «our qualities as subjects, our competences, our personalities, depend on what we hold in our hands» (Ibid.), while the NRA's declaration also claims that the gun adds something, but different from the moral state of the individual who holds it «for the NRA, one's moral state is a Platonic essence: one is born either a good citizen or a criminal.... The sole contribution of the gun is to speed the act... at no point does the gun modify one's goal» (Ibid.). Then who is responsible for the killing? Who must be held accountable?

Let us try now to apply this query to the case that we have at hand: who is responsible for the restriction of movement, the sense of closure and strangulation, the expropriation of land, and the development of new shrines? Is the Wall no more than a mediating technology for the Israeli military and government policies, or has its agency become independent of its constructors' will? R.'s affirmation that «the Wall is strangling me» can be hardly be attributed to the Israeli government motivations in constructing the Wall. In fact, the aim of achieving security does not directly lead to the feeling of strangulation, but because of the material presence of the Wall, of its appearance, and assemblage of different parts joint together it exercises the action of choking.

Coming back to Latour, he tells us that in the case of the NRA, the citizen when holding a gun becomes someone else «you are different with the gun in your hand...the gun is different with you holding it. You are another subject because you hold the gun; the gun is another object because it has entered into a relationship with you. The gun is no longer the gun-in-the-armory or the gun-in-the-drawer or the gun-in-the-pocket» (Ibid.: 179); now you are an assemblage of gun-gunman. Thus, we are facing a whole assemblage of different actants that exercise the action of killing,

Guns...when connected with humans, make up new networks or assemblages that embolden or enable certain kinds of actions, specifically killing... According to Latour, when a person kills with a gun, it is not only the person who kills. It is the larger assemblage that kills. Its murderous agency is distributed across its many parts including a finger, a trigger, a bullet, a human brain, violent films, and so on. Agency is always complex agency, unlocalizable and distributed across assemblages of

both humans and things (Hazard 2013: 66)

Coming back to our question regarding who holds the responsibility of the action, when dealing with this assemblage framework we have to acknowledge that «it is neither people nor guns that kill. Responsibility for action must be shared among the various actants» (Latour 1999, 180).

Hence, when adopting this particular framework with cases that in addition to specific political decisions regarding one's national safeguard, also speak of justice and human rights such as the Israeli-Palestinian Wall, we risk attracting the anger and critique of people on both sides. For instance, on the one hand the Israelis may justly reject the claims that through the construction of the Wall they already had planned to provoke choking, to prevent Palestinian parish priests to be appointed to parishes in Israel, to cause young women to remain unmarried, or even deny the claim that they cannot be held responsible for any of these effects. On the other hand the Palestinians may angrily object to the "withdrawal" of blame from the Israelis for the effects that the Wall exercises on their lives. Both can be deemed accurate from their own standpoint.

I agree, however, with Jane Bennett when she states that,

perhaps the responsibility of individual humans may reside most significantly in one's response to the assemblages in which one finds oneself participating—do I attempt to extricate myself from assemblages whose trajectory is likely to do harm? Do I enter into the proximity of assemblages whose conglomerate effectivity tends toward the enactment of nobler ends? (Bennett 2005: 464).

The assemblage framework allows for a wide and deep outlook into the issues that we analyze. Through this research, we are able to understand that the presence of what may seem like a series of simple concrete slabs affects the population that interacts with it in more ways that we may have been able to predict. The presence of this Wall, and of walls around the globe, is not in a vacuum, but it inevitably comes into contact and interacts with a variety of different elements present in the context, modifying its agency in unpredictable ways. Thus, the responsibility of the policymakers and of the collectivity is to

examine all the possible implications of constructing walls and then, in conscience, decide if they wish to become part of that assemblage, given the agency that its actants will exercise, and evaluate if that assemblage aims towards noble or less noble outcomes.

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