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MADRID

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24:20

●● EGYPTAIR

22:30

PARIS

CAIRO

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●● ROYAL JORDANIAN

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LONDON

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●● MIDDLE EAST AIR

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●● SYRIAN ARAB AIRWAYS

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DAMASCUS

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The Palestinian Diaspora in Europe

Challenges of Dual Identity and Adaptation

editing
Abbas Shiblak

Refugee and Diaspora Studies, No. 2



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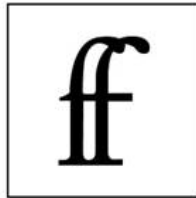
THE PALESTINIAN DIASPORA IN EUROPE
Challenges of Dual Identity and Adaptation

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Abbas Shiblak

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Preface

The papers which make up this book were presented at a workshop held at the Middle East Centre at St. Anthony's College, University of Oxford, between 5th and 6th May 2000, but were later revised and updated. The papers by H.Schulz and S. Shawa were added later.

The workshop on 'Palestinian Communities in Europe' was organised jointly by the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at the University of Oxford and the Palestinian Refugee and Diaspora Centre (Shaml) in Ramallah.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Organising Committee members for their efforts and invaluable help. In particular, I am thankful to Dr. Eugene Rogan of St. Anthony's, Dr David Turton, the ex-Director of the RSC, Dr Dawn Chatty of the RSC, Dr. Nade Al-Ali of Exeter, Dr. Nick Van Hear, Paul Ryder and Dominique Attala of the RSC. Also to Dr. Sharif Kanaana, the co-founder and ex-Director of Shaml and Judge Eugene Cotran, the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Shaml. To Said Kamal and Ghayth Armanzi of the League of Arab States (LAS) and to Ford Foundation in Cairo, for the financial assistance which made the workshop the success that it was.

I would like to extend my thanks to the indefatigable researchers who contributed to this groundbreaking workshop, to the translators: Ramsey Amin, Ihsan Al-Kharouf, Rami Cheblak and to Genevieve de Winter who went through the English text and made useful stylistic changes.

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Reflections On The Palestinian ^{*} Diaspora in Europe

By **Abbas Shiblak**

Associate Fellow, RSC, University of Oxford

Introduction

There is a shortage of studies on the Palestinian diaspora despite the large number of important works written mainly on the political context and on specific Palestinian refugee situations. In fact, Palestinian refugees were often looked upon through the prism of a political perspective. Their existence as a transitional community, their civic status in host societies and their personal narratives were rarely examined. A few studies have come out recently including that written by Hanafi (2001) on the relationship between Palestinian business communities in the diaspora and the homeland, that of Kodmani (1997) on the Palestinian diaspora from a socio-political perspective, my own study - Shiblak (1996) - on the civic status of Palestinian communities in host Arab countries and the forthcoming book by Schulz (2003) which views the Palestinian diaspora within a global context and discusses relevant theological issues.

Although the presence of large numbers of Palestinians in Europe is a relatively recent phenomenon, compared say to their presence in America or the Arab world, the size of their population in Europe is on the increase. The largest communities are to be found in Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Britain and Spain, but smaller communities can also be found dispersed in every other European country. After offering a historical brief of population mobility between Europe and Palestine, this paper argues that there is a Palestinian diaspora in ever more complex formation in Europe at present. It offers reflections and insights on the status of Palestinian communities in Europe and looks into the patterns and causes of their emigration to the host countries. The paper also examines demographic and social characteristics pertaining to these communities and tries to assess some of the primary issues related to the process of adaptation in their new societies.

1. Diaspora in Formation

In his book *Global Diasporas* (1997: ix), Cohen noted that the word 'diaspora' is derived from the Greek verb *spero* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over). When applied to humans, Cohen added that the ancient Greeks thought of diaspora in terms of migration and colonisation. By contrast, Cohen pointed out that for some communities, including Palestinians, Jews, Armenians and Africans, the expression 'acquired a more sinister and brutal meaning'. Diaspora in these cases signified 'a collective trauma, a banishment, where one dreamed of home but lived in exile'. Cohen as well as other scholars (Safran, 1991; Van Hear, 1998) have recognised that the idea of what constitutes a diasporic community has varied greatly. They have also endorsed a fairly loose perspective so as to be able to include various categories of diasporas. Van Hear used another broader term - transnational community - a more inclusive notion, which embraces diasporas, but also populations that are 'contiguous rather than scattered and may straddle just one border'.

^{*} The paper is part of the forthcoming book *The Palestinian Diaspora in Europe: Challenges of Dual Identity and Adaptation*, ed. by the author. The book mainly includes papers presented to a workshop on the subject held in May 2000 at the University of Oxford but were later revised and updated.

Until recently, some Palestinian and Arab scholars (Kodmani, 1997) found the term diaspora problematic and warned against using it in the Palestinian case. This was prompted by the notion that the Palestinian diaspora is a new and recent phenomenon. They also looked upon the use of the term as an implicit acceptance of the dispersal of the Palestinian community, assuming that they were no longer refugees uprooted from their country by force and unable to receive permission to return to their homes. This politically based argument does not conceal the fact that the Palestinian Diaspora has been in formation over the past century although it had acquired special dimensions - as a 'victims Diaspora'- with the mass expulsion of Palestinians following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. In his paper, Muhawi made the point that the word 'Diaspora' is a much more potent word than the Arabic word 'Shatat'. He observed that the former has connotations of painful or unpleasant experience, or an uprooting that is carried out with a certain degree of force which the 'Diaspora victims' experience through history, as in the case of Palestinians.

Although accepting the term for Palestinian communities living outside the Arab region, others argue against using it in the case of Palestinians who live in the surrounding host Arab states. Iliya Harik (1986:315-332)) asserts that their similarity in language, religion and cultural background and their being a majority, as in the case of Jordan, made it difficult to look upon the Palestinian communities in Arab countries as diasporic communities. In fact, one can't see the logic of such an argument even when common cultural features do exist as long as a strong ethnic group consciousness has been sustained over a long time and is based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate, as the case of the Palestinians clearly illustrates. Such distinctive features have been enhanced in the case of the Palestinians not only by their common struggle for their national rights but also by the way they were looked upon and the lack of acceptance of their situation in host Arab societies where they live. Besides, their numerical strength is not the sole factor that determines their fate, as the degree of empowerment they enjoy and the opportunities they are given for actual participation in the adopted society play an obviously crucial part in the process of integration.

Scholars generally base definitions of diaspora on fairly broad working terms such as that of Walker Conner (1955:16-64)) 'the segment of a people living outside the homeland'. William Safran (1991: 83-84) suggested extending the term by applying the concept of the diaspora to 'members of [an] expatriate community' whose members share several of the following features: 1) they or their ancestors have been dispersed from a specific original 'centre' to two or more 'peripheral' or foreign regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland- its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not – and perhaps can't be accepted by their host society and therefore feel that they are to a great extent alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as a place to which they or their descendants would or should eventually return- when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should collectively be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. Clearly all features outlined by Safran and others apply to Palestinian exiled communities whether they are in Arab countries or beyond.

In his book 'Palestinian identity: the construction of modern national consciousness', Rashid Khalidi made reference to the view that self-definition takes place with reference to an

‘other’ (1997: 147, 208). In doing so, he noticed that the clash between the Zionist narrative and the Palestinian national narrative helped to sharpen the sense of collective identity among Palestinians. He further noted that the emergence of the modern Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM) in the 1960s among Palestinians in exile was one of the major factors in reviving and reconstructing a Palestinian nationalist identity after 1948. The exceptionally high level of readiness of Palestinians in Lebanon to immerse themselves in the PMR which Khalidi refers to was in fact an expression of a more fundamental knee-jerk reality. This reality is that the inability of Palestinian refugees to integrate in host Arab societies and the continuing policies of discrimination against them undoubtedly enhanced their distinctive sense of identity as ‘undesirable’ minorities. This factor contributed towards deepening their sense of national identity and their sense of a shared destiny, whether they happened to be inside Palestine or among the scattered communities in exile.

2. Palestine as a Recipient Country for Immigrants

In times past Palestine was considered a relatively prosperous country and a centre of enlightenment in the Middle East. The land of Palestine has always attracted migrants, and those who migrated there developed a deep attachment to the country. With the exception of Jewish migration, which was largely politically motivated, migration to Palestine steadily increased under the British Mandate and between the two World Wars. It attracted, amongst others, large numbers of entrepreneurs, professionals and labourers from neighbouring Arab countries and beyond. In his study on Arab immigration to Haifa under the mandate, Yazbak (1988:89) describes how the prosperous cities attracted labourers and professional immigrants from neighbouring countries and beyond. They named areas according to the country of origin of the bulk of their inhabitants, such as ‘Souk Al-Shwam’ (the Syrians’ Market). They set up their own community centres such as *Al-Jamiya Al-Masriyah* (The Egyptian Association) and *Al-Jamia Al-Suriyah* (The Syrian Association) and those immigrants had an impact on nearly all aspects of the life of the city. Although there are no definitive figures available, at least 100,000 foreign nationals, other than the British mandatory personnel stationed in Palestine, were estimated to be residing in Palestine on a permanent basis in 1948. This constitutes about 8 per cent of the population at the time.

Until recently people of the Arab Mashreq, including Palestinians, did not see Europe as a destination for migration. A few students started to cross to Europe for education near the turn of the 20th Century. The first wave of emigration to sweep the region took place around the turn of the 19th Century under Ottoman rule as part of the general wave of global mobility at the time when migrants headed towards America. Palestinians were part of this wave of migration. The well-established community in Chile today stands as one of the manifestations of this movement. This also explains the presence of one of the earliest Palestinian communities in Europe in the Canary Islands, where immigrants to the Americas often stopped for months and some settled there, as Tarbush explains in his paper presented at the Oxford workshop. In his study on Palestinian emigration to America at the turn of the 20th Century, Adawi (1993: 131) mentioned that the Ottoman Authorities withdrew, in most cases, the nationality of Palestinian emigrants once they acquired American nationality. Thousands of Palestinian emigrants to America were denied entry to Palestine by the British mandatory authorities when they decided to return after the First World War. Based on figures included in the Palestine Royal Commission Report of 1937, Adawi recorded that of the 9,000 Palestinian emigrants to America who decided to return at the time, only 100 were allowed back into the country by the British.

On the other hand, there was a movement in the opposite direction, of foreigners into Palestine which took place for religious and commercial reasons. Palestine had, in fact, the greater share of

Muslim European communities in the region, including Bosnians and Chechnyans as well as Turks and Iranians. Palestine was possibly also similar to Lebanon in terms of foreign Christian communities: mainly Armenians, Greeks, Russians, Germans Templers, French, Maltese and Italians. In some large Palestinian cities such as Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa, there were special quarters called 'Harat', which indicate the ethnic or religious background of these foreign communities.

Even after the expulsion of Palestinians and their dispersal in 1948, few Palestinians chose to settle in Europe and only a handful settled in Britain. These were mostly civil servants who worked for the British Mandate authorities or students who were stranded in Britain after being separated from their families following the dispersal of around 800,000 Palestinians in 1948. Although as Cotran (2000) noted, it was possible for Palestinian immigrants into Britain to replace their Palestinian passports, issued by the Mandate authorities in Palestine, with a British passport until the early 1960s, few opted for this choice, either because they were not aware of such an option or, more plausibly, because they were unwilling to live in a country so far from the homeland they yearned to return to.

It was more than ten years later, in the mid 1960s, that a few hundred Palestinian labourers, mainly holders of Jordanian passports, arrived to work in Germany. They were sent as part of the labour force for the reconstruction programme, in accordance with an agreement between the German and Jordanian governments. The 1967 Israeli occupation of the remainder of Palestine had no immediate effect on this movement towards Europe. Around 300,000 Gazans and West Bank Palestinians, who were outside their homeland for work or study or simply visiting, became displaced when Israel refused to allow them back and they consequently lost their residency rights. The overall majority of these opted to stay in the region. Some of them had been expelled originally in 1948, and settled in Gaza and the West Bank, becoming refugees for the second time in their lives. In short, until recently, there has been no history of large-scale Palestinian migration to Europe. It has been limited to neighbouring Arab states and to the labour market in oil producing countries of the Gulf before further restrictive entry measures were imposed that limited the influx over the past two decades.

3. Patterns and Causes of Palestinian Migration to Europe

Since the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s and 1990s, a change in the pattern of Palestinian migration towards Europe began to manifest as a result of the indirect repercussions of the 1967 occupation and more directly as a result of the political turbulence that swept the region afterwards. Israel blocked the return of thousands of the inhabitants of the occupied territories in West bank and Gaza. As in 1948, Israel decided overnight to alter the status of the indigenous Palestinians in these territories from that of citizens to that of foreigners residing in the territories. It issued a series of administrative and military orders designed to evacuate as many Palestinians as possible and to strengthen its control over the territories. Israeli measures were against international law and the 4th Geneva Convention and amounted to a form of ethnic cleansing by administrative means.

On the other hand, the emergence of the Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM), and the uneasy and sometimes confrontational relations between the PRM and host Arab governments, mainly Jordan and Lebanon, started to take its toll. Increasingly perceived as a threat to their national security by some Arab governments, the Palestinians faced mounting political persecution. The military confrontations in Jordan in 1970 and the civil war in Lebanon which culminated in the Israeli invasion of 1982, coupled with increased restrictions on their movement and the loss of

secured residency rights in some host Arab countries led Palestinians to look for safe refuge beyond the geographical boundaries of the Arab region.

Hanafi (2001:151) for instance, pointed out that Palestinian entrepreneur and business communities began to migrate to Europe, especially to Britain, and also to the United States, as a safe haven for their investments, as an alternative to Lebanon after the civil war had started. The easier mobility of entrepreneurs and business people was soon to be followed by the migration of professionals, such as engineers, doctors and members of the teaching profession, who were mainly attracted to North America, though some went no farther than Europe.

Gradually the desire to leave, which began at an individual level during the 1970s, became a collective desire experienced by a whole community and by extended families, as was the case amongst the inhabitants of the destroyed refugee camps in Lebanon at the peak of the civil war and in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of 1982, the expulsion of the PLO and the massacres which followed. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon began to leave in large numbers for Europe, primarily to Germany, then later to the Scandinavian countries and other countries in Western Europe, as well as to former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe or any country that would accept them and give them rights they had been deprived of for decades: security, political freedom, the right to work, an actual passport, and equal citizenship rights.

An increasing number of Palestinian refugees began to seek asylum in Europe and other countries, mainly Canada and Australia, over the past decade. They come mainly from areas where they are more vulnerable, where their residency status is uncertain and where their social and economic rights are denied. Most of them are holders of travel documents issued by Lebanon or Egypt, holders of temporary Jordanian passports issued for Palestinian inhabitants from the West Bank or Gaza or simply people without documents or who have been refused renewal of the documents they have. More than 10,000 Palestinians arrived in Britain during the 1990s while a larger number sought asylum mainly in Germany and Scandinavian countries.

As European countries increasingly adopt narrower and more restrictive entry measures Palestinians, like other migrants from areas of conflict and deprivation, are being forced to find other more difficult and dangerous routes in their efforts to reach European and other industrial countries. Many Palestinian asylum seekers from Lebanon often pay between \$5,000-10,000 to traffickers. During their long and agonizing journey, they are often exposed to many kinds of risks, enduring various forms of exploitation, imprisonment and in some cases ending up in the wrong country or paying for the misadventure with their lives, such as drowning at sea. More and more Palestinian names are appearing on the lists of names of would be immigrants whose bodies have been washed up on the coasts of the Mediterranean, of South East Asia and on the border rivers of Europe.

It was part of the Zionist scheme in Palestine to try to remove Palestinian refugees expelled from their homes and settle them in areas far from the Jewish state and to push them further beyond the Arab region. Whether consciously or not, the increasingly restrictive measures on freedom of movement and employment, and the denial of secure residency and social and economic rights in some Arab countries seem to facilitate this process. As the chance to return to their country is blocked by the Israelis, and the restrictive measures and discrimination in some host Arab countries increase, the space for Palestinian refugees seems to be narrowing all the time and emigration beyond the region seems to be the only plausible option. It is worth pointing out that some host Arab countries - such as Lebanon and Egypt- tend to remove Palestinian refugees from their refugee registers and withdraw the travel document issued when the holder acquires residency

status in a new country, a practice which Israel ruthlessly applied to the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza and is still applying to the Palestinian inhabitants of Jerusalem.

It is widely accepted that the Palestinian state within the 1967 borders would be a catalyst in resolving the refugee issue. Following the signing of the peace agreement, and the Declaration of Principles (DOP) in September 1993 between the PLO and the Israeli government, well established Palestinian entrepreneurs and professionals in exile, especially those with strong family ties in the West Bank and Gaza, started to establish contact, invest or move back to live in Palestinian-controlled areas. During the period of 1994-1997 the presence of returning expatriate Palestinians families from America and Europe could be noticed in schools and educational institutions as well as in the private sectors and amongst NGOs. One should remember however that among the 122,000 or so expatriates who returned to the Palestinian controlled areas following the signing of the DOP between 1994-1997 (Jamal & Darwish 1997), the majority were part of the PLO contingent or PLO cadres. Israel still retains total control on the PA's ability to issue Palestinian ID documents which would permit people to stay in the country, an arrangement that was supposed to end in May 1998 when the interim period was over and the final agreement was to be signed for the establishment of a Palestinian state. The majority of ordinary Palestinians who choose to return were unable to get an ID issued. About 30,000 who were allowed entry on visitors' visas, stayed "illegally", facing the prospect of jail and deportation by the Israeli authorities.

When the right-wing Netanyahu-lead coalition took power in Israel in 1996, it practically annulled the peace accords, and closed the small window of opportunity that had been opened in Oslo for Palestinians to return to their country. This was soon followed by escalating violence, repression and an increased sense of insecurity. In fact a number of holders of Palestinian passports issued by the PA started to join communities from Lebanon and other countries in seeking asylum in European countries. These tend mainly to consist of single young males united by the common aim of finding refuge from the escalating violence, persecution, and the hope of being able to continue their education, an objective which seems further and further from the realms of possibility.

4. Demographic distribution and Legal Status

It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of Palestinians living in Europe, as they are statistically invisible. In most cases, they are classified together with other immigrants from the countries from which they last arrived or added to the category of stateless persons. In Britain, for example, all immigrants from the 'Middle East' - including Turkey, Iran, Israel and the Arab East - are put in the same basket. Nevertheless, a rough estimate based on various sources, including immigration agencies, PLO representatives and community leaders in several European countries, suggest that there are around 186,000 Palestinians or people of Palestinian descent currently living in Europe mainly in European Union member states, but also in scattered and small numbers in central and east European countries.

Table 1: Distribution of Palestinians in Europe
2001, estimates

Country	Estimated number of Palestinian residents
Germany	80,000
Scandinavian countries	50,000
UK	20,000
Spain	12,000
France	5,000
Greece	4,000
Others	20,000
Total	191,000

According to Ghadban, in his Oxford presentation, Palestinians from Lebanon account for around 80% of the above figure in the case of Germany. The same could be said for other countries, although smaller percentages are from Lebanon. This is due to the relationship between emigration and the status of Palestinians in their first country of refuge. Host countries where Palestinians were discriminated against by being deprived of civil, social and economic rights have formed strong push factors, which have led to migration. According to the FAFO survey (April 2000), emigration amongst Palestinians in Lebanon, for instance, reduced the number of those living in Lebanon at present to about 200,000. This comes far below the more widely publicized figures issued by UNRWA or the official Lebanese figures, which put the numbers, around 150,000-200,000 higher than the total estimated above - or around 350,000-400,000.

The FAFO survey asserts that one out of ten of those who remained in Lebanon had close relatives already living in Europe. There is an alarming desire to emigrate among Arab youth generally, according to the recent report entitled the 'Arab Human Development Report' issued by the UNDP (2002:30). This is due to the general economic stagnation that is sweeping the area. The report noted that almost half of Arab youths interviewed in the 14-20 year old age range expressed a desire to emigrate to other countries -mainly outside the Arab region in what clearly indicates dissatisfaction with current conditions and with future prospects in their home countries. Indeed, Palestinians have greater motives to leave as their chances are even slimmer.

The majority of newcomers among Palestinians in Europe are stateless and hold either refugee travel documents or Palestinian passports, which are still considered to be travel documents under international law until such a time as there is a full sovereign Palestinian state. Needless to say, Palestinian refugees expelled in 1948 lost not just their homes and their properties but their citizenship as well. Shiblak (2000) estimates that over half the total numbers of Palestinians in the world are currently stateless. Being stateless grossly exacerbates the pain of the loss of homeland. The issue of statelessness or non-citizenship is something that they have to live with in spite of the fact that it subjects them and their offspring to continuous acts of discrimination.

One also needs to bear in mind that Palestinian refugees have been excluded from the international protection regime, including the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees (article 1D of the Convention) and the UNHCR Mandate (Paragraph 7 of the UNHCR status and the international convention of 1954 relating to the status of stateless persons - Article 1, Paragraph 2). However, some scholars (including Takkenberg, 1998) rightly argue that the exclusions should only apply within UNRWA areas of operation. Indeed the UNHCR intervened on at least two occasions: once when Palestinians were stranded in Kuwait in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion in 1991, and on another occasion when the Palestinian community in Libya was expelled from that country in the summer of 1995. More significant perhaps is the position which seems to have been adopted by the UNHCR in October 2002 on the applicability to the Palestinian refugees of Article 1(d) of the 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees. The agency clearly adopted the view that the Convention should apply to Palestinian refugees beyond the five areas of operation, namely, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Immigration agencies and courts in some European countries party to the International Convention of 1954 relating to stateless persons and the 1961 Convention to Reduce Statelessness, recently began to be aware of this situation. Some of these institutions began to acknowledge that stateless Palestinian asylum seekers are entitled to the protection offered by these two international instruments. Nevertheless, a state of confusion and the absence of a clear policy on how to deal with Palestinians still exists in most countries amid the increasing trend by European countries to close their doors to immigration while paying lip service to international conventions on refugees and stateless persons. In a hearing held in Budapest in December 2002 by the Council of Europe's Committee on Refugees, the participants – including this author – acknowledged that the solution to the Palestinian refugee issue is essentially a political one that requires the full support of the international community. A series of recommendations were agreed by European parliamentarians, immigration specialists, NGO representatives and international lawyers who participated in the hearing. Among these were: a) to call upon the Council member states to harmonize their policies on Palestinian refugees, b) to apply an international protection regime related to refugees and stateless persons to Palestinian refugees, c) to ease the restrictions on Palestinian entry to Europe for humanitarian and family reunification purposes, and d) to offer work permits for limited periods of time to skilled Palestinian labourers and professionals.

There is an assumption, often made by some Palestinian political activists, that acceptance of Palestinian refugees by industrial countries is part of a 'conspiracy' designed to liquidate the refugee issue. The dispersal of Palestinian refugees in the Arab region and beyond has been and still is one of the objectives of official Israeli policy. Canada, which is the gavel holder of the Working Group on Refugees in the Middle East peace talks, has offered, together with other countries, to take in a number of Palestinian refugees as part of a comprehensive peace agreement based on the full consent of the Palestinian side. This voluntary individual choice would certainly widen the options for Palestinian refugees without undermining their right of return and should, in the view of this author, be one of the main principles to adhere to in any future settlement.

Nevertheless, the assumption that European countries are opening their welcoming arms to Palestinian refugees is a mere fantasy that has no base in reality. European countries are supposed to take refugees from areas of conflict, particularly where people are forced to flee for their lives, as part of these countries' international obligations. The main bulk of Palestinian refugees accepted in Germany and the Scandinavian countries in the 1980s and early 1990s were in fact from this category following the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon and the massacres that followed in the camps. But over the past few years many European countries have become far more timid about applying the International conventions on refugees and stateless persons on their own soil.

European countries are keeping the gates closed on genuine refugees while adopting selective immigration policies targeting skilled foreign labourers in a bid to maintain the relative high standard of living enjoyed by their population compared to the rest of the world (Harris 2002). Genuine Palestinian asylum seekers are finding it more and more difficult to find refuge in these countries and many have been turned back or deported to face bleak prospects including jail, or being left 'in orbit' stranded between airports and at border check points, with no country offering them refuge, or, in some extreme cases, being exposed to the prospect of death.

5. Social Characteristics and Challenges of Adaptation

There is significant diversity between Palestinian communities in Europe, especially with regards to their identity along gender and generational lines, their social and cultural background, their experience in the first country of refuge, their legal status and their level of integration in their new host societies. One could broadly distinguish between two main groups: the smaller and long established and mostly integrated communities and the larger, less privileged expatriates that include the late-comers who began to arrive over the past two decades seeking asylum in Europe. The interaction between the two groups is not always a strong one. However, the two groups share most of the common features identified by Safran (1991:83-99) including the traumatic experience of dispersal, the collective memory and myths built up about the homeland, the idealization of the putative ancestral home and collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity, even its re-creation, and the development of a return movement which gains collective approbation. Also the shift between various categories is common among immigrant communities and Palestinians are no exception. According to Turton and Gonzalez (1999:17), there are two important characteristics that shape minority identities - including those of immigrant communities - which are easily overlooked. Turton explains that they are not fixed and monolithic, but dynamic, situational and always in a process of construction; and they are not homogeneous, but internally differentiated according to such variables as age, experience, gender, education and socio-economic position.

Indeed, the dispersal of small-scattered groups in the new societies and their failure to maintain a strong bond with the homeland for reasons that go beyond their control, have weakened community ties and weakened the sense of identity on a national level especially among the new generation. Furthermore, the political activities of Palestinian communities in Europe have generally waned over the past decade. The responses of various groups were different and influenced by other related factors such as the level of education, familiarity with the new cultural environment and the quality of assistance offered in the adopted societies. Participants at the Oxford workshop noted, for instance, that in Britain, France, Spain and to a lesser extent in Germany and Scandinavian countries, where significant numbers of the community had various levels of higher education within the local system, refugees showed more willingness to open up, integrate and to play a more vital role in public life in the new society they found themselves in. In the case of the Canary Islands, they were ready to assimilate and cross the religious divide, as Tarboush pointed out, yet they managed to keep their distinctive sub-culture and strong community ties within that subculture. While in the Scandinavian countries, recently arrived Palestinian families seem to be largely unprepared for the culture shock of moving, and the new culture is perceived by the majority of Palestinians to be a threat to their values and identity. As a result, there is more tendency towards isolation and limited bonding with narrow family ties, a deeper bonding to the Mosque and an entrenchment in religious groups, while the second generation of Palestinians finds it more difficult to reconcile the root and adopted cultures to one another, and has had to suffer because of the consequent identity crisis.

Notwithstanding the individual success stories mainly among long established, educated professionals and entrepreneurs, the majority of latecomer refugee communities are facing enormous difficulties in adapting to and integrating with the new societies. There are some alarming figures relating to their educational status and employment prospects, especially in the Scandinavian countries and in Germany, as a result of the effect upon their collective psyche of the social, psychological and cultural changes that they have had to adapt to, as well as of the host culture's view of them as alien immigrants. Signs of identity crisis, disillusionment and confusion due to the traumatic changes they have had to undergo are painfully apparent. Such confusion also extends to their perception of their role in the new societies into whose fabric they are attempting to interweave, as well as to their perception of their role in relation to their homeland and country of origin.

Issues of age and gender are clearly crucial factors in determining the attitudes of Palestinian immigrants. The young and the skilled adapted well compared to those who migrated at a later stage in life or without skills. After spending a few years in their adopted country, they were able to resume their duties of supporting their aging, vulnerable families back home. On the other hand, caught between two cultures and the lack of social cohesion, the second generation of Palestinian communities is trying hard to reconcile their parents' inherited values with the dominant values of the new culture and consistently having to redefine and reconstruct their personal sense of identity in an ongoing process of attempted integration. It is this area that is considered the weakest link in the diaspora experience in the case of Palestinians. This is because of the absence of an effective link with their original homeland which, in the vast majority of cases, they are barred from returning or travelling to. These factors, coupled with the absence of community institutions in their new adopted countries that might ease the process of their integration, remain the major causes of turmoil in their lives.

Immigrant women who join their husbands in the new country are most likely to suffer, as Kadour and Foda observed in their joint presentation at the Oxford workshop on Palestinian women in Germany. Both researchers made reference to cumulative sources of stress faced by female refugees as a result of the isolation they experience in a new and alien culture, and of their inability to harmonize productively with its values. Kadour and Foda noted that political activism in the seventies enabled women to overcome this sense of isolation, but their withdrawal from these activities and increasing remoteness in the last decade have forced them back into a domestic cycle of loneliness and unemployment, an inability to communicate effectively with their children, and a desire for an imaginative refuge and nostalgic return to memories of more familiar environments and social values back home.

6. Conclusion

Palestinian emigration into Europe is a relatively recent phenomenon. Waves of Palestinian immigrants are likely to continue coming to Europe as a result of the failure to resolve the Palestinian issue and to put an end to the escalating violence in the occupied territories on the one hand, and the increasing restrictions on freedom of movement, employment and the denial of social and economic rights in the host Arab states on the other.

These communities are diverse and their common features are not fixed or monolithic, but dynamic and situational and almost always in a process of continuing formation and reformation; they are not homogeneous, but are internally differentiated in accordance with variables such as age, experience, gender, education, socio-economic position and a host of other variables. Some long established communities showed more willingness to integrate and to play more vital roles in

public life in the new society they found themselves in, while trying to keep strong bonds with their roots. But the more recently arrived communities of asylum seekers still have to cope with the formidable challenges of adaptation and a more acute conflict of identity which sometimes verges on the critical. Disillusionment and confusion as a result of traumatic changes they have had to undergo are painfully apparent.

Until a full sovereign and viable Palestinian state becomes a reality, these diasporic communities will not be able to enjoy any physical but only virtual links with their homeland. When asked where you do see 'home', a young Palestinian replied by quoting an Arab proverb, 'Matrah ma btirzaq ilzaq' ("Where you can make a buck, stick it out"). 'Home' for this young man is defined in the collective. Home is Lebanon, where his family live and where he grew up. It is also England, where he works and found refuge. But Palestine remains vivid within him and all his generation of exiled Palestinians. This diasporic notion is aptly expressed by a young Palestinian American writer, Suheir Hammad (1996), who says, 'Home is within me. I carry everyone and everything I am with me wherever I go'.

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The Palestinian Diaspora Between Nationalism and Transnationalism¹

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Introduction

During the last decade, much has been said about diaspora populations as the true architects of globalisation, transnationalism and hybridity. Dispersal throughout the world, exposure to two or more cultures and identities, maintenance of relations across the globe requiring transnational activities are the main aspects lifted forward as signifying the role of diasporas as globalisers, living in a borderless condition. Diaspora populations seem to confirm that the world is globalised, since peoples in exile need to think away national borders in order to for example stay in touch with kin left behind or living in other countries in the diaspora. Terms such as 'diaspora', 'nomads', 'travellers' are increasingly used as metaphors for a globalised condition of identities in constant motion. Chambers (1994) has for example claimed that all identities are formed 'on the move' and that deterritorialisation is a state of affairs also for those not formally displaced. The sense of being lost/dispersed is (supposedly) universal in a globalizing world.

However, and as the Palestinian case illustrates, transnational activities do not *necessarily* lead to hybrid identities. Rather, transnational networks and connections may also be ways to stay national. Also of importance to underline is that mobility to the Palestinians is for the most part not something to be defined as extravagant or even casual, but their mobility is circumscribed and often coerced. Identity formation in diaspora settings must be seen as always multi-faceted and variegated. For each diaspora population, there are a variety of combinations of transnationalism and nationalism, of mobility and rootedness, of relating to both 'home' and 'host' societies. As we shall see, transnationalism and nationalism are not necessarily opposing principles.

Diasporas: definitions and problems

In the literature, the term diaspora relates to a group of people that has been dispersed or has expanded to at least two countries of the world. Whether force and coercion of some form are necessary conditions is a debated issue. Faist (2000) maintains that a traumatic event is the cause of a diaspora existence, whereas Cohen (1997) has made a useful distinction between various forms of diasporas—not all of them the result of force or trauma. In this framework, Palestinians (along with for example Jews and Armenians) would amount to a 'victim diaspora'. In terms of identity, there is often a strong sense of community with other members of that diaspora, and an uneasy relationship with the host society (cf. Safran 1991: 83 f.; Clifford 1994: 304 f.; Cohen 1997: 26). For the term to be suitable, a transnational existence is required—a dispersal and a diffusion throughout the world. Also, a time-aspect is required; simply dispersal does not necessarily imply the constitution of a diaspora population. It needs to have existed for some time and it needs to be an enduring condition. To diaspora populations, homeland still accrues central meaning. Connections are maintained, and often, the homeland is commemorated as a glorified place of strong importance.

Another point of contention is however precisely the role of homeland. For example Clifford (1994) has argued that a homeland lost must not necessarily serve a cardinal role in identity

¹ This article is based on a larger research project on the Palestinian diaspora in a global perspective. The results of this project will be published by Routledge in cooperation with University of Washington Press and the title is *The Palestinian Diaspora: Politics of Homeland and Formation of Identities*. (forthcoming 2003).

formation in the diaspora. It is thus not necessarily territory, as an existing, physical entity, but the lack of it, that defines diasporic communities. Identity is often shaped by displacement. Therefore, displacement and dispersal do not mean that the meaning of place becomes redundant. Rather, there is often (if not always) a strong sense of place, or an image of a place left behind. However, a 'homeland' may be important not always (only) as something to be remembered in its own right, but as a mere symbol of rootedness. 'Having a homeland' to relate to is supposedly a way of positioning oneself in time as well as space. In the modern era, 'homeland' has become naturalised, routinised: you are simply expected not only to be rooted in a homeland, but to have your identity inscribed in legal documents enabling you to leave your homeland and return without problems.

The very term diaspora might thus widen our understanding of communities in exile, pointing toward multiple forms and options of relations and identification etc. The notion of diaspora takes as its starting-point communities away from homeland thus (to a certain extent) liberating the discussion from the limitations of the nation-state as the prime frame of analysis. Also, diaspora points toward the possibility of multiple relationships and interactions in taking into account the homeland, the receiving country as well as co-members of the diaspora. However, care should be taken as experiences in the diaspora also serve as to fuel strong sentiments of nationalism. The distinctions between 'diaspora', 'exile' and other terms used to describe conditions of movement are not clear.

The Palestinian diaspora

In general terms, the Palestinian diaspora is certainly the result of the dispersal in the late 1940s² as well as the second exodus in 1967³, but not all 'members of the Palestinian diaspora community' are refugees or descendants of refugees, but migration from Palestine started in the late 18th century and has continued to be a defining feature of the Palestinian experience as is outlined by Shibliak in this volume.

The experience of diaspora/exile is highly differently lived and sensed between different contexts, exemplified by the marginalisation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the relatively successful integration of Palestinians in the USA. In a European context, the Palestinian experience includes relative affluence and integration as well as isolation and alienation.

In this article, I will outline the basic tension within the Palestinian experience of exile, diaspora and banishment from the homeland. This tension amounts to the fact of creation of nationalism as a result of dispersal on the one hand, and the simultaneous fact of living in a condition of being without territorial anchorage in the homeland, leading to hybridity and a thinning out of a national(ised) identity on the other. The Palestinian author Fawaz Turki has captured the complicated nature of identity as a cause of a *lack of homeland*.

². The number of refugees in 1948–49 is disputed. UN figures estimated the number to approximately 726,000 (cf. Morris 1990). Benny Morris tends to favour the analysis made by the British Foreign Office in September 1949, arriving at the loose figures 'between 600,000 and 760,000' (Morris 1987: 298).

³. This time, the dispersal was not only the result of sheer flight and expulsion. One category certainly left in relation to the fighting. Many of these were refugees from 1948 who had until then resided in refugee camps in the West Bank who now fled a second time. UNRWA estimated that about 200,000 out of whom were 100,000 UNRWA registered refugees fled the West Bank (Schiff 1995: 67). For example, most of the inhabitants of the refugee camps in Jericho left for Jordan.

So it was in the land of others, in the place where it was not, that Palestinians found their peoplehood. For the Palestinians did not truly become Palestinian until their country was dismembered and its population scattered to that state of having escaped. Our name was born in exile, not the homeland. (Turki, 1994: 160)

The new homeland is a non-place. It is thus in a true sense not only 'roots' but to an equal extent 'routes' which generates basis for meaning. Further,

After twenty-five years of living in the *ghourba*, of growing up perpetually reminded of my status as an exile, the diaspora for me, for a whole generation of Palestinians, becomes *the* homeland. (Turki, 1972: 175 f.)

To the Palestinians, the diaspora has been fundamentally formative in shaping a specific national identity. Fragmentation, loss of homeland and dispersal have prompted an identity of 'suffering' at the mercy of external, stronger forces. To the generation who left Palestine, mourning and longing implied a mythologised discourse replicated officially as well as informally in people's stories and narratives. Both Rosemary Sayigh (1979, 1998) and Julie Peteet (1991; 1995) account for the grief and anxiety that characterised the situation of refugees in Lebanon (especially) during the early years of exile.

Dispersal, alienation, and in turn longing triggered resistance and revolution. The forceful eviction from the homeland implied that justice must somehow be restored. As time passed and the implementation of the 'right of return' appeared no closer to realisation, mourning and victimisation were activated into politics of resistance. The liminal condition⁴ was to be transformed. The ideology of 'armed struggle' and 'revolution' was asserted as a prime strategy through which to overcome processes of victimisation and to transcend the state of dispossession, denial and statelessness (Sayigh, R. 1979, 1994; Peteet 1991, 1993; Sayigh, Y. 1997). Outside categorisations of Palestinians as 'refugees' were eventually sensed as pejorative and as pacifying. Rather, Palestinians were defining themselves as 'returnees', implying a purpose in life and a destination rather than an origin. This was active political rhetorics by PLO as well as a slogan nourished by camp refugees expressing resistance through representing themselves as 'returnees' rather than as refugees (Peteet 1995: 177). To be *a'idoun* represented action, an assertion to go back to where one came from. The term 'returnees' also implied that residence in host societies was only temporary.

Diasporas and nationalism

Despite the current accentuation on mobility, travelling and routes and despite diaspora populations actual sentiments of placelessness, diaspora populations often nourish assertive nationalist projects in their specific memories of a place lost.

Space is a crucial component in the creation of nationalism and national(ist) identities, given its potential narrative power in concretizing relations between 'us' and 'them'. An illuminating perspective on the relationship between nationalism and place is (unintentionally) provided by Relph who tells us that the meaning of place is situated in its capacity of separating an 'inside' from an 'outside'. Being inside 'is the difference between safety and danger, cosmos and chaos, enclosure and exposure, or simply here and there' (Relph 1976: 49; George 1996: 2). Collective memory in national(ist) discourses is intimately connected to place and geography (cf. Malkki 1992: 28; Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 11), manifest in Palestinian memories of orange groves and olive trees. The olive tree has become a mighty symbol of the homeland, of rootedness as well as

⁴ In the tradition of Van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1969), Nels Johnson has described Palestinian society as a 'liminal body', as an 'anti-structure', 'defining its presence in terms of its past and its future in terms of inversions of normality and with reference to what it has lost' (Johnson 1982: 65).

of steadfastness (cf. Bardenstein 1999). The landscape of Palestine is a place that is intensely sensed and experienced. It is beheld, smelt and felt, taken in with all senses. Many Palestinians in exile speak of 'Palestine the place' as imprinted in their bodies. Visiting Jerusalem or Ramallah is a bodily experience (cf. Lindholm Schulz 2003). The landscape—in poetry as well as in oral stories—is colourful and filled with scents and colours from olives and oranges, apricots and almonds. It is a promised and abundant land. Yet at the same time, it is a land that has been conquered, raped and captured. In the land mythology produced by the Palestinian diaspora, Palestine is an organism, capable of emotions as well as of actions. Palestine weeps and mourns the people that it has lost. It is therefore not only the Palestinians who have lost Palestine, but the land has lost its people (cf. Kanafani 1978; Bardenstein 1999). At the same time, in commemorative narratives as well as in politics, the land is also capable of resisting forceful change as well as of defying the conquerors. The latter phenomenon is exemplified by leaflets and political discourse during the first intifada (1987–early 1990s), when the 'earth was trembling underneath the feet of the occupier' (leaflet from the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising 1988, quoted in Legrain 1991).

To the extent that diasporas define themselves in national terms and harbour nationalist projects, these political visions seem to reinforce nationalism as an idea and world order structuring principles.

Diaspora discourses and politics frequently embrace the idea of an unnatural disconnection from the essential, ancestral land. To reunite the people with the land and undo the traumatic separation become a political ambition—sometimes to be fought for violently. Those who have been uprooted and therefore supposedly traumatised need to become re-rooted. From the perspective of the nation-state, diasporas are 'anomalies' (Malkki 1992: 33 f.), 'matters out of place' (Douglas 1976), or categories of liminality, in Victor Turner's words (Turner 1969). Thus, host societies often find themselves uneasy containers of nationalist sentiments directed elsewhere. In terms of politics, host societies may be affected by lobbying, politicisation etc (Shain 1999). In relation to the escalating violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2000–2002, this was particularly evident. All over the diaspora, there was mobilisation among both Jews and Palestinians, implying large-scale demonstrations, occasional violence, unrest and a quite tense debate, forcing governments not only to seek a balance in their foreign policy, but to take into consideration the opinions of Jews and Palestinians as their citizens.

Despite this, Clifford has argued that nationalist discourses among diaspora populations hardly comply with actual nation-building.

Indeed, some of the most violent articulations of purity and racial exclusivism come from diaspora populations. But such discourses are usually weapons of the (relatively) weak. It is important to distinguish nationalist critical longing and nostalgic or eschatological visions, from actual nation-building. (Clifford 1994: 311)

According to Clifford, diaspora's relationship to nationalism do not include (typically) the vision/project of a nation-state with its attributes and institutions. Nationalism in diaspora settings is rather to be seen as strategies of resistance by the marginalised and as defensive reactions in order to preserve identities and in order to counter processes of exclusion. Institutions and structures may thus be set up in order to serve such purposes. Yet, nation-state buildings in exile certainly exist (cf. Seton-Watson 1977) and one of the most obvious examples of this is the Palestinian case, having achieved both nation- and proto-state building in exile (cf. Sayigh 1997). And as Basch et al. have asserted:

Deterritorialised nation-state building is something new and significant, a form of post-colonial nationalism that reflects and reinforces the division of the entire globe into nation-states. (Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton Blanc 1994: 269)

Thus, diaspora nation-state building occurs without the one condition that has been the crucial fundament in nationalist ideologies, i.e. territory. Yet, territory is not absent, since nation-building

programmes in the diaspora continuously centre on the *idea* of territory, and the vision of return. Edward Said has underlined the crucial linkages between exile and nationalism.

Nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and customs; and, by so doing, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages. Indeed, the interplay between nationalism and exile is like Hegel's dialectic of servant and master, opposites informing and constituting each other. All nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement. (Said 1990: 359)

Said's forceful argument could be seen in analogy with for example Anderson who argues that the nation as an imagined community is constituted through 'pilgrimages', journeys in social space, through which individuals become aware of the fact that their present state of affairs depend on something particular, namely that they belong to this or that nation (Anderson 1991). To Palestinians, what they have in common is lack of territory, state, passport and citizenship (cf. Khalidi 1997). In this perspective, nationalism is a reaction to conditions of estrangement, threat and alienation. Forcible evacuation, but also marginalisation and exclusion in host societies may provoke reactive tendencies of nationalism. Yet, as has been argued elsewhere (Lindholm Schulz 1999) nationalism and national identities are not solely reactive processes. Nationalism requires creative internal dynamics as well as a symbolic capital of rootedness and culture to draw upon in order to be meaningful.

Nevertheless, placelessness is a constant remainder of the fact that national or ethnic social boundaries are both externally ascribed and internally produced. In order to create potentials for resistance from a diaspora position, a process of 'othering' is required. Diaspora populations are frequently involved in social boundary-production in dialectic ways. To Palestinians, marginalisation is a constant process. In Lebanon, Palestinians have been categorised as foreigners, meaning that their access to the labour market, to social welfare, to ownership, to integration is extremely limited. The Palestinian position in Lebanon has altered dramatically since the inception of the civil war in Lebanon starting in 1975, and many Palestinians witness of a life on the margins or outside of society (Sayigh 1994; Peteet 1995; Besson 1997; Suleiman 1999; Lindholm Schulz 2003).

At the other extreme, although Palestinians in Sweden (many of them coming to Sweden in the early 1980s, from Lebanon) are leading qualitatively very different lives than their brethren in camps of destitution in Lebanon, there are also here stories of barriers to integration and participation in society. In Sweden, Palestinians give witness to outright discrimination as well as more subtle hindrances in the form of informal definitions of Swedishness (Lindholm Schulz 2003). Unemployment is a rigid barrier toward integration—, as is underlined by the contribution of Abdul Ghani in this volume—as is the segregated housing conditions of Swedish cities. In the election campaign of 2002⁵, integration of migrants to Sweden became an issue and the political parties debated whether or not Swedish citizenship was to be connected with certain language

Comment [HL1]: toward a hardening position of the political establishment of Sweden.⁶ Many Palestinians also consider cultural mores and values problematic, in particular when it comes to the behaviour of young girls as well as respect for elderly. Cultural alienation is a widespread phenomenon.

⁵ Parliamentary elections were to be held 15 September 2002.

⁶ The suggestion of language skills to be connected to the acquiring of citizenship was launched by the liberal party (Folkpartiet), but fit discursively with other suggestions from the conservatives (Moderata Samlingspartiet) on higher demands vis-à-vis 'immigrants' receiving social welfare and a proposal that in case a person holds dual citizenship and conducts crime in Sweden, the Swedish citizenship be refused. Also, Integration Minister Mona Sahlin (The Social Democrats) presented an idea that 'immigrants' be required to acquire a 'drivers license' in Swedish norms and values. This discussion was brought further in the aftermath of the tragic death of a young Kurdish woman during the Spring of 2002. The murder sparked a debate on honor killings and her father was charged with murdering her.

What is more, the character of official statelessness means that Palestinians are frequently sorted out at border posts and crossings for special treatment. How Palestinians are treated with suspicion at border crossings, airports etc is a narrative that is repeating itself in a variety of circumstances. At the same time, in order to maintain ideas of territory lost as well as to maintain a sense of internal solidarity, diaspora populations draw boundaries around themselves.

Homelessness and home away from home

Outside labelling, discrimination, exclusivism and oppression imply that diasporas are left without the kind of security which is connected to a 'home'. The importance of 'home' lies in its capacity to provide a centre of meaning and significance (Relph 1976). Home provides security, identity, a place where one is comfortable, needs no roles, where stability, warmth, comfort, relaxation and meaning prevail (cf. Sarup 1994: 94; Sagar 1997; Rapport and Dawson 1998).⁷ 'Home' belongs to the taken for granted categories (Minh-ha 1994: 14). Loss of home therefore has a traumatizing potential. One way of dealing with loss of a comforting and consoling home is through exclusivism and/or through creation of institutions that could serve the interests of a population without territory. 'Home' is therefore a special (unique) form of spatial construct. Associations to 'home' have been exploited by the nation-state and the politicisation of 'home' that has been the fundament of nationalism. A nation-state is a 'home' writ large, with 'family-members', a landscape in which one is to recognise oneself, where there exists a calendar of routinised events to provide security.

In the diaspora, home is 'far away' whereas self is situated where insecurity and chaos prevail (cf. Baumann 1998). Feelings of threat, insecurity and fear may be the result (cf. Pieterse 1997). Often such feelings of collective fear are enough to trigger exclusivist politics. As Morley and Robins assert, the search for a 'pure' and 'unpolluted' homeland is potentially an absolutist and fundamentalist discourse, potentially including exclusivism, stereotyping and boundary-production (Morley and Robins 1993: 8).

In another way, diasporas challenge the notion and the idea that state and nation should coincide. Diasporas defy the very fundament of the modern international system as it has evolved (cf. Massey 1995: 51). Diasporas live and reside in host states and societies, yet their priority is not to become part of those states. They do not involve themselves in integration programs, yet at the same time—despite the urge to return—they often stay on, as part of host society, but yet not quite. Diasporas thus cause disorder to the modern vision of neat correlations between state borders, nation boundaries and citizen's loyalties. Diaspora populations are on the one hand in a way 'homeless', and on the other hand they may feel at home in two or more places/contexts. This pluralism of homes may also trigger pluralism in identification.

Transnationalism

In contemporary usage, diaspora amounts to a situation in which supposedly 'local', 'rooted' life has been replaced by a 'transient' life (Tomlinson 1999: 9). Diaspora populations may be homesick, yet they form lives and experiences in a homeless condition, or create new homes in new settings. Despite an often nostalgic look towards a bounded 'home', diasporas lead lives not confined to a 'home'. There is thus an intense and acute difference between the lived, transnational, unbounded and out of space experience of diaspora and the memory of a

⁷. This might picture a too idyllic landscape of home, also replete with oppression, terror and abuse. 'Home' needs not be the place of security, belonging and warmth, but might just as well represent an unspeakable space of chaos, coldness and darkness, most clearly articulated in feminist writings. Nevertheless, precisely because of the romantic middle class conceptions of 'home', oppression and abuse taking place in the 'home' are so difficult to come to terms with.

nationalised, rooted, placed and essentialist past and identity. Peoples on the move and out of place is the fundamental symbol of the decreased role and meaning of the nation-state. Yet, rootlessness is (for the most part) not an enviable condition (cf. Shami 1996).

By *transnational* is meant exchange and interactions of various forms such as visiting, travelling, spending vacations, going for weddings, looking for jobs, i.e. activities that for dispersed populations are trans-national/cross-border by their very nature. Vertovec (1999: 447) defines transnationalism as 'long distance networks'. Portes sees transnational activities 'as those that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants' (Portes 1999: 464). In conventional migration studies, there has been an assumption of a movement *from* somewhere *to* somewhere else, implicating that the move supposedly causes a complete change in context, in spatial frameworks and in social relations. That is also how many a host society has continuously planned integration processes. However, 'home' and 'host' societies are to an increasing extent overlapping (Fuglerud 1999). In fact, it is progressively possible to act within two (or more) spatial systems on almost equal terms. The increasing practice of allowing dual citizenship is a case in point. There is a blurring of 'here' and 'there' (Fuglerud 1999: 178). Examples of this may be how Palestinians in precise detail recreate Palestinian homes in exile, socialise with Palestinians and devote much of their time to working politically for the cause, while at the same time participating in the Swedish labour-market, in the school system, in the celebration of new traditions such as Midsummer, in consumption patterns producing new life-styles.

Diaspora populations thus reside in one state, but remain to some extent part of their homeland. Frequently they also act within other societies, as keeping contact with kin in other states lead to connections in the plural rather than the dual. Palestinian families are for example exceedingly divided, implying that members of one family could reside in the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, the USA, Australia and Germany and be citizens of Jordan, the USA and Germany as well as stateless refugees. This means connections with a number of different places although in different regards. Van Hear has defined diaspora: 'people with multiple allegiance to place' (Van Hear 1998: 4). Tölölyan has claimed that diasporas are 'the exemplary communities of the transnational movement' (1991: 5).

Although Palestinians in the diaspora firmly place their homeland in Palestine, it is certainly possible to conceive of several possibilities as home. Sometimes, home is constructed not as something removed, far away, or confined to a particular place, but as something that you can carry within you. Home is therefore wherever you are.

'Home is within me. I carry everyone and everything I am with me wherever I go' (Hammad, 1996: ix).

Certainly, one aspect of such definitions is the continuous importance of Palestine, the land. The image of the homeland is always there, it does not go away. In a way, this can be seen as reinforcing nostalgic nationalism. At the same time, such accounts imply (to an extent) that homeland or the image of it is portable. They suggest a possibility of not staying rooted. You might then feel at home, without being there. The forceful eviction from the homeland has not led to homelessness, but to a home that follows the migrant.

Another concept of home common among Palestinians is 'Home is where my family is' (Hammer, 2001). Since family remains the sole secure structure in a life of flux and instability, family becomes what can be called 'home', underlining the prominent role of the family. In the Palestinian diaspora, the family has served a number of functions, such as facilitating migration, assisting in settling in new societies, assisting in bureaucratic encounters, giving credit, finding job and pooling resources. To many who migrated to for example the Gulf, it was kin and family members that assisted in finding housing and employment (Ghabra 1987). Familism became of even greater salience than prior to the exodus. The family has further had an important task to fulfill in constituting the primary source of story-telling and thus reproducing the implications of

the *nakba* as well as the image of the homeland. The family has comprised a weighty institution in creating a Palestinian identity in exile and in restoring a Palestinian community. Home is where the family currently resides as well as where family members originate (cf. Lindholm Schulz 2003).

Another option is to define 'home' in plural terms. Palestinians who have lived in the Gulf, for example, have held allegiance to Jordan, the country providing them with citizenship, to Kuwait and the life they led there and to Palestine as their place of origin (Van Hear, 1998: 200). Palestinians in Sweden on the one hand refer to Palestine as the true homeland and as the destination of emotions and of morality. On the other hand, Sweden is also 'home', because of providing security and individual freedom. Citizenship and the welfare state secure a different sort of meaning, not as emotionally important, but nevertheless as a source of stability and shelter. Many women also speak of Sweden as the better place to live in because of the relative emancipation of women (Lindholm Schulz 2003). As shown throughout this book, Palestinians have on the one hand been able to build new homes for themselves in Europe and on the other continued to feel themselves homeless and in lack of their ancestral homeland. To some, only Palestine could be called home.

As some have argued, the acclamation of travel and mobility, of 'transient lives' and 'hybrid identities' have a tendency to conceal power relations and repressive socioeconomic structures (Mitchell 1997; Hyndman 1997). For refugees crossing borders, or for stateless Palestinians attempting to pass Israeli checkpoints between the West Bank and Israel, or trying to enter another country at an airport (cf. Khalidi 1997), transversing borders is a humiliating and often terrorizing experience (cf. hooks 1992). To a large extent, members of the Palestinian diaspora are simply restricted from movement. Mobility is unequally distributed among various members of the diaspora and not all have the same access to cross borders. Hyndman (1997) therefore suggests that transnationalism should be studied as a 'politics of mobility'. Hybridity Diaspora life also implies the recreation of a collective self in several different places. *Hybridity* has come to refer to the ways in which identity is re-shaped in the mingling that occurs in and through meetings, i.e. how identities are formed anew in the process of travel and transnationalism, 'en route', rather than on roots.

What is distinctive about the cultures of contact zones or diasporas is that they never remain 'pure' to their origin. The new circumstances in which these cultures must survive begin to have consequences for how the 'original' culture is changed and adapted over time. The original cultures of the displaced groups come into contact and are obliged to negotiate with the cultures of the other groups with whom—on whatever terms—they establish a 'co-presence'. The culture which evolves in diasporas is therefore usually the result of some never-contemplated, complex process of combining elements from different cultural repertoires to form 'new' cultures which are related to but which are not exactly like any of the originals. (Hall 1995: 193)

Diaspora thus implies possibilities of inventiveness and potentiality in new and pluralistic settings. Identity construction in diaspora has become a marker for debate on 'hybridisation' of identity (cf. Bhabha 1990). It should be stressed that all identities are in a constant process of 'hybridisation'. The contemporary celebration of 'hybridity' must be critically assessed, since the very usage of terms such as mixing, mingling, hybrids, and creols, seem to imply an existence of two or more 'pure'/static entities being blended in the intersection. Thus, the term seems to presuppose a pre-hybrid essentialism (cf. Tomlinson 1999: 143 f.). Rather all identities are always hybrids. Identities are further not *only* the result of mingling, or of alterity, but also of people's creative activities, of collective memory and of political projects.

In the Palestinian case, hybridity should be used selectively. To second generation Palestinians in Europe or even more likely the USA, 'hybridity' is sometimes a consciously chosen concept in self-definitions. This is how a young Palestinian woman in the USA talked about her identity:

I think I am coming to terms with understanding that I am really both, I am really both Palestinian Arab and American. I am both and it is possible to have this whole hybrid identity. I don't have to feel that I am strange because I don't fit in one hundred per cent there and I can't fit in one hundred per cent here. It is possible to be both. (Seina, 13 August 1998)

In exile, Palestinian identity is not yielded, nor is it simply 'preserved' but it is complemented with new experiences, meetings and activities. The content of Palestinian-ness shifts. In Sweden, Palestinians celebrate Midsummer and Christmas and enjoy it. They cook Arabic as well as Swedish food. They appreciate the social security system, the opportunities for education, and the political stability. Norms of upbringing are changed and accommodated. Parents devote a great deal of energy to make sure that their offspring do not feel themselves strangers or aliens in new societies, but that they have the possibility to participate in their new country. At the same time, parents attempt to make sure that their children end up on the right side of moral limits. The Palestinian diaspora thus represent fluid use of cultural styles and forms. This is (in general) especially true for youth cultures (Vertovec and Cohen, 1999) that consciously mix and pick. Second and third generation Palestinians have no memories of their own of Palestine prior to 1948, neither do they have memories of the flight.

However, processes of exclusion, marginalisation in Western countries simultaneously spark essentialisations of identity, an inward search for perceived authenticity and security in conservatism and sometimes fundamentalism. To some, there is a complete rejection of everything European or American.

Concluding remarks

Both those who claim that refugees are a special category of migrants and that their frequent confinement is an argument against transnationalism and those who argue that refugees do indeed nurture transnational connections may thus find support from the experience of the Palestinians. Although both politically and individually, the attachment to a glorified homeland remains exceedingly strong, there is also a tale to be told of transnationalism and globalism—a narrative that has not been frequently voiced in the literature on the Palestinian diaspora.

One paradox here is that transnational activities are often ways to enhance or maintain/stabilise connections with family or with the homeland. Aspects of this are visits, to Palestine or the West Bank and Gaza for those that have the opportunity, or to various refugee camps in different parts of the Arab world for others. Although most refugees are barred from travelling, by either regulations or financial constraints, refugees do participate in transnational networks. They may receive visits from family members residing elsewhere. When visiting is not possible, connection is preserved through telephone lines, via satellite TV or through internet chats. There is a trek of relationships spanning across the globe, although this web is not always accompanied by physical, individual journeys. Such transnational links and networks strengthen or maintain family relationships, but also in profound ways, serve as to invigorate Palestinian nationalism and homeland politics. Put differently, transnational links and activities boost nationalism rather than make it redundant. Transnational activities do then not amount to a cosmopolitan worldview which could supersede nationalism, but there are only transnational ways of staying together, despite the coercive and violent nature of dispersion. Despite contemporary celebrations of transnational, borderless and unbounded activities, these occur exactly to restore borders and territorial anchorage. Although exile is defined as a non-place, the meanings applied to place/homeland have been gauged rather than the other way around.

Nevertheless, these activities by themselves also foster new sentiments of identity and possibilities of belonging to and affinities with more than one place. Attachment is not (always) exclusive, but many a Palestinian experience point toward sentiments of belonging, security and stability in more than one place of the world. Also, processes of identification are affected. On the one hand, the dispersal and fragmentation have definitely bolstered a specific, homeland-bound Palestinian

identity. On the other hand, there are alterations in the form of new and complementary forms of identifying. Although Palestine as a source of meaning and belonging is continuously important, young Palestinians have adopted new life-styles, new cultural and social mores and traditions. Politically, there are however strong connections, staunch sentiments of sympathy and solidarity with the refugees as well as with the Palestinians living under occupation. During the present (2000–2002) phase of violence between Israelis and Palestinians, solidarity accelerated in the diaspora when Palestinians all over the globe were glued to the Television screen following news from satellite stations. The diaspora creates national identity, but also divides and separates families as well as the national community as such. Diaspora thus influences identification and belonging in several different ways, and there is no monolithic or simplified response supporting either the globalisation or the nationalisation argument. In people's lives, those antagonistic perspectives do not appear impossible to resolve. To parts of the diaspora it is possible to find new homelands, whereas to the large majority, host societies mean unreal, surrealistic or unfriendly places incapable of rendering meaning or belonging.

The equivocacy of diaspora is therefore found in its location at the disjuncture between two opposite principles: nationalism and transnationalism. Diasporas (taken generally) are involved in a double process of desperately missing what has been lost and concretely doing without it. Contemporary celebrations of transnationalism as an inherently anti-essentialist position are premature.

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The Impact of Immigration Policies on Palestinians in Germany

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There is no decisive figure for the number of Palestinians in Germany but the Palestinian delegation in Berlin estimates the number at approximately 80,000. Surveys conducted by the Palestinian community estimate a significantly lower number and this huge discrepancy tells us that we have a numbers problem. It is impossible to know the exact number of Palestinians living in Germany simply because there is no such thing as “Palestinian” nationality in official statistics. Such a distinction is not possible in official statistics as Palestinians carry travel documents issued from various different countries and have no country of their own, and Palestinian passports from the Palestinian Authority in the Occupied Territories have not changed this because Palestinian nationality is not yet recognised by the German authorities. Because of this, up to the end of 1984, Palestinians were recorded under the category of “Staatenlos” (stateless), the official number of which was 997. After that the Interior Ministry published guidelines on the 12th December 1984 stating that Palestinians should be categorised as “Ungeklärt” (Unknown Nationality), under the number code 998. These guidelines included all people without a nationality, i.e. anyone who carried travel documents or Border Crossing Certificates (“Laisser-Passer”). Anyone who did not hold a passport because they had either destroyed them or hid them from the authorities when applying for political asylum also fell under this category, which means that people of other nationalities are also classified in this category. Because of this we have to use different historical and legal variables to find a number that is closer to the truth.

In the 1960s the number of people categorised as “Staatenlos” was very low indeed. In 1969 there were a total of 96 people who were classified in this group, the vast majority of whom came from the Baltic nations of the USSR, and the rest were Palestinians from Lebanon. After Black September in 1970 (the armed confrontation between Palestinian resistance groups and the Jordanian army) the number of “Staatenlos” increased and mostly consisted of Palestinians from Jordan and later, during the civil war in Lebanon, the number of Palestinians in Germany increased, especially among those who held Lebanese documents. This situation continued until 1976 when new groups started to fall into this category, especially the Muhalmeen Kurds from Lebanon and people from the seven villages who held Palestinian documents issued by the Lebanese authorities. The Muhalmeen are not actually Kurds, as the Lebanese Government claims, but are called Muhalmeen because they speak with an Arabic dialect called the “Muhahmea”. Most of them migrated to Lebanon in the 1940s from villages in southeast Turkey, on the road leading from the city of Mardeen to the city of Medeat. The people from the seven villages are Lebanese who differ from the rest of the Palestinians because of their Shiite religion and southern Lebanese accents. The seven villages fell under the area of the British Mandate in 1924 and their inhabitants sought refuge in Lebanon with the rest of the Palestinians in 1948 after the creation of the State of Israel. Like the Palestinians they received Lebanese travel documents, whereas the Muhalmeen received Border Crossing Certificates. These four groups continued to compile the category of “Staatenlos” until the end of 1984.

The guidelines mentioned earlier separated people coming from the former communist block, who continued to be categorised as “Staatenlos”, from the rest, who became “Ungeklärt”, and this allows us for the first time to accurately estimate the number of refugees from Lebanon who are not Lebanese. By comparing the numbers of both groups for the following years we can see that the percentage of refugees from Lebanon, out of the total of both groups, is 95%, and this is also

applicable to the “Staatenlos” group between 1970 to 1985. After this period, until 1992, estimating numbers becomes easier because the “Ungekläert” group only included refugees from Lebanon. As we mentioned earlier these refugees fall into three categories: Palestinians, Muhalmeen, and residents of the seven villages. The German authorities did not distinguish between the three groups and generally considered all of them to be Palestinians. This can be seen from Government publications, which equated people who were “Staatenlos” with Palestinians. At the beginning of the 1980s the authorities began to be aware of the existence of Kurds (i.e. the Muhalmeen) in this category, but up to today no one is aware of the existence of people from the seven villages in this category. Because of this the official statistics are unreliable and incomplete and therefore I will base my estimates on the ground research that I conducted in 1988.

In 1987 the Interior Ministry for Berlin issued guidelines through which a large number of Lebanese refugees were granted normal residency rights, and this equated them a status similar to that of foreign workers. Thus they fell under the office responsible for foreigners, as assigned by the Government. Because this department wanted more information about the social situation of these people, in 1988 they assigned me to conduct research into this issue (at the time I was the manager of the Arab Consulting Office). I conducted the first scientific ground research into refugees from Lebanon and the sample that I chose included 157 Lebanese and 534 persons who fell under the category of either “Staatenlos” or “Ungekläert”. My research showed that this group included 233 Palestinians (43.63%), 199 Muhalmeen (37.26%), and 102 people from the seven villages (19.1%). These percentages can be used to estimate the number of Palestinians in the rest of Germany, although with some reservations because of a number of points that will be explained.

Since 1992 Germany has taken in more and more refugees who claimed that they are Palestinians from Lebanon and that they are wanted by the Lebanese authorities, but in fact most of these were Turkish Kurds. This was because the Lebanese Government at the time was re-establishing its control over its territory and began to make life more difficult for Palestinians with the eventual goal of getting rid of them. In the same spirit they introduced the “Return Visa” in September 1994, which meant that returning to Lebanon was more problematic. This was because all of the Palestinians outside of the country before that date had to go back to Lebanon to get the Visa, and the Lebanese Embassy in Bonn practically refused to issue it. The President, Emile Lahoud, invalidated this law a few months after coming to power in January 1999. The Lebanese Government also made it so difficult to get travel documents from its embassies abroad that it became almost impossible. This situation did not improve, and because of this the German authorities were, and are still not able to deport Palestinians after refusing them asylum and have to let them stay in Germany.

Turkish Kurds tried to take advantage of this situation by destroying their passports and claiming that they are Palestinians from Lebanon so that they could guarantee their stay in Germany. This became evident recently in March 2000 when they discovered that 500 Turks in Bremen had claimed that they were from Lebanon but in fact they were from Turkey. These people had benefited from government benefits through the social aid system. The “Ungekläert” group did not only consist of refugees from Lebanon, but also Turks, and this means that we are unable to estimate the number of Palestinians in Germany. This calculation problem will become less important in the future for two reasons. Firstly, because of the increasing numbers of illegal Palestinian immigrants since 1995, whose numbers are unknown as they are not recorded anywhere and, as well as this, this group would also consist of many Turks. Secondly, the German authorities tried to implement changes in the system, especially after the Turkish passport faking scandal in Bremen. Luckily, after the fall of the Eastern Block the German government began categorising people with unknown nationality from Eastern Block countries in a separate group. Without this we would not be able to give an approximate figure for the number of Palestinians in the country.

To arrive at an estimate of the number of Palestinians in Germany we need to include Palestinians who have German nationality and thus were taken off the foreign person's register. To do this we will use the 1993 figures from Berlin and apply them to the whole of Germany, because the Turkish issue was not prominent then. In this year there were 10,636 people who were categorised as either "Staatenlos" or "Ungeklärt" and up to that year there were 6,078 people from this category who were nationalised. This means that out of the 16,714 refugees from Lebanon who were not Lebanese but were living in Berlin, 37% of them had Germany nationality. If we use this figure to calculate the number of refugees in the whole of Germany in 1997, we reach the following conclusion: The number of people classified as either "Staatenlos" or "Ungeklärt" is 70,516 and by adding 37% to this (41,424) we arrive at a total of 111,940 refugees. As we saw earlier 44% of these will be Palestinians (49,249), and therefore we can conclude that the number of Palestinians in Germany in 1997 was between 50 and 55 thousand, and in 2000 this number rose to between 55 to 60 thousand.

Refuge in Germany

Palestinian migration to Germany began in the 1960s when German companies made contracts with Palestinians from the West Bank and Jordan and organised their stay in Germany. These people were followed by a number of students who were able both to work and finance their studies in Germany. It is difficult to find exact numbers for these groups because most of these people had Jordanian passports, but we are sure that the numbers would have been quite small.

At the end of the 1960s Palestinians from Lebanon migrated to Berlin and worked illegally in what were known as the slavery offices. These offices took up to 60% of their earnings. Their entry into West Berlin was not difficult because of its international status, especially as the Potsdam Treaty of 1945 meant that after the Second World War, when Berlin was under the direct control of the Allies, the West Berlin police were not allowed to monitor their borders with East Berlin. People fled to Schoenefeld in East Berlin where they would obtain a transit visa for West Berlin that would allow them to cross a practically unmonitored border. This route was taken by three-quarters of the refugees that came to Germany during the Civil War in Lebanon. In 1970, after the events in September, Palestinians from Jordan applied for asylum in Germany and Palestinians from Lebanon soon followed suit. Between 1970 and 1995 most Palestinians in Germany applied for political asylum, and this benefited their situation, especially their social status.

Palestinians in Germany are principally political refugees rather than economic migrants. This is also true of the Lebanese and many others arriving in Germany. Asylum claims at this time were strongly linked with events in Lebanon. If we take the numbers of "Staatenlos" as an indicator we can see that the number of migrants coming into Germany jumped from 503 people classified as "Staatenlos" in 1973 to 1,118 in 1994. This was due to the conflict during October 1973 between the Lebanese army and the Palestinian resistance forces, and also the destruction of the Nabatieh refugee camp by Israel in 1974. The number of immigrants fell to 718 in 1975 but increased again in 1976, with the start of the Civil War in Lebanon, to reach 1,026. These figures continued to rise, peaking at 3,157. In 1979 the number fell again and after the Israeli invasion in 1982 and 1983 it fell to 1,398, because many believed that the Civil War was about to end and many refugees returned to Lebanon from Germany.

A year later the war restarted. The army split on the 6th February and in 1985 the Camps Wars began. The number of refugees coming into Germany rose again to 2,925, and at the peak of the Camps Wars in 1986 the number reached 8,199. The actual number of refugees arriving in Berlin in those two years was much higher than this, but they did not stay in the city because of the restrictions imposed on refugees by the refugee laws of 1982 and 1985. Because of this many of

them chose to continue travelling on to Scandinavia or Holland, and even people who were already residing in Germany chose to leave and move to other countries.

Refugees from Lebanon arrived in East Berlin and then took transit visas to West Berlin. From there they would take the train to Holland or Denmark without applying for asylum in Berlin. Others took transit visas to Sweden where they would take the train to the tourist city of Rostock and then the ferry to Malmo in Sweden. Because of this Palestinian families became fragmented across Germany, Denmark and Sweden. In my research in 1995 in Berlin I found that three quarters of Palestinian families had relatives in these two countries. Since 1987 most of the Palestinian migration has been to Sweden and Denmark because of an agreement between East and West Germany that became law on 1st October 1986. This agreement stated that East Germany could not give Transit Visas to people crossing into West Germany unless they also had a visa for West Germany. Sweden had a similar law but the refugees circumvented it by going first to Warsaw and from Poland travelling by ferry across the Baltic to Sweden and Denmark. Because of this legislation the numbers of people migrating to Germany and registered by the authorities as “Staatenlos” decreased dramatically in 1987 to a total of 927. But the refugees found a new method of reaching Berlin; they obtained an invitation from an East Berlin resident and through them managed to get a visa without much difficulty to West Berlin. Many Palestinian and Arab students residing in East Berlin benefited from this situation as they gave invitations to whoever wanted them for between 300 and 500 Marks. Because of this the number of refugees coming into Germany in 1988 rose to 1,705 and in 1989 this increased again to 2,315.

At the end of 1989 the government of East Germany collapsed and a transitional government came to power with the goal of preparing the country for the union of East and West Germany. Because of this security at the borders was relaxed and the number of refugees migrating to West Germany in 1989 increased to 5,723. In October 1990 East and West Germany were united and West German soldiers were sent to guard the eastern borders. After unity Berlin was no longer a border city and lost its place as a gateway for refugees coming into West Germany. Despite this some refugees still insisted on travelling to Berlin and would buy a ticket with Aeroflot (the Russian airline that flew to Cuba, via Beirut, Moscow and Berlin) and when the plane landed in Berlin they would request political asylum and stay in the city, but this did not last for long. Despite this the majority migrated to Poland and the Czech Republic and crossed the borders at night though the forests, which carried the risk of being chased by border police.

In 1993 and 1994 Germany signed a number of treaties with the countries on its borders in the east and south allowing the Government to force these countries to take back any refugees that came to Germany illegally through their lands. These agreements did not only include Poland and the Czech Republic, but also Switzerland, where many refugees passed through on their way to Germany from Italy. It was well known that refugees only had to say “Asyl” (Asylum) at the border for them to be let into Germany, but because of a change in the law the border police are now allowed to return illegal immigrants to neighbouring countries. Before the amendment all refugees were entitled to asylum, but after a change in Section 16 of the Constitution on 28th June 1993 people entering Germany from countries considered safe were no longer entitled to asylum in Germany and thus could be returned to Germany’s border countries. Because of this many of the refugees that managed to get into Germany had to survive by depending on relatives, and this was the main reason for the development of the phenomenon of the illegal immigrant. The other cause of this phenomenon is the Shengen Treaty of 1995, which essentially removed national borders for the movement of people within the EU. This means that anyone able to reach an EU country can travel freely to any other country in the EU. This however does not apply to asylum seekers as, according to the Shengen Treaty, a refugee is the responsibility of the country that he or she enters first and they do not have the right to leave that country and apply for asylum elsewhere in the EU. This is why many refugees arriving in Germany from border countries had to live illegally there.

Currently most Palestinian refugees arrive in Germany through France because many of the other routes are closed to them. From Lebanon they buy a ticket to a West Africa country and then apply for a visa for that country, but when the plane lands in Paris they would stay in France and then migrate to Germany, Holland or the UK, as these three countries are currently the main destinations for Palestinian migration in Europe. After the civil war in Lebanon ended Palestinian migration to Germany changed from refugees looking for political asylum to economic migrants in search of a better life. The high unemployment and economic difficulties for Palestinians living in Lebanon pushed them to emigrate for economic rather than political reasons.

The Social Situation

People who came to Germany in the 1960s for work or study were granted normal residency, along with the other foreigners already resident there. Work was widely available so many of them made enough money to return to their countries of origin, and many others assimilated successfully into society because their numbers were small and they had a higher level of education. This is the opposite of the Turkish workers who formed “Ghettos” or small areas where they lived separately from German society. This trend was reversed in the late 1960s as employers exploited illegal immigrants by offering them work in “slave offices” in return for 60% of their income. Rouge landlords who housed up to 6 people in one room and took full rent from all of the occupants also took advantage of the immigrants. This was exacerbated by their lack of health or social insurance. According to my estimates this situation lasted from 1968 to 1971 as in the early 1970s immigrants discovered that the political asylum laws, which they thought were applicable only to people from the Eastern Block, were also applicable to them and many of them began applying for asylum.

When Germany finally closed the door on immigration for foreign workers in October 1973, political asylum became the only means of getting into the country for both Palestinians and other foreign migrants. The Palestinian migrants of the time were mainly young men and because they were no longer faced with the social restrictions that they were used to in their own society, and were now in a society that offered a high level of individual liberty, a few unpleasant incidents occurred and this resulted in a negative picture of refugees from Lebanon. Naturally as we saw earlier the refugees from Lebanon were frequently not Lebanese but Palestinian, but despite this public opinion and the Media classified them all as Lebanese, whether they were Palestinian or Kurdish. This meant that the behaviour of an individual from any of these groups reflected on the group as a whole. The Palestinian authorities and community were not very sympathetic towards these men because of their behaviour and saw them as escapees from the struggle, and because of this they made no attempt to influence or control their behaviour in their host country. The Palestinian Authority was also suspicious of Palestinian refugees travelling to Europe because they thought that this would weaken their struggle and engender the right of return as they settled overseas. This continued until 1982 when the PLO left Beirut and after this point such problems resided.

Political asylum made it easier for families to migrate to Germany because asylum seekers had the right to claim social benefits if they were unemployed. Those who did work but did not earn enough money also received additional help to subsidise their earnings, which was guaranteed for a number of years. German asylum laws differ from those of the rest of the world, as under its constitution West Germany is the only country in the world that views the right of asylum as an individual fundamental right. This means that the individual can pursue this right through the courts. So when an individual arrives at the border all he has to say is “Asyl” and the authorities are obliged to take them into the country, and this also gives them the right to go through the courts if their asylum applications are refused. The case is conducted in the same way as any other official case, with the right of appeal and the right to take the case to a higher court if necessary.

Because of this system an asylum case can take between five and eight years before it is finally resolved. In many other countries of the world this process is much shorter and usually takes between two months and a maximum of three years.

The asylum seeker in Germany has the same work rights as foreign workers, as well as social benefits, including housing, and unlike foreign workers they do not face deportation if they lose their jobs or try to get benefits from the government. For example a Turkish worker would not have the right to bring his family to the country if he was unable to guarantee their accommodation (including a room for each member of the family), which is difficult on their salaries. However asylum seekers would be given suitable accommodation, regardless of the size of their family, and because of this whole families came to Germany. This system caused an increase in the numbers of immigrants, especially after the Civil War in 1975.

Unlike the situation in the Turkish community, the increase in the number of families did not lead to the creation of a large Arabic community because refugees were distributed around Germany using pre-determined percentages allocated by the law. For example the percentage of refugees for Berlin is 2.4%. As a result of this policy many families and individuals lived in severe cultural isolation, especially when they were the only family living in a remote village, but the positive German attitude towards Arab refugees compensated for this situation. As long as refugee numbers were low, German acceptance of them was high and it is noticeable that families who came in the early 1970s enjoyed a higher level of integration into German society in comparison to the families that came in the 1980s. Most of the refugees did not intend to stay in Germany indefinitely as they believed that the Civil War would soon be over, and this is why many of them returned to Lebanon every time there was a cease-fire, as they believed that it was the end of the Civil War. The latest wave of return took place in 1983 but after that period people stopped going back. This phenomenon was only a feature of refugees from Lebanon, as refugees from the Eastern Block could not return to their countries of origin and refugees from Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Turkey did not intend to go back. This is why politicians began to talk about the misuse of the asylum system and demanded changes in the laws.

The asylum laws were amended in 1977 at a time when the total number of refugees in Germany was very low (16,410) and this shows that there was another reason behind these changes. New laws came into effect on the 1st August 1978 and this was the beginning of a series of amendments that led them to tighten up the asylum laws. The real reason for scrutinising the asylum rules and reducing the number of people who can use them was because a large proportion of refugees from the Third World were not taking into account before when compiling refugee numbers. When the asylum laws were added to the constitution in 1949 all eyes were focused on the Eastern Block, as it was the beginning of the Cold War. Refugees from these countries formed more than 90% of the total of political refugees and because of this in 1966 the government decided to give all of the migrants from the Eastern Block the right to remain.

In 1968 the number of refugees from the Third World began to increase compared to the number of refugees from the Eastern Block. In 1968 the percentage of refugees from the Eastern Block was 89.4%, but this had decreased by 1973 to 51.3% and again to 7.8% in 1980. In the 1970s refugees from Lebanon were the largest group of refugees from the Third World in Germany, which is why the impression arose that they were the reason for the tightening of the asylum laws. The number of refugees from the Third World continued to rise and refugees from Turkey became the largest group, as in 1980 they formed 53.7% of the total refugees. In that year the total number of refugees exceeded 100,000 and because of this a number of changes to the asylum laws were implemented in 1980, 1982, 1984, 1987, 1988, 1990 and 1992 to try and halt the flow of refugees. These amendments did not produce significant results and in 1992 the number of refugees reached 438,191. At that point Section 16 of the constitution was completely overhauled and refugee

numbers decreased throughout the 1990s until they reached between 100,000 and 130,000 refugees yearly.

Lebanese refugees in Germany were distinguished by the fact that they were the first refugees to be classified as refugees from a civil war. Refugees from a civil war are not seen as political refugees under German asylum law as, under German law, a refugee is a person who is being pursued by their government for political reasons; for example, opposition members are classified as political refugees. This is why the percentage of people who won the right to asylum in Germany from Lebanon was very low (under 2%), but the percentage increased for a short period for the Palestinians during the Camps Wars but then fell back after that point. However these refugees remained in Germany and were not deported back to their country because of the Geneva Convention regarding refugees, which prevents the deportation of any person to a country where their life would be in danger. This section was added to the German laws for foreigners, and refugees benefited from this, especially after the Israeli invasion in 1982. They were not considered to be political refugees because their own government was not pursuing them, but at the same time they were allowed to stay because the Civil War threatened their lives if they went back.

The difference between staying in Germany as a political refugee, or staying as a refugee from civil war, is in the type of stay granted. While political refugees are granted normal leave to remain, with many rights across the board, the latter are granted a “Duldung”, which means that their deportation is delayed and they have limited rights. In the 1980s the majority of refugees from Lebanon, and the Palestinians among them, were classified as “Duldung”. People who applied for asylum in the 1970s were turned down after many years and in the beginning of the 1980s were not able to benefit from the rights available to political refugees because of the new laws that prevented this.

In the 1980s the situation for refugees worsened because of the new laws to a degree where it made new refugees avoid Germany and it pushed some of the people already resident in Germany to leave it for neighbouring countries. The reason for the new laws was the general perception in popular and political spheres that refugees from the Third World were coming in for economic rather than political reasons and they were exploiting the asylum laws to enter the country and remain there. The goal of the new laws was to fight the misuse of the asylum system by making the legal route much more difficult than and also as short as possible. From another angle it also aimed to limit economic migrants coming into the country by eliminating the economic attraction. Therefore the German legal system halted the right of refugees to work for one year, and then they increased it to two years and then five years. They also forced them to live in special camps designated for asylum seekers and limited their living area to four by six square metres per person and stopped their financial benefits, except for some “pocket money”. These benefits became handouts, like food products, following the example of benefits given out by UNRWA. This meant that refugees received only ready meals and forced refugees to get their clothing from government warehouses for food and second-hand furniture and also stopped benefits for children. This system also shrank health benefits to the smallest possible level, to the point that someone who lost their teeth was not able to get new ones, and someone who needed a non-urgent operation, for example for a stomach ulcer, was not operated on until the symptoms were severe and/or life threatening.

One of the worst amendments to the laws limited access to compulsory education and reduced the size of social benefits, and the banning of compulsory education for refugee children made registration in a school extremely problematic. Combined with this was the termination of guarantees for basic schooling needs to cope with lingual academic deficiencies caused by the conditions of Civil War. Children were unable to continue their education and were leaving school early, whereas in the past they were forced to attend school up to year sixteen. In my research in

1988 I found the following results in a Berlin suburb: The number of Arabic children registered in school was 334, but children who reached year ten and received their completion certificates numbered only three. The result of this was the creation of a whole new generation that did not have the minimum qualifications to get a job (i.e. the completion certificate). This meant that they were unable to move beyond the lowest social class, and as well as this the automatic right to vocational training, higher education or university education was also rescinded.

The other negative amendment to the laws was the reduction of social benefits by 22% from the original levels so refugees were living in a very tight financial situation and this pushed many to break the law, especially regarding ownership issues and some even took the route of drug dealing. The percentage of crimes committed by the Lebanese refugee group is much larger than that of the rest of the population, and the authorities exaggerated this issue by assuming that every other person migrating from Lebanon was suspicious. This meant that 50% of refugees from Lebanon were considered to be criminals and were expected to commit a crime, a record number. Because of this refugees from Lebanon had the worst reputation of all of the refugee groups in Germany. This situation only changed with the influx of Albanian refugees from Kosovo at the end of the 1980s, followed by the Romany refugees from Rumania, and after this point refugees from Lebanon slowly disappeared from the press and were no longer automatically connected with crime.

Germany as a Country of Refuge

The improvement in the reputation of refugees from Lebanon was not so much due to competition from the Albanians and the Romany people as much as an improvement in their stay conditions in Germany. Over time the refugee issue changed from a legal issue to a humanitarian issue. This change in focus occurred because of the contradictions in their status in Germany. They were not granted indefinite leave to remain because their asylum applications were refused, but at the same time they were not deported because of the continuation of the Civil War. Because of this they stayed in Germany for many years struggling under difficult conditions and in many cases their children grew up without learning their mother tongue, which makes their return a matter that contravenes basic human values because they are now strangers to their own culture. A number of churches, humanitarian organisations and some political parties pushed for an improvement in their situation and this made the authorities consider granting them normal stay conditions. One of the first initiatives in this respect came from the county of Berlin in 1984. This was linked to a number of conditions and only benefited about 300 people and therefore did not solve the problems. This was followed by another initiative at the end of 1987, which was more far-reaching and benefited thousands. Other counties followed Berlin's example until the government introduced a new foreigner's law in 1990, which meant that all refugees who were living on German soil before that time were granted indefinite leave to remain. Now the churches and humanitarian organisations are lobbying to extend that same right to the people who arrived between 1990 and 1996.

Because of the changes in the asylum laws a Palestinian community began to form in Germany, as the majority began to live outside the refugee camps and had the opportunity to work, to continue their education and to get involved in economic activities. This allowed them to integrate into German society. I discovered through my research conducted in 1995 that 55% of Palestinians who migrated to Germany before 1990 hold German nationality. This positive development was contradicted by an almost complete absence of Palestinian organisations that were able to work towards creating a Palestinian community in an organised way.

Palestinians are distinguished by their fragmentation and the Oslo Accords only increased this process, which gave the impression to the Palestinians from Lebanon (the majority of Palestinians in Germany) that they had lost control of their fate. In this situation the traditional settings of social

relationships such as the family, the village and the camp dominated. This can be seen in the names of the organisations that were created in the 1990s, which were named after villages in Palestine, camps in Lebanon, or family or clan names. Many people joined fundamentalist religious organisations like the “Ahbash” or the Islamic Organisation, which is a franchise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon. This kind of membership is not beneficial to the Palestinian community in Germany, as Germany views these kinds of organisations very sceptically.

It is noticeable that because of the absence of a role for the Palestinian organisations, the movement of Palestinians in Germany takes place in Lebanese circles. Their relationship with the refugees from Lebanon and the Lebanese is stronger than their relationship with the Palestine Palestinians and the other Arabic countries. This explains their understanding of Lebanese-Islamic organisations, and organisations such as Hamas were not able to recruit them simply because their main supporters come chiefly from Gaza, the West Bank and Jordan. Organisations such as the “Mashaareh Lebanese Organisation” (which is known as the “Ahbash” because their leader comes from Ethiopia) are more attractive to Palestinians from Lebanon and the few Lebanese.

In the second half of the 1990s there was a need to create a Palestinian entity that was independent and that truly reflected Palestinian existence. The Palestinian community became multifaceted as social differentiation began to categorise and create new social groups. In the past the vast majority fell under the laws for refugees that enforced difficult living conditions on the whole group. But because of the changes in the system new categories of intellectuals, entrepreneurs, businessmen and workers were created, despite the very high unemployment rates in the community (exceeding 70%), especially when compared with 28% unemployment among Turks and 10% across Germany. These new groups aspired to represent their society and create an effective base with which to build a community.

In 1996 two new organisations were created and they expressed these new relationships by representing the various sectors of the community and ignoring the traditional categorisations. However these organisations will be unable to overcome the fragmentation caused by social differentiation, which appears to have slowly grown in 2000. These organisations represent a new effort to unite the Palestinian community under one large organisational framework. This development hopes to place the Palestinian community on the same route followed in the United States, Canada and the other Diaspora countries.

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Caught Between Two Worlds: The Case of the Palestinian Community in Sweden

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1. Introduction

The study of the conditions in the Palestinian community in Sweden has for a long time engrossed my attention. In the early stages of my study I contacted the authorities responsible for refugee affairs, at the Departments of Refugees, as well as many of the census offices throughout Sweden. I was surprised by a discovery that I did not expect to find in a country like Sweden. Sadly, I discovered that there is no separate classification for “Palestinians” in Sweden, but that they are classified as “stateless”. I also discovered that Palestinians are not alone in being classified thus, but that many other minorities in Sweden are classified in the same way, including Kurds, Syrian Armenians and many other groups. The Syrian Armenians and the Kurds also mostly originate from the Arab world. So although I initially thought of identifying Palestinian’s by their Arabic names from amongst the list of minority groups generally, I was however soon disheartened to realise that Arabic names are very similar, and that there is no reliable way to distinguish the Palestinian from the non-Palestinian names. It thus proved impossible, given these limitations, to conduct an accurate survey of the Palestinian community in Sweden.

The aim of this study is to describe the social, cultural and economic conditions of Palestinians in Sweden, and the effect that their migration into the country has had on their character and their identity. In addition to that, I aim to acquire an objective understanding of the Palestinian identity in the Diaspora by looking into issues of integration and co-existence with the host culture, and the changes which traditional roles within the family have been subjected to. My goal is to understand the subjective and objective factors that are behind these social and economic changes within a historical context.

My study was primarily based on personal interviews. I tried to make the study as inclusive and comprehensive as possible on issues such as age, location, place of origin, level of education and gender.

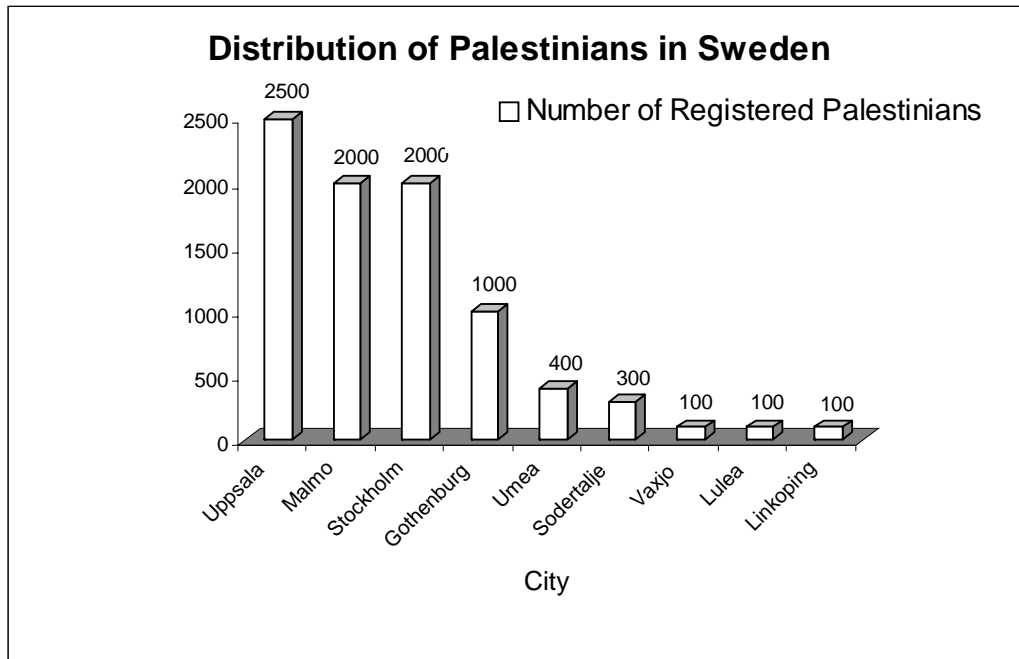
I managed to conduct 50 interviews in total. I also distributed 200 questionnaires, only a fifth of which were returned to me completed. In addition, I enquired into the conditions of Palestinians by approaching the relevant authorities, including the local council in areas where the majority of Palestinians live, as well as the few Palestinian associations in Sweden.

2. Source countries and demographic distribution

The migration of Palestinians to Sweden was one of the effects of the civil war and Israeli aggression in Lebanon from the mid-1970s to the end of the 1980s. As a result of the war large numbers of Palestinians escaped to Europe. Most of the migrants held Lebanese or Syrian travel documents. When they obtained permission to reside in Sweden, however, the names of their former host countries were not registered in the official statistics of the Swedish authorities. In addition to the Palestinians who migrated from the above-mentioned states, there are also a number of Palestinians who came from the West Bank because they had lost their Jordanian passports as a result of the political situation. Also the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which took place at the beginning of the last decade, caused an influx of large numbers of Palestinians into Sweden. In 1999 there was also a wave of Palestinian immigration from Gaza. This latter group consisted, for the first time ever, of holders of actual Palestinian passports.

It is difficult to know the precise number of Palestinians in Sweden because they do not have a separate ethnic or legal category in the official statistics. However, based on figures I acquired in the year 2000 from various local councils and immigration agencies, it became clear, as Graph (1) shows, that there are around 8,500-9,000 Palestinians. One needs to add at least 1,000 to this figure for other scattered communities who live in cities or towns other than those that appear in the table. Therefore, one may assume that the total number is around 10,000.

Graph (1)



3. The Social, Economic and Cultural Status of Palestinian Families in Sweden

It should be mentioned that one of the distinguishing characteristics of family affairs in Sweden is the speed at which the state intervenes when there is any problem, such as a marital dispute or in issues of childcare. Generally the state rules in favour of the wife or the child. Often custody of the children may be taken away from the family itself, if these children are subjected to persistent neglect by the parents.

Wide-ranging individual freedoms are taken seriously in Sweden. Nobody can legitimately force another to act against their will. In practice this goes against deeply ingrained patriarchal Arab and Islamic traditions which rule in favour of loyalty and obedience to the man in marriage, or to the parents rather than the children in a family. The clash between these traditional values and Swedish culture and law actually creates a fissure within the Palestinian family structure. To determine the extent to which Swedish culture influences the Palestinian family, and the effects of living with two widely diverging cultures, we need to look at both the subjective and objective factors that play a fundamental role in influencing the Palestinian family, either positively or negatively.

3.1 Employment

It is more difficult for immigrants to find work than it is for citizens of Swedish origin. This is partly because many immigrants cannot speak Swedish fluently. Because of these and other issues, unemployment in the Palestinian community may be as high as 80%, and consequently many Palestinians work hard to acquire some fluency in the language. Over half of the remaining 20% who are in full-time employment work mainly in the services sector (restaurants and pizza parlours).⁸ The remainder of those in work are employed in the education, publishing and media sectors.

3.2 Education

Swedish culture permeates Palestinian family life primarily through schooling. Children spend more than two thirds of their day there, and they come into contact with a new culture that conflict in many ways with the teachings of their parents. Schooling is also not limited to children alone, but extends to the whole family, as parents often go to classes to acquire a grasp of the Swedish language.

It quickly becomes apparent to any student of Palestinian affairs how highly education is rated amongst the Palestinian community. But Palestinians in Sweden seem for one reason or another to be unaware of this. This is partly because many of the Palestinian refugees who came to Sweden had a low education status, and many of them never had the opportunity to educate themselves or learn a job. Mostly these people came from refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon. Only a few of the Palestinians that came to Sweden had some form of previous education but many of these still had to return to school when they arrived in order to complete their education certificates and allow them to get a job. In most of these cases the refugees have managed to forge a place for themselves in society, although it took them a very long time.

Many Palestinians in Sweden do not make sufficient effort to learn Swedish, in spite of their awareness of its importance for finding suitable work and, more importantly, for maintaining links with their children, who often quickly begin to lose their Arabic language and identity. Language is the key to coexistence and to survival in the new culture, although traditional men from the Palestinian community sometimes obstruct the women from improving their education. But often the woman herself will not be convinced that there is any need for her to improve her level of education, and leaves to the man the responsibility of mixing with the new culture.

4. Clash of cultures

In this study we have tried to give an overview of daily life for a typical family in Sweden, and the measure to which such a family imbibes the host culture's traditions and values, as well as the repercussions of this on the family's status. This overview is based on interviews I conducted with Palestinians and the analysis of the questionnaires that were returned. The overview is also based on my personal impressions gathered through my work experience as a teacher of Swedish for refugees, many of whom are Palestinians, in the city of Vaxjo.

Without exception individual members of families in the new culture find themselves before a cultural conflict that leads in most instances to negative repercussions upon their lives. Palestinian families are already scarred from their previous refugee experience and the ensuing suffering that was a part of daily life in the refugee camps, and this before they had even set foot in Sweden. They are unable to forget the past or attempt new experiences in an open society without feeling

⁸Information from the Migration and Works Office in Vaxjo

negative about the consequences. These negative feelings may take on a variety of different forms. For instance, there will be extremely diverse reactions to the new culture between men and women, and also between children and their parents. Their common experiences are limited to the identity conflict within them all, which mostly leads to persistent feelings of dissatisfaction with the way things are. Negative feelings may also be expressed by blaming the host society or, at times, adopting behaviour patterns which are inexplicable or that are difficult to find rational causes for. The changes that Palestinian families go through may not be noticeable for several years. For parents, the recognition that their lives have changed occurs when they discover that the culture in which they now live cannot give them any real reassurances with regard to the previous certainties of their belief systems, on which their sense of identity and character is based. As individuals they may suddenly discover that their previous self-image has been replaced by one that bears no resemblance to it, and the vital role they once felt they had in life has vanished. This changing perception of one's role in society can create continuous tension in the family, which in several cases has led to divorce. Divorce, in turn, has a negative effect upon the children of the divorcing couple.

Fraudulent divorce claims, or divorce where the marriage partners pretend that there is a disagreement between them and then divorce in accordance with Swedish law, are cases where children are necessarily involved. They have to put up an act and play the victims at school. This benefits the family financially as the husband then has to pay alimony to his ex-wife and children, which is actually paid by the authorities. In these cases the mother holds the children in custody. In some instances the father is actually barred from seeing his children, if the mother so wishes. Swedish society automatically intervenes to resolve differences if the family or one of its members requests it.

Members of the family resolve this situation through their pre-existing traditions, regardless of whether its effects are positive or negative. They attempt to apply their traditional values to the new situation they find themselves in. Their traditional values and ways of thinking thus clash with the new status quo. Language in this instance plays a central and vital role in the new society. It carries not merely the substance of speech, but also the trappings of the new culture within it. Without fluency in the language these people cannot understand the culture in which they are living and, in this instance, going to court. For example, when a woman in court or at the Family Association Arbitration hears her rights in relation to her husband and to society read out, she still fails to understand how she can continue running the family without her husband's help and support. This creates a conflict between the values of the culture in which she was brought up, and her current situation, and thus has a negative effect upon her future life. The man, on the other hand, whose role as head of the household has gradually begun to erode and whose authority is daily diminished, feels that he has no real role to play and that he has even been dishonoured. He used to have the final word at home as far as his wife and children were concerned. Now he has been stripped of this right. He finds himself in a quagmire because he is unable to escape the traditional values that he has been brought up to believe in, nor is he able to understand the new cultural values that have been imposed upon him. He feels that the roles have been reversed and that the woman is now in charge. The man is adamant upon his adherence to his values and traditions, whilst the woman adapts slowly to Western and European ways. This role reversal leaves the man with a divided personality that is fragile and frail, without any firm foundation to cling to.

Often a man might learn to live with the negative self-image that he has unconsciously been compelled to adopt. But he is not solely responsible for absorbing this self-image, and shares that responsibility with the social milieu and his new environment. His family, who generally ignore

his sometimes erratic reactions, and society around him are unable to understand his behaviour or the nature of the crisis he is experiencing, and are therefore also partially responsible for what he is going through. In a few cases the confusion and distress is so powerful that the father has resorted to murdering his wife or his daughter. The woman, on the other hand, may often regret that things have come to a point where she has had to complain to the police and may even regret involving her family in the lengthy judicial proceedings. But more often than not her regret comes too late, as the fissure in the family unit is already apparent. Sometimes she might be adamant about following her new-found role. Many other women manage to escape this situation, only to repeat this experience with a man of similar background and circumstances, and thus create an inescapable pattern.

5. Torn between two cultures: The new generation

The children, who in the beginning may not have reacted to the situation, begin to take sides after a while, whether they are young children or teenagers and whether they are boys or girls. Since children are the most vulnerable group when there is fundamental change in the family structure, they are more likely to have psychological and social problems. Their very identity is split on a daily basis between two societies and cultures, particularly when home culture is a traditional Arab one, and school culture is a liberal Swedish one, and this can affect them mentally. This is exacerbated when the children reach their teenage years. The parents often lose control of their children because of their inability to maintain traditional authority in their relationship with them, whilst the children live in a society that respects the freedom of the individual. Children in their teenage years will, under these conditions, reject all constraints that the family puts on them, particularly since the preservation of the family circle is not so important to them. Within Palestinian societies the position of the girl in such circumstances is much more difficult than that of the boy, as the conflict within her is more deeply rooted and more severe. She is divided between either pleasing her parents by conforming to Arabic customs or absorbing the values she has picked up at school and with friends from school. As a girl who previously did not enjoy the freedoms allowed to women in Swedish society, she feels torn between two extremes, and this may lead to deep conflicts in her sense of identity.

One of the most pronounced effects of refugee experience that I discovered from the interviews is that more than half of male children left home before reaching the age of eighteen. Girls found it much more difficult to talk about the subject, but I came to the conclusion that there is a considerable ratio of girls who also left home before they were eighteen. This doesn't include the children who were put into the custody of the Social Services Institution as a result of their parents' inability to bring them up, in accordance with the institution's guidelines.

6. The need for self-expression

An individual, whether young or old, may pass through a major crisis when faced with a sudden change in personal circumstances and in environment, as previously discussed. He then becomes in need of assurance about his security, and the preservation of his wellbeing, and also of his sense of identity. Identity and environment are essential to, and created by each other. His social environment is to a large extent responsible for creating his self-image, whether this self-image is a negative or positive one. When that individual moves into a new social and cultural milieu, he loses the familiar mirror that once reflected what he used to be. He is no longer surrounded by the culture on which his identity is founded, and in which he grew up. And in some cases this creates a personal as well as a social crisis for the individual that hampers his full development as a balanced human being.

For Palestinian families immigrating to Sweden, it was the second time that they were forced to flee. Palestinian refugees first settled in neighbouring states after the creation of the state of Israel, but were forced to emigrate again because of continuing conflicts and war in the region. Their national identity was practically destroyed. The distinguishing feature of this migration was that it was a qualitative move, though only in the material sense, which also led to a cultural clash. By leaving behind their suffering in the refugee camps and the accompanying suppression of individual freedoms in the Arab world, Palestinians did not generally suspect that they would now face a new set of problems in a different culture. Their greatest difficulty was that of needing to adjust to a society that in no way re-affirmed their previous identity. Living in exile, as Edward Said (1993: 67) said, is not only a meaningless wasting of years for someone who has left his familiar surroundings, but also an insecure life with a nebulous identity in which a human being always seems to be travelling in the opposite direction to the milieu in which he has been transposed. He can neither find real succour in dwelling on his past, nor take refuge in his present, nor look forward to a better, brighter future. In order to escape this quagmire, the younger generation finds assimilation with the new culture the only viable solution on offer.

According to Goffman's theory, (1971: 14-23) this may take place in one of two ways. The first Goffman calls "passing", in which the individual attempts to assimilate in order to avoid feelings of inferiority. The second he terms "covering", in which the individual acknowledges these feelings of inferiority, but tries to soften the severity of the clash between him and the conditions that he is trying to acclimatise to. Of course individual members of the community do not consciously think in these terms, particularly if they are in their teens. What they do is merely deny their former identity, and live in a vacuum that they try to fill up somehow, as they feel lost and unable to identify and integrate completely with either culture.

7. Living the peripheral life

The individuals described above live on the periphery of society. Stonequist describes these cases in their third stage, where the individual lives the non-interactive life. He is in a perpetual state of unrest. He may even begin to doubt his personal relationships, and will perpetually feel that he is an outcast and persecuted by others in society. His life, in both cultures, will be difficult. The distinguishing mark of this phase is the acknowledgement that he does not belong. He will continually see himself as existing outside of both cultures and societies. As a result, his behaviour may be inconsistent and will appear to be increasingly irrational. Stonequist (In Holmberth, 1980:17), describes this situation as, "At one moment it maybe idealised and longed for, at another moment despised and hated. The other world to which he has been assigned has the same contradictory character, at times it appears as a beloved place of refuge - again it may seem like a prison".

Things may take another direction. The individual may seek to escape the negative repercussions of being a Palestinian by shunning his own sense of identity and spurning everything connected to his customs and traditions. Going down this path may lead to living in a perennial state of uncertainty and insecurity, out of fear that he will fail to be defined as a Swede. He may lose his feeling of belonging to or bonding with any society, whether Palestinian or Swedish. He may feel threatened by both sides.

This ordeal is described by Charles Westin in his book, "Existence and Identity"(1975), as one that passes through three phases. The first phase is that of "arrival", the second is "confrontation", and the third is that of "reminiscence". The author feels that many immigrants don't even pass through the first phase and prefer to dwell continuously in that phase. They neither integrate with the new society nor do they return to their first place of refuge. Therefore they behave as if they are in the

initial phases of immigration, not yet ready to let anything new enter into their lives, nor able to brave these new conditions.

This construct applies to many of those whom I interviewed, most of whom refused to even compare their current situation with that of the society in which they find themselves. It is as if they were still at the beginning of their stay in the country, even when years have already elapsed since they first found themselves on the periphery of this new and strange society. Although the ages of the people that I interviewed varied widely, in many cases their answers were the same. The majority of the interviewees rejected the idea of integration and were unable to compare their situation to that of the surrounding community. Many appeared to have progressed no further than Westin's first stage of migration, and are unable to either integrate into the community or form new lives for themselves. They refuse to confront their new reality (Westin's second phase of migration) however long they remain in their new homeland. For example, one of the research participants, a 40-year-old man who has lived in Sweden for the past 15 years, said, "I have no relationship with Swedish society or Swedish culture. I do not allow or tolerate anything Swedish". Another research participant, a woman in her thirties who has lived in Sweden for the past 14 years, said, "I've lived here for 14 years and still I go to school to learn the language. I do that only because I have to, so that I can get welfare benefits". A young man of 19 years, who has lived in Sweden for 5 years, said that he does not want to have any contact with Swedish society as he said that they do not accept immigrants. Finally a good demonstration of the difficulties that Palestinian women have integrating into Swedish society is demonstrated by a 22-year-old girl that I interviewed, who came to Sweden 5 years ago. She said that she found that being both a Muslim woman and living in Swedish society was impossible; she had to choose between them.

8. Conclusion

There are common characteristics that distinguish Palestinian immigrants in Sweden. They are mainly individuals and families who had been inhabitants of Palestinian refugee camps. In most cases they neither had the opportunity to receive an education, nor did their range of experience extend to anything beyond poverty. They are also, in most cases, offspring of the generation that left Palestine in 1948. They never knew their original homeland, and, more often than not, were born in Lebanon, Syria or Jordan. When they arrived as refugees in Sweden they had already endured a previous identity struggle and a struggle for some sense of belonging to a homeland in another country. One of the distinguishing features of the interviews is the way in which they look to Sweden as an alternative homeland to Lebanon, rather than Palestine, as this is the land of their memories and their past experiences, and also the land that they have no wish to return to. Being uprooted from their homeland, living through the ordeal of the camps, and the suppression of their freedom for so many years, has left marks upon their character and upon their sense of identity, marks that are also inherited from the previous generation and which are almost impossible to erase. Nearly every Palestinian has lived through several wars before coming to Sweden in search of security and a better life and arrives in Sweden faced with a cultural conflict the like of which he has had no experience of before. The task before him becomes that of acclimatising to a culture to which he is a complete stranger and with which he cannot seem to find common links. Even if he is able to find a sense of security in material terms and a good life in the financial sense, because of the unfamiliarity of the new culture it still has negative effects on his social, cultural and psychological life. He unwittingly faces an unexpected challenge that brings problems of adaptation that he is neither psychologically nor socially equipped to deal with unaided. In most cases he does not realise how serious these problems are, and if he does acknowledge these problems, he fails to acknowledge or explore the depth of their impact upon his being. He takes the easy way out by blaming the new host society and enumerating what, in his view, are its endless

faults, locking himself and his coterie into a pattern that they make no attempt to escape. The absence of political, cultural and social institutions that can absorb this group, with its varying age range, exacerbates the problem, whether in relation to identifying with the previous homeland or to co-existing with their new home.

The young mostly live through a phase of confusion and alienation. There is nothing that can help these people to re-direct their energies towards positive co-existence with the new culture, whilst at the same time keeping alive some feeling of belonging to an ancestral homeland. Even if they were not happy in their original home, it will be difficult for them to love their new homeland, no matter how hospitable it tries to be. For the majority, Palestine is no longer the homeland that they once dreamt of returning to, but has become in their conscious the cause of the suffering that they have had to endure. Palestine is no longer the dream destination for which they will struggle, but the object of a near futile political battle. Their survival and sense of cultural belonging have become limited in most instances to the concept of religious adherence or to the concept of Arabism. Most of them have disowned their sense of belonging to the latter and were able to maintain their religious sense of identity alone.

These conditions are not the result of an individual or a collective mistake, but rather of objective conditions that developed within a historical, social and political framework. This framework became the reality of the daily lives of Palestinian people in different parts of the world, and has been experienced in marginally or deeply different ways. It is dependent on the conditions of each particular sector of the community and on the nature of the country in which they find themselves. We are drawn to conclude that this experience is a unique one in its distinguishing features, although in its broad features it is the same for all Palestinian people in all of the countries of their Diaspora.

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An Early Case of Migration to the UK: Problems of Adaptation and Integration**

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Introduction

The Palestinian exodus from Palestine, caused by Zionist military and other coercive activities, started in the latter months of 1947, (Morris, 52-4). The exodus gained momentum in early 1948, rising to a crescendo between April and September of that year. My family, who lived in the western part of Jerusalem, was, like others, finally forced to leave in April 1948, as a direct consequence of the escalation of violence in that area. The western suburbs of Jerusalem were early targets for attack by Jewish forces, as they wanted to extend their hold over that part of the city. Their settlements adjoined our neighbourhood and Qatamon, where we lived, was an important part of their battle plan, especially the Qatamon hill, which gave considerable strategic advantage to whoever controlled it.

The attack on Qatamon started in January 1948, with the destruction of the Semiramis hotel. This was said (erroneously) to be a meeting place for Arab fighters and activists and had been targeted by the "Haganah", the Jewish army, as enemy headquarters. On the night of January 4th they bombed the hotel, leading to the deaths of some 30 people, amongst them the Spanish consul. The Semiramis incident was a seminal event in the battle for control of Qatamon and led to a wave of terror amongst the inhabitants, many of whom started to evacuate their homes immediately afterwards. The effect on my family was dramatic, since the hotel was located in the road immediately above ours, and when it was hit in the early hours of the morning we could scarcely comprehend what was happening.

"On the night of the fourth of January, two days before Christmas, we went to sleep as usual. It was raining heavily with occasional bursts of thunder and lightning. Suddenly, at some time in the night, I came to from a deep sleep and found myself in the middle of a nightmare crashing with thunder and lightning. For a few seconds, I could not distinguish dream from reality. The bedroom seemed to be full of strangers until I realised that they were my parents. There was a tremendous noise of shattering glass, shooting and explosion, which seemed to be coming from our back garden and Rex our dog was barking wildly. My mother dragged me off the bed and sat me up with my brother Ziyad against the bedroom wall. The floor was cold against my warm body. She sat in front of us, her back pushing against our knees. The room was strangely lit up and as I twisted round to the window I saw that the sky was orange, glowing and dancing. "Is it dawn?" I asked, "is that the sun?" No one answered and I could feel my mother's body shaking in her nightdress. My father was on the other side of Ziyad, sat against the wall with my sister Siham and Fatima, our village woman, squeezed in next to them. They all stared ahead and Fatima was intoning in a whisper the words of the *Fatiha*, the opening chapter of the Quran, over and over again.

I thought that my mother was whispering something too, but I did not know what it was. A shattering bang shook the windows as a great clap of thunder exploded overhead. And then I knew that I was afraid, more afraid than I had ever been in my life before...

*Exerpts from Karmi's memoir, entitles 'In Search of Fatima', Verso Press, October 2002.

“By morning, when we got up jaded and tired, we found that everybody had gone to the scene of last night's explosion, the Semiramis hotel in the road directly behind ours, and we decided to go and see for ourselves, walking through the wet, slippery streets in a howling icy wind with Rex close on our heels. The windows of several houses in the vicinity gaped, their glass shattered by the explosion of the night before. There was a great crowd around the devastated building which was still smoking and there was a strong smell of kerosene. Their faces were cold and pinched and many people were crying. Municipal workers and British soldiers were trying to clear the rubble and still dragging bodies out. Some of these were very dark-skinned, Sudanese kitchen workers. As the crowd surged forward to see the bodies, in case there was a relative or friend amongst them, the soldiers pushed them back. Because we were small, we had got right to the front and they shouted at us to go back home. All the dead and wounded who were accessible had been taken away in the small hours, but the search was now on for others still buried beneath the slabs of concrete and stone and unlikely to be alive.” •

The situation continued to worsen throughout the early months of 1948 until, by April, most of the houses in our neighbourhood stood empty. Qatamon saw what could only be described as a reign of terror. Heavy artillery and shelling fell day and night with deafening and continuous machine-gun fire, “as if we were a battlefield”, (Sakakini, entry for April 13). In these appalling conditions, people had no option but to evacuate their families to a place of safety, either to what were deemed quieter parts of Palestine or outside the country altogether. We decided on the latter course, as my grandparents lived in Damascus and my father decided to move us there until the situation quietened down. It did not occur to any Palestinian at the time that such moves were anything but temporary or that our return was not inevitable.

And so it was with us. My mother took only one suitcase of clothes for us because, as she said, we wouldn't be away for long. We even left the house keys with Fatima who was to await our early return, a week or two at most. We left the house one April morning by taxi that had been procured with enormous difficulty, since Qatamon was by then so dangerous that few people dared go there. It would take us downtown to the Old City.

“The short journey to the taxi depot in the Old City opposite the Damascus Gate passed without much incident. We were stopped by Arab soldiers at the checkpoint outside the Zone, and my father explained to them why we were leaving, since the Arab Higher Command had issued strict orders to people to stay where they were. When we reached the depot, we got out and transferred our luggage to a taxi, which would take us to Damascus by way of Amman. To reach Damascus from Jerusalem, one would normally have taken the northern route through Ras al-Naqura. But all that part of Palestine was a raging battleground and no car would travel that way. Hence, we would have to take the longer and more roundabout route through Amman. The taxi depot was bustling with people leaving Palestine like us. There was a different atmosphere here to the one we had got used to in Qatamon. As it was a wholly Arab area, there was no sound of gunfire and though it was full of crowds of people crying and saying good-bye, it felt safe and familiar.

“Fatima stood by the car which would take us away. For all her efforts at self-control, tears were coursing down her cheeks. She embraced and kissed the three of us in turn. My father said, ‘mind you look after the house until we come back,’ and she nodded wordlessly. I clung desperately to the material of her caftan but she gently disengaged my fingers. As we got into the taxi and the doors were shut, she drew up close and pressed her sad face against the window. We drove off, leaving her and her brother Muhammad looking after us until they were no more than specks on the horizon, indistinguishable from the other village men and women who were there that day.”

• This and the following extracts are taken from Ghada Karmi's memoir, *In Search of Fatima: a Palestinian story* Verso Press, 2002.

An early case of migration

It is well documented that the majority of Palestinians displaced in 1948 ended up in the adjoining Arab countries. A small number went to the Gulf States, and even fewer went further afield to Europe and the Americas. Our family was one of a tiny number of Palestinian families who migrated to Britain in the wake of the Nakba. In 1949, when we arrived, we found only a small number of our countrymen, mostly single Palestinian men, who had found work or were studying in Britain. Many of these had left Palestine before the final exodus and found themselves stuck in England, cut off from their families' back home and unable to return to Palestine.

The main place of congregation for such men was the BBC Arabic Service in London, which had also employed my father. The Arabic Service was newly established and was desperate for Arabic speakers. Hence, it became a focus, not just for Palestinians, but for Arabs of all nationalities. A number of its employees were Palestinian students who supplemented their incomes by part-time or freelance work. Thus the BBC became a sort of Arab social club and an important reference point for displaced Palestinians, where they could share problems and exchange ideas. This was of benefit mainly to my father, since that was where he spent most of his waking weekday hours, but it also helped my mother. The Palestinians who worked with my father, few as they were, soon became family friends and helped us to recreate a sense of Palestine in the midst of London. This was crucially important for all of us as we tried to adjust to life in a totally alien society.

When we first arrived in London, only my father and older sister knew any English. My mother, brother and I spoke not a single word of the language. In addition, we had scarcely ever travelled outside our own country. Our flight to Damascus was our first and only visit abroad and the only environment we knew was that of the Arab world. Although we had been ruled by a British government in Palestine and policed by a British army, whose presence in the 1940s was increasingly ubiquitous, it had not made our mother or us any more familiar with British customs and culture. We lived a typical Arab life in the colonial shadow of Britain, which remained remote and unknown. Thus, travelling to England was for us like going to another planet, and we each tried to adjust to its social and cultural assault on our senses in our own different ways.

My mother resolved the problem in what I call the Miss Havisham way.

For her, the clock simply stopped in Jerusalem in 1948.

"Our house in London was one of a row of almost identical houses stuck to each other on both sides, "terraced" in English estate agents' jargon, and nothing like our "detached" house in Jerusalem. Inside, it was dark and cold and there were stairs leading to the upper floor. Downstairs, there were two rooms, a kitchen and a scullery. The back room had a 1930s fireplace with a lacquered wooden surround, later to be a "feature" prized by middle class English house hunters, but which at the time left my mother utterly indifferent. Accustomed as she had been to our large stone villa with its tiled floors and wide veranda, this cramped house with its wooden floorboards and small rooms did not appeal to her.

"She started first with the floors. In the Arab world, floors are usually made of stone or tiles because of the hot summers. Housewives, or their servants if they had them, washed the floors regularly to clean them but also to keep the houses cool. In no time, and despite England's cold weather, my mother took up the carpets which covered the kitchen and the hall and had the floor laid with reddish brown shiny tiles to simulate our villa in Jerusalem. She would fill a bucket with soap and water and slosh it all over the floor, exactly as Fatima used to do in Palestine, get down on her knees and mop it up vigorously with a cloth. "Don't do that," my father would say, "it's cold here. We're not in Jerusalem now." She would snort dismissively and carry on just the same. And if she was washing the floor when we came home, she would shout at us to take our shoes off at the door and tread carefully."

My mother never accepted our forced migration to England and she made no secret of the fact that she resented being there.

“She complained endlessly that there was no decent food to cook, none of the vegetables we were used to, and even garlic, the staple of all Arabic cooking, was a luxury. She hated the cold weather and the rain and complained she could scarcely keep the house warm. She was lonely and longed for company. In the Arab world, you were never alone for a moment. Your neighbours or friends were always there to call on every day and in any case, there was the family around you at all times. In London, she had no neighbours she could talk to, no family and few friends . . . My mother had been a gregarious, sociable woman who depended on the company of other people almost for her very survival . . . “With our coming to London, she had changed. Whereas in Jerusalem, she had been house-proud and energetic, rushing noisily round the house in the mornings, organising the cooking and the cleaning, here in London, she sometimes found it hard even to get out of bed. We might come back at lunchtime and find her still there. She took no interest in the house and apart from the obsessional blitz on the floors, did not bother to clean it at all. No one understood what had happened to her or why she had changed so. Perhaps we should have realised that her whole life had collapsed around her. In coming to England, my mother had lost everything that to her made life normal and worthwhile. Its whole fabric had been destroyed and she could not come to terms with that loss. She never expressed any of this overtly and each of us, trying to cope with our own sense of loss, was in no position to help her.”

Adjusting to an alien environment

For my brother and I, as the youngest members of our family, the process of adaptation to English society was at once easier and also more difficult than for the rest of the family. My parents, trying to cope with their basic survival as well as their sense of loss and alienation, made the decision early on that we would remain a traditionally Arab, Muslim family. We might be living in the middle of Golders Green (as ironic as that may seem) a mixed Jewish/English area at the time, yet still my mother ran the home as if we had never left Palestine. Of course, my father had to interact with English people in public, but this was on a strictly business basis and his social, intellectual and emotional life was lived entirely within an Arab context. Neither he nor my mother felt the dilemma of living in one culture and belonging to another, nor did it occur to them to question their sense of identity. They were Palestinian Arabs forced to live in London and that was that.

But for us it was different. As a child, I learned quickly to speak English and to understand the English way of life. This was inevitable, given that I went to school with English children, made friends with them, entered their homes and mixed with their families. After a while, I became so absorbed by English culture that it started to have greater relevance for me than my own. I read English literature avidly, went to concerts of Western classical music, and started to visit art galleries.

“The Gainsborough and Reynolds paintings I saw there presented views of English eighteenth and nineteenth century life which, coupled with my concurrent reading of the English classics, imparted a sense of solid familiarity. I would gaze at ruddy-faced, bewigged men in breeches and women in straw hats and high waisted dresses surrounded by fields and woodlands against a horizon of turquoise skies and fluffy clouds as if they had been a natural part of my own heritage. . . .

“My sister, who was much older, remained relatively unaffected by these westernising influences. Her appreciation of European art and music did not touch her inner core, which remained solidly Arab and Islamic. But my case was different. In my overt exposure to these cultural experiences and in a myriad other insensible ways, my inner sense of myself was irrevocably affected. At about this time, I began to write my own stories, private, hand-written compositions in a large, ruled school notebook. These were modelled on the classic books which I had read and from which I devised implausible, second-hand plots. They were all rooted in England and the English way of life which seemed to me far

closer and more familiar than anything Arab or Islamic. The latter did not have the same reality for me and I mentally confined it to my mother's domain to which I commuted from England, as it were, in a form of daily ritual. Outwardly, I was the same Arab-looking, Arabic-speaking girl my family knew, but inwardly I grew ever closer to the society around me, identifying with its history and its norms, at least in so far as I could understand them from the vantage point of an Arab household in Golders Green."

Our parents sensed nothing of this and blithely persisted with their assumptions which held all of us suspended in their world, as if our world were only temporary and could be left behind at any moment. They knew that we read nothing but English books, went to art galleries and concerts, and yet none of this changed their view that we were the same, unchanging Arab unit that had lived in Palestine. It was as if we had never left. To them, our culture was so strong, so natural and so right that no amount of Beethoven or Rubens or Thackeray could dislodge it. The fact was that they did not want to integrate us into British society, even had they been able to. My father regarded our stay in England principally as a means for acquiring a good education. There was a widely held view in Palestine, to which he also subscribed, that the best education was to be had abroad and especially in Britain. This was a natural consequence of the fact that there were no institutions of higher learning in Palestine. The nearest universities in the region were in Istanbul, Cairo or Beirut after 1940.

So now we found ourselves, *faute de mieux*, with the opportunity to have that same English education so prized by Palestinians, and my father's sole concern was that we would all go to university and gain degrees. Beyond that, he thought very little about the other aspects of life in England and what we would make of them. With our mother at home maintaining a traditional lifestyle, he assumed that we would naturally retain our identity as Arabs and Muslims without other help. As for the surrounding environment, if he thought about it at all, he saw it as no more than a backdrop to the crucial work we must be doing on our education. I have often wondered if he clung to this mechanical view of us as a way of coping with his situation.

After all, there he was with a family of growing children in an alien environment and no previous experience to draw on and no help from our mother. If anything, she was a hindrance. Rejecting every aspect of life in England as she did, she was in no position to help us integrate either. If anything, she would try and pull us back every time she thought we were straying from our customs or our culture. This led in time to a fierce conflict within me, between my English and Arab selves, which first surfaced in the wake of the Suez crisis of 1956. I was exposed for the first time to a wave of violent anti-Arab feeling in Britain that truly shocked me.

"Was I Arab or was I English or a hybrid, and was there such a thing? I saw these two sides personified in my mother on the one hand and in my surroundings on the other. Whereas until then, the English side of me had comfortably dominated, the experience of Suez brought back a compelling Middle Eastern dimension which I could not set aside. Impinging on these was a third element, the Jews and Israel and the separate challenge they posed. But I was too absorbed by the dilemma of my two selves to find a place for that at the time. I began to experience an internal conflict which grew worse with my increasing exposure to British society. London in the late 1950s was at last emerging from the austerity of the first part of the decade and it was exciting to be young. Against this background, my mother's frozen adherence to a traditional Arab way of life and her refusal to adapt to our being in England struck a thoroughly discordant note with me. I wanted to reject what she stood for and yet I felt the pull of it because it was a part of me too."

I felt constantly torn between my two selves and this conflict got worse as I matured. I resolved it by going to a university far away from home, where I gave myself over entirely to my English side.

Living in Bristol, I could pretend to be English, absurd as that seems in retrospect, and avoid the psychological anguish over my identity which being in London induced.

An atypical migrant experience

My parents' cultural isolation can not be understood simply within the context of migration. Many migrant groups are known to maintain their previous cultures and lifestyles in their countries of adoption, often insisting that their children do the same. But this is a way of accommodating their new situation, creating a bridge between the past that they had chosen to leave behind and the present that they had opted for.

None of this was true for us. My parents did not choose to leave Palestine and they never willingly acquiesced in its loss. They did not see England as a place of the future, but as a staging post on a route which only pointed back - somewhere, of course, where they could never go. And it could not have been otherwise, for abandoning that view was tantamount to accepting the irrevocable loss of Palestine. And so, unlike the case of conventional migrants who try to build bridges to the future, the only bridges my parents built were ones which connected them to the past - to Palestine and to the Arab world.

My family suffered the fate of many others who are displaced and forced to leave their familiar surroundings. Like those others, they also had to try and cope with adjusting to a society vastly different from their own. It may be argued that we could have settled in time and accepted our new lives in Britain. This is in effect what the majority of migrants end up doing with varying degrees of success. But how does one do that when the conflict that caused the original migration remains unresolved? Is it possible in such a case to set aside memory and look to a new life? This is precisely the situation that Palestinian exiles face today, wherever they may be living and however comfortably. It is this that keeps Palestinians involved in events in their country of origin, in preference to what happens in their country of residence. And this I would suggest is the primary reason for the striking lack of participation of Palestinians in non-Middle Eastern political life.

In my case, growing up in a Jewish part of London, the conflict was impossible to ignore. In fact, I had an ordinary upbringing; I went to school and then on to university to study medicine. True, the talk in my home amongst my father and his friends while I was growing up was always about the politics of the Arab world. But I was able to ignore it and it is theoretically possible that I could have 'forgotten' all about my origins. Indeed, for most of the time up to 1967, I managed not exactly to forget but to see myself as an ordinary citizen of Britain, to subscribe to the values of British society and to have an almost exclusively English social circle. I might conceivably have been able to maintain that way of life, had Israel played along, so to speak...

Had Israel stayed quietly within the borders it acquired in 1948, displayed no aggression towards its neighbours, tried instead to make friends with them; we exiles, who had moved far away and made comfortable lives, might have retained no more than sad memories of what we had lost. But Israel's behaviour from the start was expansionist, provocative and hostile. Even if Palestinians had wanted to forget, they were not allowed to. And in our case, this was enhanced by the fact that we lived in a country largely sympathetic to Israel. Thus, we were at a double disadvantage; we were victims that no one in the West acknowledged, while it at the same time was the victor who was celebrated. Worse still, after 1970, we became demonised as 'terrorists' and the trial of the Palestinians was complete.

Conclusion

Many of the effects of forced migration described above are common to all such situations. All migrants whose cultures are widely divergent from that of their host countries will suffer from problems of adjustment. The identity crisis that I faced and the intercultural conflict that I experienced, the effects of which still linger on, is common to all migrant communities. What

makes the case of Palestinian migration different is that the conflict that caused it is on going, which renders an acceptance of the circumstances of exile more difficult. This could have implications for the future of subsequent generations of exiles. The temptation for the older generations will be to inculcate their history and their struggle into their children, thus preventing them from adapting properly to their environment and perhaps provoking in them the same identity problems as their parents encountered. Such parental behaviour is natural, but it is potentially harmful.

There is an additional problem for those of us living in pro-Israel societies: the question of the propriety of doing so. It seems to me that this complicates and aggravates the ill effects of displacement. Clearly, strategies that deal with these consequences of exile need to be formulated, especially with regard to the younger generation.

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Cycle of Isolation: the Situation of Palestinian Refugee Women in Germany

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1.1: Palestinian Refugees in Germany

The aim of our research is to provide a general overview of the legal status of Palestinian refugees in Germany by focusing on the situation of Palestinian refugee women in particular. For our research we interviewed 62 Palestinian refugee women and we describe their everyday life, their attitudes and their expectations. We also investigated how well these women are integrating into German society. The majority of our research participants are from Lebanon (72.5%) as this is the largest Palestinian refugee group in Germany. They mainly originate from villages in the north of Palestine and they fled to Lebanon after the 1948 creation of the state of Israel.

Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon were confined indefinitely to the refugee camps. Although they received temporary residence permits in Lebanon they had to continue their struggle to survive as they were deprived of primary social and civil rights. They have experienced much hardship, especially as the situation was intensified by various wars (the civil war, the Israeli invasion, and the camps wars) and for Palestinian women and children this meant tension and fear for their own survival as well as the loss of family members.

Another group of Palestinian refugee women, who also originate from northern Palestine, found shelter in Syria (19.5% of our study sample). Most of these women and their families lived in refugee camps there. Their lives in Syria were more stable and they could live more or less in peace. But they also brought their specific Syrian experience with them when they migrated to Germany. There are only a few refugee women among the Palestinian women in Germany from Jordan (8.0% of our sample). Most of them came to Germany to rejoin their families, or to undertake vocational training.

Eleven percent of our study sample were aged between 15 and 20 years old, 40.5% were aged between 20 and 35 years, 47.0% were aged between 35 and 50 years, and 1.5% of our study sample were over 50 years old. The age of our participants shows that they are in the active phase of their life and 98.5% of them are able to participate and communicate within the host society.

Eighty four percent of our research participants are married and family issues seem to be their primary interest. Eight percent of our sample is single, 5% widowed and 3% divorced. The average number of children per family is 3-4 children, which is higher than the national average, and the majority of our research participants mentioned that building a big family is also one of their aims in this society. Based on traditional values a big family provides a real feeling of safety and shelter in exile.

1.2: The Second Exile - Federal Republic of Germany

As the situation in Lebanon increasingly worsened, Palestinians mostly fled to European countries where their relatives lived, and many came to Germany in the mid 1970s at the beginning of the civil war in Lebanon. The exodus gained momentum during the 1980s and 1990s as the civil war continued. After 1995 the volume of Palestinian refugees coming into the Federal Republic of Germany decreased. This was mainly because of the restrictions of the amended German Refugee Laws. Despite this many Palestinian refugees are continuing to leave the region because of the ongoing economic crisis in the Middle East, especially in Lebanon. This is endorsed by our study findings as, out of the 62 women questioned for our study, 9.7% of them (6 women) arrived in Germany before 1975, 75.8% of them (47 women) arrived between 1975 and 1995, and only 14.5% of them (9 women) arrived in Germany after 1995.

1.3: Application for asylum in the Federal Republic of Germany

Palestinian women had to apply for political asylum after their arrival in the Federal Republic of Germany without any knowledge of their own legal position and the requirements of the asylum procedure. Their difficulties with the German authorities often started with the application forms. When confronted with the established jurisdiction of the Federal Republic of Germany many women gave incomplete explanations of their reasons for fleeing.

After applying for asylum they would be accommodated in reception centres for asylum seekers all over Germany. These women had to stay in these reception centres until a decision on their asylum application was made. Only a few of these women applied for political asylum for personal reasons. Most of their applications were dealt with within the framework of asylum for families because they often arrived after their husbands and 93.5% of our participants migrated to Germany for family reasons. Only 6.5% referred to the worsening economic situation. But 77.5% stated additionally that they left the country because male family members were politically persecuted.

German asylum law only recognises persecution by the state as a legitimate basis for claiming political asylum. Consequently the overwhelming majority of Palestinian women were not accepted as political refugees because they were fleeing civil war, and therefore do not qualify. Only in a very few cases Palestinian refugee women were given asylum under the German Constitution (Article 16a GG) or were accepted in compliance with paragraph 51 of Aliens' Law (Geneva Convention). Nevertheless they and their families had to wait for a period of between 1 and 10 years to know the outcome of their asylum applications and during that time their status of residence remained uncertain.

1.4: German jurisdiction and the status of stateless persons

Since the mid 1980s Palestinian refugees have also been confronted with the development of German jurisdiction regarding the implementation of the Geneva Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons. A decision by the Federal Administrative Court on the 15th October 1985 (9C 30.85) stated that, "Stateless Palestinians not falling under UNRWA protection and not being accepted according to Article 16GG in Germany, have to be treated according to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons". This was followed up by a further decision from the Federal Administrative Court on the 21st January 1992 (1C 18.90), which stated that, "the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons should not be applied to stateless Palestinians who left Lebanon voluntarily and who were later denied re-entry permit". The final decision of the Federal Administrative Court regarding the status of stateless persons on the 23rd February 1993 (1C 45.90) declared that, "Palestinians who have not acquired another nationality are stateless in accordance with Article 1, Paragraph 1 of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons".

Because of these decisions Palestinian refugees cannot improve their legal status. For the police and the administrative courts the Palestinian refugees are defined as “nationality unclear“. Palestinian refugees are registered in the German Central Register for Foreigners under the category of “nationality unclear“ and this also includes other ethnic groups. The federal government has no exact figures for the number of Palestinians in Germany and estimates that 75 per cent of the 47,439 people with unclear nationality are Palestinians from Lebanon (35,579).

Table 1 - Type of residence permit granted to refugees classified as “Nationality Unclear”

Type of residence permit	Estimate of Palestinians classified as “Nationality unclear”	Estimate of other refugees classified as “Nationality unclear”
Title to residence (TR) (<i>Aufenthaltsberechtigung</i>)	212	71
Residence permit (RP) (<i>Aufenthaltserlaubnis</i>)	8,203	2,734
Residence permit for exceptional purposes (RPEP) (<i>Aufenthaltsbefugnis</i>)	8,608	2,870
Residence permit for special purposes (RPSP) - (<i>Aufenthaltsbewilligung</i>)	652	217
Permission to reside (PR) (<i>Aufenthalts gestattet</i>)	5,427	1,809
Freed from residence permission (FRP) (<i>Befreit von Aufenthaltsgenehmigung</i>)	264	88
Recognition as stateless person (RSP) (<i>Anerkennung als Staatenlose</i>)	2,493	831
Exceptional leave to remain (EL) (<i>Duldung</i>)	9,720	3,240
Total	35,579	11,860

Source: Secretary of State Dr. Kurt Schelter 21st August 1997, Printed Matter 13/8409 of Federal Parliament - 13th election period / September 1997
(Table figures based on the federal government’s ¾-estimate)⁹

⁹ The various types of residence permits define different categories of residence. Among those the “Title of residence” (after 10-12 years of residence, no recourse of public funds, work, apartment, no criminal record, 60 months of contribution to the national pension fund) is the most secure one followed by the “Residence permit”. The residence permit is available as an “Unlimited residence permit” (after 8-10 years of residence in Germany, no recourse of public funds, work, apartment, no criminal record) and as a “Limited residence permit” (temporary stay for work and marriage). The “Residence permit for exceptional purposes” is given to two categories of refugees. At first to those accepted in compliance with paragraph 51 of Aliens’ Law

1.5: Exceptional leave to remain

A large number of Palestinian refugee women and their families were granted exceptional leave to remain in Germany after having been rejected in their asylum application. Exceptional leave to remain offers no legal status and the refugees are obliged to leave the country when required as this means only the suspension of deportation for a limited period of time. Refugees with exceptional leave to remain face obstacles like restricted freedom of movement to the issuing district or regional county, only basic medical care, no permission for higher education, vocational training or work, dependent on public funds and they have to register with the aliens' police every 3 or 6 months to renew this permission.

Since the mid 1990s Palestinian refugee women and their families often apply for exceptional leave to remain because of the restrictive asylum laws and the denial of jurisdiction by the Federal Republic of Germany for Palestinians from Lebanon. These refugees prefer to live without any legal status from the beginning, as they fear the same legal results at the end of their asylum procedure.¹⁰

As well as exceptional leave to remain another certificate called the "Border Crossing Certificate" (Grenzübertrittsbescheinigung) was introduced for a short period. The legal basis for this certificate remains unclear even today. The "Border Crossing Certificate" was issued by the German authorities to rejected asylum seekers, allowing them to "cross the border" without a valid passport. This procedure was applied to force refugees to leave the country, additionally accompanied by economic sanctions that withdrew any kind of public relief. After a decision by the higher administrative court in Berlin in 1997 (OVG 7 B 112.96) the Border Crossing Certificate was abolished.¹¹

*"They keep us in an uncertain situation and we have to go from one person to the next. Sometimes they give us hope that we can stay here and at other times we are threatened with deportation. How can we, the younger generation, think about our future if we don't have a permanent home? For me and others of my age it seems that it is our fate to be lost."*¹²

(including the benefits of the Geneva Convention, limited for 2 years with optional prolongation), second to rejected asylum seekers with exceptional leave to remain in compliance with regulations for long pending cases (optional extension possible with the pre-conditions of no recourse to public funds, no criminal record and being a local resident). Fulfilling the relevant pre-conditions can prolong the above-mentioned types of residence permits. The "Residence permit for special purposes" is normally granted for study or work and is limited to the period and the purpose issued. The "Permission to reside" enables asylum seekers to stay in the country only during the asylum procedure. It grants them leave to stay with restricted rights and limited movement. Diplomats for example do not have to apply for residence permission. Refugees accepted as Stateless in accordance with article 1, paragraph 1 of the Convention relating to the status of stateless persons obtain secure residence by durable residence permission. "Exceptional leave to remain" is granted to asylum seekers with rejected asylum application (Period: 3 up to 6 months) and offers no legal status; it means only the suspension of deportation for a limited period of time (statutory bars or other obstacles like civil war, no passport, humanitarian reasons etc.), thus the refugees are legally forced to leave the country.

¹⁰ Interviews obtained from information and welfare centres in Berlin "Al-Dar", "Al-Muntada", "Al-Nadi", "AWO" and "Kumulus". End of 1999/Beginning of 2000

Interview with the information centre "Kahina", Leipzig - January 2000

¹¹ Interview with the welfare centre and advisory board, Al-Muntada/Diak. Werk Neukölln-Oberspree e.V. - 30. September 1999

¹² Quotation of a research participant, 19 years old, Berlin - November 1999

1.6: The Re-Admission Agreement

Germany is interested in returning large groups of failed Palestinian asylum seekers, who were granted exceptional leave to remain, to their host countries, and to further this end in 1996 they drafted a Re-Admission Agreement with Lebanon to return failed asylum seekers. This agreement has yet to be signed. According to the estimate of the federal government nearly 10,000 Palestinians from Lebanon with exceptional leave to remain should leave Germany. At present a type of “gentlemen’s agreement”¹³ is applied to deportations on a case-by-case basis. Despite a visit by the Lebanese president to Germany in 2001, no progress has been made on this issue.

“I knew from the beginning that we could not dream of a future here without legal status. Of course, I hope that this “miracle” will happen and we will be saved. But ten years have already passed and nothing new has happened. Any plans for my future are hindered by this constant uncertainty. My case is only one of many others; lots of foreigners don’t know...where they can stay in the end.”¹⁴

1.7: Regulations for long-pending cases

Since the mid 1980s, and within the framework of federal and regional regulations for long-pending cases (preceding average residence period: 6 to 10 years), Palestinian refugees who had been granted exceptional leave to remain received a two-year residence permit (with the pre-conditions of no recourse to public funds, no criminal record and they must be local residents).

Since December 1984 seven regulations for long-pending and hardship cases have been passed. In the late 1980s a large number of Palestinian refugee women took advantage of these regulations to stabilise their residency. The recent regulation for long-pending cases passed in November 1999 does not help these Palestinian refugees, as they cannot fulfil the pre-conditions of a work permit, a job, and no recourse to public funds. In this context the delegate for foreigners of the Senate in Berlin, Dr. Barbara John, stated that the situation is critical, because only 3 to 4 out of 1000 Arabic refugees can fulfil these conditions and that was not the aim of such regulations.

Some of the Palestinian refugees who benefited from the first regulations for long-pending cases achieved the pre-conditions for naturalisation over a period of years. Meanwhile a great number of them have been naturalised. The figures of the Office for Statistics estimates that the number of naturalised Palestinians from 1981 to 1997 was 8,139.¹⁵

Although our research participants have lived in the Federal Republic of Germany from 1 to 20 years only half of them have permanent residency. The table below contains information on the different types of residence permits our interviewees were granted:

¹³ Interview with a member of parliament of Hizbollah, Mr. Kassim, Berlin - November 1999

¹⁴ Quotation of a research participant, Berlin, 1999

¹⁵ „Leben zwischen zwei Kulturen“ (Life between two cultures), Diploma of Wahiba Megdad at the Catholic Academy Berlin, June 1999

Table 2 - Types of residence permits granted (Total Sample Number: 62)

Residence Permit	Law basis	Residence Permit granted to study sample	Percentage
Unlimited residence permit (URP)	Accepted refugee status Article 16aGG of German Constitution	-	-
Residence permit for exceptional purposes (RPEP)	Accepted refugee status § 51 German Aliens' Law (Geneva Convention)	-	-
Permission to reside (PR)	German Asylum Procedure Act	7	11%
Exceptional leave to remain (EL)	German Aliens' Law	21	34%
Residence permit for exceptional purposes (RPEP)	Regulations for long-pending cases (refugees with exceptional leaves to remain and long-term asylum seekers)	9	14.5%
Limited residence permit (LRP)	German Aliens' Law	1	2%
Unlimited residence permit (URP)	German Aliens' Law	7	11%
Title to residence (TR)	German Aliens' Law	3	5%
Naturalisation (N)	German Naturalisation Law (Average residence period before: 10-12 years)	14	22.5%

2: Integration into German society

2.1: German host society

After the end of World War II Germany underwent major changes in the structure of its society and its political institutions. A thorough overhaul of the principles of National Socialism did not take place immediately but over the course of time it was slowly repressed. The majority of the population, either consciously or sub-consciously, has continued to distance themselves from anything perceived to be foreign. A further aspect that distinguishes German society from its neighbours are its strict nationality laws, as opposed to neighbouring countries such as France or Denmark where naturalisation is based on territorial law (i.e. those born on the territory automatically receive citizenship). In the 1980s and early 1990s, during the nation-wide election campaigns, many politicians tried to win over the people by verbal attacks on asylum seekers and foreigners. Such widespread public debates ended in a number of restrictive laws being passed. The political parties and the mass media manipulated these issues in order to gain support, but the whole process caused prejudice, non-acceptance and fear as well as hostility towards foreigners.

Although a great number of foreigners (working immigrants and refugees) have lived in Germany for years, resulting in a multicultural society, the majority of Germans remain distant or ignore them and this sometimes turns into open hostility and attacks on the refugee community. The limited jobs available and the tense economic situation tend to aggravate the competition between Germans and foreigners in the labour market.

In fact there is little contact between German society and refugees, despite the fact that there have been different cultural groups, with their own customs and traditions, in Germany for many years. The majority of refugees are kept in collective centres isolated from German society. The only Germans they have regular contact with are the guards of the accommodation, the aliens' authorities, the police, the Federal Border Police, the social office and the medical service. Only a few of them have access to advisory boards. The few who are allowed to live in apartments outside the collective centres usually have no additional contact with the German population. But sometimes progress can be achieved when their children go to school.

These circumstances have led to a parallel movement in immigrant groups and a revival of ethnic group solidarity, especially in marginalized communities like the Palestinian one. Thus in Berlin and other German cities there are ghettos of immigrants with their own infrastructure, grocery stores, tea-houses, mosques and political, sport and cultural associations, which meet their requirements and make their life more comfortable in exile.

2.2: The Palestinian Community in Germany (PC)

When the Palestinian community (PC) in Germany first became a reality it was more united and made collective efforts to achieve mutual political gains. During the peace process the refugees felt more and more marginalized and forgotten, and there was little discussion of their plight. The identity of the PC is of great importance as it signifies orientation and stability by strengthening the use of traditional values in unfamiliar surroundings. The fear of losing their own culture and identity results in a conservative attitude to protect their original values and norms. Because they feel discriminated against by the host society they stay close together. The attitudes and patterns of behaviour of the rural Palestinian villages and camps play again a dominant role in the PC. Traditional and religious values provide a feeling of security and maintain the Palestinian identity.

Many people use religion as the basis for preserving their identity, as religion provides continuity, guidance and focus for the Palestinian community. Recently the importance of religion to the Palestinian community has increased. More and more women are choosing to wear the "hijab" (headscarf) and taking part in religious activities. The increased importance of religion is reflected in the education of the new generation. Parents use religion to restrict and control their children. The children try to conform to these restrictions but without really understanding the basis of them.

In the mid 1990s associations were founded consisting of various families and village communities and this led to a trend of withdrawal into the Palestinian community. The establishment of these associations served to revive the feelings of belonging in a community that had formerly been defined by the general Palestinian community or by joining Palestinian political groups. Many women who have lived here for years in big cities know little about their surroundings. As well as this a large number of Palestinian families confine themselves only to Arabic television and have little knowledge of the progress of German society. Because of this there is little motivation to learn German. They care little about political events in Germany and therefore they cannot take part in every day life. Their connection to the Palestinian community plays a more important role. This will also be reflected in the structure of their communities where traditional and religious values come into the foreground.

2.3: Palestinian Women in Germany

Palestinian women who came to Germany in the mid 1970s moved initially more open-mindedly within German society owing to increased political activities. This entitled them to more freedom outside the house, although their position within the hierarchy of the family did not change in general. Within the framework of the regulations for long pending cases, especially that of 1989, a number of women who had already been in Germany for many years achieved a safe residence status and have since been naturalised. Nevertheless over time their progress towards freedom of movement in the political area declined and again they have taken over the traditional role of looking after the household and introducing the Arabic traditions and values to their children.

Along with this development there was a tendency to withdraw from German society, accompanied by the argument that Palestinian women should not emulate the German way of life. There are a lot of Palestinian women in Germany who still feel themselves to be foreigners in a society that they have been living in for years and they strongly wish to be back in their homeland where they feel sheltered and safe.

“I have lost the comfort of my family and my usual surroundings, I have lost my existence and my personality in German society.”¹⁶

Palestinian women who came to Germany in the early 1990s were not interested in political activities and were often busy within the household. From the beginning they had very little contact with German society because of language barriers, residence problems and the closeness of the Palestinian community and the household. Most of them have no legal or safe residence status.

2.4: Childcare and household as the sole function

Due to the prevailing structure of Palestinian society it is the women's duty to care for the children and to keep the household. They are under pressure from their husbands and the PC to educate their children, especially their daughters, according to the existing community values and make sure their children follow these rules in everyday life. They have different standards of acceptable behaviour for girls and boys, and boys are granted more freedom in local society. The girls face strong restrictions and often in school are not allowed to take part in swimming lessons, day trips or contact German friends. Their method of educating their children reflects their own education in their home country. Although many women and their families are confronted for years with the German way of life this does not normally result in the family questioning or discussing the existing educational practices.

The mothers' teaching is determined by their own understanding of their role and their wish to meet the educational requirements. Owing to their own fear of family conflict they tend to be restrictive in their communication or dealings with their daughters and try to keep them away from the perceived threats of German society. The girls must look after their honour and partly adopt their parents' values in their external appearance (for example in their clothing and in the wearing of the hijab [headscarf]). But secretly many of them violate these restrictions and feel forced to deceive their parents in everyday life.

¹⁶Statement from a research participant

“There are a lot of Arabic parents who stifle the breath of their children so that at some point the children burst and take the first opportunity to leave.”¹⁷

Conflicts between parents and children partly arise because the parents put pressure on their children and they are not frank with each other. The family tends to conceal their problems from others. They try to dissociate their children from local society in order to avoid conflict and to provide shelter for them. Often they are the last to know about the activities of their children outside the house, especially in the case of their daughters.

2.5: Areas of conflict

The prevailing method of bringing up girls in many Palestinian families is, even today, based on the principle that it might be more important for the young women to marry in time than to complete their education. Therefore young women frequently interrupt their school or vocational training because they get married. Under pressure from their families the girls often marry at a very young age and have no experience of life at all. At the same time many girls acquire the desire to leave the restricted atmosphere of their parents home and to get rid of family control. As the young women have no opportunities to meet an appropriate husband, they accept the choice of their family as a solution to the problem. Marriages serve as a meeting-place to make a person's acquaintance and to represent themselves. On these occasions the mother places great importance on the clothing and appearance of her daughter, so that she can free herself from the imposed burden of the Palestinian community and to preserve the honour of the family.

Some girls flee the house of their parents because they do not wish to marry early; they like to go out in the evening and to meet their boyfriends. These young women face a very difficult process of decision-making and are often marginalized by their family and the PC. They usually receive support and shelter from the German authorities. While they are freed from the traditional restrictions they also lose the affection and shelter of their family and the community that they are accustomed to and which cannot be replaced by German society.

The behaviour of women is guided by the values and norms of the PC; they marry early, they obey their husbands, and they accept the family and the household as their main area of responsibility and interest. Generations of women were brought up in this way and were taught to obey the man in the family; the father, the brother, the husband and later the son.

The women who came to Germany with their families often feel alone and ostracised in their new surroundings. In most cases they have no knowledge of the language and many of their husbands think that there is no need for them to learn it¹⁸. Because of this the women become prisoners¹⁹ within their own family and the new society.

Within the Palestinian community the women are dependent on their husband's for the whole of their married life. The Arabic man's main reason for marriage is to establish a typical Arabic family, to have children and to let the women keep the household. Many of them like to enjoy their life to the full while married and leave the task of keeping the house in order and caring for the children to the women. Because of this women are confined to the house and move within society only through their husbands. They have already been educated like this in the house of their

¹⁷ Statement from a research participant

¹⁸ Quotation of interviewee

¹⁹ Statements of participants

parents, where they have to obey their father and their brothers – they know their roles and that now they must obey their husbands.

Single women and mothers often feel their life is a hard struggle. They feel that the PC focuses on, and criticises them, because they stay in Germany without a husband. These women try to be inconspicuous and to fit in with the community in order to deflect possible criticism from their fellow countrymen. Frequently they voluntarily limit their freedom of movement, pay attention to their clothing or wear a hijab (headscarf). They fulfil their religious duties impeccably and are eager to have a good reputation within the Palestinian community. They feel that they have more freedom in German society²⁰ and they impose fewer restrictions on themselves and their children than would be the case when members of the Palestinian community are present and where their concern for their reputation is paramount.

The Palestinian community does not allow women any choice in relationships besides marriage. An unmarried partnership is a taboo. If a woman takes the risk of such a partnership she and her parents will be ostracised by the community. Contacts between young girls and boys are prohibited. Thus a normal and relaxed atmosphere of communication among the young generation of both sexes cannot be developed, although, in practise, they study and work together.

The phenomenon of marriage for residence has existed since the 1970s. A lot of Arabic men married German women in order to get a residence permit. Most of these marriages failed over time. During the divorce proceedings the men often arranged for an Islamic marriage with a fellow-countrywoman. These women face a very difficult situation because they are not officially married according to German law, their children are illegitimate and they do not get legal residence. If the marriage fails the woman is not entitled to any kind of financial subsidy from her husband for herself or for any children.

2.6: Emancipation and Reduction of Personality to Functions

The term emancipation is not relevant to the PC. For men as well as a lot of women the idea of emancipation is reduced to freedom of sexuality for women. They see the freedoms allowed to women in Germany as a threat to their customs and traditions and they feel obliged to protect and preserve their values from these influences. As a result of this they reject any changes to their education methods and continue to avoid integration into German society. By assuming this attitude they prevent any changes to the women's role in the Palestinian community because they feel threatened and take the role of defenders. Men exacerbate this trend as they often increase the pressure on their wives if they have the feeling they are trying to rush into new areas of life.

One of our interviewees defined the problem as follows:

“We could see with our own eyes the freedoms enjoyed by the women in the local society. But we see this through keyholes from behind closed doors. In spite of what we saw we did not shake off our chains and free ourselves from our way of thinking. As we could not come to a decision we say that German women are different. Are they really different from us or is it because we did not find the courage to exceed the limits of what we brought here with us. Although all these thoughts are going through my head I stayed in the role dictated to me because I didn't want any earthquakes in my life.”²¹

²⁰ Comment from an interview partner

²¹ Opinion of a research participant

Even in student circles or at work in Germany Palestinian women face restrictions in their study or among their work colleagues. The men from the same cultural background observe exactly how the women move, with whom they talk and laugh. The women fear for their reputation and voluntarily restrict their freedom of movement and withdraw into their own community. Women who have to interrupt their professional career tend to look for another sphere of activity. Their former careers are often replaced by running the household and childcare. Although they preserve their dreams of a professional career it is impossible for them with their family commitments to return to the former status.

2.7: Education

The majority of Palestinian women who migrated to Germany have a low level of education, as well as many who grew up in Germany. They have little chance for professional work. This is collaborated in our study as 13.0% of our study participants are illiterate, 66.0% have completed basic education, and 10.0% of our participants had completed higher education. Even Palestinian graduate women (11.0% of our sample) have less opportunity to find a job in comparison with German graduates.

A proportion of the children in our study are confronted with the problem of lacking legal residence status and this results in many girls interrupting their education or preventing them starting vocational training.

“Owing to my situation of residence [exceptional leave] I could not continue my education after the 10th grade. In the meantime I got married and I’m going to have a baby soon.” [This woman is 19 years old]²²

Another problem is that a lot of parents are not able to support their children at school owing to lack of language skills and their own education level. They can neither supervise their homework nor co-operate with the school or take part in parents’ evenings at school. As well as this many families do not see graduation or vocational training for girls as important. Usually these young women have no goals in their lives. Their desired job is, in reality, unobtainable because they are not adequately qualified. They live in two different worlds, their values and targets get mixed up, and they are unable to defy the wishes of their parents.

2.8: Profession, Work and Income

Women who grew up in Germany and had direct contact with German society are more likely to consider a professional career. This entails the extra pressure of having to balance childcare, household duties and the demands of a job. Moreover a large proportion of the men do not agree with their wives having a professional career.

“I would like to work but my husband won’t let me because he thinks that a woman’s role is in the home and caring for the children.”²³

More than 50% of our study participants do not have a work permit. This reflects their insecure residence status, as this is a pre-condition for obtaining a work permit. This figure also reflects the legal and economic situation of the Palestinian refugee community in Germany in general. Although 30 women out of our sample of 62 have a work permit, 53 of them are unemployed and only 9 of them have a job. This signifies that 85% of our participants rely on public funds.

²² Statement from a research participant

²³ Statement of a research participant – Autumn 1999

Palestinian refugees (women as well as men) face many obstacles that restrict their access to the labour market. A category of legal priorities based on nationality (Germans, EU-immigrants, Non-EU-immigrants) regulates access to the German labour market. As well as this it is often difficult to get a job because of prejudices against foreigners - even for people who are naturalised.²⁴ Women in general face more difficulties than men in getting a job and for Palestinian women this problem is greatly magnified. Many Palestinian women and their families stay in Germany for a long time without legal residence and are dependent on public funds. Also a great number of Palestinian families who have a secure residence status are still without employment.

The table below shows that only 30% of our study participants are able to ensure their livelihood through their own income. The remaining 70% are dependent on public subsidies.

Table 3 - Source of income for our study sample (Total Sample Number 62)

Types of Income	Private Income	Public funds
Family income	16	-
Pension	1	-
Unemployment benefit	2	-
Unemployment relief	-	1
Public relief	-	42
Total	19	43

It has to be noticed that the above-mentioned situation refers also to the Palestinian community in general and is mainly caused by lack of residence and professional qualifications, lack of orientation in the labour market and less opportunities to find a work with an adequate salary to ensure the basic needs of big families. If also the husband has no job this can be another source of conflict within the family. His inability to support his family can cause feelings of worthlessness and damage his self-esteem and this leads to tensions in the family unit. In extreme cases this can lead to the break up of the family circle.

“Nobody should think that we want to live on public relief. I feel penalised because working is very important for a human being. On the one hand public relief enables us to cover our needs, on the other hand it makes life a perfect hell for us.”²⁵

Facing this reality many families have become accustomed to relying on public relief as a secure source of income. This is accepted by the youth as well. Although the majority of Germans avoid public benefit because it is associated with low status in society, this view is not reflected within the Palestinian community.

²⁴ Palestinian woman “N” qualified as a saleswoman and was naturalised, applied for a job in a well-known shopping centre in Berlin. When meeting the sales manager for an interview, he expressed immediately that they prefer to employ only Germans. As she referred to her German nationality, he stated that she does not look like a German and therefore he would not employ her.

²⁵ Statement of a research participant – Autumn 1999

The consumerist society of Germany led many of the younger generation of the Palestinian community to dream of a better and more comfortable life that cannot be achieved because of lacking family income. These circumstances prepare the background for committing crimes (theft, drugs, vandalism, blackmail and robbery) and could be a reason for the destructive behaviour of some of these young people.²⁶

2.9: The Health situation

Palestinian women have health insurance in Germany and can make use of the medical care of the state. Medical care is normally covered by contributions to a health insurance policy provided by work or from a public subsidiary (unemployment benefit or public relief). We questioned our research participants about the types of illnesses that they currently suffer, and that had appeared after their refugee experience. The illnesses most commonly mentioned not only show the physical effects of their exile, but are also connected with symptoms of stress. The women believe that their illnesses are the consequence of dissatisfaction with their current situation, combined with their unresolved status in Germany, the lack of possibilities for vocational training and work, inability to speak the local language, overcrowded housing, lack of money and stress in their family and in the community.

“My yearning for my parents and relatives is very strong, and I’ve no possibility to visit them because of exceptional leave. Berlin seems to be a big prison for me.”²⁷

Some of our research participants suffer from depression (4.8%) and this frequently remains unrecognised and is not treated. Other commonly reported illnesses include high blood pressure (6.45%), gastritis (3.2%) and migraines (3.2%) but these are considered by many of our study participants to be an illness and are medically treated.

These women have lost their familiar surroundings and feel isolated in German society. Due to the lack of permanent residence status in Germany a lot of them have not seen their families and relatives for years, as they cannot travel abroad. Feeling unbalanced and alone they are increasingly bitter, as one of our study participant commented, *“There our life had another taste”*.²⁸

2.10: The Peace Process

The attitude of our interviewees towards the peace process is, in general, very pessimistic. They do not believe that there will be a fair solution to the problem of the 1948 refugees and they feel left out of the peace process.

²⁶ See: Report on Integration and Aliens’ policy 1996/1997, issued by the Representative of Foreigners of the Senate of Berlin, September 1998, page 15 *“Crimes - Crimes of Youth”*

²⁷ Comment from one of our research participants

²⁸ Comment of a study participant - Autumn 1999

Table 4 - Attitudes to the Peace Process (Total Sample Number 62)

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No comment</i>	<i>Total figure</i>
<i>Are you interested in the peace process?</i>	45	11	6	62
<i>Do you know about the details of the agreements achieved?</i>	36	18	8	62
<i>Have you any hope for the negotiations?</i>	20	36	6	62
<i>Do you expect a fair solution for the refugees?</i>	1	52	9	62

The differences of opinion within the PC in relation to the peace process are the result of two main political positions and two official associations representing the Palestinian community²⁹ in Germany. In both associations few women participate and they have less influence on policy and structures issues. This reflects their position in PC in general and forces them into the background. With the beginning of the second Intifada the mutual political activities of women and men have increased and have led to a new approach by both of the associations in Germany based on the idea of merging into one strong official “Palestinian Community” with common political interests.

2.11: Life between two worlds

The young women of the new generation increasingly come into conflict with their Palestinian parents whose identity is firmly rooted in Arabic-Palestinian society and their own life in German society. The traditional values that they superficially obey frequently comprise only restrictions for women. Many of them want to be accepted in both German and Palestinian society and try to adapt themselves to the social values of each society, as circumstances require. This leads to division and conflict in everyday life, something that they do not discuss openly with each other. On the other hand a lot of them adopt as a matter of form the rules of their parents, because they believe that they can achieve further freedom in the local society while pretending to conform to the values of the Palestinian community. The chair of Al-Hole, a Palestinian association in Berlin, when expressing his views on the role of Palestinian women, commented,

*“In this society it is very important that the mother has the same role as in our native country. What can the mother do to preserve her daughter’s Arabic-Muslim identity when her daughter is becoming familiar with German society? How can women protect their daughters and our traditions and customs at the same time?”*³⁰

²⁹ Palestinian Community Berlin (supports the peace process and is the official policy of negotiations)
Palestinian Community Berlin-Brandenburg (is unsatisfied with and criticises the results achieved during peace talks)

³⁰ Comment from the chair of the Al-Huleh-Association

A regular and steady exchange between German and Palestinian women does not exist. Also women who have jobs still have little contact with German society. In order to express strong ties with the Palestinian community these women intentionally associate themselves with the *Palestinian Island*. This perspective was common among our study participants, some of whom commented that,

“I have no idea what they are like because there is no contact between us. The only contact I have is when I go shopping.”

“No idea because I do not have any communication with the authorities and do not meet people.”

*“There is no contact at all.”*³¹

3: Conclusions and Recommendations

The lack of protection and recognition for Palestinian refugees under international law results in an unsolved residence status for the majority of them in Germany and is the main problem that must be urgently resolved. The insecure residency situation has led to the Palestinian community being marginalized, especially in terms of living conditions, social status, relation to the host society and the position of women. These social and cultural trends in the countries of origin mean that the PC tends to be more traditional and passive while returning to more conservative forms of representation. The participation of Palestinian women in the public life of the PC as well as of the host society is declining. Women are being pushed back into traditional social roles. In local society they have less social contacts than they enjoyed before in their countries of origin. Problems of residency status, poor language skills, discrimination of immigrants in Germany, and conservatism of the PC limit women's access to education, vocational training, and work. It is difficult for Palestinian women to take up any social role or practice more freedom.

Because of the stagnation of the peace process and the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the refugee issue has gained momentum among the Palestinian refugee community in Germany. With this process, and the deteriorating situation in Palestine, an increase in political activities, especially among women, within the PC in Germany is apparent. Remarkably there is a continuing process of political engagement by the Palestinian community in Germany, and this is reflected in changes to the traditional role of Palestinian women as well as the role of the Palestinian community within German society.

The increasingly disparate mix of cultures in Germany is one of the major challenges to German society. The multiculturalism of German society should be used to promote inter-cultural exchange in Germany³². Migration and the mixture of cultures in Germany, and also in Europe, demonstrate the need for restructuring present societies by developing new aims based on mutual concepts, values and other social relations. Such a process will not be without conflict if the host societies feel that they are threatened with the loss of their own culture and homogeneity, and this could result in a demand to isolate immigrants and to insist that they are repatriated. German society should support the immigrants' cultural identity, as well as preventing any attempts to segregate refugees and also avoiding psychological and cultural borders hindering approach and exchange between groups who could be a wealthy contribution to every national society.³³

³¹ Comment from a research participant

³² „Mehrsprachigkeit - Aspekte und Standpunkte“, Hrsg. Hidir Çelik, Free Pen Verlag, Bonn, Juli 1999 - ISBN 3-933672-01-5

³³ Vgl.: Ripa di Meana, Carlo: Die kulturelle Bedeutung der Minderheiten für die Entwicklung Europa, Bonn 1988

Although segregation, especially in housing, is a common phenomenon in all countries with immigrants this must not necessarily be a negative development. The culture of immigrants can create new forms and structures that can contribute to the culture of the host society, and at the same time offer additional support to immigrants through their close association with their countrymen while they adapt to the new values and norms of the host society.³⁴

To facilitate the development of a multicultural society efforts need to be made by the government to promote a mutual human approach and to integrate the different cultures in all areas of life. It would be normal for a multicultural society to be characterised by differences, but building “intercultural bridges”³⁵ could be used for mutual progress and to solve arising conflicts. On the basis of this we would recommend the following initiatives. Firstly the position of the Palestinian refugee community in exile should be considered in any decisions on refugee issues and their future within the peace process. Secondly the government of Germany should grant full protection and legal residence status for the Palestinian refugees within its community. Thirdly possibilities for vocational training, advanced education and work for Palestinian women and men should be discussed and practised by the German authorities and Palestinian/Arab associations, and finally a mutual forum of exchange should be established involving both communities (Palestinian/Arab and German). The areas of exchange could include women’s activities, pilot projects for vocational training and inter-cultural exchange circles, cultural events, schools, and organisations.

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³⁴ Hidir, Celik. Mehrsprachigkeit Aspekte und Standpunkte. Bonn, 1999

³⁵ vgl.: Micksch, Jürgen: Rassismus kann überwunden werden, in : Interkultureller Rat in Deutschland, Frankfurt 1997

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The Palestinian Community in Spain: Past and Present

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Spain is one of the countries of residence for the Palestinian diaspora in Europe. The motivation for this migratory movement is twofold: work and university studies. The community which falls into the former category, located in the Canaries Archipelago, has its origins in the Arab emigration to America which took place towards the end of the 19th century, as well as in the early 20th century. The second category, originally concentrated around the main university cities of the Spanish mainland, belonged to the broader emigration from the middle-east region of students seeking to attend foreign universities, as of the second half of the 20th century.

The contrasting nature of the two migratory movements, both in their geographic distribution and period of arrival, contributed to the development of the characteristics inherent to each, such as their continued presence. With little further connection between the two, it was deemed methodologically pertinent to study each separately. Notwithstanding, an analysis of the individual characteristics of these movements should not impede the recognition of their common features. Both were migratory currents that attracted – directly and indirectly - new immigrants, and both subsequently developed – formally and informally – into Palestinian communities of the diaspora. Without a doubt, the background of the Palestinian question cast an inseparable shadow over these communities' transition from emigration to exile, their associative, socio-political expression, and the challenges they faced in the relationship between the diaspora and the renewed Palestinian question.

1. Crossing the Religious Divide: The Palestinian Community in Canary Islands

One's first impression of Palestinian migration to the Canary Islands was that it was linked to the Palestinian national question and that it was a community of political refugees. However, further analysis revealed that this immigration originally had little to do with the socio-political events of 1948 (al-Nakba). On the contrary, the roots of this movement are to be found in Ottoman emigration to America, which started in the second half of the 19th century. (Karpas 1985 :175-209)

Despite this element, Palestinian singularities in this migratory movement are recognised in this study. The fact that Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians were equally and unequally involved in this migration leads me to consider that some similarities (such as migratory trend) and dissimilarities (specific to each region) might be appraised. These migratory waves lasted until the 1st World War (1914-1918) and their members mainly held Turkish citizenship. This explains why immigrants in Latin America were called Turks³⁶ (Amado 1995), an expression with degrading and xenophobic connotations. (Hernández 1994 :249-272)

³⁶ With the same expression Latin American literature refers to their presence in America.

1.1 The origins of Palestinian Immigration

The pioneers of the Palestinian community in the Canary Islands emerged from this migratory movement. According to the Foreigners Registry of Security general office, 40 people of Turkish nationality were registered between 1917 and 1918 in the Canary Islands³⁷. Though imprecise about their specific regional origin, this data deserves analysis. Firstly, following the pattern of Ottoman emigration, these 40 Turkish people could possibly be the first Arabs who came to the Canary Islands during seasonal migration. Secondly, this trend is corroborated by further data from 1930 (Van Der Laan 1992 :531-547), when foreigners of Turkish nationality numbered only 27 contrasting to 219 Arabs, 67 of them Palestinians. Finally, according to numerous testimonies of the immigrants who settled in the islands during the 1930s, other compatriots were living there long before their arrival. (Navarro 1985)

This information allows us to endorse the theory of the early presence of Arabs in the Canary Islands. However, the question arises as to why these immigrants settled in the Canary Islands rather than continuing to their original destination of America. It is a difficult question to answer because there are no primary sources to rely on. Therefore, once more, we are forced to hazard a hypothesis for this phenomenon.

Originally, the destination of Ottoman migration was America, although Lebanese people also settled on the western coast of Africa³⁸, among other places. In both cases, the geo-strategic position of the Canary Islands between Europe, Africa and America is central. Even Christopher Columbus stopped on the islands before departing to what he thought would be western India. Due to the development of international sea communications (Van Der Laan 1992 :533-534), the harbours in the Canary Islands acquired a growing relevance in transcontinental routes as a passing station in which vessels refuelled during their long crossings. (Alcaraz, Anaya, Millares 1986: 99-131)

It is very probable that contemporary Arab immigrants did not know of the existence of the Canary Islands, given their lower education levels and the distance from their place of origin. Presumably, a vague knowledge was all that they had when approaching the Canaries. At that time, the Canaries were not well known internationally. According to the testimonies of several research participants, a number of circumstances combined in their decision to settle in the islands, as outlined below.

Firstly, if the ship stopped for refuelling or because of circumstances beyond control (for example, an accident or a breakdown) people would land on the islands and might postpone their departure. Secondly, boat owners at the harbour of departure might have claimed that their destination was America, when in fact they were going only as far as Spain or to one of the harbours in the Canary Islands. Thirdly, the anguish that such a long trip caused and the fear of continuing away from their native land, or becoming too sick to continue may have influenced their decision to remain on the islands. Also there was the adventure of trying your fortune on the islands, and finally the presence of other Arab immigrants on the islands would appeal to these people because of their businesses.

A decision to stay on the islands carried certain risks. A particular case was that of Lebanese people who migrated to West Africa. Some of them chose the islands because of commercial, pleasure and climate reasons. Many of the people registered in the Consular Registry of Lebanon

³⁷ Instituto Geográfico y Catastral de Estadísticas, *Extranjeros inscritos en el censo de población de 1930*. Madrid, 1935. [*Foreigners Registered in the Inhabitant Census in 1930*].

³⁸ I gained access to these documents with the kind offer of Mr Eduardo Mansur which I acknowledge here.

in the Canary Islands came from that region or worked there while their families lived on the islands or their sons studied in boarding schools. Probably, the Lebanese were among the first Arabs who dwelled temporarily in the Canary Islands because of their proximity and good communications with West Africa. Some testimonies endorse this hypothesis. The Honorary Consul of the Ivory Coast in the Canary Islands, Antonio Haroun, who has Lebanese ancestors, states that his father was on the islands at the beginning of the century, ca. 1904. As well as this, studies on the Lebanese presence in Western Africa show some similarities with the Arab emigration to the Canaries, since the first period of Lebanese migration took place from the beginning of the century until 1914 and the second period of migration lasted until 1950. All immigrants travelled on sailing ships and steamboats. These studies also prove that some of the Lebanese who left Africa, particularly Sierra Leone, settled finally in the Canary Islands.

Therefore, it could be that the origin of Arab migration to the islands was a secondary effect of Ottoman migration to America and also of Lebanese migration to Western Africa. In the collective imagination of the emigrants (and even that of their relatives) America was more than just a continent, it was any Promised Land, any country that could welcome them and provide an honest way of life.

1. 2 Demographic characteristics

From this period onwards, the presence of an Arab community on the islands, with a remarkable Palestinian representation together with Syrians and Lebanese (Table 1), can be firmly stated. At that time, the whole of Arab immigration into Spain was concentrated in the Canary Islands. There was a high concentration of Palestinians in the province of Las Palmas (Table 2). Generally speaking, this trend became more and more dominating in the years to come.

The 219 Arab immigrants consisted of 130 males and 89 females. It was not a typically masculine migratory movement, given the remarkable presence of women and the combination of families and individuals (Table 3). Only 98 were married, in contrast to 116 single people (Table 4), but many of these were children (under 10 years old) or youngsters (between 10 and 19 years old) which was a total of 85 people (Table 5). Their main economic activity was trade, run by men (Table 6) while, with some exceptions, women were responsible for housekeeping.

The 2nd World War prevented migration to the islands and the earlier Spanish Civil War (1936-39) encouraged the departure of Arab migrants from the islands to America or to their native countries for economic reasons, the material shortage experienced in all wars, and socio-political reasons. The repression that followed the military upheaval against the Republic in Spain affected the Arab citizens as well; caused by clear extortion by some members of the Security Forces and also the envy of the local commercial bourgeoisie who feared the enterprise and competence of these merchant venturers.

After the Second World War, Arab migration continued (Table 7). The majority of the immigrants shared aspirations of improving their socio-economic status (material lot) and continuing their migratory tradition (cultural reasons), but in the case of the Palestinians the emergence of the Palestine Question added to this. Nevertheless, the main group who arrived on the islands in the second half of the 20th century did not come from territories occupied in 1948, but from those occupied in 1967. Mainly this was the West Bank³⁹, an area that had not yet been occupied by the Israeli Army. But this area had been directly affected by war events, with the mass arrival of

³⁹ The majority was from Tormosayya (Ramallah) followed at a far distance by a diversity of people like Aqraba (Nablus) and above all Beit Sahur, Beit Jala and Beit Lehem.

refugees, the Jordan annexation and its policy of wealth transference from the West Bank to the East Bank (Mishal 1980 :169-184), and also by the extended instability in the Middle East.

During the 1970s there was a continuous growth of the Palestinian community (30%), but it was interrupted at the beginning of the 1980s in the province of Las Palmas, although it continued in Santa Cruz de Tenerife (Table 8). This growth was due in part to the occupation of Gaza and West Bank in 1967 but also to the early presence of the Palestinian community in the Canary Islands. Their relatives, through “calling letters”, bought a lot of its members there. The sudden decrease in migration was related to the acquisition of Spanish nationality by Palestinians and their descendants, by the disappearance of many immigrants due to natural causes and, probably, because the Foreigners register was updated.

These periods (during and after the wars) did not stop Palestinian migration to the islands. In the last decades, a few members have joined the community. They are businessmen, professionals and students. There is no connection between them and former Palestinian immigration, apart from a few exceptional cases. As equally integrated as their compatriots, they are not part of the Arab migratory movement. Their attitudes are different, but they share the wandering fate of many of their people.

1.3 Socio- economic integration

The socio-economic integration of Palestinians into the society of the Canaries is inseparable from Arab immigration. Their major labour activity was trade. Generally speaking, this activity can be analysed in two stages. Firstly, that of the peddler, and secondly, the textile shop. Peddler activity was common to Arab migration to America. This option was chosen because of low costs and risks. It did not require a high investment (a shop or a great stock). On the contrary, the investment was minimal and sometimes money was not needed, as the community would often credit the goods⁴⁰. A special professional qualification was not required since this activity was based on a very simple economic principle: give-and-take. The need for language was only to set prices and to name the goods, so it was possible to work in this field from the moment of arrival in the country. This was also an activity which mostly depended on individual effort and which offered a degree of independence. Everyone was his or her own boss. From the very beginning you could realise the benefits obtained in everyday sales and this was a greater incentive than a weekly or monthly wage. In the end, every immigrant's dream was to become a self-made man.

The principal strategy of the migrants was saving with the purpose of setting up a shop. Passing from a nomadic to a commercial sedentary lifestyle involved remarkable socio-economic changes. In this public context, with constant interaction with the host society, they learnt Spanish (the Canary dialect), the customs of the islands and many of them met their future wives. This change in their socio-economic status was extended to their civil status since the establishment of the shop and marriage tended to coincide. In this way, social promotion was completed with the integration into the Canary Island's social fabric through Palestinian-Canary marriages. In a parallel mode, there was a qualitative shift from individual business to a more stable family-run system, and women were a part of its success.

Immigration is high risk and demands sacrifices. Without planning, immigrants rendered a service to the host society, mostly to the popular classes who had little purchasing power and a peripheral position in the community of the islands. Places where communication links were poor were

⁴⁰ It is widely known that some Arab merchants in the islands made easier the integration of new comers when they provided goods for them to start to work. The most famous case is that of Muhammad Yuma, a Palestinian who arrived in the Canaries in the thirties from the jerosolimitan village of Bir Nabalalah.

frequented by Arab immigrants who carried their bags and sold their goods at low prices and in instalments, without any added interest or any other guarantee than their own word (committing honour and family honour). It was not an altruist gesture like any other commercial enterprise. It extended the consumption of basic goods (clothes and shoes, mainly) among the poorest communities and in areas with poor communications. Many Arab shops were the first to be established in the present main commercial streets. This fact has not yet been recognised in the historiography of the Canary Islands.

The Arab immigrant reaped the fruits of this labour, especially after the revival of the Spanish economy in the sixties and, particularly, in the Canary Islands economy after the tourism boom and subsequent development of services. In this context, the Arab traders had a commercial infrastructure (shops and a client portfolio) which they adopted with remarkable success to the demands of the island's market during the years of economic prosperity (Álvarez 1980 :2 Vols). Parallel to this, there existed another method of socio-economic integration, less costly and faster, but less numerous, of those who immigrated later and who brought with them enough capital to invest at a time of high economic activity. Although originally the Arab-Palestinian immigrant was clearly identified with the textile trade, as soon as their integration was complete, their economic activity began to diversify. From their original activities, they evolved to the point of playing a role in business in the Canary Islands with its socio-economic diversity.

The image of the Arab peddler is now history. Though it has not yet disappeared from collective memory, only elders remember it. There is some proof of this in popular culture, which shows the Arab peddler with special affection⁴¹. We should not forget the numerous jokes that Canary humour dedicates to their singular accent, given the fact that the majority learnt Spanish on the streets. In contrast to their brothers in Latin America, the Arab's in the Canary Islands were not called Turks as their arrival coincided with the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire. However, they were known by a name that changes in different areas of the islands: "jarandinos" or "jarabandinos". The origin of this name seems to be related to a taboo word that many immigrants repeated: Ya Jaredinak (Damn your religion!) and which the islanders adapted to their phonetics.

1.4 Community and Associative Trends

The whole of Arab immigration showed the constitutive elements of a community because of the similarities of their knowledge or origins (ethnic, historic, regional, cultural, linguistic, economic and social) and their recent life events, such as emigration, material expectancies, labour activity and the new social context. The behavioural trends (exogenous or endogenous) adopted by immigrants are usually connected with their social reception, either acceptance or rejection. Although Canary society did not seriously resist their integration, the immigrants devised informal community links (Taylor 1989), based on the principle of, "You can do the same for me one day". The socio-economic co-operation referred to in the last section was a good example of it.

In the logic of collective action, we can observe a higher tendency for co-operation in small and homogeneous groups than in big and heterogeneous ones (Olson 1971). The Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian immigrants were a relatively small and dense group. The aforementioned knowledge and common experiences in a social medium, in which they constituted a different collective from an ethnic and linguistic point of view, reinforced this group. Their community relations crossed

⁴¹ The Canarian folk group Bejeque in its CD "Con tierra y viento" ("With Land and Wind") dedicates a song to the Arabs merchants of the area with a specific mention to Julián Ali, a Palestinian established during the thirties in Vecindario, Gran Canaria. On the other hand, the Canaria poet Francisco Tarajano is the author of the poem "The Palestinian", which he dedicated to Rosa Mishal, daughter of a Palestinian settled in Gran Canaria during the thirties, Musa Hussein Mishal.

beyond the economic ties. These links supported new migrants as they integrated into the new society.

The immigrant community played a decisive role in this transition. Its members often took in newcomers without having any previous relationship with them in many cases. In the new social medium they became a family, joined by affection, community and identity links, as well as temporality (similar past, present and future), the physical space (the islands) and the social space (the society of the islands). The immigrant community functioned as a double link to the new society: to the inner space (personal, familiar and community, affective and expressive relationships) and to the outer space (impersonal, public and society, based on instrumental and formal relationships). At the same time, it divided both spheres and allowed cohabitation between them.

The community played the role of intercultural mediator between two symbolic and linguistically different cultures and it complemented the social reception of migrants into the society of the islands. The social acceptance of the Arab community permitted their integration and exogenous development. The Christian Arabs showed more endogenous growth as far as marriage is concerned. Theoretically, Muslims expected more difficulties in getting married in a Catholic society. However, the majority of Arab-Christians married Arab-women and the majority of Arab-Muslims married Canary-Christians. This behaviour might be explained in terms of the minority of Christians in the Middle East, forced to more endogenous traditions.

During the peddler activity period, the most frequent community trends were cohabitation, especially among those who were relatives; the meal, mainly Arab cuisine, and coffee time, acted as a leisure space and a meeting point for the community. Once married, the community relations were organised through the family (Arabs and Canary-Arabs) who shared visits, meals, leisure, and help where needed, such as with bureaucracy, guarantees and money, and support in adversity, such as illness or death. Feasts took place on various occasions, such as weddings, baptisms and Christmas. The most celebrated time of the year is Ramadan and this brings together large numbers of Arabs (both Christian and Muslims). This strengthens the links in the community as well as the tolerance and respect between both religions. As they became socially integrated, their community ties weakened in favour of the process of individualisation inherent to modernisation and the social change undergone by the host society. However, this relax in community ties did not occur before it fulfilled its supportive function of integration.

Community ties were also present among Arab immigrants. Their most successful enterprise was the Hispano-Arab Club, founded in Las Palmas at the beginning of the 1960s. Even though not all of the associates were immigrants, a great number of community activities took place in its headquarters. The Club was a centre for community life, but was limited to leisure activities without any further cultural scope.

In general terms, Arab immigrants failed to transmit their cultural heritage to their descendants (the Arab language), or their religious beliefs, in the case of Muslims (Abu-Tarbush 2001 :79-92), (Abu-Tarbush 2002). This said, they did pass on some more concrete elements such as culinary skills. This behaviour is commonly justified in terms of adaptation to the new social milieu, but with the passing of the years it involved an implicit declination of their cultural tradition and, when talking about Muslims, of their religion. The inability of immigrants to transmit their cultural identity to the next generation was due in part to their deficient cultural links and their low collective self-esteem. More interested in material goods than in culture, immigrants concentrated

on investment in work and education of their descendants, who inherited their economic capital (business and properties) and received academic opportunities unavailable to their parents.

1. 5 Emigration, Exile and Identity

The national identity of Palestinians settled in the Canary Islands is very weak when compared to other communities in the Diaspora. Their singularity is characteristic of their migratory movement, originally unrelated to the Palestinian Question. Their members did not move because of war and therefore they could not be regarded as refugees in the same way as their compatriots who migrated to Lebanon, Jordan and Syria between 1947 and 1949 (Morris 1989). They cannot be considered to be political exiles, given the fact that the majority of them left their land for socio-economic reasons and not political ones.

It may be interesting to consider whether it was voluntary or forced migration. Generally, Palestinian immigrants to the Canaries left their land before the Nakba; but after it, Palestinian migration was forced. The great political and economic instability in the region was also extended to the West Bank and Gaza, even before the occupation in 1967. However, it was after this occupation that the departure of the greater amount of Palestinians from their territories was fostered by Israeli policy causing the demographic transformation of Palestine (Abu-Lughod 1987:139-163).

There is a noticeable difference between the economic migrant and refugees. While migrants can return to their native land whenever they want, refugees cannot, until the causes that prevent their return disappear or are eliminated. Therefore, it does not matter whether Palestinian emigration was voluntary or forced as further Israeli occupation blocked Palestinian émigrés from returning to their homes. Even those who emigrated after the 1967 occupation were risking their own right of return because of the (supposedly bureaucratic) obstacles of the Israeli occupation policy. In this context, the Palestinians who lived in the Canary Islands were forced to change their status (voluntary or forced) to that of an exiled people. In doing so, the Palestinian community in the Canary Islands joined the Diaspora.

This new situation did not have immediate socio-political ramifications among the Palestinian immigrants in the Canary Islands because, in many cases, their emigration was more of a private departure. They went in search of economic stability, rather than a demonstration of the public and collective voice of protest and resistance to the Israeli occupation (Hirschman 1970). However, the increasing process of reconstruction of the Palestine national identity (Khalidi 1997) also reached its peak in the Canaries. As in other communities of the Diaspora, these dynamics were accelerated after the drastic events of 1967, when the Arab dimension of the conflict lost ground and an exclusively Palestinian alternative became increasingly popular (Sayeg 1997). Parallel to this, the violent contradictions between the “reason of revolution” and the “reason of State” expressed in Jordan and Lebanon during the 1970s, the Israeli occupation and the growing international acknowledgement of the PLO, helped to increase their Palestinian identity.

Until that moment the vision of Palestine that was shared in the Canary Islands was nostalgic, with romantic references and an idealisation of the lost paradise. Palestine became the daily bread, with its fertile land and its lovely people. Home became the relevant question in everyday life and the most typical greeting became, “Did you hear the latest?”⁴² (Karmi 1999 :52-63).

⁴² At that time, the radio was usually connected in order to follow the most relevant news on Middle East. Despite the new and sophisticated media (TV, Internet, Satellite TV), the tradition of listening to radio is still present among those youngsters, grandfathers nowadays. They have witnessed the history of the second half of the twentieth century in Middle East from these islands; listening to those celebrated broadcastings that

However, the practical development of these nationalist feelings met several obstacles. First, their political culture, both traditionalist and personal, based on tribal, religious and regional links, which were stronger than the national ones, tended to fragment and erode collective action. Secondly, their geographical position, their remoteness and insularity, exacerbated communication difficulties among members on the different islands and with other communities in the Diaspora. Thirdly, their legal and political position in Franco's Spain added problems as they had no freedom of movement or expression and they were constantly under suspicion and surveillance because of the globalisation of political violence that some Palestinian organisations encouraged. Fourthly, their socio-cultural and economic profile, focused on material and individual values, leaves no space for political matters and immigrants feared risking their possessions for ideals.

These deficiencies of the community did not prevent activity, fostered by some of its members who had joined the national liberation movement as supporters or activists. They were not political professionals in the traditional sense, but they acted as if they were. Their main activity, restricted to the Arab and Palestinian community, was focused on the collection of money for the national movement, especially when it went through serious difficulties, and on contact with the movement when a delegation was sent to the islands. Unfortunately the collection of money for the Palestinian cause raised suspicions among members of the local community. Because of their weak national conscience, their individualist and mercantile socio-economical profile, and even the conservative spirit of the Palestinian commercial bourgeoisie in the islands, it was noticeable that, without a previous labour of political pedagogy, it would be difficult to generate the necessary positive attitude and confidence for co-operation.

This state of affairs began to change with the generational shift in the Palestinian community. This process coincided with transition in Spain and a volatile socio-political period. A few members of the second generation, who were born on the islands, took part in community activities, but in a new and different way. They organised affiches and Palestinian popular art exhibitions, performances of the Palestine National Folk group, conferences on the Palestine Question, meetings with Canary political parties, speeches in the mass media (press and radio, mainly), and developed contacts with relevant members of Canary society like journalists, intellectuals and scholars.

This young group fostered the creation of an association whose aim was to promote links with Palestinian youngsters with the purpose of organising the community from its base, given the difficulty of the first generation to achieve more ambitious goals. Despite the celebration of the 1st Congress of the Palestinian Community in the Canary Islands in the early 1980s, their scope of activities was small and did not fulfil these youngsters' aspirations. In this sense, the foundation of Sanaud ("We'll be back") in the mid-1980s represented a qualitative and quantitative growth in the Palestinian presence in the Canary Islands. Sanaud had two aims. Firstly, to group together the descendants of the Palestinian immigrants in the Canary Islands; and secondly, to disseminate information about the Palestine Question among the Canary authorities and society in order to gain support and promote solidarity. The sons and daughters of those immigrants who came to the islands as peddlers were now part of Canary society and were fully integrated members of it. Their values, especially material values, were radically different to those of their parents. (Inglehart 1989)

even today the BBC transmits from London. Curiously, several members of its staff in its Arab edition were Palestinians exiled.

Its success can be measured by the amount of activities that it encouraged and contacts it developed in the community of the Canary Islands. Sanaud was an important reference for the Palestinian and Arab community. However, a crisis in the early 1990s culminated in its practical disappearance, caused mainly by its members and members of the Palestinian and Arab community. The PLO was also responsible for the wrong conception of the community agenda in the Diaspora. The Central Palestinian Office underestimated the fact that most of the political duties in the islands fell to the younger members and they tried to organise a project that exceeded the capacities of the community. It was a proposal which copied the Arab and Palestine models in Latin America, but more numerous and with greater resources. The PLO decimated the organised links of the community in the Canary Islands and took away its scarce and subjective existing resources (time and energy) from its (also scarce) active members, who occupied different leading positions in the different organisations. This ended up generating suspicion and distrust among them. At the same time, the PLO, in a very risky tactic, played a role of reference and sent several delegations to the islands in order to rectify the co-ordination problems and to assume a central position as an authority that should be constantly consulted.

The result was that many youngsters of Palestinian-origin living in the Canary Islands, who had initiated an unprecedented effort, withdrew themselves from the public sphere (the Arab-Palestinian community and its position in Canary society) to the private sphere (studies, family and friends). Frustrated and exhausted by the organisation and co-operation problems that they were constantly finding in the core of their own collective, they withdrew to their personal and professional tasks after a decade of massive activity. During that time they had successfully promoted the presence of the Palestinian community in the Canary Islands as no one had done before.

However, the displacement of the Palestine Question from the Diaspora to the inner territories (started by the Intifada and completed by the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority) had taken away the traditional role of the communities in the Diaspora. Besides, the dissatisfaction of these communities with the Oslo Agreement and the Peace Process in general had instituted a certain degree of malaise among their members. Disenchanted both in the community and in national fields, the Palestinian community in the islands became far more passive on nationalist issues.

Tables

Table 1
Distribution of Arab immigrants in Spain (1930)

Country	Spain	Canaries	Difference
Arabia ^A	13	13	0
Palestine	74	67	7
Syria/Lebanon ^B	142	139	3
Total	229	219	10

^A With this so general a term it is possible to understand both “of Arab nationality” or “from Saudi Arabia.” However, though this nationality is not included among the members of the immigration I have dealt with in this paper -Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian- I have decided to include it as it can be attached to any of the already mentioned Arab nationality.

^B Though only Syrians appears in the quoted source, I have considered relevant to introduce the Lebanon, because it is rather probable that the Lebanese were counted as Syrians as both countries were under French mandatory; a fact corroborated by oral sources and the Lebanese presence from that period, that was quantitative superior to the Syrian one.

Source: *Extranjeros inscritos en el censo de población de 1930*. Madrid, 1935. [Registered Foreigners in the Inhabitant Census in 1930].

Table 2
Provincial distribution of Arab immigrants (1930)

Country	Canaries	Las Palmas	S/C de Tenerife
Arabia	13	6	7
Palestine	67	66	1
Syria/Lebanon	139	100	39

Source: *Extranjeros inscritos en el censo de población de 1930*. Madrid, 1935. [Registered Foreigners in the Inhabitant Census in 1930].

Table 3
Gender Distribution of Arab Immigrants (1930) M: Males; F: Females

Country	Las Palmas GC	S/C Tenerife	Total Canarias
Arabia (M)	3	5	8
Arabia (F)	3	2	5
Palestine (M)	39	1	40
Palestine (F)	27		27
Syria/Lebanon (M)	52	30	82
Syria/Lebanon (F)	48	9	57

Source: *Extranjeros inscritos en el censo de población de 1930*. Madrid, 1935. [Registered Foreigners in the Inhabitant Census in 1930].

Table 4
Civil Status Distribution of Arab Immigrants (1930)

	Single	Married	Widows	Unknown
Arabia (M)	4	4		
Arabia (F)		4	1	
Palestine (M)	20	18	1	1
Palestine (F)	12	14	1	
Syria/Lebanon (M)	51	30	1	
Syria/Lebanon (F)	29	28		
Total Males	75	52	2	
Total Females	41	46	2	
Total M y F	116	98	4	1

Source: *Extranjeros inscritos en el censo de población de 1930*. Madrid, 1935. [Registered Foreigners in the Inhabitant Census in 1930].

Table 5
Age Distribution of Arab Immigrants (1930)

	Under 10	10-19	20-39	30-39	40-60	Over 60	Unknown
Arabia (M)	1		3	1	2	1	
Arabia (F)			2	1	1	1	
Palestine (M)	6	5	14	9	4	2	
Palestine (F)	10	2	10	5			
Syria/Lebanon (M)	13	16	24	19	10		1
Syria/Lebanon (F)	20	12	11	7	6		
Total Males	20	21	41	29	16	3	1
Total Females	30	14	23	13	7	1	
Total M y F	50	35	64	42	23	4	1

Source: *Extranjeros inscritos en el censo de población de 1930*. Madrid, 1935. [Registered Foreigners in the Inhabitant Census in 1930].

Table 6
Professional Activity Distribution of Arab Immigrant (1930)

	Agriculture	Industry	Trade	Professionals	Owners	Housekeeping	Day Labourer	Improductive	Other professor
Arabia (M)			7					1	
Arabia (F)						4		1	
Palestine (M)	2	2	27				1	8	
Palestine (F)						16		11	
Syria/Lebanon (M)		4	47				7	23	1
Syria/Lebanon (F)			1			33		23	
Total Males	2	6	81				8	32	
Total Females			1			53		35	
Total M y F	2	6	82			53	8	67	1

Source: *Extranjeros inscritos en el censo de población de 1930*. Madrid, 1935. [Registered Foreigners in the Inhabitant Census in 1930].

Table 7
Citizen from Middle East in the Canary Islands *

Years	Las Palmas de GC	S/C Tenerife	Total Canaries
1955	302	203	505
1956	228	196	424
1958	340	204	544
1959	371	303	674
1961	299	194	493
1963	294	183	477

Source: Anuarios del Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas de los años mencionados. [Yearbooks of National Statistics Institute of mentioned years].

Table 8
Palestinians living in the Canary Islands

Years	Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	Total Canaries
1965	155	75	230
1966	154	62	216
1967	151	66	217
1969	153	67	220
1970	183	91	274
1971	191	77	268
1972	197	78	275
1973	205	87	292
1974	211	82	293
1975	229	82	311
1976	230	83	313
1977	233	82	315
1978	235	79	314
1979	238	90	328

* Syrians, Lebanese, Jordanians, Israelis and Iranians are here registered under this generic name. I shall remark what follows: First, Palestinians are registered under the name of Jordanians, as the majority of them travelled with Jordanian passport –at least those who arrived in the islands, where no Jordanian person was registered. In the second place, despite the fact that in this reckon two different nationalities appear (Israeli and Iranian, with a little presence) as far as other data are not available at the moment, as a conclusion this register offers an approximate idea of the number of Arab immigrants in the Canaries.

1980	238	96	334
1982	110	86	196
1983	9	87	96
1984	7	89	96
1985	4	79	83
1986	4	86	90
1987	2	91	93
1988	4	93	97
1989	5	95	100

Source: Anuarios del Instituto Nacional de Estadística de los años citados. [Yearbooks of National Statistics Institute of mentioned years].

2. The Transformation of a Young Community: The Palestinian Community of the Spanish Mainland

In recent decades, many Palestinian students have chosen Spain as a destination for their university studies. Their arrival to the Peninsula has produced a quantitative and qualitative increase in the size of the Palestinian community in Spain, which, until then, had only consisted of the integrated Palestinians resident in the Canary Islands. Unlike the latter, the new Palestinian immigrants were more numerous and younger, and, for the most part, single males whose main motive was academic advancement. The new profile of Palestinian immigration in Spain reflected, in turn, the changes that were taking place in Palestinian society, both in the occupied territories and the diaspora, towards greater investment in academic resources, public dedication and political commitment. The Palestinian community in the Spanish peninsula is mainly made up of the young students who remained in the country after their studies, well integrated into Spanish society via the labour market (for the most part as professionals and businessmen), and part of its social fabric (through mixed marriages, resulting in a new generation of Hispanic-Palestinian descendants)²⁴. As with immigration from other parts of the Third World, the Palestinians brought with them, and have nurtured, knowledge and skills which, so far, they have been unable to substantially reinvest in their society of origin, despite their numerous areas of expertise (economic, scientific, technical and many more); nor has the so called peace process produced a significant return of Palestinians settled in Spain, except for visits - principally individuals and families – as a result of the slight relaxation in Israeli controls over the Palestinian diaspora of western Europe.

2.1 Moving to a familiar land

Spain was one of the various destinations chosen by emigrating Palestinian students during the sixties and seventies. This migratory movement was attributable to the difficulties which Palestinian youths faced in pursuing their higher education locally (universities had limited places, selective entry, general political instability), and the hope offered by foreign universities (prestige, accessibility, scholarships). Spain was chosen for its quality of life (very affordable for the middle and more modest classes), as well as the accessibility of its universities (relatively easy in comparison to other European or western countries).

The starting points of the Palestinian students were varied. The main ones were the West Bank and Gaza, followed by Jordan, Kuwait, Syrian and Lebanon. This also meant a similar variety of passports and travel documents and, for the purposes of this work, it has been deemed a handicap

²⁴ It is worth mentioning that in recent decades, other Palestinian immigrants, at different stages of professional training (graduates from Cuba for example), and with different financial resources (from businessmen to workers) have been added to the existing Palestinian community in Spain.

to quantify the number of different types thereof. Their Palestinian origin doesn't appear registered in the census of Spain's foreign population, of which Palestinian students are estimated to number between 3,500 and 5,000. The highest number was reached during the sixties and seventies. Then, Spain didn't present great difficulties to foreigners wishing to reside within it. But its entrance into the European Union increased the bureaucratic obstacles to the entrance of non-Community foreigners. Equally, the rapid process of modernisation raised the quality of life, both in economic terms, as well as in university entrance requirements. These factors would explain the gradual decrease in the number of Palestinian immigrants in Spain, throughout the eighties and nineties, along with the growing capacity of the region of origin to satisfy its students' demands, with the creation of new universities (public and private).

The main studies undertaken were medicine, given its prestige in the origin society (to be a doctor or 'hakim') and the relative easiness of the course in Spanish universities, as compared to other parts of Europe and the United States (Musin 1982 :70).

The second major option was Pharmacy. Beyond the latter two, subjects chosen were diverse, but always within the predominant branches of experimental and technological sciences. Humanities and social sciences occupied a very peripheral and minor place. In general - and with some notable exceptions - studying the latter subjects was not so much the result of choosing them as a first choice, but often that of academic failure in the sciences. It is important to note the latter point - away from humanistic traditions and social sciences - in order to understand the relative 'intellectual deficit' of Palestinians in Spain as compared to their counterparts in Anglo-Saxon countries, where they occupy a more prominent position in debates within academic and media circles²⁶, on the Arab and Islamic world in general, and the Palestinian question in particular.

It should be noted that a good number of the Palestinian students in Anglo-Saxon countries came from more prominent families and social classes, with better social networking, material means, and linguistic capabilities (bilingual education). In Spain, on the other hand, the social profile of Palestinian students was more modest. It was a migratory movement consisting mainly of students, made up, for the most part, of male youths (women were scarce), of university age (around 17, 18 or 19 years old), of mainly rural origin, but including a certain urban and middle-class contingent. The nature of their stay was temporary, according to the duration of their studies. In general, this took longer than usual - for various reasons (learning the language, pending subjects, economic problems, implications in the socio-political arena, etc.). Although the time it took to complete a degree varied according to the individual's effort, the average time was between 6 to 7 years, not counting specialisation in the case of Medicine. The group's demographic distribution followed the main university cities: Barcelona, Granada, Madrid, Valencia, Valladolid, Salamanca, Santiago de Compostela, Seville, Zaragoza, etc.²⁷

2.2 The community and associative rules

As the number of Palestinian students increased, small nuclei of students were forming around the cities where they resided and the universities where they studied. The more experienced students were clear points of reference for the recently arrived ones. In fact, many of the students shared common origins: family, friends, etc, both on a local and regional level.

²⁶ Arabs who had studied in the US came to be members of "The Association of Arab-American University Graduates," which remains quite active in the US.

²⁷ Among the numerous sources consulted, I would like to highlight Mr Fayez Saqqa and Mahmud Hussein who informally, on many occasions, in recalling their youth, helped recreate this social landscape.

In Spain under Franco, they did not face great difficulty in terms of social reception. The current legal barriers to the residence of non-EC foreigners didn't exist. Apart from the clichés associated with Arabs, which was more the product of ignorance than a deliberate campaign, and the political situation attributable to the dictatorship (a total absence of freedoms), the Arab-Palestinian students were only faced with overcoming the language barrier and completing their studies.

Their circles of coexistence consisted mainly of students and young people of a similar age. Places of residence were varied: student halls of residence, houses attended to by older ladies, in designated homes with Spanish families, or in flats shared with other youths (Spaniards, Arabs or Palestinians). The most common choice varied over the years; in the early years, maintained flats, in which basic services were provided (catering, cleaning, ironing), were in greater demand, while in later years, with increased experience and a greater desire for emancipation, shared flats became more popular.

The principal areas of social gathering were cafeterias and university dining rooms. Food and drink was very cheap and the space allowed for larger groupings than at home, to the effect that they became the main setting for student socialisation. In them, Palestinian students were able to meet a good number of young people as well as other students from different departments. Recently arrived students were helped with self-orientation in their new surroundings: finding accommodation, language courses, procedures (changing money, visas, residency permits, registration), information about Spanish society (norms and customs), introduction to other students (Spaniards, Arabs and Palestinians), and contact with other friends, relatives or neighbours in the same city or others.

The people present were from diverse sections of the student community. They had grown accustomed to living alongside the Palestinian students via flat-sharing, having dinner together, social meetings, parties and trips. This group solidarity compensated for the absence of family support in moments of hardship (illness, accident, bereavement). In some cases, it carried out the most traditional of family functions (marriage proposal, and patronage in weddings and baptisms). But it mainly provided an entire series of services (financial assistance, medical attendance, searching for lodgings, language classes, loans, the forwarding of correspondence and messages to family by those who were travelling to the country of origin, etc.). Thus, the student environment was of unusually profound importance in a time of growing political effervescence, characterised by restlessness and debates. The various political organizations of the Palestinian national movement were instrumental in using this public space and informal forum as a key to political proselytism. The most obvious example of this process was the creation of the Spanish section of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS).

2.3 The student movement

In the Palestinian institutional lattice GUPS had particular importance: it was the first properly Palestinian organization that arose after the catastrophe of 1948 (al-Nakba) (Brand 1988 :64-84). Its main objective was to regroup the various Palestinian student circles in the diaspora and endow and support them from an organisational, educative and politically active base. Unlike other sections of Palestinian society, students had a growing repertoire of resources: communicative (languages, knowledge of political and mass media terminology), academic (studies, seminars, debates) and mobilisation (solidarity networks, organization, planning). Not to mention their availability (flexible timetables), energy (characteristic of their youth) and dreams/aspirations (sense of national mission).

GUPS was the centre of socio-political activism for Palestinian university youths away from their countries of residence. Some students prolonged their university life to devote themselves more to collective (student movement) rather than private tasks (studies). It was not always easy to coordinate both environments: the academic curriculum (degree studies) and the extra-curricular one (socio-political learning). The GUPS was inseparable from the Palestinian national movement. Many of their members were militant or sympathetic towards some of the political organizations of the PLO. In this sense, the contradictions and conflicts among the different political and ideological tendencies at the heart of the PLO were also reflected in GUPS. An example of this was the debate raised at the beginning of the seventies around the Geneva Conference (Muslih 1976 :127-140).

This controversy created a significant division between the *al-Fatah* movement and the GUPS section in Spain (Manuel, Solar 1975 : 239-260), which inevitably marked their subsequent course. In fact, the crisis that affected the Palestinian national movement in Spain cannot be understood without considering this rupture.

The growing process of institutionalisation of the PLO and its recognition by Spain (Yasser Arafat was received by the Spanish President, Adolfo Suárez, in 1979) displaced the protagonism of GUPS towards PLO Office of Information, opened in Madrid at around the same date. Until then, Palestinian representation had an unofficial character and was taken up by the League of Arab States headquarters, Office of Information, in Madrid. Social support came from the student movement. At the time, GUPS acted as speaker for Palestinians, given the absence of official recognition for the PLO by Spain. Contact between GUPS and Spanish democratic forces (mainly with political parties, still in secrecy), was usual. However, with Spanish political transition to democracy and the diplomatic and political status acquired by Palestinian representation, the focal point of Palestinian political activism moved from GUPS to the new PLO delegation.

Nevertheless, GUPS remained active, though it became more and more focused on student circles. Its bilateral relationships with Spanish organizations were reduced to those with its counterparts and peers: youth associations and organisations, NGOs, student movements and unions, and youths from political parties. The GUPS leadership in Spain had an office at the headquarters of the Palestinian delegation in Madrid. As an institutional part of the PLO, it cooperated closely with the latter. On numerous occasions, the PLO would delegate various tasks to student representatives, particularly those of a disseminating nature, relating to the Palestinian question, in the most affiliated circles: universities, meetings, festivals, chat-colloquy, exhibitions, etc. The student social base was an important point of support for the increased PLO activity in Spain of the late seventies and early eighties.

During this period, the Palestinian student movement in Spain had become one of the most active in Western Europe, which was also reflected on a national level³¹. In Spain, GUPS was the forerunner of other Arab student organizations, and it stirred other Arab students into forming their own associations. It was a school of political thought, similar to the youth organizations and student unions often nurtured by political parties in democratic countries. Many of its members acquired exquisite experience in inter-Arab and international relations. These considerable socio-political tools contributed to GUPS' ascent in the Palestinian national movement: from well-known leaders of the past to part of its current political and bureaucratic elite. Many of the young

³¹ Salah Kakaban was first elected member of the Administrative Council (intermediary body between the central committee and national assembly) in the historic GUPS conference in Jordan (1969), after which he was elected president of the GUPS General Conference held in Algeria (1972.) For his part, Fayez Saqqa was elected to represent GUPS before counterpart organisations in Latin America, where he was posted on numerous missions in the eighties.

students were not only GUPS figureheads, but also carried out – or carry out – important functions at the forefront of the PLO and, currently, of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Some became PLO ambassadors in various Latin American states (Ahmad Sobeh, Hussein Abu Ali, Farid Siwan, George Salameh, Marwan Tahbuk and Sabri Atille)³². For his part, Isam Salem Kamel finished his days as ambassador for the PLO in Spain, where he died in the autumn of 1993, after having represented the PLO in Cuba and in the former Democratic Republic of Germany. Not to mention, probably the most famous of all and of the entire era, Jawwad Abu Sa'aer, who went on to lead the Palestinian militias in Beirut, where he lost his life in the mid-late seventies (Mesa 1978 :207-209).

2.4 From students to an established community

GUPS was more than just a student movement. Given the absence of institutions which could facilitate the integration of the aforementioned young immigrants, it operated as an important, symbolic reference point which helped them – very successfully – achieve social integration. In that sense, it attenuated the difficulties associated with integration in the host society: the potential psychological impact and possibility of social deviation, which the immigrants could undergo in the face of irregularities and maladjustment to the new country (Grimberg, L & R 1984). Participation in GUPS was a means of political socialization in new norms and values, which created a sense of belonging and loyalty. The activism in the group (an estimated 70% of Palestinian students were active members) was more extensive than in the different political organisations of the PLO. Thus, this socio-political involvement was something more than a means of attaining objectives, because it became an end in itself: it endowed a feeling of national dignity and recreated the collective identity of Palestinians in the diaspora.

Although many were determined to prolong their student life by way of their participation in GUPS, the passage of time took its toll. By the mid-eighties, the Palestinian student movement in Spain showed serious signs of fatigue and it had practically disappeared by the early nineties. There are several causes for this paralysis and subsequent demise.

Demographically, the Palestinian student population in Spain gradually ceased to be replaced or renewed by subsequent generations or new waves of students. The influx of Palestinian students began to decrease in the eighties. What is more, the socio-political character of the new arrivals was very different to that of their predecessors: they demonstrated greater political indifference while at the same time being more and more concerned with the more recreational aspects of life, given the liberalization of customs as compared to the situation previously and in other countries. The studies they pursued were even more inclined towards technical careers, which provided quicker access to the labour market.

Comment [RC2]: Que quiere decir esta palabra – no podía encontrarla. Aspecto profesional? El beneficio individual? La vida social?

Politically, the national movement's crises (displacement of its leadership from Beirut to Tunisia, divisions in Fatah and within the PLO) were inevitably reflected in its various geographic subdivisions. The national movement in Spain was no exception and it even underwent its own internal disputes or autonomous conflicts. The dynamics of PLO institutionalisation (political-diplomatic representation in Madrid) collided with those of the social movement (GUPS). At the same time, a process of branching-out was taking place between elements of civil society in the diaspora (political parties and social movements, unions, professional associations, etc) and the State (PLO representation). The work dynamics basically depended on the results of frequent disputes between sectors of civil society and the State, or on the ambassador's mood, given the

³² Hussein Abu Ali is currently Director General of the International Planning and Cooperation Ministry in the PNA, and in the same ministerial department Dr. Ahmad Sobeh is the General Director of International Relations.

somewhat personalised character of the PLO's external representation, to the detriment of professionalism and teamwork.

Socially, the changes were no less drastic. The social profile of youths arriving in Spain during the sixties and seventies, who by then had completed their studies, completely changed by the eighties and nineties: they were no longer students, nor young. It is not necessary to fix a border age between youth and maturity, but the onset of a new series of responsibilities (occupation, marriage, children, property) decisively point to this shift. In addition to the two aforementioned areas of change – demographic and political – social change has perhaps the greatest explanatory effect, since it reflects the changes taking place in the Palestinian population resident in Spain. Without considering the population's new social profile, it is difficult to understand its new behavioural norms, which were more centred on private concerns (mainly work and the family) than collective ones (political activity). What is more, on many occasions, the private sector provides refuge from public or political frustrations. In the same way, once private demands are met - or from sheer boredom with them - people often take up public action. (Hirschman 1982)

On completing their studies, the Palestinians that remained in Spain went from being temporary immigrants to permanent ones. A broad range of individuals and groups took this option. Many of them were part of the diaspora in countries bordering Palestine, though some had come directly from the West Bank and Gaza, a large proportion of whom lost their residency status in the aforementioned territories once they were occupied by Israeli forces in June of 1967. Also, many of those who had left under Israeli occupation lost their residency permits due to expiry during their time abroad. Given the precarious political situation in the area, some feared returning to their places of residence, whether in the Occupied Territories or in some Arab countries known for their political militancy³⁶. Others simply decided to start afresh or continue their lives in Spain, where they had (or perceived) better prospects of professional (work), personal (autonomy) and family (engagement or mixed marriage) development. In any case, the original body of student immigration had opened the way to a new collective of Palestinian diaspora in Western Europe.

On obtaining a university degree (or other higher qualification or PhD), the next step was to look for work in the field, while those who did not complete their studies or develop themselves professionally went into other areas of work (requiring fewer qualifications) or selected types of business³⁷. In turn, the continuity of work required the resolution of their legal status: residence, work permits and nationality. A large part acquired Spanish nationality, especially after Spain's entrance into the European Union and the gradual closure of its borders to non-EC foreigners. Save for some exceptions, often attributable to activity in the Palestinian political movement in Spain³⁸, most were nationalized with little difficulty, because they tended to meet the specified requirements: good behaviour, years of residence in the country, work, knowledge of the language and Spanish customs, etc; not to mention the clear advantage of being married to a Spaniard and having descendents in the country.

³⁶ In fact, some were encouraged to remain in Spain by their own families, who feared for their lives if they returned to the region, and in many cases this was a survival strategy used by families who counted on members abroad who could provide more efficient financial support.

³⁷ Among the most prominent were the export of Spanish products to Arab countries, given the benefits of knowing both cultures and languages – Arabic and Spanish – not just for the purposes of translation, but also to help in bringing about such commercial ventures, either individually or as head of one or more companies.

³⁸ Many had to wait for years longer than usual to obtain Spanish nationality, and were the subject of close surveillance by the Spanish secret service, CESID.

Mixed marriages were quite common among the older students (around 85%). This incorporation into the Spanish population was testament to the students' high level of integration, reinforced by Hispanic-Palestinian descendants. Given their professional skills – principally as doctors, pharmacists and managers – many experienced a remarkable ascent in the Spanish social hierarchy, gained greater social recognition and some acquired distinguished socio-economic status. Notwithstanding, they have been less successful in the bicultural education of their children. With some exceptions, most of their descendants know little about their paternal language and – even worse – the culture from which it emanates. In general, parents had a sense of control over their children in infancy, but did not pick-up on the growing autonomy of adolescents and young people in a modern society. Perhaps, more than anything else, it has been this cultural and linguistic 'divorce' between parents and children that raised the alarm to the disintegration in signs of collective identity, the members of which – paradoxically – have fought so hard to preserve.

With the exception of specific individual efforts, Palestinians – as a collective – have failed to create some form of community organization that would maintain their identity among their descendants in a bicultural context. In principle, many showed great reticence in accepting the idea that their period of residence in Spain would be longer than initially intended and that, therefore, they had to adopt appropriate measures to facilitate a lengthier stay. But even when they accepted this new reality, there was little substantial change in their approach to the issue.

Although the Palestinian student movement in Spain was very active and enjoyed national prestige, similar associative experience has not been reproduced in the community, despite the fact that its members now have access to far greater material resources than in their student years. Even so, the organizational models and motivational incentives of the past – of identity, political militancy, peer pressure, grants, scholarships and economic support – have since become, apart from obsolete, inadequate, when not counteractive. Regrettably, repeated, generous attempts to give collective voice to Palestinians residing in Spain have been frustrated³⁹ (Alami 1993). The difficulties they suffer, without over-exaggerating the matter, centre on the politicisation of social affairs, which seeks to compensate political frustrations⁴⁰ (Abumalham 1995) and drags with it remnants of their student activist past; the interference of PLO representation, which plays to give the latter the role of judge, allowing it to bring its usual political clientele, and unease with setting up a strong Palestinian community in Spain able to supervise its own work and influence the selection of a suitable ambassador; and the interpersonal distrust and protagonism (*mukhtar* mentality) which derives from a suspicious personalised, localised political culture, in which personal and regional loyalties prevail – supposedly charismatic – which take precedence over rational and national ones. It is certain that, so far, private interests (embassy, political organizations, interest groups) have prevailed at the expense of collective (or community) ones. Worse still, there has been a failure to provide an appropriate forum or platform to bring descendants together. On the contrary, meetings – whether informal or not – usually rotate around parents (coffee and Arabic social gatherings) which, at the risk of trying to delve too deeply into a cultural ghetto, seem to perpetuate the notion of separate identities or the aforementioned cultural 'divorce.'

³⁹ In the mid-late eighties the Hispano-Palestinian Community Association "Jerusalén" was set up in Madrid. Despite its members' efforts and good will, ever since its establishment, it has experienced a series of ups and downs which illustrate the Palestinian community's associative state.

⁴⁰ On this note it is worth highlighting that some sections of the Palestinian community have assumed the voice of Islamist sentiments in the area, which should not be confused with the re-evaluation and practice of Islam in Europe.

3. Conclusion

Regardless of the motivation for their migration (work or study), the era of their arrival (early, mid or late 20th Century), the areas in which they settled (The Canary Islands or the Peninsula), the Palestinians now integrated into Spanish society have a series of common features which allow conclusions to be drawn about the community as a whole. First, in passing from emigration to exile, the Palestinian community in Spain has experienced a remarkable transition from consisting of temporary immigrants (intending to work or study) to permanent residents (part of the community), and from seeking private and material interests (work and family) to public and post-material ones (socio-political and community related). Second, considering the problems the community has faced with regards to maintaining its identity, one cannot overlook its profound social, cultural, economic, political and ideological transformation: most of its members have spent more of their lives in Spain than in Palestine or any other Arab country for that matter; in most cases, their behavioural norms are governed not by the society from which they came, but that in which they have come to reside. The result of this profound process of re-socialisation is that today's Palestinians in Spain have little to do with those who arrived at its coasts and universities a few decades ago. Third, in the difficulties it has encountered in striving for association, trying to have a greater voice and become a noteworthy pressure group in Spain, the Palestinian community has undergone another equally significant change from a state of political and ideological confusion (derived from the current collapse of the peace process) to the necessary demarcation between State and civil society in the diaspora (the delimitation of boundaries between official Palestinian representation and the Palestinian community). Any initiative that fails to take this into account is bound to fail.

Despite the PLO's lack of community work in the west, the Palestinian community's experience in Spain shows how it is possible to reconstruct the associative fabric of an isolated, displaced community, while remaining aware of the sometimes undesirable effects of quasi-state organization interference in civil society in the diaspora. It is important to note that the shift in the Palestinian question's focal point from the diaspora to the occupied territories themselves – initiated by the first *intifada* – has taken away from the diaspora communities' traditional role. In turn, dissatisfaction with the Oslo agreements and the peace process in general has produced a marked melancholy among its members. These sources of disillusionment, both on a community and national level, may explain the current passiveness of the Palestinian community in Spain. This said, it is certain that political events in the region – as has been the case in the second Intifada – can stir and motivate the diaspora into being more active, which has lately manifested itself in the use of new technology – namely the establishment of web-sites by various Palestinian collectives and organisations.

Looking to the future, two important trends may be identified. First, the Palestinian community in Spain is tending towards disappearance, both due to the advanced age of its members, and the practical non-existence of any new immigration. Its only remnant will be descendants, fully integrated into Spanish society and distributed throughout its social structure. Second, it is somewhat unlikely that associative movements such as those propagated by GUPS and *Sanaud* will be reborn in the community, unless they are conducted under a different premise to those previously invoked, since the Palestinian situation, both locally and nationally, has changed significantly. In this regard, a revision of the Palestinian community's role in the diaspora is necessary, especially in the light of ongoing, monumental changes to the Palestinian issue, and its geopolitical 'coordinates.'

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British Palestinians

The Transformation of an Exiled Community

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1. Introduction

This essay attempts to assess the efforts of the British-Palestinian Diaspora community to preserve their Palestinian identity by supporting the Palestinian National Movement through political, cultural or financial means, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora. Equally this study seeks to trace the extent to which British-Palestinians have created associations and clubs to support the community in Britain and to protect their political and social interests within the British political system during the last 30 years. An attempt will also be made to analyse historical trends and changes in the agendas of these associations over the last three decades through the analysis of primary sources such as newsletters, pamphlets, general publications, lectures and activities as well as some interviews.

According to Chris Doyle, press officer for “The Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding” (CAABU) the most important task facing these associations is the preservation of Palestinian identity through various activities such as dinners, folklorist fashion shows, fund-raising campaigns, lectures and films. For such a dispersed community symbolic and social links are vital for the continuation of ties with the homeland and they also foster a much-needed sense of community among Palestinians in Britain. These events are hosted by associations such as, “The Association of the Palestinian Community in the United Kingdom” (APC), “The Arab Club”, the “Palestine Solidarity Campaign” (PSC), CAABU, or the charity “Medical Aid for Palestine” (MAP).

The period covered in this article begins with the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in 1964 through to the post-Oslo accords and Wye agreements in the early and late 1990s. The political, social and economic developments in the homeland and the experiences of the Palestinian Diaspora in the Lebanon and Jordan in the early 1970s and 1980s has had a direct impact on the political outlook of the British-Palestinian community. Consequently the participation of British-Palestinians as left-wing opposition, independents, centrists as pro-Fateh or the more Islamist movements throughout this period will be analysed. Such a plethora of political views and passionate beliefs merely reveals the community’s constant “looking back to” news from Palestine rather than local news in Britain. This reveals their divisions and also explains their lack of visible participation in British local affairs, compounded by their low numbers (estimates range from 15,000 to 20,000 Palestinians residing in the UK). In the *Pull of Return*, Ghada Karmi captures her family’s experience of exile as she describes how both her parents, soon after arriving in Britain in 1948 and thereafter, “...still harboured a secret wish to return. ‘I’ll put up with being here,’ my mother would say about living in London, ‘because I know it won’t be for long. And you children’ she would continue, ‘don’t get too used to things here, we’re not staying’” (Karmi 1999: 56). Tragically, her mother only returned to be buried in Amman, in 1991. (Karmi 1994: 40)

2. Identity, Diaspora, Return

Palestinian identity evolved primarily as a national phenomenon in the region, and developed particular traits as a reaction to the traumatic experience of loss of land and heritage. Prior to the First World War, Palestinian localism was part of a generic Arab reaction to Turkish Nationalism during the last days of the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently this nationalism evolved more

specifically during the British Mandate and thereafter in reaction to Zionism. Rashid Khalidi expressed this early nationalism as an amalgam of elements that pre-existed the coming of the Zionists. He commented that Palestinian nationalism was created by, “religious attachment to what both Muslims and Christians saw as a Holy Land, the conception of Palestine as an administrative entity, the fear of external encroachment, and local patriotism.” (Khalidi 1997:154)

This identity was not mutually exclusive but evolved according to what was most needed. Today, as Rashid Khalidi captures quite vividly in *Palestinian Identities*, in an age when many Palestinians of the Diaspora community carry the passports of various host countries, being Palestinian comes above being American, Jordanian, or Australian. Their identity as Palestinians is most painfully felt at a border; be it a port, airport, or checkpoint. Being singled out for further checking and “special treatment” (Khalidi 1997:1) merely reminds six million Palestinians of their differences, it reminds them of who they are, and it reinforces bonds of solidarity between them. (Khalidi 1997:1)

Palestinians differentiate themselves from the rest of the Arab peoples through their territorial losses, the negation of their past and its memory, and their subsequent sense of “otherness”, even among fellow Arabs. This, on the whole, was the common denominator that transcended religious differences that still exist in their society. Their common bond is language, the memory of the 1948 Catastrophe, the *Nakbeh*, or their first experience of being the “other”. This is aptly summarised in Fawaz Turki’s *Life in Exile in Lebanon*,

“If I was not a Palestinian when I left Haifa as a child, I am one now. Living in Beirut as a stateless person for most of my [youth, mainly]... in [a] refugee camp, I did not feel I was living among my “Arab brothers”. I did not feel I was an Arab, a Lebanese or, as some wretchedly pious writers claimed, a “Southern Syrian,” I was a Palestinian, and that meant I was an outsider, an alien, a refugee, a burden. To be that, for us, for my generation, meant to look inward, to draw closer, to be part of a minority that had its own way of doing and seeing and feeling and reacting.” (Turki 1972: 8)

The term “Diaspora” signifies a dispersal or “scattering”, which ironically was originally associated with the Jews, who were dispersed among the “gentiles” in the 8th-6th Century BC.⁴³ It has also been applied to various growing communities who are dispersed. The Palestinian Diaspora maintains strong ties with the motherland of Palestine. This relationship is a “mixture of solidarity and autonomy”⁴⁴, and links the Palestinian Diaspora and the “inside” Palestinians and also the Palestine Authority. However, unlike the Jewish Diaspora, the influence of the Palestinian Diaspora community on the Palestine Authority is minimal. Edward Said vocally expresses this criticism in his latest article, *Arafat’s Style of Politics*,⁴⁵ but the leadership seems to heed little criticism from the Diaspora community, which lives and responds to a different reality.

The pull of “Return” is a powerful unifying force for Palestinians. First generation immigrants generally look back to their motherland with nostalgia and many harbour a real intention of returning “home”. The consequences of this are difficulties in fully integrating into their host societies. This task is more likely to fall to the following generations, as Ghada Al-Karmi shows. (Karmi, 1999:1)

The proliferation of associations such as the Palestine Return Centre and the Palestinian Right to Return Coalition (Al-Awda) are testimony to the Palestinian attachment to the Right of Return, which is highlighted through petitions and marches. This has succeeded in rallying Palestinians

⁴³ The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Oxford: Clarendon PRESS, 1991, P.323.

⁴⁴ The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Oxford: Clarendon PRESS, 1991, P.12.

⁴⁵ Internet: [HTTP://www.dawn.com](http://www.dawn.com), Karachi, 27 September 1999, The Opinion section.

from all social classes: recent immigrants and asylum seekers as well as the more established older families.⁴⁶

3. Researching Palestinians in Britain

3.1 The “Invisibility” of Palestinians and the Problem of Numbers

Little has been written on Palestinians in Britain. This is due to the lack of precise statistics on the number of Arabs and Palestinians in Britain. This problem is indicative of both the complexity of the British census classification system, and of the relative “invisibility” of the Arab community in general and the Palestinian community in particular. Madawi Al-Rasheed, one of the few researchers on this topic, attributes this difficulty to four main facts: the nature of the British census, ethnic classifications, the general lack of participation and apathy on the part of Palestinian and Arab Community, their lack of homogeneity and their geographic dispersal. (Al-Rasheed 1991: 9-12)

In a later work on the same topic, Madawi Al Rasheed went on to call for a new anthropological approach to the study of this community that went beyond numbers and called for a study of the way these communities create ties, interact, and relate to the host country. This would probably tell more about that community than misleading and meaningless numbers. (Al-Rasheed 1993: 9)

Firstly, the 1981 census is outdated and underestimates the number of migrants of Arab nationality or ethnic origin. (Al-Rasheed 1993: 9) The 1991 census calculated that the total number of Arabs born in the Arab world and residing in Britain was 101,886, that however ignores Arabs born in countries other than those listed or those born in Britain (second generation); thus according to Al Rasheed this may be an underestimate. In the census of 1991, ethnic group questions did not have “Arab” as a classification. Rather they were subsumed under the category: “Other-Other” or “Other-Asian.” (Coleman; Salt 1996: 87)

Another shortcoming of this census is that it is impossible to estimate the numbers of UK-born Arabs, such groups do not appear in the census as they are grouped under “born in the UK.” (Coleman; Salt 1996: 87) Similar to the 1991 census, Camilla Al-Solh’s 1992 figure of 250,000 Arabs was also judged an underestimate: whereas *The Economist*’s figure of 500,000 was an overestimate.⁴⁷ As for Palestinians, however, vague estimates range from 15,000 to 20,000.⁴⁸ On the whole, the Arab communities are not socially or economically homogenous. They can be subdivided into four categories: The wealthy Arab migrants, the professionals, the migrant workers, and the refugees.⁴⁹ The factors uniting these 4 social subdivisions are language, religion and culture.⁵⁰ Moreover not all are registered as residents or hold British passports.

3.2 Ascribed identities: Other-Other, Palestinian or Arab, Circumventing Numbers.

There are also difficulties for Arabs themselves because of how they choose to define themselves when faced with an “Other-Other” category. Some fair Arabs, mostly from Syria or Lebanon, could describe themselves as “White”; some might identify themselves by nation-state rather than the category Arab, thus the fluidity of their identity complicates analysis of the census data. Also some Arabs might have responded to the call of some Islamic organisations such as the Islamic Secretariat of the UK, which urged Muslims to write “Muslim” rather than anything else. This may confuse Arabs with Muslims from other ethnic groups. Finally the most difficult problem in locating Arabs stems from their fear of releasing information about themselves, a legacy of living

⁴⁶ “Al-Awda March of 17 September”, *The Palestine Mail*, (London, November 2000, 2nd issue.) p. 1.

⁴⁷ “The Economist,” loc. cit.

⁴⁸ “The Economist”, 17 September 1988.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 11

in oppressive societies. Significantly, illegal immigrants are unlikely to reveal themselves under tightening immigration controls. This group is destined to remain elusive. (Al-Rasheed 1993: 8-9) Thus to approach this problem anthropologically, Madawi Rashid starts by focusing on, “what those Arabs are doing in this country, what networks they have formed, what ethnic organisation they have, and how they maintain their ethnicity here.” These are significant questions. (Al-Rasheed 1993: 9)

3.3 Few Secondary or Primary sources available on this topic

Few secondary sources have been published on Palestinians in Britain, or indeed for Arabs in general. The few useful works are from a collection of lectures from the First Arab Conference held at The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in October 1990, which were published as *Arabs in Britain: Concerns and Prospects*. (Shiblak 1991) A second conference was held in November 1993 at the same location. A third conference on the same topic took place in October 1999, a sign of the growing concern and recognition of the need to address the plight of Arabs in Britain. A more specialised but nonetheless important work is Fred Halliday's, *Arabs in Exile: Yemeni Migrants in Urban Britain*, (Halliday 1992) which is useful when comparing Palestinians to one of the oldest Arab and third world communities in Britain, the Yemenis. Primary sources will be the focus of this essay, with interviews with associations, personalities, memoirs and biographies relevant to the topic. Fawaz Turki's autobiographical *Exile's Return* (Turki, 1994) will be mentioned as an example of the rebellious, alienated Lebanese/American/Australian Palestinian who feels rejected by those “insider” Palestinians. This experience seems to reveal how members of the Diaspora tend to create Anderson's “Imagined Community” to acquire a sense of belonging and to survive psychologically. Turki and others in the Diaspora feel Palestinian by cherishing ideas of an idyllic and romanticised homeland from a distance. Once in Palestine, they confront a different Palestinian reality from within, which rudely reveals the complexity and multiplicity of Palestinian identities. Similarly Ghada Karmi's writings on *After the Nakbah: An Experience of Exile in England*, relevantly and humanly draws on what it means to grow up in Britain as a Palestinian. (Karmi 1999: 52-63)

A number of interviews were conducted with the heads of various associations, notably the APC in the UK, The Arab Club, The Palestine Return Centre, CAABU, and MAP. An interview was also conducted with Abbas Shiblak, who was the main co-ordinator for the first two conferences on Arabs in Britain that were held in 1990 and 1992.⁵¹ Interviews were also conducted with Mazen Masri, a businessman and Director of EDGO Project Development,⁵² businessman Mazen Abdin who runs a successful British company and Afif Safieh, The Palestinian General Delegate to the United Kingdom.

4. Community and Solidarity Associations in Britain

4.1 The Arab Club and CAABU

Inevitably Palestinians are easily absorbed into the general Arab community of the UK. This is due to their small numbers and also because the Palestinian/Israeli conflict was an issue that has united Arabs for more than 30 years. Both CAABU and The Arab Club feature events, lectures, campaigns, or exhibits that have been dominated for years by the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. More

⁵¹ Dr. Abbas Shiblak, Academic specialising on Palestinian refugees and the Diaspora. Interviewed on 6 September 1999.

⁵² Mazin Masri, Businessman and Director of EDGO Project Development Ltd. Interviewed on 27 September 1999,

recently, and particularly since the Gulf Crisis in 1990, other areas of the Middle East have come to the forefront of their activities, notably the Lebanon, during the 1970s and 1980s, and more recently Iraq.

More inward looking, The Arab Club was founded by Arabs living in Britain who sought to preserve their community and retain their heritage through cultural exhibits, Arabic schools for their children, lectures and music shows.⁵³ According to Mazen Abdin, a Palestinian and a member of the Arab Club's Executive Committee, "they seek to be a cultural and social forum and shy away from serious political lobbying, or general ideological stands. We aim to remain neutral from political divisions; our purpose is to bring together the community, not to divide it."⁵⁴ Contrary to this CAABU was founded by pro-Palestinian British politicians at a time when, according to the *Sunday Times*, "only 2% of the British people supported the Arabs," (CAABU 1977: 3) and sought to increase British awareness of the Palestinians' plight, thus it was more outward looking and worked at lobbying Government.

After reviewing CAABU's newsletters and interviewing a member of the Arab Club's Executive Committee, Mr Mazen Abdin (a Palestinian) it can be seen that the trend for both of these associations is a move from the 1960s and 1970s focus on Palestine, to the Lebanon, the Gulf and most recently Iraq.⁵⁵ A decrease in focus on the Palestinian problem, as Mr Abdin explains, is a result of peace treaties that have paralysed Palestinian activism. He explains further that people no longer know who to protest against, either the Israelis or the human right's abuses of the Palestinian security forces.⁵⁶ *[At the time of writing, this author has noticed a growing political activism across all of these associations as the peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority falls apart. There is now more unity, protests and political activism than seen in the last decade, as the number of protests in front of the Israeli and American Embassy has shown. September-November 2000)]*

4.2 The Association of the Palestinian Community in the United Kingdom (APC)

The APC focuses more on Palestinian issues. Mr. Nawaf al-Tamimi, who is a journalist and the officer responsible for External Affairs and the Media, estimated that there might be over 15,000 Palestinians in the UK, with the number rising after 1991. Explaining their "invisibility" and lack of participation in political activities, he said that the Palestinian Diaspora in general is not only disappointed but also "devastated" as a result of the peace deals with Israel. "If the situation in the homeland has reached such a low, why get involved within Britain, when they know they have [no]...impact on the decision-making process?"⁵⁷

The APC has two main objectives. Their first aim is to help maintain the cultural identity of Palestinians, and their second aim is to prevent divisions within the small community. Thus there is more focus on unifying political activities. The question of the refugees is important to all Palestinians, and speakers from all levels of the political strata attend these activities. A symbolic

⁵³ Chris Doyle, Press Officer of CAABU. Interviewed on 1 September 1999.

⁵⁴ Mazen Abdin, businessman and Member of the Executive Committee of the Arab Club. Interviewed on 24 September 1999.

⁵⁵ CAABU, Summer Newsletter, summer 1974, (London: Arab British Centre, 1974,) pp. 2-3.

CAABU, Spring Newsletter, 1979, (London: Arab British Centre, 1979,) pp. 8-9.

CAABU, Annual Report, 1987 (London: Arab British Centre, 1987) p. 2 & pp. 4-1.

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CAABU, Annual Report, 1991 (London: Arab British Centre, 1991) p. 5 & pp. 9-15.

CAABU, Annual Report, 1993 (London: Arab British Centre, 1993) p. iii, p. 11.

CAABU, Annual Report, 1996 (London: Arab British Centre, 1996) p. 5 & pp. 23-26.

⁵⁶ Mazen Abdin, Businessman and Member of the Executive Committee of the Arab Club. Interviewed on 24 September 1999.

⁵⁷ Mr. Nawaf Al-Tamimi, journalist and Officer of External Relations and the Media. Interviewed on 21 September 1999.

personality from Palestine, Mahmoud Darweesh, was invited to read his poetry at the Annual Dinner, thus both raising funds and reviving Palestinian identity. The Right of Return and the Refugee Question are topics that are also unifying for lectures as well as folkloristic fashion shows, according to Al-Tamimi.⁵⁸ The APC is diversifying its activities in Palestine, especially in terms of financial support to the homeland, as “it is hard to invest in big projects in Palestine thus the APC prefers to act on small initiatives such as housing, hospitals and communications”, said Al-Tamimi. Therefore ties with other Arab Clubs are maintained.

4.3 Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)

As a British registered charity catering to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Palestine, Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) was founded by “half [a] dozen people, three of [whom are]...doctors”. These people, following the Sabra and Shatilla massacre in 1982, set up a charity to support the work of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and Palestinian health institutions.⁵⁹ This British charity boasts the support of the British Government as well as funds from the EU. As early as 1952, the late Leila Mantoura started Palestine Medical Aid, which later changed into Medical Aid for Palestine after 1982. The media coverage of Dr. Pauline Cutting and Nurse Susan Wright, who survived the 134-day siege in the Bourj Al Barajeneh refugee camp in 1987, increased media awareness of the Palestinians’ plight.⁶⁰ Similarly Dr. Swee Ang followed suit and published her experiences working under atrocious conditions in Lebanon and Palestine, and witnessing the Sabra and Shatilla massacre in 1982, in her book, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*,⁶¹ which also captured the outbreak of the Intifada in Gaza in 1987.

According to Mrs. Saida Nusseibah, Chief Executive of MAP,⁶² because it is registered as a British charity, it qualifies for money for Palestine through the Overseas Development Agency. Thus the major donor is the British Government. The European Union, however, funds refugee camps in Lebanon, whereas the British government funds Palestine. Moreover MAP also collects money through fund-raising activities. In addition to sending medical supplies, MAP is working on upgrading human resources in the Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories. Significantly, on Palestinian refugees, Nusseibeh insists that the objective “is not to impose, but to listen to their needs and respond to them. Most importantly they must not become MAP dependent,” she says. On the whole, she is proud of the income-generating projects that focus on rehabilitation and it encourages the donee when they find they are not MAP dependent.⁶³

4.4 The Palestine Solidarity Campaign PSC

Leftwing British and Anglo Arab supporters of the Palestinian cause founded the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in 1982. However, following the end of the Intifada that started in 1987, the Oslo Accords and the recent Wye agreement as well as the gradual reduction in support for Palestinian left-wing movements, there was a decrease in the number of active Palestinians on the board. Most of the current active staff are British and apart from regular political lobbying, they foster educational exchange programmes for British and Palestinian students. This is a non-profit independent organisation, with members from many different communities.

This is a very pro-active group that conducts a candlelit march at 10 Downing Street every September 17th, to protest and keep the memory of Sabra and Shatilla alive. They stage marches whenever they can and they aggressively support the right to education for Gazan students. They

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ MAP, *Annual Review*, 1993-1994, Tenth Anniversary of MAP 1984-1994, p. 1

⁶⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁶¹ Dr. Ang Swee Chai, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, (Singapore: Times Books International, 1989.)

⁶² Mrs. Sa’ida Nusseibah, Chief Executive of MAP. Interviewed on 7 September 1999.

⁶³ Ibid.

sponsor talks, publish a monthly newsletter (which covers news in Palestine), monitor the media and advertising agencies and organise fringe meetings at the Labour Conference.

4.5 Fred Halliday's Theory of "Encapsulation."

In one of the rare studies on the Arab communities in Britain, Fred Halliday's *Arab in Exile: Yemeni Migrants in Urban Britain*, (Halliday 1992) captures a phenomenon among Yemeni immigrants that can aptly be used to describe the behaviour of the Palestinian community. In the chapter entitled, "The Invisible Arab", Fred Halliday describes one of the oldest Arab communities in Britain, the Yemenis, whose relationship to the outside world relative to British society is similar to that of the Pakistani migrant. (Halliday 1992:135) "On the one hand, the very strength of internal networks reinforced a process by which the migrants had restricted contact with the rest of the world... This process is simply known as "encapsulation"... such migrants live within an "urban village" of their own people, with little need for official or social contact with the host country". (Halliday 1992:135)

This explains the lack of Arab presence in local British affairs. This, together with the pull of return in the case of Palestinians, and the cultural baggage of fear of political activity, prevents them from ever fully settling in the host country and restricts their ability to survive and participate actively within British society.

4.6 The business, academic and legal world and the Pull of Return

On a more optimistic note, there are a number of prominent British Palestinians in the legal world, such as Judge Eugene Cotran and Mr. Michel Abdul Messih QC, as well as prominent academics such as Yazid Sayigh, from Cambridge University and others, most of whom are committed to and critical of Palestine. There are also some important businessmen who mostly made their wealth either in the Gulf or in other parts of Europe and the world. Their businesses seem mostly to be directed to the markets of the Middle East, apart from a few such as Mazen Abdin who has his own British company that employs British people and caters to the British market. This pattern, according to a paper by Ghayth Armanazi on *Arab Participation in British Business life*, is one that equally applies to Palestinians. Armanazi describes how, " Much Arab business activity in this country, especially that which is centred around London, is characterised by its purely Arab orientation in two distinct categories. It is either:

- a) Targeted at the Arab community [residing]...here, or
- b) Feeding the requirements of Arab markets overseas." (Shiblak 1991:34-35)

Mazen Masri, a successful Palestinian businessman, and his father, Munib Masri, who was Chairman of the APC, returned to Palestine with their business capital to set up PADICO, the most influential company in the West Bank and Gaza, and PALTEL, the Middle East's first privately owned phone company. The Masris, who made their wealth in the Gulf and Europe, have invested heavily in creating much-needed infrastructure in Palestine. Interviewed on 27th September 1999, Mazen said, "in 1992, most of my family returned to Palestine having moved here from Beirut in 1982". Committed to rebuilding Palestine, Mazen insists that, "the wealthy members of the Palestinian Diaspora...in Britain or wherever they may be, should return to invest their wealth in Palestine".⁶⁴ Overall, there have been several significant returnees, but there are not yet enough to stimulate the economy. It seems that the political climate and the slow moving peace-process has not generated enough confidence or incentive for investments from the Diaspora. Mazen, however, believes otherwise: "They don't want to return, that's the problem, there is much to be done which they can contribute to, their fears are not justified".⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Mazin Masri, Businessman, Director of EDGO Project Development Ltd. Interviewed on 27 September 1999.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

An academic pursuing Diaspora affairs, Abbas Shibliak, a research fellow at the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at the University of Oxford, focuses on the civil status of Palestinian refugee communities in host societies. He edited the *Shaml* newsletter, which is the voice of the Palestinian Diaspora and the Refugee Centre Shaml that he helped to set-up in Ramallah in 1994. 'Until the route of return to their original homes is unlocked, said Shibliak, "the Palestinian refugees should be entitled to secure residency and full social, economic and citizenship rights". He pointed out that depriving them from these basic rights is forcing them to move beyond the Arab region and this in a way serves the Zionist scheme under the misleading banner of "no to 'al-Tawteen' or permanent settlement" of refugees in neighbouring Arab states.

4.7 The Palestinian General Delegate to the United Kingdom

Finally on a positive note for future trends, the Palestinian General Delegate to the United Kingdom, Afif Safiyeh, says that in the last 9 years he is pleased to say that the numbers of Palestinians listed with his office has grown from 200 to 900, a very promising sign.⁶⁶ In terms of how he envisions the rapport between the Diaspora and the Future State he wrote in his booklet, *Children of a Lesser God?* of, "A dynamic strategy based on a triangular Palestinian-Palestinian-Palestinian co-operation, among the Palestinians of the State in the making, Diaspora Palestinians and the Palestinians of Israel, should be created...". He concludes by mentioning the concept of "global tribes" and he looks forward to the day when "Palestinian and Arab associations in Britain...[become] no longer an alien phenomenon or a foreign factor but a domestic actor." (Safiyeh 1997:47)

5. Conclusion

Overall the Palestinian leadership seems to promote the notion of interaction between the Palestinian Diaspora and the Palestinians in Palestine, which is envisioned to be dynamic and enriching to both. Palestinian and Arab associations have taken some positive steps in the last three decades to be more engaged and more effective in British society. However British Palestinians need to become more pro-active and to participate in all aspects of local British society. They need to become more visible and lobby the political and media establishments. They also need to have sufficient political power to be able to participate and influence developments in Palestine. To continue on Mr. Safiyeh's positive concept of "global tribes", the dual identity of Palestinian and British should ensure a dynamic and free exchange between the original homeland, which will be supported, and the security derived from knowing that a State for Palestinians exists. This should ensure a more relaxed, self-assured and assertive role in British society for the coming third generation of Palestinians in Britain, and they will play a more visible role.

Although material for this article was sparse, there was a wealth of primary sources such as newsletters, pamphlets and booklets for me to study to gain an understanding of some of the trends apparent in recent years. The most important trend is the decreasing political activism of Palestinians, particularly after the Madrid Conference of 1991. Secondly, as the amount of associations grew, particularly the more inclusive and integrated ones, the focus of their activities took a broader form to include social and cultural as well as political activities. Mostly more engaged and more confident groups started to exert their influence in British society and to move away from the experience described by Ghada Karmi when she spoke about the generation separated worlds:

"As we children became more integrated, our parents increasingly lived a life separate from ours. We had few activities in common. (Karmi 1999: 59)

⁶⁶ Dr. Afif Safiyeh, Palestinian General Delegate to the United Kingdom and Director of the Office of the P.L.O to the Holy See. Interviewed on 10 September 1999.

I must conclude that political, economic and cultural action mirrors historical and political events in the Middle East. However, the attempts to create and sustain a Palestinian community continue and can only flourish as the third generation is born here. Palestinians are accustomed to multiple and overlapping identities from the days of the Ottoman Empire. If they have the chance to travel to their homeland freely they should be able to balance both British and Palestinian identities in such a way as to influence political actors in Britain to pursue policies in their interest, such as economic investments, educational exchange or tourism. Similarly, it would be expected that a returning Diaspora community could only enrich the civil, cultural and economic institutions of Palestine by promoting and stimulating growth. It is vital that the guardians of civil society are from the Palestinian Diaspora abroad, particularly from Britain, Europe and the Americas in order to ensure that a good civil society in Palestine may someday flourish. Furthermore, it is vital that steps be taken by the Diaspora to counter what Patrick Cockburn from *The Independent* predicted. Namely, that a dichotomy is likely to develop among the leadership in the homeland, and the Diaspora is likely to create growing barriers between the two, as Cockburn writes,

“On the Palestinian side, it is refugees who have done the worst out of the Oslo deal. The politically active and wealthier refugees may come back to where Mr. Arafat rules. But Palestinian families that became refugees after the 1948 war will get nothing under the Oslo Accords. They will not be allowed to return to their homes. The majority of the Palestinian Diaspora will remain abroad and marginalized.” (Cockburn 1996)

It is therefore crucial that Palestinians continue to build their communities and societies to support each other in the Diaspora, to strengthen their identity and to be able to participate more effectively in British public life as well to solicit support for their just cause.

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Towards the Preservation Of Palestinian National Identity

By **Sharif Kanaana**,
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1. Challenges for Social Identity

The Palestinian Diaspora was created by the 1948 war when over three-quarters of a million Palestinians were forced to leave their homes. About a quarter of a million suffered the same fate in 1967. Meanwhile, due to unbearable living conditions, many of those who remained have since migrated to different parts of the world. For many years dispersion, loss, pain, struggle and the hope of returning to the homeland strengthened the collective Palestinian identity. More recently this identity has shown signs of weakening among some of the Palestinian communities, especially among the estimated 1/2 of a million Palestinian citizens of Israel, and some of the Palestinian communities in the Western Hemisphere. The Israeli-Palestinian agreements starting with Oslo are expected to make things worse rather than better. Concern over this issue was expressed at a conference held in Nazareth January 1993, in which Palestinian intellectuals and academics from a wide range of fields came together to discuss strategies for the preservation and consolidation of the Palestinian national identity. This paper is an expanded version of the presentation I made at the Nazareth conference. I offer a preliminary discussion of the contribution that the ideological manipulation of folklore could make to such a cause. The propositions made here apply to the whole Palestinian diaspora as well as to the Palestinian citizen of Israel

The social identity of a human being is multiple. An individual has as many social identities as social groups of which he is a member. Each group of people constitutes a social group with its own identity, and the members of these have at least one shared factor in common that distinguishes them from other groups, and of which they are aware. Identity springs from the awareness of common and shared factors and from collective experiences, memory, history, and the past that they have by virtue of being members of that group.

The essence of social identity is the subjective feeling of belonging to a group and therefore being distinct from members of other groups. However, the subjective feeling is not enough to maintain the continuity of group identity; identity must have some observable manifestations that distinguish members of the group. Thus, each group that aspires to survival as a group codes its collective past, its history, its experiences, its characteristics, and its achievement, that is, all the constituent elements of its identity, into manifest signs of that identity. This results in collective distinctive and exclusive features such as customs, traditions, habits, codes of dress, cuisine, holidays, festivals, celebrations, songs, narratives, epics and so on. The sum of these codes of identification forms what we call the folklore of the group. In this sense folklore is a function of identity.

However, folklore does not code experiences and memories of the past in an objective or factual way; it codes the feelings, the sentiments, the emotions, the excitement, the beauty, the warmth, the glamour, the affiliation and the loyalty which accompanied and were inspired by these collective experiences. When members of the group repeat these experiences, not only do they recall the past but they also evoke previous feelings and sentiments and generate into them the feelings of pride, affiliation, identification and loyalty to the group. Thus folklore is not only a function of shared identity but also, once the folklore is generated by shared identity, shared identity in turn becomes a function of folklore. It is this quality that makes folklore ideal for

ideological manipulation and this explains the popularity of folklore in 19th century Europe during a period of growing Romantic Nationalism.

Throughout history folklore has been collected and studied not for its own sake but for the support of political, ideological and nationalist aspirations. In particular, it was nations, countries, and groups therein, which were weak, oppressed, or overwhelmed politically and culturally by stronger countries or nations, those suffering from a poor self-image, which resorted to the use of folklore and folk symbols to bolster their morale and strengthen their identities. It is relatively small and insecure countries like Finland, Hungary, and Ireland, not strong, secure countries like England and France, which have been particularly active in collecting and studying folklore. And where folklore was deemed lacking or insufficient for asserting and instilling pride in their identity, especially in a time of crisis, countries anxious about their identities resorted to embroidering, inflating and exaggerating fragments of their folklore. And when all this was not enough they even resorted to reconstructing the past, creating “golden ages”, wars, battles, heroes and acts of heroism and inventing epics, songs, tales and legends to glorify their past.

The past history of nations is never past. It is not dead and gone; rather it extends into the present and through it into the future. The past is not a neutral zone in terms of a people’s ideology and identity; the past is the authority which judges, justifies and legitimises the present and the future. There is not a people in the world that looks at its past history as insignificant or neutral; all peoples review their history, change it, modify it, develop it, add to it, and eliminate fragments of it, to make it fit with their present and future goals and aspirations. All existing nations, especially the modern industrial nations, where change is fast and mutual influences are great, resort to an intellectual-psychological trick in order to harmonise their past, present and future. Namely, they project their present national ideologies and their future goals, hopes and aspirations onto their past and reconstruct it accordingly, then they use the reconstructed past to justify and legitimise the present, and to plan the future.

In today’s world, possibly more than any other peoples, Palestinians are anxious about their national identity; they face challenges that threaten to disintegrate their shared national and cultural heritage. This danger has existed since the Nakbah of 1948 when Palestinians were physically scattered all over the world. The current reorganisation of world political and economic affairs into what is being called “The New World Order” is likely to exacerbate the problem. The dangers threatening the Palestinian national-cultural identity come from many sources.

Every person belongs to many different groups and has many social identities paralleling these groups and derived from the shared characteristics and experiences of the different groups. These groups compete for the loyalty of the individual. The emphasis on loyalty to any one of these identities weakens loyalties at other levels. Palestinian identity competes for the loyalty of its members with several other identities at levels both wider and narrower than the Palestinian level. At the higher or wider level it competes with such powerful identities as Arab Nationalism and Islamic Nationalism. At a lower or narrower level it faces competition from such traditional and well-established identities as the “milla”, the region, the tribe, the village, the “hamula” and the extended family. It is not only that Palestinian identity faces competition in all of these areas, but it is also possibly one of the weakest among them, being the youngest, least crystallised and least endowed with folk symbols and folk associations. The reason for this is that the Palestinian people as an entity is a recent artificial political invention that lacks any natural geographic, political, cultural, or racial boundaries to separate and distinguish it from neighbouring Arab peoples. Before the British Mandate the concept of Palestine as a separate country did not exist in the minds of its own people. Within its British Mandate borders Palestine never existed as a distinct political-

geographic-administrative entity, at any time or stage in the whole history of the Middle East until the Sykes-Pico Agreement of 1916, the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and especially until the approval of the British Mandate Document in 1922. Palestine was created by European powers and its borders were defined in a totally arbitrary manner with no reference to any inherent or natural considerations. When this political entity was created the salient identities of the people living within these artificial borders were those of family, “hamula”, village, and district. They also saw themselves to a milder degree as Greater Syrians, Arabs, and Moslems, but not as Palestinians. The Palestinian Identity still suffers, and will continue to suffer for a long time in the future, as a result of the circumstances of its creation. For example, three major elements in the creation of national identity for all nations are religion, language and history. Palestinians are deprived of the use of these three important elements in the consolidation of their Palestinian identity. This is because although all Palestinians (or most in the case of religion) share these elements, they are not exclusive to them and, therefore, cannot be used to distinguish them from any of the other Arab peoples.

But even after the creation of this arbitrary entity it was not easy for the population to adopt a parallel identity. Its creation came at the height of a wave of Arab nationalism, usually referred to as “The Arab Awakening”, when the Arab peoples, after four centuries of Ottoman rule, aspired to Arab liberation and to the establishment of a unified Arab state over the whole of the Arab Middle East. The creation of regional political entities by the colonial European powers, which later became the present day Arab states, was seen as a threat to the hopes and aspirations of the Arab people, and the new arbitrary identities, including Palestinian, were strongly rejected. The Palestinian identity in particular was unacceptable, because accepting it meant accepting Colonial-Zionist designs for Palestine, for which this entity was created. However since the 1920s it was actually the struggle against these designs that gave Palestinians the exclusively shared experiences that began to distinguish them from the rest of the Arab people. But up to the 1948 war they perceived these experiences in terms of their Arab rather than their Palestinian identity; they saw themselves as Arabs defending a parcel of Arab land called Palestine, rather than Palestinians defending Palestine. Even up to the 1967 war Palestinians perceived the conflict to be Arab-Jewish, Arab-Zionist, Arab-Imperialist, or Arab-colonialist and not as a Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Palestinian identity started to emerge only during and after the 1948 war as a result of dispersion and other catastrophic and traumatic experiences, and it developed in contrast to the identity of the Arab countries and other countries to which they fled. Palestinian identity began to take a definite shape only after the establishment of the PLO in 1964 and in particular after the 1967 war. As a result of the thorough defeat of the Arab countries at the hands of the Israeli army, Palestinians came to the realisation that the Arab countries could not defend themselves against Israel let alone defend the Palestinians and liberate Palestine. They had to take matters into their own hands, fight for themselves, and tend to their own affairs. It was only at this time, the early 1970s, that Palestinians started to live a Palestinian reality and a Palestinian history through a Palestinian identity and consciousness. This process was facilitated by the Israeli occupation of all of Mandate Palestine in addition to parts of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, which loosened the grip of the Arab countries over the Palestinians and brought large numbers of Palestinians back in contact with each other. This, however, came quite late, after approximately thirty years of Palestinians being classified as refugees, Egyptians, Jordanians, Israelis, and many other such labels.

The process of Palestinian unification and identity formation was soon marred by three developments. The first was the shift in Palestinian policy from advocating a secular state for Arabs and Jews within the whole area of Mandate Palestine to advocating a two-state solution. Every Palestinian, including those now Israeli citizens, could identify with the proposed secular

state on their ancestral land. It promised a shared future for all Palestinians. The two-state solution meant something else. It meant surrendering about 80 percent of their homeland, relinquishing the right of return for the 1948 refugees, and abandoning the hope that over half a million Palestinians who had become Israeli citizens could be reunited with the rest of the Palestinian people. Advocating this solution left several disaffected Palestinian groups.

The second development was the popular Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank: the “Intifada”. Although the Palestinian cause gained a lot in terms of international recognition, sympathy and support through it, the Intifada created strong distinctions between Palestinians of the “inside” (Gaza and West Bank) and the “outside” (the Diaspora). In particular the Intifada drew clear distinctions between Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and the 1948 Palestinians, or the Israeli-Arabs.

A third, and, more recent development is the Israeli-Arab peace talks that started with the Madrid Conference in October 1991 followed by the peace talks in Washington, and finally the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Agreement, which was signed in Washington on September 13th 1993. This development is too recent and too complex to treat adequately in this paper, but does seem to carry within it the potential for a Palestinian identity crisis. Firstly, there is severe disagreement on every aspect dealt with by the treaty, because of differences in ideology and political views and because of the fact that the treaty does not deal evenly with the interests and the aspirations of the different Palestinian groups. Secondly, which is potentially more dangerous for the Palestinian national identity, Palestinians seem to have sacrificed many of their national symbols, which have so far held the Palestinians together as one people through very trying experiences. Most importantly among these symbols are the Palestinian National Charter (which was declared void), the PLO (which practically turned from a national liberation organisation into a political party), the right to self-determination and to an independent state (which was traded for “limited self-administration”), and the right of return for all Palestinian refugees. The prospect of a shared Palestinian future for all Palestinians within one homeland, the liberation of Jerusalem and the Moslem and Christian holy places in it, and the right to struggle against their common enemy were also relinquished. It was such shared symbols and shared aspirations that unified them, made them unique and coherent, gave them resiliency and steadfastness, and kept them going throughout all the years of dispersion and oppression. With the loss of these symbols and ideals, and unless a strong conscious effort is made, the Palestinian national and cultural identity is likely to dissolve or disintegrate.

To many Palestinians, both Arab and non-Arab, the preservation of Palestinian national and cultural identity may not be a significant issue. Many Palestinians and Arabs may even be happy to see the Palestinian entity dissolve into a larger pan-Arab or pan-Islamic identity. To many others, Palestinians in particular, including myself, preserving a Palestinian identity is very important, and it requires and deserves a great deal of conscious effort. Such efforts should not wait until after the fact, they should be preventive and pre-emptive. Action should cover many areas, including the political, ideological, economic, scientific and literary establishments. Here we are concerned specifically with the contribution that folklore could make toward the preservation of a shared Palestinian identity. So far, in this discussion, we have reached two important conclusions relevant to the use of folklore as a function of collective identity: it is equally true that collective identity is, to a great extent, a function of shared folklore. The second conclusion is that folk symbols do not have to be authentic, historical or factual, as tradition can be borrowed, modified, and even invented. All it needs is to become accepted by the community, to become shared and identified with by the members of the intended community, to serve in unifying them and distinguish them from the membership of other groups.

2. Towards Identity Preservation

Based on the above-mentioned conclusions I present here an outline of a program that could utilise folklore in the service of Palestinian cultural and national identity. A project of this sort should consist of four steps:

1. Selection and/or creation of proper Palestinian national folk symbols.
2. Charging the selected and/or created symbols with proper national, ideological, sentimental and emotional contents.
3. Devising proper strategies for practising these symbols and experiencing their contents.
4. Circulating the symbols and the strategies among the concerned population.

For the remainder of this paper I will elaborate on the first step and give only a very brief sketch of each of the other three steps, hoping that others concerned with the survival and integrity of the Palestinian national identity will take up the cause and continue the process started in this paper.

2.1. Selection and/or creation of folk symbols

We have already established that Palestinians do not have many shared or exclusive folk symbols. Palestinians, however, have already started inventing some folk symbols that refer to the Palestinian identity at the Palestinian national level. This was done in a spontaneous way. Such is the “Palestinian Kuffiyeh”, worn always by Yasser Arafat and worn by other Palestinian men when they want to distinguish themselves specifically as Palestinians, and worn by non-Palestinians as a scarf when they want to show identification or solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Until the 1970s, this item was one of several kinds of Kuffiyehs used by men in all parts of the Arab world and had no specifically Palestinian connection or connotation. In fact it was less prevalent among Palestinians than in other parts of the Arab world such as Jordan or Syria. The typical Kuffiyeh most often used by Palestinian men is plain, white cotton or silk. Recently, Palestinians simply appropriated the white-with-blue-dots type as a symbol of their exclusive identity. Another such symbol is the so-called “Palestinian-Dress” or “Thob Falastini” now worn by Palestinian women all over the world on national occasions and nationalist celebrations and considered a symbol of “Palestinian-ness”. This dress was and still is the local costume for women in one town, Ramallah, just outside Jerusalem, and the surrounding villages. Palestinians invented these symbols and a few others spontaneously because they were badly needed. I am advocating here that many more such symbols should be consciously selected or created. For such symbols to fulfil the purpose for which they are intended, they must satisfy the following criteria,

- a. They should be potentially applicable to, or shared by, all Palestinians.
- b. They should become exclusive to the Palestinians, and capable of distinguishing them from non-Palestinians.
- c. Palestinians should become aware that these symbols are exclusively and collectively theirs.
- d. Non-Palestinians should become aware that these symbols represent Palestinians.
- e. The symbols should be distinct, unambiguous, visible and noticeable, in order to signal easily the identity of the users, and be easy for the observer to identify.
- f. They should include elements that signify continuity between the past and the present.
- g. They should involve some ritual behaviour that requires frequent performance.

- h. They should be symbolic; i.e. they should not have practical mundane functions, and should be expressive and refer to some broad abstract values.
- i. They should be positively loaded; i.e. they should make those who practice them feel proud of the identity and the group with which they are associated.
- j. They should support and enhance the ideology and the philosophy on which this whole project is based.

These are some of the criteria that must be satisfied by the folk symbols of any national identity in order for them to fulfil their functions properly. But where can we get such symbols? From what sources do we derive them? Generally symbols of national identity come from a nation's past, from its history and from its collective experiences. But the past must be suitable for the purpose. Following the examples of successful nations all over the world, Palestinians should project their present needs and their future aspirations on their past and their history, then use that past to justify the present and light the way toward the future. This way harmony between the past, the present, and the future is assured and the harmony and continuity between the past, the present, and the future will form the essence of the Palestinian national identity. Here are some of the aspects of the past which should be utilised for this purpose,

1. There are many pan-Arab symbols. Such symbols can be modified, rearranged, recombined or reorganised by each of the Arab countries to bring out the unique and exclusive character and identity of that sub-national entity. This has already been done in the case of the four traditional Arabic colours which are found, in different combinations, on all Arab flags including the Palestinian flag. The same can be done with many other folk and official pan-Arab symbols and themes.
2. Palestinians can appropriate and monopolise some aspects of the shared pan-Arab culture that have not yet been appropriated by other Arab countries. Palestinians have already done this with the Kuffiyeh, or headdress, and can proceed to do the same with many other items of dress, cuisine, architecture, etc.
3. The same two processes above can be applied to pan-Islamic symbols and themes as well as to pan-Arab ones.
4. Palestinians can take some of the symbols and traditions of specific villages, towns, districts, sub-culture, tribal groups or any other sub-entities of historic Palestine and its Arab population, and expand them to symbolise the Palestinian people as a whole. This, as was mentioned above, has already been done in the case of the Ramallah dress. Many other items of local cuisine, jewellery, speech, furniture, dances, etc, could be equally suitable.
5. Some of the stages, the details and the aspects of Arabic and/or Islamic history that are most relevant to Palestine and the Palestinians can be projected into the past as belonging exclusively to Palestinian history and significant symbols can be derived from that history. Some of the more suitable stages for this purpose are:
 - a. The Canaanite and Phoenician periods and civilisations.
 - b. The period of Islamic expansion into the Fertile Crescent, especially the conquering of Jerusalem and other Palestinian towns: the Moslem leaders participating in these wars, the battles, the martyrs, etc.
 - c. The period of the Crusader wars, Saladin and his commanders, battles, heroes, martyrs, tombs, shrines, locations, etc.
6. Palestinian experiences between 1920 and 1948. This is a period of history that is truly Palestinian and Palestinians have many shared experiences of that time, and consequently it is a

fertile period for deriving shared Palestinian symbols. Such symbols would refer mainly to the Palestinian struggle against the British and the Zionists including demonstrations, strikes, uprisings, the 1936 Revolution, heroes, prisoners, martyrs, etc.

7. Palestine the country, its terrain, its mountains and valleys, its towns and villages, its weather, its plants and animals, every part and every aspect of it as it existed, or as it is imagined to have existed, before 1948.

8. The style, the life, the culture, as it was, or as it is imagined to have been before 1948, especially the peasant lifestyle, the daily life of the villagers, ploughing, planting, harvesting, threshing floors, crops, peasant food and peasant clothes, peasant weddings, festivals, holidays, and celebrations.

These are only few of the experiences that could be utilised for the creation of suitable folk symbols to help preserve and strengthen Palestinian national identity.

I cannot in this paper create the actual symbols themselves, but I am trying to present a theoretical framework that may facilitate the creation of such symbols. I have so far given the criteria that such symbols must satisfy and some of the sources from which such symbols may be derived. A third dimension in the suggested theoretical framework is the topics around which the symbols may revolve. Among such topics I would suggest the following: Heroes and heroic exploits, battles and battlefields, generals and commanders, martyrs, uprisings and revolts, great men of science, poets and literary figures, men of courage and sacrifice, famous geographical locations, towns and villages, geographical features, national behavioural, physical and psychological characteristics, national cuisine, costumes, dialect, architecture, dances, music, songs, holidays, festivals and celebrations, tombs, shrines, holy places, historical buildings, important days in Palestinian history, and many other similar topics.

2.2. Charging or Loading the Symbols

Symbols of a national and cultural identity cannot fulfil the function for which they are designed and will not be enthusiastically embraced if they are presented as cold, objective, neutral items. They must be positively loaded or charged, so that they can induce strong positive emotions in the people for whom they are intended. They must be phrased in literary or artistic forms, and must convey beautiful warm images. They must inspire in people a sense of unity and solidarity and inspire them with a strong desire for struggle and sacrifice in order to preserve and protect that identity and the collective for which it stands. The symbols should also enable the people concerned to convey clear and positive statements about their identity to themselves and to others with whom they may come in contact and to whom it also may concern. For example, a Palestinian should be able to convey, through the symbols of his national identity, that:

I am Palestinian. Palestinians are one people, wherever they may live. Palestinians have their own history, traditions, heritage, and character. The national aspirations of the Palestinian people will, sooner or later, be realised. We are part of the large and ancient Arab nation. Our culture and heritage are part of the great Arab-Islamic civilisation. I am part of this nation, I carry its distinguishing characteristics in my soul, body, and mind, and I am proud of that.

These are some of the messages that Palestinian folk symbols should be capable of conveying if they are to be used for the consolidation and preservation of the Palestinian national identity.

2.3. Circulating the Symbols among the Concerned Population

Academics and intellectuals, having selected and/or devised the right symbols according to the specifications given so far, should put these symbols in forms that would allow them to reach the

general public. Such symbols could be effectively utilized in the arts, the media and cultural events, especially in books, plays and poems, movies, museums and paintings, and also children's literature, and they could also be promoted in everyday life, for example in proverbs, jokes and games, as well as architecture and even in the home.

2.4. Strategies for Practising and Experiencing the Symbols

If the newly selected and/or created symbols were to remain within the limits of the forms mentioned above, the symbols would remain the property of an elite group and they would not reach the general Palestinian public, which is the main target of this whole project. Strategies should be found that could enable the average Palestinian to use these symbols, experience their meaning, and convey messages about their identity to other Palestinians and to the rest of the world, and thus help strengthen and preserve the collective Palestinian national identity. Members of the elite intellectual and academic group may not be the best choice for this enterprise at this stage. We should rather resort to political and ideological leaders, to people in public relations, advertising and the media, in order to create and publicise the right occasions for putting folk and popular symbols into action.

An important step in this process could be the revival or invention of national festivals and public celebrations during which Palestinian "national" costumes are worn and "national" cuisine eaten. For example, celebrations such as Ramadan and the Muslim and Christian holidays could be used to promote Palestinian issues and Palestinian Identity. As well as this the Palestinian community could organise special cultural evenings when, for example, "national" epics could be recited, or competitions could be held on such things as Palestinian music or poetry. Another important step in this process could be the establishment of organisations or committees that promote and preserve Palestinian folklore and organise events for the Palestinian community on a regular basis. Important events in the lives of Palestinians are also a good occasion with which to promote folklore symbols, especially weddings, birthdays or the birth of a child, as such events bring the community together and reinforces the links between them. The decimation of the folklore symbols in ways such as these will allow the Palestinian community to adopt them into their own way of life so that they become a part of Palestinian tradition and cultural heritage and thus help to preserve the Palestinian national identity.

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Translation and the Palestinian Diaspora

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To us as Palestinian Arabs attached to our language and culture, there is no doubt that Palestine exists primarily in Arabic, but, as we are a diasporic people, this perception is not in total conformity with the facts. Further, aside from its strategic significance in the political sphere, Palestine, in its configuration as the Holy Land, is the centre of sacred geography for the adherents of monotheism, and hence it forms part of the religious lexicon of all their languages. It seems to me that the perception of Palestine as the Holy Land and the fact of the Palestinian diaspora are linked in obscure ways. At work here, I think, is a translational process that transforms a physical place into a spiritual and mythical entity to which anyone can lay a claim in his or her own language. This has proved extremely dangerous for us both historically, as exemplified by the Crusades, and in terms of present circumstances.

In view of this perception, I want to take this opportunity to point out the importance of translation to the idea of Palestine, with particular reference to English, the language of the Balfour declaration. This refers to us, the majority and owners of the land in Palestine, as “the existing non-Jewish population.” English here defines us in negative terms as non-Jews, and therefore not an indigenous people. The Balfour declaration in effect made us a diasporic people in our own land long before there was an actual Palestinian diaspora. Or to use the language later applied by the Israeli State to internally displaced Palestinians, we were already present-absent, or perhaps in our presence we were absent. This state of contradiction for the Palestinian people living under the Anglophone powers was another factor contributing to our exile, as the present-absent equation, or non-equation, contains within it the seeds of something that was already there but was waiting to happen when the historical moment was ripe. I don’t know whether anyone has commented on the extent to which the Balfour declaration, which is an actual historical document, duplicates a mythical event in which a tribal god called Yahweh promised the same piece of land to a mythical hero called Moses. In both cases, however, the promise was given in a language other than that spoken in the land itself. In neither case were the indigenous people allowed to contribute to this matter.

Many students of Palestinian studies know that Balfour dismissed out of hand the possibility of asking the Palestinians what they thought of his declaration, but very few know what Churchill had to say after the Zionist take-over of Palestine in 1948: “I do not agree”, he wrote, “that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time...I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade of race, or at any rate a worldly-wise race, to put it that way, has come in and taken their place.”⁶⁷ This is the law of the jungle, parading as the pinnacle of civilisation. This kind of attitude had its precursors in the nineteenth century travel books about Palestine that present the country in a particular way to a foreign audience. But before proceeding I should like to point out that the practice of not allowing Palestinians to speak still holds true today, as we can see from the intellectual terrorism practised in Anglophone establishments, more so in America than here, against anyone who dares to claim a history for the Palestinian people in Palestine. The most recent example of this was the witch-hunt conducted in the American press against Edward Said

⁶⁷ Taken from Churchill's statement to the Peel Commission, 1937.

for daring to claim in his autobiography, *Out of Place*, that he is in fact a Palestinian living in exile. Had he written his autobiography in Arabic it would not have caused such a stir. After all who understands, or cares, what the word *shatat* means? Diaspora, however, is a much more potent word than *shatat*, and the extent of the difference between *shatat* and diaspora is a measure of the power of translation. Said's transgression is that he has proved to be a major intellectual success in English, a success which does not conform to the image of irrationality and barbarism that our enemies have always sought to cultivate about us in Anglophone discourse about Palestine, a discourse that so far they have dominated. Perhaps an even greater transgression has been his ability to articulate, or translate, the experience of the diaspora and thereby claim a history for the Palestinian people in Palestine.

In this brief essay I would like to explore, with reference to my topic, at least one of the ways in which the truth was disguised and obscured. Admittedly, I'm using the word translation in a double sense. I have so far been discussing it as a metaphor for a process that interprets the reality of a people in terms of something else, but later I shall be paying more attention to translation as a literal activity. The careful management of Anglophone public opinion concerning Palestine began in the travel books written by nineteenth century travellers to Palestine, many of which reflected an evangelical perspective. The vital connection between travel books and translation may not be obvious at first, but it is there nevertheless; a travel book is in fact an act of translation that brings the culture and sometimes even the language of the other to the target audience. In travel books, translation is taken for granted, just like the language itself in which the book is written. In the nineteenth century the most common genre of travel book, at least as far as the Arab Middle East is concerned, was the Manners and Customs type made famous by Edward Lane's book about Egypt⁶⁸. As far as Palestine is concerned however, the vast majority were written with the Bible in the background. Some of them, which follow the Churchillian model, were egregious in their racism, for example Ermete Pierotti confidently states that the animals in Palestine are more intelligent than the people.⁶⁹ Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad* is not quite as bad, but surely it is bad enough. The Churchill model, of course, is still with us. It will be recalled that even as recently as 1982, during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Menachem Begin, the gentleman from Poland, elevated us to the status of cockroaches, and after this we were considered non-existent under Golda Meir, the Lady from Wisconsin.

I shall pay no further attention to this type, except to note the existence of what seems to be a nineteenth century zeitgeist, a relentless process of making the present absent in Palestine. A second type of travel book deserves more attention because it is perhaps more dangerous, and also because it embodies a process of translation directly. I shall call this the Thompson model, after William Thompson, the author of *The Land and the Book: Or Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery of the Holy Land*, which appeared in 1886 in two volumes (Thompson 1863). The translational thrust is already apparent from the title. As the title tells us, the book consists of a thorough description of the land of Palestine from north to south almost inch by inch. In this book, typical of innumerable others of the same genre, the relationship between historical reality and myth is turned upside down, or inside out. As the author trudges through the land, meticulously and very accurately describing the scenery, he translates the

⁶⁸ See his book, *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Modern Egyptians*. London, 1902.

⁶⁹ See the opening part of Pierotti's book, *Customs and Traditions of Palestine Illustrating the Manners of the Ancient Hebrews*. Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1864.

actual landscape unfolding before him into the mythical-historical perspective of the Bible. Wherever you turn in the book, you see this reversal taking place. When he comes upon the city gate of Jaffa, for example, he says, "Stop a moment. A city gate is a novelty to me, and I must examine in details a structure so often mentioned in the Bible...I remember that righteous Lot, intent on deeds of hospitality, sat in the gate of Sodom towards the close of the day, somewhat as these Arabs are now seated, I suppose, and thereby he obtained the privilege of entertaining unawares those angels who save him from the destruction of that wicked city. It was at the gate of Kiryath-arba, which is Hebron, that Abraham completed the contract for the cave Machpelah, in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of the city. It was at the same place that Hamor and Schechem negotiated that fatal treaty with all that went in at the gate of the city..."(p 28). Historical reality here is turned inside out. A myth or legend mentioned in the Bible is taken to be literal truth. Present facts, i.e. the life, arts, and material culture of the Palestinian people, or "these Arabs" as Thompson calls us, do not exist as historical beings but as phantoms, as anthropological specimens whose purpose is to demonstrate the truth of the Bible or to illustrate scenes mentioned in it. As we can see from this example, we were assumed to have been present-absent in the land long before the state of Israel applied that description to us.

We are not only, as Edward Said says, victims of a map; we are also victims of a language. By language, I do not mean only a specific language like English, the language of the Balfour declaration and these travel books, I also mean a way of speaking, a manner of thinking, or a style of discourse. This way of thinking about language is not as fanciful as it may seem. Considerable attention has been paid, or speculation if you will, to the role that language plays in shaping our reality in anthropology, philosophy, psychology, linguistics and translation studies. The famous anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, for example, postulated that myth was a language, adding that it is not human beings that think by means of myth so much as the other way around. In linguistics, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis continues to excite debate among researchers in language-oriented disciplines. As stated by Sapir, the hypothesis postulates that "human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society...The fact of the matter is that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group (Sapir 1980:82)". And, to mention one last example, the celebrated French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, postulated that language is the site of the unconscious. In *Memory for Forgetfulness*, that quintessential piece of diasporic literature, Mahmoud Darwish offers us a poetic interpretation of this perspective: "Do you know that the ear of the writer is negative, just like the eye of the leader." (Darwish 1995:73) Part of the problem in understanding this book arises directly from his fundamental reversal of the assumed relation between reality and language. The poet looks at reality from the inside out, placing language where we would ordinarily assume reality to be, and vice versa. At the height of the shelling during the 1982 siege of Beirut, the poet engages in a reflection on language as a countermeasure to the falling bombs: "The rockets penetrate my pores and come out safe. How powerful they are! As long as I'm breathing hell and sweating out an inferno I no longer feel the Gehenna meted out by the air. Yet I want to break into song. Yes, I want to sing to this burning day. I do want to sing. I want to find a language that transforms language itself into steel for the spirit--a language to use against these sparkling silver insects, these jets. I want to sing. I want to find a language that I can lean on and that can lean on me, that asks me to bear witness and that I can ask to bear witness, to what power there is in us to overcome this cosmic isolation" (Darwish 1995:52). The upshot of all this is that, in exile, the balance of relations between language and reality begins to shift in favour of language. We recall that in an earlier book, *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, Darwish said, In its essence, writing remains the other shape of the homeland. This transmutation of reality into language is perhaps a necessary condition for all diasporic writing. In *Memory for Forgetfulness*,

which is composed of a sequence of poetic prose pieces of varying lengths, we find the following exchange: "--Good-by, sir. --Where to? --Madness. --Which madness? --Any madness, for I have turned into words" (Darwish 1995:51).

The transmutation of reality into language, which as Darwish says, is a form of madness, is a double-edged sword, for it is precisely the method employed by William Thompson to deprive the Palestinian people of their history and their lived reality. While in the hands of a poet like Darwish writing always remains suffused with metaphor; in the hands of an ideologue the metaphorical or the hypothetical nature of poetic discourse is cut. The transmutation of the historical reality of Palestine into the language of Revelation is precisely what Thompson is about. Here is the first sentence of his introduction: "The land where the Word-Made-Flesh dwelt among men must ever continue to be an important part of Revelation; and Palestine may be fairly regarded as the divinely prepared tablet whereupon God's messages to men have been graven in ever-living characters by the Great Publisher of Glad Tidings...It is from this land we have received that marvellous spiritual language through which we gain nearly all religious knowledge. Here it was devised and first used, and here are found its best illustrations." Palestine then, is not a place, but a tablet; or rather it is a place only to the extent that it is a tablet upon which holy characters are scribbled. We, the people of Palestine, our customs and manners, are nothing more than representative scribbles on the surface of this tablet. It may perhaps be thought that I am reading my own interpretation into this, but that is not the case. The Bible, says Thompson, is the dialect of the kingdom of heaven and Palestine is the birthplace of that dialect, and his purpose in writing *The Land and the Book* is "to see and study to the best advantage this transfiguration of language." If the word is more powerful than the sword for Darwish, it is only so in a metaphorical way; neither he nor his readers would believe in the literal truth of such a statement. The word may be more powerful than the sword in the long run, because swords by their very nature get rusty while words are renewed and reborn in the course of time. Words may also be more powerful than weapons when one has only the words and not the weapons; or in a dream world where the order of words and the order of things is jumbled up. Metaphors by their very nature are not truth-factual types of statement but always remain suspended between truth and supposition. We would assume, correctly I believe, that anyone who literally believes that words are more powerful than atomic weapons is in need of psychological help. Yet we do not hold that to be the case for someone who takes religious stories, or myths, to be factual statements. If we translate the Thompson model into the political sphere, we end up with an apparent confirmation of the claim that Palestine was a land without a people. Thompson may not have had a sinister purpose in mind, but he was guilty of perpetuating a mode of discourse that ended in disaster for the Palestinian people. Before I leave this topic, I must note that the word has proven more powerful than the sword, if we are to judge by the hysterical debate in the Israeli Knesset recently, concerning the inclusion of some of Darwish's poems in the school curriculum. To some extent, this debate, and the attention that the Palestinian cause receives in the American press, from *Newsweek* to the *New York Times*, is vindication, if any was needed, of the importance of translation to our cause.

We do not know what the future will bring, but we must not surrender to present fact. I see it as an essential part of our national duty to acknowledge the fact that as a people we are living in the diaspora, even though some of us may not be refugees as such. The priorities of a diasporic people are different from those of a people who have a homeland. It seems obvious to me that, in addition to carrying on the struggle in the political sphere, the first duty of a diasporic people is to become masters of languages other than their own so as to undertake their own translations of themselves into the dominant languages of the world. In fact, there are hundreds of thousands of Palestinians born in North or South America and who can neither speak Arabic nor read it. Their ignorance of Arabic is a lamentable fact, but it should not diminish their feeling of belonging to a people. They

are after all living in a diaspora, and we must be able to reach them somehow. We must provide them with first-rate translations of Palestinian works in English and Spanish and the other languages of the world where there is a concentration of Palestinians. It is in this way that I see the volume of Palestinian folktales, on which Sharif and I collaborated, which were published first in English and then in French, and now in Arabic⁷⁰. The aim of the book is to present a cultural portrait of the Palestinian people through their folktales. The book puts the people, with their manners, customs, costumes, material culture, and folklore on the land of Palestine, where they belong. Since folktales are ageless, the mere fact of producing a collection of folktales is in itself a testimony to the presence of the Palestinian people on the land of Palestine since time immemorial. If there is a shortage of trained personnel to undertake these translations, then it is incumbent upon us to establish language institutes, encourage exchange programmes, and send people abroad in order to acquire the necessary cultural background to undertake these translations. It seems self-evident to me that diaspora means multi-lingual, and multilingualism entails translation. When it comes to Palestine everything is political, even breathing. Translation must be seen in that light. As far as I know, this has never been on anyone's agenda. Perhaps it is time it was.

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Adaptation without Assimilation

Palestinian Youths in France and Germany

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Introduction

This study concerns Palestinian students in France and Germany and will be part of a doctoral thesis that will focus on the construction of identity among Palestinian youth. The analysis presented here is based on fieldwork including semi-structured interviews and my own observations. The data from Germany was collected during a series of research trips to Berlin between 1997 and 2000.

The purpose of this article is to establish a short monograph comparing these two groups. The features that I will examine within these two groups are firstly, the creation (or lack) of social networks, and secondly an examination of their particular methods of identity construction. The inherent consequences for gender relations will also be discussed. This article will focus on external and factual analysis, as well as the views of the study participants.

We will begin with a short description of student groups in both France and Germany, particularly their larger social characteristics. We will then discuss the role networking plays in the lives of these students, especially for the Palestinian students living in Germany. Lastly, we will finish with a discussion of the methods of identity construction that are most important for these youths.

1. Palestinian students in France and Germany: social characteristics

It is difficult to obtain accurate figures for the Palestinian population because Palestinians can be officially registered under Jordanian, Lebanese and sometimes even Israeli nationalities. This is due to the fact that some universities do not have a “Palestinian” nationality code for student registration. We are thus obliged to use the approximate numbers provided by the local Palestinian organisations themselves: *l'Association des étudiants Palestiniens* in France and the *Palestinensische Gemeinde Berlin-Brandenburg E.V.* in Germany. According to these sources, there are about 300 Palestinian students in France and about 5,000 in Germany. This purely numerical difference reflects Palestinian attitudes towards these two countries. France represents a peripheral destination for students. The small number of Palestinian students in France reflects a very limited scholarship program (about 20 scholarships), and the rest of the Palestinian students in France come from affluent and middle class families in Gaza and the West Bank. They are mostly interested in higher-level studies, principally in law and business, and their main goal is an international career in upper management, banking, etc. The Palestinian students in France do not have established networks. One of the main goals of the *Association of Palestinian Students* in France was in fact the development of an organised Palestinian network and the diffusion of Palestinian culture. But the unsuccessful attempts of this organisation (founded in 1998) to create such a network reveal the absence of a desire among the students to create a social network. There are two explanations for this. Firstly, Palestinian students in France are geographically scattered and few in number, and secondly, financed by their families, they do not need the support of a social network. Some of them even start small businesses during their studies in France.

The situation in Germany is very different, beginning with the existence of a large Palestinian community. This, in addition to the relative ease with which Palestinians used to be able to obtain student visas, explains why Germany has a larger amount of Palestinian students. Furthermore, the German University system is organised into semesters (rather than annually) and this makes it possible for students to study at their own speed, which is especially important as they often simultaneously work to support themselves. The French system is less adaptable to student needs, firstly because it is an annual system, and secondly because the possibility of repeating a year, in the case of academic failure, is extremely limited. Lastly, the student job market in Germany is far more organised, with organisations that help students find employment, and sustained governmental fiscal measures. This makes it easier for students in Germany to get jobs and finance their own education. This situation was however truer in the past than it is today, because the German economic situation has led to a decline in the available jobs. Nonetheless, these two elements (an effective network in the Palestinian community, plus the possibility of financing one's own studies), allow many poor and refugee families to send their children to study in Germany.

The situation is more difficult today than in the past because of new limitations on student visas and fewer job opportunities. However, if one takes into account the current reduced scholarship and fellowship opportunities for students in Eastern Europe (especially in Russia), this further reinforces Germany as a destination for children of the poor or middle classes. These students mainly study technical subjects in fields such as computer science, civil engineering, aviation and architecture.

Therefore there are important differences between Palestinian students in France and Germany, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. These differences justify longer analysis of Palestinian students in Germany than in France.

2. The network of Palestinian students

2.1. Networking and solidarity activities

Despite the different attempts made by *l'Association des étudiants Palestiniens* to develop cohesion, one cannot really talk of a relationship network, and even less of social networks in France. It should be remembered, however, that these students are financed by their families and do not need the support of a network, unlike Palestinian students in Germany. As a matter of fact, for the latter, only a reliable social network can compensate for their generally precarious economic situation. Within this group a feeling of shared responsibility predominates, even in the absence of intimate interpersonal ties (e.g. friendship, kinship, etc). The lending of money is a common phenomenon. And in at least one case, a collection was organised to raise funds for a student who otherwise would be forced to live on the street. Likewise, in the event of a death, the student community will contribute to the repatriation of the body. In the case of academic failure, they will help a student go back to Palestine. Whenever a student found him or herself in dire need, the network of Palestinian students was there to offer its help.

This social network is also a very important source of information. Frequently confronted with German institutions and often finding themselves in situations requiring them to defend themselves legally, students need a good knowledge of how the administrative bureaucracy functions. This network can provide information on institutional and judicial regulations. It is also an important resource for university life and information about lectures, professors and exams. They organise study and work groups, thus helping each other to succeed in their studies. Therefore the

Palestinian student network in Germany is of central importance as a source of aid for these students.

2.2. Gender relations among Palestinian students

The Palestinian student population is not equally comprised of both men and women, and numbers differ between France and Germany. It is possible for the families whose children are studying in France to send at least one daughter to study, but because Palestinian students studying in Germany come from less affluent families, it is totally impossible for them to send all of their children away to study. This is why the disproportion between men and women is much larger in Germany than in France (about 1/3 of Palestinian students in France are women). Apart from a few exceptional cases, the majority of Palestinian women in Germany are there to be with husbands who are studying. Some of them study, but they represent a very small minority, and there are few unmarried student women in Germany.

This difference in the population composition clearly influences gender relations among Palestinian students. Palestinian women come to Germany in a pre-determined social context: her role is to be integrated into the way of life of her student husband. The various parameters of his way of life condition her own situation, such as the social network, liberty of movement, her own possibility to study, etc. Because of this the way of life of a Palestinian woman reflects her husband's way of life. In turn the authority of the Palestinian community will influence the husband's role. He is, for example, responsible vis-à-vis his extended family for his (and his wife's) situation in life, and for the preservation of family honour.

As for the Palestinian women in France, their situation is different since they come as students in their own right, rather than as part of a family. Consequently, male Palestinian students adapt their behaviour towards them and treat them differently than they would treat single young women in Palestine. These young men and women have more freedom than the Palestinian students do in Germany. But this does not mean that all male Palestinian students accept the freedom allowed to these women. They feel responsible for their protection and for ensuring that they remain within the Palestinian community. This responsibility is however rarely directly expressed. In fact, the masculine right to guard the women's way of life is not fully accepted as legitimate by these women. This is why their behaviour towards women is motivated both by their will to fulfil this duty of protection and at the same time, recognising that not all Palestinian women regard their interference as legitimate. For example, when a new female student arrives in France the types of relationships that characterise Western society will be explained to her,

*“As for me, I tell them, “do what you want here, but there is one thing that you must know. There are no sincere and lasting relationships in these countries. So don't come crying on my shoulder when a French man has promised you marriage, taken your virginity and rejected you after three months”.*⁷¹

In reality, the behaviour of female students in France, even if they are concerned with their reputations, remains unaffected by the ideas and opinions of the male students. But it is precisely these delusions about the Palestinian woman's life in France that is interesting to notice. For the male Palestinian students, these women from the Palestinian community will be confronted by so many dangers that it is their duty as men to protect them from these dangers in order to preserve the honour of the Palestinian community. Likewise, we see similar strictures aimed at students who drink too much or play cards all day. They are considered a shame for the community.

⁷¹ “M”, 27 years old, engineering DEA, Paris, March 1999.

3. The relationship between Palestinian students and the Palestinian community in Germany

The network of Palestinian students in Germany expands into the wider Palestinian community in Germany as well. Palestinian students have strong ties with this community because it has strong ties with the community back home. In this sense, we can speak of a truly global community, a community that is not a closed system, but rather a link to the Palestinian community at home. Contact is thus maintained with branches of the family that are settled abroad and these will also be used as a welcoming network for new students. However, students often prefer to rely on the student network even if this network does not have the same resources available, especially financially, when compared to those of settled families. Indeed, students from the Palestinian community find the same restrictions in Germany that were imposed upon them in Palestine. Information about their activities will be passed on to Gaza. They will then have to justify their activities such as success in studies, finances, free time etc. For example, if a student appeals too much to the financial resources of these communities, or does not contribute to the exchange of information, if he additionally practices an “immoral” way of life; not only will he have to justify himself to his family but his family will be responsible to the community, especially for debts. This is why students generally develop a façade in front of the Palestinian community in Germany in order to protect themselves from the consequences of information being passed on to their families back home. They feel that they have more freedom among students even if the student network is itself an information vehicle (for example, especially when one of its members wishes to marry in Palestine). This all-male network of students has a collective interest in screening information to their home communities, particularly when it involves women. Therefore, for example it is not unusual for a student who fabricates qualifications not to be unmasked by his peers.

It is important to bear in mind that this community is not, however, a homogeneous one. Indeed, the Islamic students constitute a separate group in which the solidarity is even stronger than among the general Palestinian students. In front of the Islamic students the same façade is preserved as is maintained towards the Palestinian community in Germany. This includes concealing such violations of religious practices as drinking alcohol or not fasting during Ramadan. Because of their religious beliefs some students are not as reserved as other students. On the contrary, they feel responsible for upholding religious values and above all, for the upkeep of the Palestinian community honour in foreign countries. However this only matters to some Islamic students, others advocate a spiritual religion defined by a personal relationship with God, and spirituality rather than blind respect for some practices.

The façade that Palestinian students maintain towards Islamic students has little to do with the respect of religious practices, but rather to preserve their freedoms in the host country. The upkeep of this façade with respect to the home community does not reflect the same idea. Students rather feel that it is impossible for their home community to understand how life is abroad.

The attitude of Palestinian students towards the Palestinian community in Germany is even more ambivalent than we first anticipated. Palestinian students actually explicitly complain about being watched over and gossiped about. On the other hand, apart from its use as a material resource, this community is, above all, a cultural resource since it helps these students retain contact with the family way of life. Within these families they meet in a mixed environment with women and children, rediscovering their cultural roots and above all their traditional way of life. They regain the feeling of belonging to a community with its customs, its values, its language and even its cuisine. This is especially important during religious holidays when the nostalgia for the native country is at its peak. At this time, the Palestinian community plays an irreplaceable role. Indeed, a

student network cannot compete with the Palestinian community in this way. It builds a very important social network. They visit one another very frequently, cook Arabic cuisine, listen to Arabic music, watch their movies, speak Arabic and reaffirm their values and pride in their community. But this is not a substitute for the longing for a strong family way of life.

4. Relationship with the host society

The different social origins of Palestinian students in France and Germany will condition different relationships to the host society, especially since the standard cost of living in the West is much higher.

4.1. In France

To begin with, most of the Palestinian students that arrive in France have a better understanding of Western society than their counterparts in Germany. Therefore, it is far easier for them to adapt. In fact, as we have already mentioned before, they mostly originate from the affluent part of Palestinian society, they have had the opportunity to travel abroad, for example to visit relatives in the United States, and they often hold a passport that entitles them to travel in Israel. They have access to the international media. Moreover, most of them feel that they belong to an international youth culture that expresses itself through consumer culture. The identification to this culture is for them a synonym of modernity, a positive notion. They have not however renounced their Arabic culture; they know and identify with Arabic history, they are glad to dance *dabka* during their meetings, they do not differentiate between themselves and French youths and they do not define themselves through religion.

The situation is totally different in Germany. However, our aim here is to understand global methods of identity construction and we may find a few individuals in Germany that follow the “French” model. Conversely, a (very) few Palestinian students in France will be closer to the “German” model.

4.2. In Germany

4.2.1. A generational difference

The question of the rapport to the host society drives us to notice generational differences between Palestinian students in Germany. In fact, Palestinian students in Germany range from roughly 19 to 35 years old, which is a gap of 16 years. For the current population we will therefore have arrival dates from about 1990 to 2000. To have left Palestine at the end of the Intifada or to have spent a few years under the Palestinian Authority induces some significant differences in terms of goals in Germany.

In the latest wave of Palestinian student immigration there are significant differences in reasons for immigration. Earlier generations came to Germany with a clear purpose of self-realisation, whereas the latest generation wants to escape the despair and closure, particularly in the Gaza strip. Their goal is no longer to study to achieve a better status in Palestine or to participate in projects for the Palestinian community. They search now for ways to escape a situation that restricts totally their freedom and their lives.

“I want to stay in Germany because life is impossible in Gaza. There is nothing to do, and everybody watches you all the time. You can’t do anything. You can’t go out. I don’t give a damn about studying or working. I just want to be somewhere else”.⁷²

⁷² “A”, 24 years old, Berlin, July 1998.

This reflects a desire to leave permanently, rather than just to improve their situation in their native country. The interactions within the Palestinian student community between the recently arrived students and those who have been here for several years, and who wish to return, are especially interesting. They show the misunderstanding that exists between those who have remained faithful to the spirit of the Intifada, the people who fight and go forwards, and those newly arrived who speak about Arafat's failure, a hopeless situation and about renunciation.

4.2.2. Interactions with the host society

We have to distinguish here between real interaction with the host society and the Palestinian students' perception of the values of that society. We will focus upon on the second aspect in the section on identity construction.

The Palestinian students tend to keep to themselves. Socialising outside their own community is essentially limited to professional or academic relationships. Apart from these, contacts are sparse. It reflects the specificity of the Palestinian student situation as they find it difficult to share their life experience with German people. Also, as we have mentioned earlier, the fact that faced with a society so different from their own, most of them try to recreate a world that reminds them their native country.

5. Identity reconstruction and its relationship to Western values

5.1. General outlook

For Palestinian young people who have gone to Germany it is interesting to note the absence of real conflict with Western society. This is for several reasons. Again we must emphasise the difference between the older generation who "went to" realise a project and the younger generation who left in order "not to be" in Gaza. This distinction is necessary because it influences the various ways of adapting to German society.

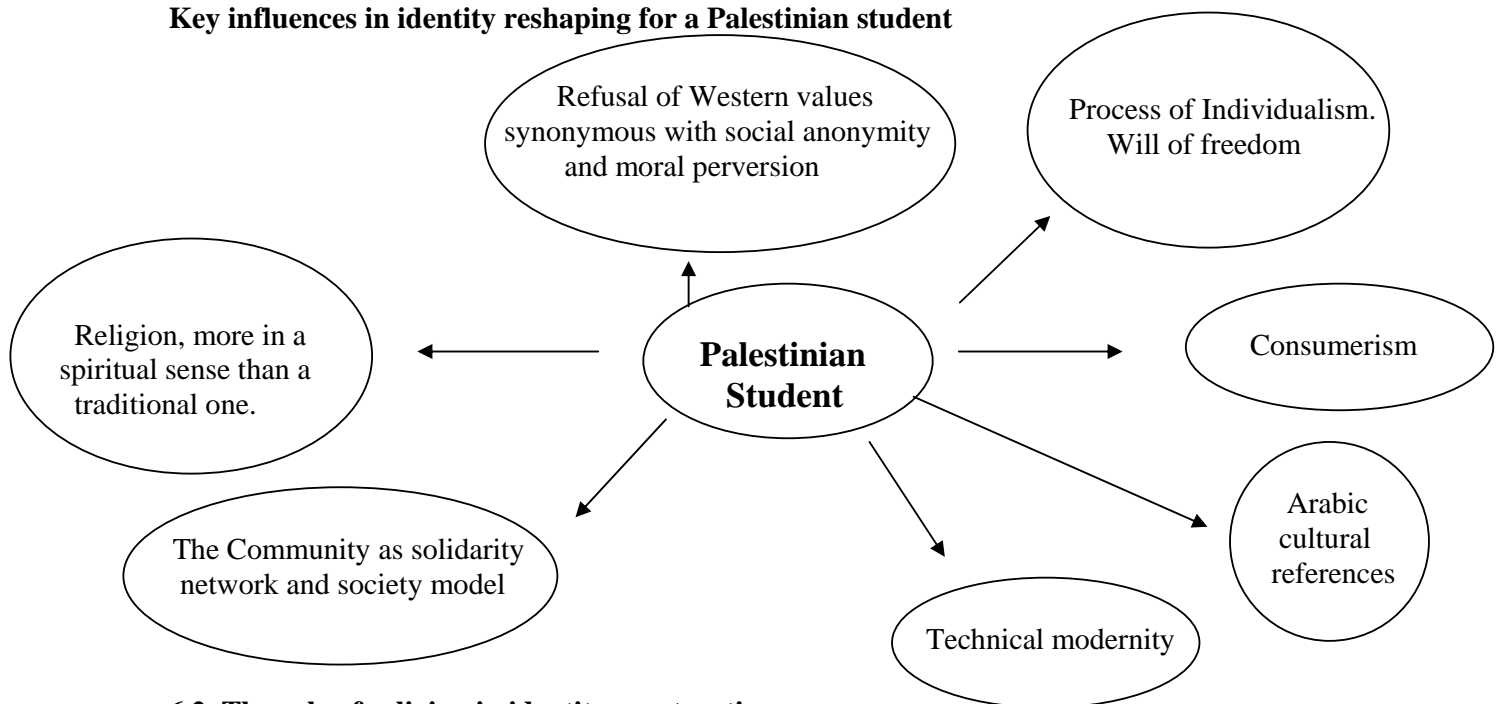
The first group quickly assimilated into the structures of the host society and its language, which was necessary to achieve their academic and financial goals. Paradoxically, people who went "not to be" in Gaza, live in Germany within the Palestinian community, and are indifferent to learning the German language or even acquiring the basic knowledge to move about in German society. Because they lived through the despair of the end of the Intifada, they have difficulties in forming future goals and ambitions. Their interaction with people from the West is thus extremely limited. So most Palestinian students abroad share the same stereotypes of the Western world, especially about relationships in the West.

Therefore continued Western stereotypes are not surprising. These young people build a model of an ideal Islamic society the legitimacy of which relies precisely on its capacity to provide a sense of belonging and a net of security in exile. So it is impossible to question stereotypes of Western society without also questioning the Islamic model. Gender relationships represent one of the main aspects of this type casting, and this is the reason why this particular impression will remain unchanged. On the other hand, they discover Western poverty, and this reinforces the Islamic model of an egalitarian society. But there is a minority fringe of these young people who manage to develop a deeper knowledge of German society. They find themselves in difficulty especially if they return to Gaza where traditional cultural practices still prevail and they have to behave in a particularly conformist way. They are in a delicate position, torn between the knowledge that it is impossible to share their experience of a Western country and the feeling that, whatever they have experienced, they remain above all Palestinian.

For Palestinian students the values of German society and more generally the Western world are individualism, materialism, technical modernity and amorality. However their attitudes towards Western values turn out to be a central element in the process of their identity construction. Most of them have created a version of Islamic modernity that is in essence a Muslim and Arabic version of modernity. This representation is closely linked to the vision young Palestinians have of the Western world. They are fascinated by the mastery of science and technology in the Western world and this was often their initial motivation for coming to the West. But they advocate community solidarity and reject a system they consider based upon extreme individualism that is in itself responsible, in their mind, for the dislocation of society and family. Furthermore, they want to maintain a form of spirituality through religious morality in a society that they see as materialistic and consumerist. The latter criticism is, however, hypocritical as it conflicts with their desire for Western-style consumerism including famous name-brand products. In that sense, like the students from Gaza but with easier access to it, they are linked to an international youth culture that advocates consumer values. Palestinian students, therefore, try to bring together these different cultural ideologies in an unstable composite, in which the importance given to the different components varies from one group to the next and from one individual to the next.

*“The problem is that we want everything at the same time. We want freedom and community and solidarity. That’s impossible”.*⁷³

Key influences in identity reshaping for a Palestinian student



6.2. The role of religion in identity construction

Among the different identity constructions that are possible, the Islamic model is the most influential one because it constitutes a more general model that is held by a group and not only by individuals. It represents a well-known model with the power of legitimacy for the whole population, even if not all of them adopt this model.

⁷³ “O”, 28 year old student in computer science. Berlin, February 2000.

Identity construction through modern Islamic values emphasises religion. In this context, a religious reference entails the use of the representation of an all-encompassing Islam. This Islam is used as a guide for every aspect of life, including politics. The use of Islam as a central reference allows the group to preserve their cultural identity in the face of perceived Western contempt.

The notion of Islamic modernity is built on the idea that it is possible to gain access to modernity (technology, consumer goods etc.) without renouncing spiritual values and social solidarity. To reconcile these two demands they use a reinvented Islam that is entirely different from the traditional one, which includes the political formation of a fair and egalitarian society. They don't really believe that an Islamic state will be established, but they look to it as an ideal.

Conclusion

The issues surrounding Palestinian students in the Western world play a central role in understanding the younger generation in Palestinian society. They are on the frontline of contact with the Western world; therefore their values and identity are essential in understanding Palestinian youth culture because of the West's economic and axiomatic domination. They represent a central investment and risk for Palestinian society. Indeed, through these students, Palestinian society can gain access to technological and economic expertise. However, this access carries the possibility of a perversion of values, as it may result in the student changing their ideas or their behaviour. Despite their admiration for the Western world, especially its technological achievements, these students want to maintain their links to their countries of origin. Thus, the pressure that is exerted on these youths when they return to their native society is especially strong. Familial control expresses itself particularly through marriage, which is organised, in the majority of cases, from the Territories.

Students who have lived for about 10 years in Germany and come back to the Territories are in a delicate situation, caught between their determination to maintain their independence in decision making that they acquired whilst abroad and their desire not to provoke accusations of identity loss. Furthermore, the economic situation increases their difficulties because it makes it hard for them to find a job that utilises their new skills. The most common attitude these students adopt when they come back is a return to the Gazan way of life. Some respite is provided by the network of other Palestinians who have also come back from Germany and with whom it is possible to discuss the life they led in Germany and about the problems of readjustment in their native land.

Palestinians in Greece; Same Sense of Belonging, Diverse Communities

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Introduction

My aim in this paper is to give an overview of the experience of Palestinians living in Greece, mainly in the Athens area, in 2001 and 2002. The majority of these Palestinians are refugees from Palestine. The main aim of my research was to understand the relationship between this group of Palestinians and their homeland by analysing collective memories, migration experience and collective action in support of the Palestinian cause. My research included interviews with officials, representatives of political factions, company owners, illegal immigrants and students to collect information about the Palestinian presence and its history in Greece. My interest in studying Palestinians living in Greece was triggered by three apparent contradictions. The first was the presence of collective activities in which Palestinians participated despite their different class affiliations, factional affiliations, religious backgrounds and relations with Greek society, in contrast to other Palestinian communities in Europe (see for example, Palestinians in Sweden as shown by AbdulGhani in Shiblak 2000b). The second was the presence of strict barriers between these groups, which implied that these activities were not successful in creating a collective identity among them. Thirdly there were the vast differences among Palestinians regarding relations with Greek society, where some were quite integrated while others were completely separated or isolated and had no interest in integrating. The main question that emerged was what made these people come together despite the weak links across these groups? What made them dedicate some of their resources - whether time, energy or financial resources - to a cause that did not have much effect on the functioning of their lives? Why didn't these activities succeed in creating a more 'collective' identity among these individuals? What is the relationship between the formation of a collective identity and relations with Greek society?

I shall examine this process through the general environment surrounding the collective action of Palestinians living in Greece and by studying individual life histories representing different socio-economic backgrounds, gender, immigration and settlement histories. The suggestion is that although globalisation has helped some groupings to enjoy trans-nationality, most Palestinians in Greece live on an imaginary level of nationality or ethnoscape, which takes precedence over their actual experiences. This ethnoscape is supported by some shared collective memories that were behind the occurrence of instances of collectivised actions. However, successive displacement of Palestinians might have resulted in the formation of several diversified identities and memories that stood in the way of the formation of a reflexive collective identity that could transform the imaginary level bond that tied Palestinians, to a bond expressed in praxis.

The history of Palestinian immigration to Greece

The presence of Palestinians in Greece goes back to the end of the 1960s when students arrived to study at Greek universities. Palestinian students chose Greece because of the availability of scholarships and the relatively low costs of living there compared to other Western countries, especially for the middle and lower classes. The first group consisted of students primarily from Jordan and the Palestinian Occupied Territories who were mostly holders of permanent or

temporary Jordanian passports. Their arrival was facilitated by the presence of informal and family relations. They arrived in Greece during the dictatorship and in a similar manner to their Greek colleagues they engaged in political activities. Greek students, as well as supporting the Palestinian cause, aimed to put an end to the dictatorship, and this environment helped Palestinians to work together socially and politically, which was not possible in their countries of origin. The migration of Palestinians to Greece continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Shiblak, 2000b) and eventually some of them married Greek women and settled in Greece. This process was facilitated by the availability of work for doctors and to some extent, also engineers.

In 1976 businessmen and professionals, mainly from Lebanon, began to migrate to the United States and Europe (Shiblak, 2000b). Many of these people also came to Greece, as businessmen considered moving their headquarters from Lebanon to Greece after the intensification of the Lebanese war. Greece was considered to be a more secure option than other countries in the Arab world, especially as its laws encouraged offshore companies to settle in Greece (Law 89). The movement of Arab businesses to Greece included the relocation of a large number of their employees and workers, along with their families, and these comprised the second migratory group to Greece. These two groups carried different nationality documents; some had Lebanese passports, others had Lebanese travel documents, Jordanian passports and even US and Canadian passports, among others.

The fourth group of Palestinians migrating to Greece was comprised of immigrants attempting to overcome political or economic problems in the Arab world. Many members of this group arrived from Lebanon after the departure of the PLO from Beirut, from Syria and to some extent from the Palestinian Occupied Territories. In the 1990s new restrictions were placed on the arrival of Palestinians from these areas. However they continued to arrive in small numbers using student visas or by illegally immigrating through the Greek/Turkish border. Many of the individuals from this group thrived by setting up successful small businesses in Greece.

The categories outlined above should be used only as a guide as they are not mutually exclusive and many Palestinians in Greece belong to more than one group and, as well as this, some Palestinians do not fit into any of them.

Characteristics of the Palestinian community in Greece

Despite the fact that Palestinian migration to Greece is a relatively recent phenomenon, the Palestinian community in Greece is dispersed throughout the country. Historically, the largest concentration of Palestinian students in Greece was in Salonika, but has since become Athens, and the city of Patras was also a popular destination for Palestinian students. However Palestinians are also situated on remote islands such as Cos or in the villages and towns of the Peloponnese, such as Kalamata, and they are also concentrated in Crete. According to sources in the Palestinian embassy in Athens, the number of Palestinians still residing in Greece is around 3000 to 3500. The number of students currently enrolled at Greek or international universities was estimated to be 500 students according to the same source. As mentioned above the first group of Palestinians who settled in Greece came here to study, but then found work and some of this group married Greek women. The second group consisted of businessmen who resettled in Greece as a result of the war in Lebanon. A large number of these businessmen were Christian. The third group included professionals, both Christian and Muslim, who came as a result of the migration of businesses and they settled mainly in the Athens area. The fourth category, mainly workers, was concentrated in areas near the centre of Athens. The fifth group comprised students, both male and female, who enrolled at Greek or international universities. There are also a very few cases of women who arrived for study or work and subsequently got married to Greek men. Generally women

accompanied their husbands if they had come to Greece to work and a large number of these Palestinians had children; therefore children, especially in mixed marriages, became an issue.

Social divisions influenced Palestinian migration patterns and settlement in Greece. Palestinians who came to Greece to study generally formed links among themselves that continued throughout their lives, despite interruptions due to resettlement, work, family obligations or political differences. Their shared experiences have made them more politicised than other groups. They also differed from other groups as many of them married Greek women, which led them in some cases to assimilate into Greek society. They generally communicate in Greek and their children mostly speak Greek as they attended Greek schools. In Greek society this group is upwardly mobile and is considered to be middle class or upper-middle class. The majority work for the public sector: there is a minority that work in the private sector but they generally have stable incomes. A small number of them were recruited by Arab or Palestinian companies operating in Greece.

The experience of the second and third groups differed greatly from the experience of the previous group and from the experience of the fourth group. The arrival of whole companies, and their legal status as offshore companies, provided social and technical support to the businessmen and professionals settling in Greece, many of whom were accompanied by their families. Due to their work status, which prohibited doing business in Greece, there was no need for them have any contact with Greek society or institutions, and this limited their experience of Greece and the Greek population. Very few of them spoke any Greek. They were also exposed to the larger Arab community, especially the Lebanese and the Jordanians, due to their previous links with these countries or because of their citizenship status. Their educational background included university degrees in engineering, business or finance, among other fields. Large numbers of children from this group attended international schools, many of which were either American or British. Some of them learnt Arabic at these schools, but very few learnt Greek, and the majority of them communicate more fluently in English. The socio-economic status of this group depends on their position within the company, but generally they are among the upper level strata of Palestinians in Greece.

Palestinians who ended up working as labourers either came to study, and did not succeed in completing their studies, or arrived illegally, or aimed to improve their lives after experiencing economic and political problems in their countries of origin. Due to difficulties in finding work, many of these Palestinians turned to the construction sector despite having, in some cases, higher degrees. They also experienced difficulties in acquiring work or residence permits. Until the migration laws were revised (discussed below), they would acquire student visas to enter Greece. Informal and family relations facilitated their migration to Greece and to some extent helped them in their search for employment. They generally worked for Greek employers and they lived in mixed neighbourhoods with Greeks, Syrians and other ethnic groups. Their social relations with the rest of the Palestinian community were limited. The children of this group generally attended public Greek schools and so were fluent in Greek, in addition to communicating in Arabic with their parents.

Institutional and community work

Palestinian students in Greece have used the Arab and Greek student networks to increase awareness of and mobilise the students and community at large to the Palestinian issue. After the end of the dictatorship, they formed the Palestinian Student Union, which was affiliated to the General Union of Palestinian Students under the umbrella of the PLO. This union resembled the structure of the General Union in the distribution of quotas to different factions. In the beginning,

students were mainly affiliated to Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine or the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Medicine and Pharmacy students also formed their own union but its policies were closely associated with the General Union. The student union gradually took on the role of representing Palestinians in Greece prior to the recognition of official representation. The efforts of the students eventually led to the recognition of the PLO mission (in the form of a press office) by the end of the 1970s. The hard work of former Palestinian officials led to the acquisition of land, donated by the Greek government, on which to build the Palestinian mission at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. In 1981, after the success of the Socialist Party (PASOK), the office was promoted to the status of a diplomatic mission.

The student union and the representative mission continued to be the formal institutions for Palestinians in Greece until the end of the 1980s. During this time there were attempts to form an association for all Palestinians living in Athens, especially as there was a similar association in Salonika that was functioning well. It was only at the beginning of the 1990s that these efforts led to the foundation of a 'Palestinian community' or *Jalia*. PLO representatives, businessmen and professionals who studied in Greece led the efforts. The *Jalia* continued its operations until 2002, but throughout its existence it faced many obstacles in its attempts to organise the community (as discussed in the following sections). The main function of this association was to provide Arabic lessons to children and to offer some cultural activities. There were other organizations that worked in Greece, such as the Palestinian Red Crescent, which had relocated to Greece following the departure of the PLO from Beirut in 1982. This office moved to Cairo by the end of the 1990s and then to the Gaza Strip. There was also an Arabic newspaper, published in Athens, that covered Greek and Arab news in Greece, but this was eventually closed down because of low circulation figures.

Around 28 companies moved to Greece in accordance with Law 89 for offshore companies, but since then some of them have moved back to Lebanon (Palestinian mission sources). These companies were mostly trans-national and were owned by Palestinians or Arabs of different nationalities. The Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC) was one of the largest companies that had moved its headquarters to Greece in 1976 and it was owned by a group of influential Palestinian businessmen with Lebanese nationalities (for a comprehensive review of its activities see Hantel-Fraser, 1999). Its 400 employees included large numbers of Palestinians who held various different citizenships. Most of their employees brought their families and children to reside in Greece. They were part of the trans-national work and family networks that were spread all over the world, especially in the Gulf States, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Lebanon. The second largest business found in Greece and owned by a Jordanian Palestinian was the Arab Bank that established a branch in Greece in the 1970s. The rest of the companies mainly work in exports and imports, trading, the shipping business, financial services, insurance and legal affairs.

Among the grassroots organisations operating in Greece there was an Islamic centre that provided services to the Palestinian and Arab community. These services included free Arabic and religion lessons to children, and computer literacy courses for women and teenagers. There were also several temporary committees that were created in response to events taking place in Palestine. For example, following the eruption of the second *Intifada*, a committee was created to organize activities with Palestinians to promote solidarity (for example, concerts were held with Greek singers). There were also campaigns to support the injured arriving from the Palestinian Territories, who were brought here by the Greek government to be treated in Greece. Moreover, there was an attempt to establish a right of return committee but political differences and attempts to control community work led to the dissolution of this committee soon after its creation. There was another attempt to create a Greek-Palestinian friendship committee but these efforts faced

similar difficulties and its activities were frozen. Recently a new workers' union was established in cooperation with the Greek workers' union. It was responsible for many activities following the reoccupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the end of March 2002 and has managed to broadcast its activities on Greek radio.

Informal networks play a critical role among Palestinians in Greece and between them and other Palestinians in other parts of the world (see Hanafi, 2001). Some of these networks were based on family or inter-marital relations, although professional networks, based on occupation and employment, were also common. Networks were also based on the country of emigration; for example, Palestinians from Syria had closer relations with other Palestinians from Syria or even with Syrians, and the same with Lebanese or Jordanians. A fourth base was sectarian affiliations within the Palestinian community, but not across the Palestinian and Greek communities (although many Palestinians were Greek Orthodox, this did not necessarily make them identify with Greeks, partly because of the strength of their national identity).

Greece and the Palestinians

Until the 1960s Greece did not attract migrants, although some refugees used Greece as a staging post to other countries (Papantoniou-Frangouli, 2000). During the 1980s immigration increased tremendously due to weaker border controls in Southern Europe compared to other parts of Europe and also because of the proximity of North Africa, the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean (Lazaridis, 1999). However, the majority of these immigrants were Albanians and Eastern Europeans. Immigration was regulated by the Aliens' Law (L. 1975/91), which tried to control illegal immigration. It was approved by Parliament in 1991 and came into effect in June 1992 (Papantoniou-Frangouli, 2000). Law 2434/1996 was passed by Parliament in July 1996. Article 16 of this law aimed to legalise aliens in two stages. In the first stage immigrants would register and acquire temporary resident permits and in the second stage they would receive residency permits. The legalisation period began on January 1, 1998 when around 373,000 people applied for registration, out of an estimated total of 800,000 illegal immigrants (Papantoniou-Frangouli, 2000). The Albanian immigrants were considered by the Greek population to be a danger to Greek society because they were associated with crime (Lazaridis, 1999; Fakiolas, 1999).

Some of the Palestinians residing in Greece had acquired Greek citizenship before the changes in the law. Individuals from the first group acquired Greek citizenship by marrying Greek women or by living for a long period in Greece. Some businessmen and their wives acquired citizenship as well. Most professionals had valid work permits obtained by their companies prior to their arrival in Greece. The labourers' group generally had work permits despite the illegal presence of some of them. According to many interviewees from this group, the changes in legislation presented an opportunity for their stay to be legalised.

Political relations between the Greek government and Palestinians or the PLO have generally been strongly supportive. Even during the dictatorship, Palestinians managed to acquire scholarships and come to Greece (although in small numbers). After the end of the dictatorship in 1974 and the takeover by the New Democracy (Nea Demokratia), the PLO was recognised. Thus by the end of the 1970s it operated a press office in Greece and more scholarships had been secured for Palestinians. During this time, relations between the Socialist Party (PASOK), especially its leader Papandreou, and the Palestinians, especially the PLO Chairman, were quite strong. After the success of PASOK in 1981, Chairman Arafat was invited to give a speech that coincided with the departure of the PLO from Lebanon to symbolize the close relationship between Greeks and Palestinians. The PLO representation was elevated to a diplomatic mission as well by that time.

This support continued until the beginning of the 1990s when PASOK lost power and Papandreou died.

The cooling of relations was due to several circumstances. One reason was the membership of Greece in the European Union and the pressure to limit immigration; a second reason was due to its membership in NATO; and the third reason was the emergence of minor incidents where Palestinian students were accused of 'terrorist acts', according to Palestinian officials. Despite this, President Arafat was invited to give a speech at the PASOK conference in 2000 and 2001 to stress close ties.

Popular support for Palestinians has continued in Greece since the 1970s, and there are still frequent demonstrations and concerts organised in support of the Palestinian cause. During the siege of Beirut there were large campaigns to collect food and money. There were also campaigns during the first and second *Intifada*. Demonstrations and concerts have continued despite the political indifference of Greeks during the 1990s that slowed down their participation in their own political affairs.

Migration, collective identity, collective memory and potential action

Migration studies have shown that refugees and migrants belong to multiple *social spheres* or communities. Thus, the process of identity formation does not only involve relations between immigrants and their host society (centred around the processes of either adaptation, acculturation, separation or assimilation) but also incorporates relations with members of the same ethnic group in the host society or trans-nationally. This process has been described as *trans-nationality* (Basch et al., 1994; Hannerz, 1996; Sassen, 1998; Salih, 2000a). The main aspects that we need to consider when studying identity formation among immigrants and refugees are the degrees of *cultural maintenance* and *contact-participation*, where cultural maintenance is the maintenance of a cultural identity (locally or trans-nationally) and contact participation is the contact with the larger society (Berry, 1999). However, what is the relationship between these two aspects? Is there a relationship between the presence of a collective identity based on ethnic or national ties and the relations that immigrants form with the host society? Moreover, if there is a relation, to what extent does it allow individuals to actively pursue their interests or needs?

These multiple identities are often in conflict with one another and, despite constant negotiation (Salih, 2000b), migrants often find themselves unable to manage their different loyalties or resolve the resultant contradictions and conflict between them (Basch et al., 1994; England, 1999 [on Afro-indigenous people living in Central America and the US]). One possible outcome of this difficulty is that migrant's feel that they neither belong to their host society nor their country of origin and suffer from a "state of limbo" as discussed by Al-Ali and Salih (2002). A second possibility is that the immigrants would find themselves unable to work with members of the same ethnic group in their host country (See Sanchez & Roach, 1999 on Columbians in New York and Los Angeles). Columbians in the previous study had strong trans-national links with their country of origin; however, immigrants could not manage to contain the conflicts, jealousies and class differences within their communities in their host country. Some studies of Mexican immigrants also showed how conflicts occurred within the ethnic community, despite the presence of trans-national ties, due to differences in generations and experiences in the host country (Faist, 2001).

A third possibility concerns relations with the host society, as discussed in studies on acculturation and acculturative stress (Williams & Berry, 1991; Berry, 1999; Keshishian, 2000). The literature describes four strategies utilized by immigrants and refugees in the host country: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation (Berry, 1999). Acculturation includes the changes that

occur when individuals come into contact with another culture and the changes they must make to fit in (Berry, 1999). In the case of integration, there is a level of mutual accommodation on behalf of the host society (not on the same level because of the differences in power relations) in addition to changes on the individual and collective level of the immigrant group. The model also suggests that immigrants or refugees might experience 'societal disintegration, which can result in personal crisis' as a result of acculturation (Williams & Berry, 1991). Sometimes acculturation is hindered when a strong ethnic identity is present (Giles and Byrne (1982), In Williams & Berry, 1991), although some studies have shown that maintaining a strong ethnic identity is needed for a higher level of adjustment in the host country (Lieber, 2001) eliminating the contradiction between a strong ethnic identity and acculturation or adjustment in the host society. Studies of refugees and asylum seekers demonstrate the complications in resettlement due to problems within the refugee community that can be traced back to disputes in the home country (White, 2002). Studies of Palestinian refugees showed that they did not want to create a *home away from home* because they perceived this as a threat to their cause and their right to return, and these individuals consciously rejected adjustment or assimilation because of their strong national identity (Al-Ali & Salih, 2002).

A fourth possible outcome is that immigrants and later generations may preserve an ethnic identity but not an ethnic culture because they felt or wanted to feel part of a larger ethnicity without necessarily creating formal or informal organizations to preserve this ethnicity (Gans, 1994 (and earlier in 1979); Abu-Tarbush in Shiblak, 2000). These findings imply that despite assimilation into the host society, immigrants might feel the need to preserve another identity based on ethnicity or nationality. This could be explained by the notion that the *safeguarding or revival* of ethnic identities provides a way for individuals to overcome the complexities of modern societies, as discussed by Melucci (1989). For this process of revival to occur, individuals need to negotiate this collectively by coming together and acting collectively. Thus collective action is needed to ensure the consolidation of a collective 'we' based on an ethnic or national identity, especially outside the territorial homeland. For Palestinians this involves mainly national identity since there is no unique Palestinian ethnicity.

However, the consolidation of a collective identity based on ethnicity or nationality depends on the collective memory of its members giving similar meanings to their experiences (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994). As Anthony Smith explained, "*collective memories have always been recognized as a vital element in the construction of the nation*" and these memories should "*attach themselves to specific places and definite territories*" (1996, p. 453; and 1986). For this to occur in the cases of immigration, displacement or exile there is a need to consolidate the different 'collective memories' (Halbwachs, 1980; Coser, 1992) of individuals into a main body of memories that can be transferred to new generations. The creation of a 'collective memory' for Palestinians has been discussed by several authors (Abu Lughod, 1999; Said, 1999; Kan'aneh in Shiblak, 2000b), however there is evidence to show that there are difficulties in sharing meanings, collective memories and consequently in forming a collective identity based on ethnic/national ties. One reason for these difficulties was resentment among Palestinians who aimed to exclude their rivals from the *imaginary community* (Bowman, 1994). Members tended to use their power or influence to exclude others because of the lack of a unified image of the imaginary community, which can be explained also by the lack of consensus on the territoriality of this community.

The issue of interest here is the possibility of negotiation between the different identities that link the individual with the host society, the ethnic community and with trans-national networks. For negotiation to succeed it is necessary to base it on either ethnic or national identity. The presence of ethnic or national identity requires the presence of a consolidated body of collective memory among its members, i.e. by continuous *memory work* (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994). This identity should

also have a level of flexibility that enables individuals to choose from different *choices of meaning* rather than from what was *dictated in advance* (Castoriadis, 1992). This aspect helps the individual to manage their strategy of integration with the host society by changing some of these values in accordance with their new environment while retaining some values from the original ethnic group. It is assumed that the possibility of negotiation eventually helps to create and sustain collective action concerning issues of the ethnic group in the host society or in the home country. The use of collective action leads to a dynamic collective identity, which helps members to not lose sight of the changes occurring in their country of origin while at the same time learning from their actual environments and sustaining a collective identity with their fellow nationals.

Discussion of main issues

One of the common observations among my study participants about relations between Palestinians was the difficulty they have in working together despite the supportive environment that surrounds them. One explanation for this difficulty is factional rivalry, which prevented better coordination between Palestinians. Since the arrival of Palestinian students to Greece in the 1970s, there have been intense disagreements between rival factions, solved only by abusing each faction's power within the PLO. As well as this there has been disputes within factions, especially at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s with the start of the peace process. Another reason was the predominance of economic interests that guided individuals' actions above other interests, as the main motivation for action was the presence of economic benefits. This was reflected by the control of political (in)action by the well off and powerful Palestinians in Greece. Thirdly, socio-economic differences placed barriers among people and prohibited sustained collective action. Finally, as one of my study participants commented, '*you know that no Palestinian from the inside can really be selected to sit on the board of the Jalia*'. This comment reveals the much-discussed issue of the divisions between the *inside* and the *outside* (discussed at length by Heacock, 1999) and the threat to people from the 'outside' that they will be taken over by people from the 'inside'.

The differing relations with Greek society of my study participants reflected differences in settlement history and socio-economic differences. For example the students who arrived in the 1970s were more integrated into the Greek society than the businessmen and professionals and less integrated than the workers. Among businessmen, there were few examples of integration within the Greek society. The majority were not interested in integration and their primary relations were with Palestinians and Arabs from the same professional circles or personal and work-related transnational networks. Professionals had a similar rate of integration to the businessmen, especially the ones who studied in Greece. However, there were examples of almost total isolation from Greek society expressed by the lack of knowledge of the Greek language or any attempts to acquire it. Workers were the most integrated, mainly because there was a practical need for it since most aspects of life were conducted with Greek society. Their main complaint about Greek society was the high level of religious observance apparent on their first encounter, however this awareness soon disappeared and they felt accepted by most Greeks.

The relationship between Palestinians in Greece and Palestine is often contradictory. On the one hand, as discussed by Hanafi (2001), physical return to Palestine is impossible for many Palestinians because of the difficulties in Palestine and also the difficulties resettling in a new, unstable place. There appears to be a possible relation between the re-emergence of a collective movement in Greece at the end of 1999 and the Second *Intifada* and the impossibility of physical return. It was observed that the Second *Intifada* played a crucial role in bringing these different sectors together to demonstrate solidarity with Palestinians in Palestine in coordination with the Greek community. However, these efforts soon disintegrated with the creation of several

committees that were eventually frozen. This contradicted findings on Palestinians in other countries such as France and Germany where political activities have been declining throughout the 1990s. A second finding was that trans-national links were relatively strong among Palestinians in the Arab world and the West. These links were based on family and work relations, and this sometimes translated into cyberspace or virtual relations.

A third finding was that *Al-Nakbah* was one of the most significant events for Palestinians in Greece, and it acted as a unifying factor (Sayigh, 1997). Also Palestinians in Greece were affected by the war in Lebanon since a large number of the participants were living in Lebanon at the time. The departure of the PLO from Lebanon and the arrival of some of the PLO fighters in Greece had a strong impact on most participants.

Finally it was apparent that the different concerns of the Palestinian community reflected differences between the younger generation who arrived from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and others from different countries or generations. These students witnessed the arrival of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and witnessed firsthand its deficiencies, something that Palestinians in the diaspora did not experience. The issue of whether to criticize the PNA's practices is one of the main subjects debated, or more precisely used as a means for exclusion or inclusion from the *community*. Thus the barriers between Palestinians in Greece concern not only socio-economic factors or 'inside' versus 'outside', but also how they relate to Palestine and whether their memory of it is current or remote.

Conclusion

An analysis of the main issues confronting Palestinians in Greece revealed that there was a relationship between collective identity, collective memory and collective actions. These, in turn, were affected by migration and settlement history, relations with Greek society and with other Palestinians. Despite the presence of a shared history, the lack of efforts to preserve a comprehensive body of memories prevented the formation of a collective identity. Preoccupation with minor differences and the maintenance of power positions stood in the way of a strong collective identity based on collective memory. It also transformed the link to Palestine to an imaginary one interpreted differently by different members of the community. The sporadic nature of collective action was fostered by a lack of a common *imaginary community* and the lack of a collective identity, which prevented sustained collective action.

Relations with the Greek community also influenced collective action. Although there was some integration because of work or living conditions, there was a lack of interest in this society and its culture by large numbers of Palestinians, despite its strong support of the Palestinian cause. These findings contradict what other researchers (Mahmoud and Ghadban) found in France and Germany, where the Palestinian communities were trying to integrate and play a public role in society (In Shiblak, 2000b & Shaml, 2000). The lack of integration was partly caused by the political decision of not wanting to settle outside Palestine. This detached them from their direct surroundings, and sometimes from their actual homeland. It also stood in the way of their integration into Greek society and prohibited them from acquiring rights and expressing their needs. This lack of negotiation between their different identities prevented collective action in support of their cause. It can be concluded that a strong ethnic identity does not necessarily mean that individuals are able to work together, and it does not prohibit immigrants from integration into the host country. What affects both collective action and integration is how identity is articulated and how collective that identity is. Without a collective identity based on a shared set of memories, it is impossible for Palestinians in Greece to convert their emotional attachment into sustained collective action.

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Physical Return, Virtual Return: The Palestinian Diaspora and the Homeland

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Director of Shaml

“Transnational corporations make sure that ‘we are all connected’, but (...) at the same time borders and passports are under surveillance as a reminder that some have more ‘connections’ than others”

Ella Shohat (1999: 215)

Introduction

While the phenomenon of international migration is often studied from the perspective of the economic *push and pull* theory, it is imperative that researchers begin to acknowledge the complexity of this phenomenon and also to place it in its proper social, cultural, political and economic contexts. Currently three separate trends epitomize international migration: the first is characterised by the intense circulation of capital, goods and services (economic globalisation), the second trend, paradoxically, is typified by increasingly impenetrable borders and the difficulties of individual mobility that restricts the movement of people. The third trend comprises the *virtual* nature of some global movements, manifested through new means of communication and new media technology such as the Internet and e-mail. These processes have intensified the creation of new social and economic networks and have changed migration patterns.

My aim in this paper is to examine one of the main forms of international migration, refugees returning to their homeland, through the case of the Palestinian communities in Europe. Palestinian refugees came to Europe for both political and economic reasons and as well as refugees seeking asylum, there are two principle sources for this migration: firstly, the wave of immigration after the second Gulf War⁷⁴, and secondly, the flow of students with or without scholarships. The overwhelming majority of these people enjoyed one or two advantages: they were professionals with financial capital acquired during the golden period of the Gulf and/or they held degrees from European universities. Since the beginning of the peace process, and although this area is still affected by political and economic upheavals, the possibility of some migrants returning to the Palestinian Territories and the refugee absorption capacity of the territories is being discussed. Other questions are also posed beyond the dilemma of staying or returning, they concern an option such as dwelling between two worlds.

This paper seeks to understand the relationship between host countries and the homeland, and more precisely the nature of the connection between the Palestinian entrepreneurs and professionals of Europe and the Palestinian Territories in three main areas. Firstly, I will examine the different modes of entrepreneurship within the Palestinian community in Europe. I will argue that the individualistic mode of entrepreneurship in the Palestinian community in Europe is correlated to weak relationships with the homeland, therefore making difficult the definitive return of members of this community. Secondly, I will examine different types of return, namely virtual

⁷⁴ I refer to the coalition attack on Iraq in 1990 led by the United States as the Second Gulf war to highlight the importance of the previous major war in the gulf between Iraq and Iran which had a far-reaching impact in the region.

return, by evaluating the experience of an internet-based network called PALESTA (Palestinian Scientists and Technologists Aboard). This was established at the end of 1997 in order to “harness the scientific and technological knowledge of expatriate professionals for the benefit of development efforts in Palestine”. And thirdly, I will evaluate the TOKTEN program (The Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals), which was created by the UNDP in order to facilitate the transmission of information and expertise from migrants to their homeland.

This paper will be based on three studies. The first study was conducted in England in 1997 and was based on 25 interviews conducted with Palestinian business people. The second study was conducted in France in 1998, and it covers the economic activities of 30 degree-holders from French universities. And finally the third study is an assessment of the impact of PALESTA in connecting the Palestinian diaspora in Europe with their homeland, and this will be done by analysing the content of the electronic mail messages exchanged between PALESTA’s team and Palestinians abroad.

I will focus on the entrepreneurs and professionals living in France and the UK. I chose these two countries for various reasons. I chose France because my familiarity with the country allowed me to follow the careers of many professionals. My choice of the UK is based on the fact that this country absorbed a substantial number of Palestinians just after the 1948 war, as it was the colonial power in charge of the Palestinian Mandate. Moreover, both countries absorbed a large number of Palestinian students.

The Palestinian Communities in Europe: An Overview

Compared to the mass Palestinian (forced) migration flows in the Middle East, Palestinians migrating to Europe have generally been few in number. The Palestinian communities in Europe are relatively recent, with the exception of the UK where the community has been present since the late 1940s after the creation of Israel. The members of the Palestinian communities in the UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy mainly came as students and then decided to settle. Consequently, there are a high percentage of professionals in these communities. As well as students, there was a substantial flow of Palestinians toward the Scandinavian states in 1982. Thousands of refugees were admitted mainly from Lebanon after the Israeli occupation of this country. This population consisted of far fewer academics and professionals. Poor qualifications, and also language difficulties, forced them to work in low paid jobs and as a consequence they were poorly integrated into the labour market. Nearly twenty years after the first wave of migration more than three-quarters of the Palestinian community in Denmark, Sweden and Norway live on the welfare system, as mentioned by some of our study participants. Immigrants feel hopeless and consider their life to be an early retirement, ‘Here we die slowly whilst in Lebanon we did it quickly’, declared one asylum seeker in Denmark. The Intifada was another event that convinced the German authorities in particular to accept Palestinian asylum seekers. In Berlin, for example, there is a large Gazan community. While Palestinian migrants to the Scandinavian states were mainly relatively middle-aged families (households over 40 years old), migrants to Germany tended to be younger. Whilst a substantial number of these became manual workers, some of these young people chose to study and became qualified workers or professionals.

The Gulf War was another event that provoked a large flow of Palestinians to the UK and France. As universities in the UK already had large numbers of second-generation Palestinian immigrants from the Gulf, this country became the destination for their parents after the second Gulf War. Many of them were in a precarious situation. However the specificity of this immigration brought entrepreneurs to the UK, and consequently there is an important concentration of Palestinian business people in the UK.

Modes of entrepreneurship: rather individualistic

To understand the relationship between Palestinian immigrants and their homeland, the Palestinian Territories, many studies focus on the situation in the homeland. These studies, which stress the political instability and economic problems, support the argument that immigrants have few ties to their country in terms of physical return and capital investment. My contribution will rather focus on two other factors that have a greater impact on their relationship with the homeland. Firstly, the nature of the migrant relationship with the host country and secondly, the social structure of the immigrant community in which economic activities are embedded, as Granovetter discussed (1985). Therefore instead of describing the economic activities of the Palestinian community in France and the UK, and comparing it to investment in the homeland, I would like to deal with the different types of entrepreneurship, which will provide us with information on the type of capital mobilisation and the social structure of the communities.

According to the survey that I conducted in the UK, a quarter of entrepreneurs work in the service sector (25%). This includes real estate and banking, etc. Almost all of this group came to the UK relatively recently after the Gulf War. Another 25% of entrepreneurs work in the trade and industry sector. Students dominate this sector, as they studied in British universities and established themselves in industries focusing on mechanical or electronic products, such as manufacturing and trade. Because London is also one of the big financial centres, a large percentage of the entrepreneurs work in the financial sector (19%). Because of this the community is well integrated into the London economy. A significant percentage of migrants also work in the tourism sector, with 13% of the sample (see Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of entrepreneurs by economic activity

Type of economic activity	Number of entrepreneurs	Percentage of entrepreneurs
Service	8	25%
Finance	6	19%
Trade	3	9%
Industry	1	3%
Trade and industry	8	25%
Engineering	2	6%
Tourism	4	13%
Total	32	100%

Almost all of these businesses started without help from the community as the community is dispersed all over the city of London and there is no Palestinian suburb in this city. However, the people who migrated from the Gulf tend to be older and therefore are more likely to continue their relationship with the community in the UK and abroad. Some of these people are not always well integrated socially into the host society. Even if they are based in the UK, their businesses are outside the country. However, although they do not have significant problems with the lifestyle in the UK they are not fully integrated and this hinders them from establishing tight relationships with the local community.

It is very striking that two thirds of the business community in the UK has an individualistic approach to business (individualistic entrepreneurship) rather than a familial and communitarian one. The students who come to the UK usually find their first job through their peer community, and very few find jobs through the Palestinian or Arab community. Here the community is well integrated into the host society, and mixed marriages and cross-cultural friendships are common. However, this integration does not mean that they are alienated from the Palestinian community. Forty two percent declared that they have strong ties with their family abroad, 34% said that they had good relationships, while only 23% said that they did not maintain any links. This is the opposite of the French model of polarisation between integration and connections to the homeland. The individual entrepreneurship in the UK has succeeded in creating harmony between these two poles. After graduating from British universities, the first job of three quarters of our study participants was provided by general information or information from friends, while the rest came from information provided by the family. This demonstrates Granovetter's famous concept of weak and strong ties. According to his survey on job seekers in the USA in the 1950s, this sociologist revealed that family (strong ties) was not important in the process of looking for a job, when compared to contacts with other people (weak ties). This does not mean that Palestinian entrepreneurs do not have contact with the community and about 58% of them are members of at least one Arab or Palestinian association in the UK. This increases to 65% when we include those who spend at least one evening a week with members of their community.

Fifty percent of Palestinian entrepreneurs invest outside the UK and this survey counted 30 projects already established. Only a few investments are in the Palestinian Territories (20%), and these are usually in trade as investors try to use their migration experience and their knowledge of British enterprise more than their technical experience. Other surveys looking at the Palestinian business community in Arabic countries show better investment participation in the homeland (Hanafi 2001, 1997 & 1996). When the connections to the West Bank and Gaza are weak, investment focuses on holding companies (a very frequent case in the Gulf and Jordan). This also demonstrates the lack of interest and concern for the Palestinian Territories.

Some 40% of investments are in the Gulf (where this group migrated from), 15% in the USA, 5% in Canada, and 10% in South Asia. Some 23% of these investments were associated with non-Arab and non-Palestinian business ventures, and this demonstrates a rather individualistic approach to business.

In France, the situation is significantly different. The British economic model of the Palestinian community cannot be compared to the Palestinian community in France, which has very few independent businessmen (only 13%), while the majority work as executives for the private or public sector. However, we find a comparable but more emphasised model when examining employment: less than 12% find their first jobs through the Palestinian or Arab community. This is because of the extremely weak community links in France. There is no institution, nor an active association that could contribute to the organisation of the community.⁷⁵ As well as the lack of institutions, there are also few informal ties. The community only meets in times of serious concern for the Palestinian Territories (such as the Intifada).

Although the Palestinian presence in France is a recent phenomenon, the community is relatively assimilated into French society. However, the absence of traditional community life for

⁷⁵The General Union of Palestine Student (GUPS), as well as, to a lesser extent, the General Union of Palestine Women are active sporadically at the local level. However, the activities of such groups usually concern the political arena rather than the social one.

Palestinians in France cannot be explained solely by communication difficulties. The origins of the weak community links for Palestinians in France can be traced, in part, to the French absorption model, which in practice often compels migrants to *assimilate* into French society, even while the official governmental policy is one of *integration*. While an important minority in France is of Arabic origin, the Jacobean French public schools do not provide adequate facilities for teaching Arabic. Thus, 53% of our study participants declared that their children over 12-years-old do not speak Arabic and 68% cannot write it. Because of this Palestinian community links inside France are extremely loose and access to community resources is scarce. At the same time, the connection between these people and their homeland is very vulnerable despite the fact that their immigration is recent. A third of our interviewees have lived in France less than 10 years, a third between 10 and 15 years, and a third have lived here over 15 years. Those who have been living for more than 25 years in France are usually completely assimilated into French society.

On the European level, this phenomenon is mainly apparent in France. The only similar model to this is in Latin America where Palestinian immigration dates from the beginning of the 20th Century (Picard, 1998; Gonzales, 1992).

Overall, connections between the Palestinian periphery in Europe and the centre in the Palestinian Territories are clearly loose. North American communities, despite their more distant location, are generally better connected. The Palestinian Territories continue to experience economic and political crises and thus definitive return remains both limited and rare. As well as this another difficulty for potential returnees is that many of them, whose point of origin was in the territories that became Israel in 1948, cannot return to their native villages or cities; and in this case “return” does not signify return to the original home. Furthermore, the “return movement”, in the current political context, is by nature an ephemeral one as Israel still controls immigration to the Palestinian Territories and does not generally grant residency to returnees. Returnees who possess a foreign passport are considered tourists and are given 3-month visas if they have travelled by air and often only one-month visas if they travelled across land borders. Even when such returnees are employed in Palestinian areas the possibility of acquiring a work permit or residency remains minimal and they must repeatedly exit and re-enter the country before the expiration of their visa in order to obtain a new one. Those who overstay their visa run the danger of being permanently barred entry into Israel and, consequently, the Palestinian Territories.

Thus, while connections between the diaspora and the homeland are an important factor in fostering physical return, a temporary physical return remains possible for skilled Palestinians whose participation is vital to the construction of a viable Palestinian state. In this case, it would represent a significant step forward if the Palestinian National Authority or the international community could harness this group to facilitate the transmission of expertise by the migrant community towards the homeland. As Meyer, et al argued (1999), there are two possible policies that developing countries could follow to tap their expatriate professional communities; either through a policy of repatriation (a return option), or a policy of remote mobilization and connection to scientific, technological and cultural programs at home (a diaspora option). These two policies have both been employed in the Palestinian Territories: in the former, through a UNDP program that encourages repatriation called TOKTEN (The Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals), and in the latter through an internet-based network called PALESTA (Palestinian Scientists and Technologists Abroad).

TOKTEN: A Tentative Step to Brain Gain?

The TOKTEN concept is an interesting mechanism for tapping into national expatriate human resources and mobilising them to undertake short-term consultancy work in their countries of origin. The UNDP, which founded it, assisted a program of utilising the expertise of expatriate nationals and this demonstrated that specialists (who had migrated to other countries and achieved professional success abroad) would be enthusiastic about providing short-term technical assistance to their country of origin. This may even encourage some of them to return and resettle. This program has been applied over the last 22 years in 30 different countries, resulting in thousands of technical assistance missions by expatriate professionals to their home country (UNDP, 1996). Historically, the catalyst for TOKTEN was the 'brain drain' from developing countries. The program created a database of highly trained and experienced expatriates and in the 1990s assigned more than 400 of them per annum, on a volunteer⁷⁶ basis, to their countries of origin for anything from 1 month to 6 months. They have served governments, the public and private sector, universities and NGO's.

The TOKTEN program in the Palestinian Territories is considered one of the most successful, with more than 178 Palestinian experts contributing to Palestinian development under the mantle of TOKTEN. Palestinian TOKTEN consultants, for example, have helped to reform the treatment of kidney disease in the Palestinian Territories and have guided the development of macro-economic frameworks and planning. TOKTEN skills have also made significant progress in areas of computerisation and information technology, on city planning, on university curriculum development and academic networking, on the upgrading of film and television capacities, and on cultural preservation, including the Bethlehem 2000 project. The lack of expertise in some sectors where people have volunteered under TOKTEN has generated some real success stories in Palestine, such as the construction and opening of the international airport in Gaza, planned by TOKTEN consultants, 9 of whom stayed on and are presently the backbone of the airport's operations (UNDP, 1999:1-2).

Some 37% of the consultants come from Jordan (a country suffering from a big economic crisis but benefiting from an important scientific and technology community that graduated mainly from Western universities). Thirty three percent come from the USA (where there is a large West Bank community that has close ties with the homeland) and Canada. Seventeen percent come from Europe (which constitutes a small percentage of the Palestinian community there, especially considering its relative geographical proximity to the Palestinian Territories), and finally 5% come from the Gulf region (this small percentage is due to the fact that advertising is reluctant and the Palestinian community profits from good job opportunities there) (see Table 2).

⁷⁶In the Palestinian Territories, a TOKTEN consultant receives \$3000 if senior and \$2000 if junior plus travel expenses and miscellaneous costs.

Table 2: Distribution of consultants by country of residence

Country	Percentage of TOKTEN consultants
Jordan	37%
United Arab Emirates	3%
Saudi Arabia	2%
USA	27%
Canada	6%
France	8%
Germany	5%
UK	4%
Other	8%

However, the success of the TOKTEN program should not only be measured by the increase in demand and the results of the consultancy, as it also gave these experts a chance to experience first-hand life in their native countries and encouraged them to settle there long-term.

In fact, about 21% of TOKTEN experts still live in the Palestinian Territories after their TOKTEN assignment expired. This represents 34 from 160 TOKTEN experts. The returnees came mainly from Jordan and the USA, two countries where the Palestinian community kept close links with their families in the West Bank and Gaza. This percentage is very high for a country like Palestine where the political and economic situation is not easy⁷⁷ (see Table 3). In Lebanon only 16% of TOKTEN experts settled after their mission was completed, despite the fact that these expatriates do not have residency difficulties (6 from 36 TOKTEN experts), (Ghattas, 1999).

Table 3: Distribution of Returnees by Country of Origin

Country	Number of returnees
<i>Jordan</i>	15
USA	12
UK	2
Canada	1
UAE	1
France	2
Saudi Arabia	1
Total	34

Despite its positive impact, the TOKTEN program has some weaknesses. Firstly, the beneficiaries of the TOKTEN program belong mainly to the Palestinian Ministries and public institutions, while the private sector and the NGO's continue to be marginal. Secondly the selection of candidates is problematic as there is not yet a large enough database capable of identifying expatriates who are willing to volunteer for technical assistance missions, except the recent one established by PALESTA that will be discussed later. Also the timing of such missions can be problematic, as TOKTEN experts need to be available when the recipient institution requires help. Direct dialogue

⁷⁷The author expresses his gratitude to Mr. Mounir Kleibo, program officer in UNDP, who provided data for this research.

through the Internet of the three parties concerned is instrumental in ensuring expedience and success.

In some countries where international experts are employed there can be suspicions that these experts are following the agenda of their host governments, but experts from the Palestinian diaspora do not have this problem. However there were difficulties when local people felt that the experts did not have more experience or qualifications than them, yet they were earning 3 or 4 times more than they were. This became even more problematic when some ministries, despite their limited budget, asked UNDP for TOKTEN experts when they discovered that they could not recruit permanent local employees with the right expertise.

Finally, the TOKTEN program raised the issue of whether the concept of “brain drain” could be tackled in the framework of the nation-state. With the process of globalisation, the labour market has become increasingly international and the question has arisen as to whether developing countries can compete with developed countries where wages are far higher. In this case, TOKTEN could be one of the mechanisms whereby the recipient countries of migration (usually Western countries) could compensate the country of emigration. Some Western governments have given grants to their migrant communities so that they can explore the possibility of returning to their homeland. For example, the German government subsidised 2 missions of a Palestinian-German medical delegation. One of these missions allowed 2 Palestinian doctors to settle back in Palestine after the end of their mission. However, these mechanisms are not sufficient and the international community has to find a more radical solution, for example regulating the global skills market⁷⁸ in order to control the disastrous effects of this globalisation of labour on developing countries.

The PALESTA Network

Like TOKTEN, the PALESTA network is an ambitious project to connect the diaspora to the homeland. PALESTA (Palestinian Scientists and Technologists Abroad) is an internet-based network that harnesses the scientific and technological knowledge of Palestinian expatriate professionals for the benefit of development efforts in Palestine. This network which launched by Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation contains a database of expatriate Palestinian scientists and engineers and also includes facilities for secure discussion among participants as they contribute their technical knowledge and experience toward addressing problems important to the development of the Palestinian economy. The founders’ objectives are as follows: first, to involve expatriate Palestinian scientists and technology experts in serious discussions aimed at resolving scientific and technological problems important to Palestinian economic development. Second, to keep expatriate Palestinian’s informed about developments and programs at home in the areas of science and technology so that they will be prepared to contribute fully when their presence is needed in Palestine. Third, to obtain the assistance of these expatriates in identifying and initiating new projects that will contribute to aspects of Palestinian economic development.

PALESTA aims to become a familiar, powerful tool among decision-makers in Palestine and expatriate science and technology professionals. Through ensuring a high level of quality in the operations of PALESTA, through establishing familiarity among the relevant communities, and through a structure that is amenable to decentralisation, PALESTA aims also to grow into a viable and sustainable entity that will make major contributions to Palestinian development. However, if

⁷⁸In its report of 1999 the World Bank advised regulation of the global skills market, but no proper measures have yet been taken.

PALESTA's founders have these ambitious objectives, the current evaluation of the project after about two years show mixed results.⁷⁹

The Database of Expatriate Palestinian Professionals

The database currently contains information on 955 expatriate Palestinian professionals. In June 1999, the number was 950, which means that the number has not increased significantly. In fact, the real development of the database came about during its first period (between April and July 1998). However, it should be noted that not all of the 955 professionals listed are active. Only one third (about 320 professionals) are active members of PALESTA.

While the mailing list was designed in sections, the majority of mailing was general and oriented to all PALESTA members. The PALESTA management was unable to mobilise local organisations to identify problems that obstruct development in the Palestinian Territories.

Discussion Boards

Recognising the difficulty of free movement of Palestinians from the diaspora to the Palestinian Territories, this mailing list constitutes a very important means of opening up discussion between individuals in distant places, in a cost-effective manner. Through this forum, some of the most important issues have been raised regarding scientific problems. Furthermore, there were discussions on social issues that will effect the eventual return or visits by the expatriates to their homeland, topics included a summer camp for second generation expatriate youth; health and treatment in the Palestinian Territories; Business conditions, etc. Furthermore, PALESTA advertised jobs available in NGO's and public and private institutions in the Palestinian Territories.

The problem of moderators

After one year of hesitation, PALESTA's director decided to assign specialist moderators to the various sections of PALESTA who did not necessarily belong to PALESTA. Ten months later, it can be seen that the functioning of PALESTA has not improved. In fact, these moderators were not sufficiently active to make such decentralisation efficient. There was insufficient co-operation between PALESTA and the local institutions and ministries that the moderators worked for. This meant that the administration did not liberate these moderators from their previous assignment in order to facilitate the work of the moderators for PALESTA.

One of the mailing list discussions reveals the problems in PALESTA's conception of the mailing list. In a discussion about 'Who owns the list?' the members participating expressed irritation over editing by the manager of PALESTA and considered his editing a form of censorship. Moreover, participants voiced their desire to know each other, while PALESTA does not allow this: each message is re-sent by a moderator without an email address or the area where the writer of the message lives. This discussion convinced the PALESTA team to launch a questionnaire asking people their opinions of PALESTA in July and August 1999. About 60 PALESTA subscribers

⁷⁹The methodology of this evaluation comprises four different steps: 1. Interviews in January 2000 of all of PALESTA's staff as well as those involved in the elaboration of the PALESTA project, including the previous manager of PALESTA. Moreover some moderators of PALESTA were interviewed. They were asked about their feelings and opinions concerning the functioning of the PALESTA network

2. Consulting the correspondence between the PALESTA members in order to assess the impact of the discussion board. 3. Consulting the progress reports submitted by PALESTA's team to the UNDP, as well as the minutes of the meeting of PALESTA's staff. 4. Interviewing PALESTA members abroad about their feelings and opinions about PALESTA and some of the local beneficiaries about PALESTA's services.

participated in this survey, (which makes the response rate 18.4%). The importance of this survey is that it provided PALESTA with its first opportunity ever to identify the profile of its members, in terms of academic qualifications, age, country of residence and so on.

PALESTA's members are concentrated in the United States (56% of total PALESTA members), while only 17% are living in Europe. This means that PALESTA has not yet broken into Europe despite its importance in terms of geographical proximity to the Palestinian Territories. The same can be said for the Palestinian community in Arabic countries, mainly the Gulf and Jordan, which are underrepresented (each country represents only 2% of the total PALESTA members). The survey also shows that more than 37% of PALESTA members are aged between 30-39 and 30% between 20-29, which means that the people interested in PALESTA's mission are relatively young. This does not mean however that they are not highly educated, 41% of PALESTA members hold a Ph.D. and 15% hold a Master's degree. Women are overwhelmingly underrepresented, constituting only 7% of PALESTA subscribers. Keeping in mind the importance of launching discussions between local and expatriate Palestinians, this survey also revealed some problems in the functioning of PALESTA and its structure. Some 15% of subscribers to PALESTA have withdrawn from the mailing list.

The most important criticisms one can make of PALESTA is that it is functioning as an *institution* and not as a *network*, because it aims to connect members to itself without connecting members to each other. This conception neglects the importance of the development of the Palestinian community in each country in order to prevent their total assimilation and dilution into their host society, and this could facilitate contact with the homeland. How will this be possible if PALESTA's members are not allowed to know one another's email addresses? This fact calls us to examine the paradoxical relationship between the PALESTA trans-geographical network and the original discourse produced by PALESTA managers of a geographically defined identity of, "a Palestinian abroad has to be connected only to the centre". This raises several issues: What help can PALESTA offer to Arabs who are willing to serve in the construction of a Palestinian State? How can the PALESTA team distinguish between the Jordanian from the Palestinian living in Jordan as the latter holds Jordanian nationality? Furthermore, from a practical perspective, the best mechanism for publicising PALESTA is through the Palestinian community abroad. The PALESTA survey has shown us that about half of the subscribers find out about PALESTA through their relatives and friends, and 85% of them try to spread this information.

At the same time, PALESTA's management has refused to allow free and direct contact between local specialised institutions and people abroad in the same field. For instance, it is important to give the Ministry of Higher Education and universities the names and contact information of Palestinian professors abroad. This will assist them tremendously in the recruitment of personnel and it will help them to establish forms of international co-operation. One can say the same thing about the Palestinian Water Authority and hydraulic engineers, and so on. PALESTA's team believes that connecting the diaspora with the Palestinian Territories should only be done by mailing list.

Numerous discussions were launched in the weekly meetings of PALESTA's staff during the first six months of this project to examine the possibility of centralising or decentralising the mailing list. Some members of the team wanted to centralise the mailing list, mainly because they were afraid that the discussion could violate important ethics and might encourage personal attacks, or lose sight of objectives. If this were to happen, it might waste the members' time and discourage their interest in the mailing list. This argument, which is not necessarily an authoritarian one, is no longer an appropriate one for the objectives of PALESTA. It seems to me that this fear is no longer

justifiable as it was apparent after one year of PALESTA that the Palestinian professionals involved in PALESTA are serious about dealing with the discussion issues. A sanction could be imposed against a member who violates the ethics of PALESTA. This way is a better approach than the one currently adopted by PALESTA, which consists of preventing all violations before they happen. The team of PALESTA should understand that Palestinians in the homeland and abroad fear the centralisation of power, after their experiences with the political power of Arab regimes. The team has to understand this reaction, which reflects more of an obsessive fear than a real expectation. Some Palestinians abroad have a phobia of all forms of censorship even when it is to protect ethics and morality.

Finally, one has to agree that at this level, after 18 months, the output is more visible than the impact, but it is also too early to assess the impact of PALESTA on the links between local and expatriate Palestinians. However, I feel that the mailing list has allowed Palestinians abroad to have some technical information about the development process in the Palestinian Territories. I use the word 'technical' because general information is already widely available, spread by news and mass media, but technical information is not. The expatriate people that I met abroad expressed their willingness to serve the Palestinian Territories through their knowledge and experience but they do not know how to do it. Moreover, PALESTA has focused its effort on expatriates but it is time to focus on the local Palestinian community. This means less institutionalisation and more networking.

Conclusion

Contrary to the old Asian proverb of, 'falling leaves will always return to their roots', Palestinian entrepreneurs and professional are, at present, unlikely to return to their homeland. Instead of physical return however, I have examined the possibility of a virtual return to the Palestinian Territories based on the PALESTA experience. Despite the difficulties for physical return to the homeland a small movement of return for capital and investment is apparent, a movement largely affected by the individualistic approach dominant in the business community in France and the UK. However, the type of investment is significantly different from the classic types of remittances studied in the Arab world. Limited economic benefits and the negative effects of migration dominated these classic types, as well as weak investment in productive activities and inflation provoked by the transfer of currency, (See Saad Al Din & Abdel Fadil, 1983; Fargany, 1988).

This paper also tried to communicate a sense of both the possibilities and the limitations of the PALESTA network and the new media technologies. PALESTA has significant implications for 'charting diasporic movements across national borders', as Shohat argued about the experiences of one of the Iraqi diaspora's mailing lists (1999:231). Networking through the Internet, as experienced by PALESTA, does not suggest the 'end of geography' but a kind of 'reshaping of geography' by connecting the different dispersed communities not only to the centre but also to each other. The process of construction and reconstruction of the Palestinian identity can be affected by dispersed people with a fragile centre in the Palestinian Territories to which refugee communities abroad cannot have access. New media can be a very important tool in connecting communities to one another.

However, this new media is at the same time exclusive and inclusive. Exclusive because if the intellectual community has the privilege of this method of communication, it is open more to the upper-middle classes (at least in the Arab World) than all of the population. At the same time, it concerns only English speaking people and not all of the intellectual community. This fact could explain why PALESTA has few members in Arabic countries and also in France and Germany. It

is inclusive because the connection between the diaspora and the homeland through the Internet can be pluralistic and not necessarily based on one official connection between the PNA (or PLO organisations) and the Palestinian communities abroad. It is possible to imagine the creation of multiple networks like PALESTA.

The impact of PALESTA on the relationship between Palestinians abroad and the Palestinian Territories goes beyond the cause of serving the homeland and facilitating physical return in the future. In a trans-national world typified by the 'global circulation of images, sounds, [and] goods' but not people, which have a complex impact on community relationships, we raise the question after Shohat, (1999:215) What do we make of new media's promise to shape new identities? And more radically and more generally, will this new form of international migration modify our perception of the homogeneity of the nation and particularly between the state, the nation and territory? (Ma Mung et al. 1998:3). In fact PALESTA's experience shows us that the impact of new media is to allow universal *virtual* access to the homeland when *physical* access is unattainable⁸⁰. Jerusalem is important in this process precisely because this city is idealised in two ways. Firstly, it is considered to be the 'kingdom of God' and secondly, being in terrestrial Jerusalem is associated with approaching celestial Jerusalem.

It is too early to assess the impact of new media like PALESTA on this kind of issue, but its evolution raises several questions; namely whether new media is able to facilitate the conciliation between the diverse cultural heritage that the Palestinian diaspora has by both being in the host country and connected to the inaccessible homeland. We must also ask whether it is able to extend the ontological question to go beyond the identity question of, 'who am I?' towards a kind of topographical one of, 'where am I?' As well as this, there are political implications of this new media in terms of geographical location, national affiliation, and identification with the homeland, which go beyond the objectives of this paper.

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⁸⁰I am not dealing here with the legal issue of the boundaries of a Palestinian State that would include the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland and/or compensation. But with the sociological issue related to the different choices that Palestinians are forced to make of either being in the homeland or in the host land.

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