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Challenges for Young People as 'Citizens to Be' in Palestine

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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Acknowledgement

I dedicate this research paper to John and Jeff without whose comments, feedback, and vision this inspirational journey would not be the same.

To my parents Nassar and Najmolmolouk, who never gave up on me or stopped believing in me. I thank them for their endless discussions and ideas. To my little sister Camellia who has her own way of always being there for me. To my friends in Palestine and in The Hague for their inspiring support.

I also extend my gratitude to Melanie Nassar for proof reading the draft of this thesis.

Last but not least to Palestine – a place where freedom is always a dream. I hope this research will be an inspiration to pause and analyse the current situation in order to reorganize the Palestinian political agenda and acknowledge the mistakes that have been made until now.

"I take criticism so seriously as to believe that, even in the midst of a battle in which one is unmistakably on one side against another, there should be criticism, because there must be critical consciousness if there are to be issues, problems, values, even lives to be fought for... Criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are noncoercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom."

Edward W. Said (Said 1983: 28)

Contents

List of Acronyms

PA   Palestinian Authority

PLO   Palestine Liberation Organization

MoYS   Ministry of Youth and Sport

List of Maps

Abstract

This research examines why the youth of Palestine are absent from the political arena. It focuses on the way youth perceive political participation and the role-played by the Palestinian Authority and political parties in encouraging or discouraging such participation. Using the right-based approach, the research will attempt to shed light on the various limitations that youth face in becoming real citizens in the Palestinian society. The data was examined and the following conclusion was reached: Weak citizenship is a feature not only of youth in Palestine – it also applies to adults and both groups can be considered citizens to be. This is the result both of the occupation that controls the situation in Palestine and of the policies of the Palestinian Authority and the unclear role of the political parties. The political confusion that youth face had an effect as well.

To this end, the research sheds light on other factors aside from occupation that limit the active participation of youth in Palestine. It helps the reader to pause and analyse from the young people's point of view what the Palestinian Authority, political parties, and people in power do to disappoint youth. It explains how the general feeling among Palestinian youth is that the Palestinian Authority and political parties are drifting away from the national goal, which is the creation of an effective sovereign state.

Keywords

Main Historical Events

1917   British foreign minister Arthur Balfour recognized a Jewish national home in Palestine

1947   Many clashes took place between Jews and Palestinians and the recommendation was made to divide Palestine into two states.

15 May 1948   Israel declaration of the state and Nakba or "catastrophe" for Palestinians

May 1964   Establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

1967   Israel occupies West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip

1987   First Intifada

13 Sep 1993   Declaration of principle signed between Israel and the PLO, effectively ending the first Intifada

28 Sep 1995   Signing of the Oslo II Accord, which led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA)

2000   Israeli government started building the separation wall, much of it on privately owned Palestinian land in the West Bank

2006   Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) won elections over Fatah

2007   Internal violence and clashes between Fatah and Hamas, which caused establishment of two governments, one led by Fatah in the West Bank, and another one led by the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip.

Maps

Map 1: Percentage of Jews and Palestinians

Source: United Nation 1950.

Map 2: Palestinian Loss of Land

Palestinian Loss of Land 1946-2013

ISRAELI POLICIES COMBINE APARTHEID, COLONIZATION AND OCCUPATION

itisapartheid.org

www.badil.org

More than 5 million Palestinians are classified by the UN as Refugees

1946

UN Partition Plan 1947

1967

2013

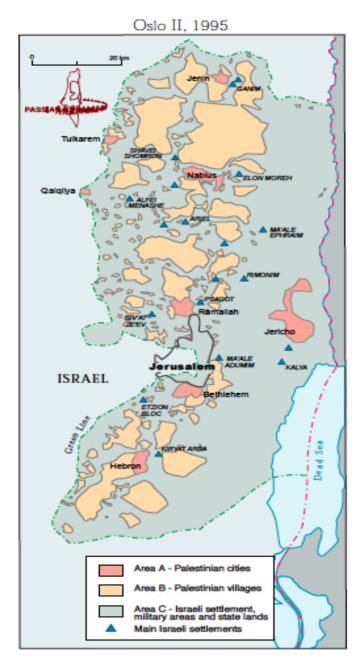*Source*: Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights (Badil), 2013.

Map 3: The Result of Oslo (II)

PALESTINE MAPS

Oslo II, 1995

Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)

Source: PASSIA 1995.

Chapter 1
Introduction

My reason for choosing this topic was the result of my everyday experience with children and youth in Palestine. I noticed that they were losing faith and interest in political participation. Not only that, their comments related to the political parties or the Palestinian Authority were marked by disappointment. Although merely living in Palestine makes you see the influence of occupation on everything, this did not stop me of wondering about the other reasons that made the young generation lose faith in political participation. Why were they not able to express themselves the way the previous generation did? As Bailey and Murray (2013) mention that the participation of the Palestinian youth reached its peak in the first Intifada while today they have lost faith in the political life (ibid). That is to say people had high confidence in the political forces, which made people and particularly youth involved strongly in the political process.

Moreover, since the political and economic situation is becoming worse every day, why are youth as social actors not doing enough to change it? All this made me interested in understanding how youth perceive the concept of citizenship in the Palestinian context. What are the difficulties that youth face in being active citizens in Palestine aside from occupation? In other words, what makes the situation in Palestine any different from any other place when it comes to the contradiction between rights and policies?

This paper represents the results of interviews that were conducted with Palestinian youth in the West Bank regarding this topic. The paper uses the right-based approach as a framework, which is used to analyze the content of interviews.

The remainder of this first chapter covers the contextual background with some major dates in Palestinian history. Then it will address the problem statement with the research questions. There is a section on methodology followed by another section that explains my personal reflections and background. This chapter will end with the organization of the research paper.

1.1 Contextual Background

Research regarding the Palestinian- Israeli conflict usually immerses itself in discussing the history of the issue and its perspectives. I acknowledge what Handmaker (2011) argues, "Most people's understanding of the Palestinian refugee issue has been bounded in terms of competing moral claims rather than the historical context in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were uprooted from their homes, prevented from returning and later denationalized by a series of laws. As discussed in this section, the historical context of the Palestinian refugee issue has generally been blind to the systematic

efforts of the Zionist founders of Israel in 1948 to 'ethnically cleanse', in the words of Ilan Pappe, the Palestinian territory in order to create and maintain a Jewish majority" (Handmaker 2011:199). However, this thesis does not take it on itself to dive into such an ongoing debate about the historical story from various perspectives, and finds it fit to only introduce the reader to key historical moments that are relevant to the research question and inquiry.

Regarding the issue of youth and citizenship in Palestine, it is important to discuss two concepts – occupation and colonization – because prolonged military occupation and the domination of colonization by the state of Israel since 1948 are the frame of the Palestinian context. Discussing the effects of occupation is not limited to controlling the resources in Palestine; there is a difference between occupation and colonization and the Israeli occupation is trying to change the Palestinian identity through its daily practices.

Therefore, in order to understand the impact of occupation on the identity of the Palestinians in general and youth in particular, it is important to describe briefly what is the difference between occupation and colonization. According to Hilton (2011) colonization is an establishment of a colony in a certain place, which causes oppression and affects the psyches of the colonized people. Adding to this Hilton mentions how Fanon goes deeper in explaining the changes that the French colonizers tried to make in the Arab culture in Algeria in the late 1950s, which caused a cultural struggle. Therefore, colonization has an effect on the identity of the indigenous people (ibid). Fanon (1989) concludes that colonizers attempt to make people believe that the way they live is not the right way and they present their own culture in an attempt to change a people's culture, believing that is the right way. Brewer (1999) points out that colonies were an extension of the European empire, and they came to rule over the non-European population and control their resources. In addition, he asks questions such as: Did the colonial era really end or did it just modify the new world economy?

The most important difference between these two concepts according to Heyden (2009) is that unlike colonization, we know occupation will end at some point. Occupation also uses military force and ends with a peace treaty, while colonization controls the country through what is called colonial administration in cooperation with the political elite and some individuals who choose to obey their new sovereign. Moreover, Heyden perceives the relations between the Palestinians and Israelis as a colonial relationship. On the other hand, Gordon (2008) argues against this approach, stating that the situation in Palestine has moved from colonization to separation. In other words, the colonizer manages the lives of the colonized people along with the resources of the territories, which means they exert control over the population and use the resources in addition. In fact, occupation has to recognize the power in the territories in order to control resources, and Israel has no interest in managing the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (ibid). Adding to this, there is the Israeli occupation claims that all of Palestine is the chosen land for Jewish people.

Accordingly, citizens under military occupation cannot exercise their citizenship rights as long as there is military occupation. Citizens can exercise their rights of citizenship by the end of occupation and establishing a sovereign state. We can see that colonization attempts to reshape the principles of citizenship, such as French colonization in Algeria, which tried to change the Algerian identity through schools curricula, issuing laws, and weakening the Arabic language. With respect to the Palestinian case, Palestinians are facing the direct military occupation and the colonization which has been trying to affect the Palestinian identity through denying the right of return of the majority of Palestinian in addition to give the Israeli identity to the Palestinian who are living in Israel.

In the view of Heyden and Hilton discussion, I argue that the situation in Palestine is considered to be a prolonged military occupation and dominant colonization due to many reasons. First, occupation uses military forces, which is the case in Palestine since Palestinians have been under military occupation for the last sixty-five years. Second, colonization tries to affect the identity of indigenous people and regarding this issue, Nabulsi (2006) mentions how the new generation of refugee youth had enough talking about the refugee issue and situation and moreover they lost their faith in the institutions and civil society. Therefore, the identity of Palestinian youth is not as clear as before (Nabulsi 2006). Finally, colonization takes control over the people with the aid of the political elites. Supporting this discussion, Christophersen et al. (2012) explain how the political elite claims to represent the resistance of the Palestinians vis-à-vis Israel and the international community (ibid).

For the Palestinian youth the issue of citizenship is related to the end of occupation and establishing an independent state where there is a space to exercise their rights of citizenship. But at the same time youth are feeling powerless and hopeless in Palestine as a result of the occupation as well as the division between Fatah and Hamas, which led to the establishment of two authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Naser-Najjab 2012). Accordingly and based on different reviews of related literature, it can be said that despite the economic, political and social problems in Palestine, the level of youth participation is low as it was discussed in some Palestinians research papers:

> *"Palestinian youth are fully aware of the political forces that affect their lives, but a sense of disappointment with Palestinian political parties is rising among the majority of youth, up to the degree of fear of dealing with these parties. This represents a new trend among Palestinian youth. When the main driving force for political activism has been struggle against the occupation, employing all legitimate means to end it, Palestinian youth have showed a high degree of readiness to sacrifice. In contrast, when their political activism has become related to narrow factional agendas and visions, Palestinian youth are no longer willing to pay the price of internal fragmentation in favour of any of the competing groups"* (Zamareh and Abu Kamesh 2010: 4).

In this context, the Arab Spring came as a surprise to the Arab nations and Palestinian people, as it was primarily youth who were the main leaders in these revolutions. To put it another way they were rejecting the authority of the political parties and trying through their participation to reach a stage where they can exercise their full rights of citizenship. Nonetheless Christophersen et al. (2012) discuss that the Arab Spring did not lead Palestinian youth to question the performance of their political leaders, even though there are many criticisms against the Palestinian Authority and the political parties:

"At present neither the Palestinian government nor the political parties are showing a discourse on the ground to meet the interests of youth in Palestine, except in statements. The criticism of youth regarding political work does not stem from a rejection of the political parties per se. It should be more understood as a call on the political parties to be more active and to include youth in their activism". (Nassar 2011:22).

So what is happening in Palestine? Why youth are not being politically active in order to express their needs or even their disappointment? In answering these questions, a specific approach to occupation will be adopted as it serves the purposes of this project. I will use the term occupation in my research since it is the conventional term in the field. However, that will be with keeping in mind that occupation in Palestine includes the element of colonization that affects the mindset of people. Accordingly we can see how important it is to understand the situation of youth in Palestine within the Palestinian context. That is to say if we try to discuss the situation of the Palestinian youth disconnected from these two concepts we will not be able to present a clear understanding of the Palestinian situation. In addition, we will not be able to understand the existent limitations that Palestinian youth face in Palestine when it comes to the issue of being politically active citizens with protected rights.

1.2 Problem Statement

Youth occupy an important place in any process that seeks social change and for this reason they are considered to be important actors in society. On the other hand, if adults acknowledge that they have this right it does not means they are giving them the space to exercise these rights. There are thus many policies that limit youth being active citizens in society although this society does acknowledge the rights of youth. For these reasons, there are many questions and theoretical approaches that seek to understand the nature of youth as a category and the contradiction that might occur between rights and policies. Deriving from the Palestinian contextual background seeing that youth in Palestine is losing interest in being politically active. This research attempts to understand the limitations that youth face in order to be active actors in the political process. In other words what are the limitations that make youth lose their interest and hope? What makes this process different in Palestine? What is the role of the Palestinian Authority and the political parties for youth to be active citizens and how that is perceived by youth?

1.3 Research Question

In order to explore the role of the Palestinian youth as a major actor in internal Palestinian policies based on the rights of citizenship, the following main question rises. **How do politically active young "West Bank" Palestinians engage in the internal politics of Palestine as active citizens and what challenges and obstacles do they face in such an engagement?**

In order to answer this main question the following questions were established:

- How do youth perceive the contradiction between their political rights and the actual Palestinian political system, which impedes exercising their political rights?
- How do youth perceive the role of the political parties in meeting the challenges and needs of youth?
- How do youth from different political backgrounds think about the effective ways that enable them to express themselves or participate in society?

1.4 Methodology

I have adopted a qualitative methodology influenced by ethnographic methodology as a way to engage with the personal experience and emotions of youth. This methodology was chosen in order to understand their point of view, needs, values and challenges and their perception of citizenship in Palestine. On other hand, to reflect the social and political complexity of the Palestinian society and go beyond what is simple and clear. The research will shed light on the experience of youth in detail.

My plan was to interview one person at a time, which gives the interviewee the freedom to express himself or herself. I chose youth between age twenty and twenty three because this group is socially or politically active in the students' unions at universities, which will make it easier to discover the challenges they go through and how they engage in the society. It is also worth mentioning that there was one special case when it comes to age. One of my interviewees representing the political party Hamas at one of the universities was twenty-seven years old because he had been in an Israeli prison for nine years.

I started interviews by talking about my research, and explained that anonymity will be maintained. I had around ten questions (see Appendix A) that were prepared earlier and targeted the experience of youth, challenges they face, their interaction with the Palestinian Authority and political parties, and how they participate in society. Each interview lasted around one hour and sometimes one hour and a half. Interviewees felt very comfortable when I explained that their names would be changed in the research. Interviews were conducted in Arabic and then translated to English later on, which took some time due translation difficulties.

It is worth mentioning that some of the male interviewee did not feel comfortable talking to me in private because I am female; I found it strange, however, that this was not the case for the interviewee representing Hamas, which is a branch of the Muslim brotherhood. On the other hand, when I wanted to conduct an interview with a girl who represents Hamas at the university, he refused and mentioned that "The work of our sisters is only to preach to students at university and they have nothing to do with politics" that is why my last interview did not take place.

All interviews were held in August 2013 in the West Bank (see Appendix B) and youth were chosen based on snowball sampling since the subject is sensitive and not easy to discuss. The factors age, gender, political affiliation, and membership in the student union or NGOs were taken into account. I do not claim that this research represents the whole population, but it attempts to understand the needs, opinions, and experience of each interviewee. In short, it will give us a chance to learn from these experiences and use them as a tool to have a better understanding that might help us later in analyzing the situation. At the same time, the majority of interviewees despite their critique are *still affiliated* to the political forces, which means that they are already active and so their obstacles to greater commitment to political activity are likely to be even greater for others who are not as active.

After finishing the interviews, I ended up with rich data that I attempted to look at outside the box and question everything; even what might seem normal for me. Grouping data at the beginning was challenging because everything was interrelated in a complex way. That is why I divided my data according to themes related to my sub-questions, which helped me to have thematic data. The first theme was the way Palestinian youth perceive the contradiction between their political rights and the actual Palestinian political system. The second was ways that youth perceive the role of political parties when it comes to meeting the challenges and needs of youth. The third was differences in the ways youth express themselves or participate in society depending on their political background. The fourth was influences of social and cultural structures on participation of youth, and the fifth, ways that the occupation affects youth being active citizens in society. In brief, under each theme I created different themes in order to have a clear grouping and have a better understanding of the connection between these themes and look for patterns.

This process was very time consuming, but it allowed me to have a theoretically meaningful understanding. Adding to that, it facilitated the formulation of a clear argument that answers the research question and drawing my conclusions. I therefore discussed my data according to these themes, which will give a better understanding to my argument.

1.5 Reflexivity

I was born in Syria in 1986 from a Palestinian Father and Iranian mother and lived there for fifteen years. In 2000, my family and I moved to the West Bank in Palestine. Some might think that being born and raised in a different place than your original home makes you lose connection with that place, but that is definitely not the case when it comes to the Palestinians who live outside Palestine. I can say through my experience that my family's community in Syria consisted of people who were originally Palestinians who became refugees for whom Palestine is a dream, a dream that passes from one generation to the next, and so talking about Palestine made us feel all the time that it is the home, the place that every Palestinian wishes to be. For us, it was like a holy place where nothing goes wrong.

When we moved to the West Bank the story was different, at least for me. It is like when your dream comes true but then you find out that nothing is perfect. For me, everything regarding Palestine and what is right and what is wrong was much clearer when I was living outside. Being in Palestine made me see the differences that Palestinians themselves have when it comes to the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. I cannot deny that it was prettier from outside. Moreover, my Persian half gave me the power to look at the Palestinian conflict in a critical eye due to the fact that it represents a completely different culture and language.

Living in Palestine in general makes you, at a certain point, choose a side and by this I do not mean between Palestine and Israel – this is of course out of the question – but I mean between Palestinians themselves. Following a leftist ideology made me know whom I would support, but from the beginning I did not support any particular political party. It is worth mentioning that all the political parties agree that the goal is the freedom of Palestine, but the way of achieving this goal is different from one party to another.

Nevertheless, I always had an interest in the rights of children and youth. For me this category is so interesting because young people are full of energy, new ideas, and perceptions. This interest became an action in my first year of university when I started volunteering at Defence for Children International in Bethlehem. I volunteered there for four years from 2004 until 2008, giving workshops to youth between the ages of 13 and 18 about children's rights and communication skills. Also I worked in the environmental education centre from 2010 to 2011 targeting students from different age group in the public and private schools of Ramallah and Bethlehem. This experience brought me closer to this subject and enabled me to understand their needs and the challenges they go through. On the other hand, my experience at university, especially during the elections, made me more certain about my choice of not following any of these political parties.

Afterwards, I also worked in many places that targeted youth and aimed at empowering them. As a result, I often noticed that many of these programs

claimed to be representing the voice of youth, but actually they did not. I also noticed how much youth are going through hard times in expressing themselves because of the practices of the Palestinian Authority. Therefore, I felt the need of understanding all the aspects that affects youth participation in the Palestinian society. I was able to see the restrictions and limitations youth face in expressing their political opinion against the Palestinian Authority. As a start, I wanted to shed light on what we Palestinians did wrong.

Yes, I cannot deny that when I felt the need of doing this research, all I thought was that I will come across and I will hold only the Palestinian Authority and occupation responsible. But I realized the fact that we as Palestinians, especially youth, are also responsible and we all share the responsibility for this situation that we are living in, starting from occupation, Palestinian Authority, and political parties and ending with people. All these made me think how much we need to pause and to view ourselves critically and question the unquestionable all over again.

1.6 Organization of the Research Paper

Chapter 2 will present the right-based approach, which will be used as the framework of this research. It will also present the global literature on youth and citizenship. In addition, it presents the existing contradiction between the right of being a real citizen and the implementation of policies that are decided by the policy makers so as to limit the youth participation.

Chapter 3 will present and analyze the data from interviews that I conducted for this research. I attempted to present my argument through themes that was clearly divided in this chapter. I also used direct quotations to support my argument.

Chapter 4 will be the conclusion of this research paper where I summarize how the research questions were answered. Moreover, I will shed light on the importance of this research paper and mention some points that can be a good suggestion for future research.

Chapter 2 The Research Framework

2.1 Right Based Approach

In this paper, an attempt is made to analyze and understand the relationship between youth and citizenship based on rights and responsibilities in addition to the challenges that youth face in order to become active citizens and participate in society. The right-based approach is used as the basis in this paper in order to lead the general argument. According to Miller et al. (2005), the right-based approach is based on rights and participation and it promotes participation at the economic, social, and political levels in society. Save the Children (2005) also bring up participation as a fundamental factor in the right-based approach that will be the focus of this paper, especially political participation. This approach is also appropriate because as Rand and Watson (2007) explain, in this approach people are seen as active agents of their own development. In other words it is a people-centered approach, which takes empowerment a step further to influence public policy and to make claims in defense of the rights of people (ibid).

Moreover, right-based approach focuses on marginalized groups whose rights are at risk, and furthermore it analyzes inequalities and practices that influence the unjust distribution of power in society (United Nations. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2006).

The main argument of this paper is about the contradictions that exist between the rights of youth and the policies that are being implemented by the state. The human rights approach, as Miller et al. (2005) explain, in seeking justice and equality in society, tries to define the nature of these rights, the ways in which they can be violated, and to identify the challenges in applying them. Moreover, Save the Children (2005) defines rights as the agreement between persons who hold rights and institutions or persons who have an obligation to provide these rights. On top of that, Miller et al. (2005) explain how the human rights approach has a legal aspect that imposes obligations on the state to protect citizens. In view of this, Save the Children (2005) discuss that the main core of human rights is establishing a relationship between rights holders and the duty agent. Since it is principally the duty of the state to provide these rights, the state has the obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill rights:

- Respect: The state must not interfere in how people enjoy their rights.
- Protect: The state must prevent any third party or parties from interfering in people's rights.
- Fulfill: The state must adopt appropriate administrative, judicial, and other measures to facilitate the full realization of rights (ibid: 14).

In summary, this research will engage with the concepts of active political participation of youth through the right-based approach. Since according to

Save the Children (2005) this approach is universal, which means it is held equally all by people regardless of age, gender, or any other circumstances. These rights also cannot be given or taken away by anyone (ibid). In other words, youth have the right to participate in society regardless of their political affiliation, gender, or ethnicity, etc. Not only that, but the state is obliged to protect these rights and empower youth in order for them to achieve the full realization of their rights.

Prior to the discussion about the relationship between youth and citizenship, I will discuss the concepts of youth and citizenship, explaining how they are perceived in literature. Afterwards, I will explain the concept of citizenship in relation with youth, and the difficulties youth face in order to realize active political participation. I will focus on the right of participation, especially of political participation, since it is the main nucleus of this paper.

2.2 Youth in the Lens of Citizenship

2.2.1 Youth: Unstable Category

A review of the literature about the concept of youth soon shows that there is not a clear definition that defines youth as a category. According to many institutions, youth can be defined based on age, for instance the official UN definition of youth is persons between 14 to 24 years old, while the definition of UNESCO is individuals between age 10 and 19 years (UNESCO 2004). But that is not the case for Gearin (2003), who argues that various physical characteristics – gender, ethnicity, and age are cultural constructs that play a role in defining youth as a category. This author also explains that the identity that shapes youth is not fixed but is limited by the physical, historical context and shaped by culture (ibid: 107).

In my opinion, Gearin's point is important, especially in such a research. Since youth cannot be seen out of context, they are influenced by the context they are living in and many other factors such as gender, age, and ethnicity play a role in the way youth perceive their identity and their role in society. That is why when it comes to the ways youth perceive their rights, it is important to understand youth within the context they are living in.

2.2.2 Youth: Transition Period

There is ongoing debate about the age of youth; when does it start and when does it end? This debate was explained by Beauvais et al. (2001) In addition to this they mention that youth is perceived as a transition period or a stage in which individuals make important decisions that have an effect on their lives afterwards (ibid). Furthermore, Manning and Ryan (2004) point out that youth and children are seen as vulnerable groups in society that are in constant need of protection. Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010) emphasize this discussion by giving an example of how, in the media, children are seen as helpless victims and youth as troublemakers instead of active participants in society (ibid). Moreover, Beauvais et al. (2001) clarify the shift that has been made on

perceiving youth in 1960s and the present time. That is to say, in 1960 youth were seen as a social movement, while today youth are seen as a social problem.

So if not age, what are the factors that define youth on the way to becoming adults? According to Beauvais et al. (2001), some focus on the transition perspective so as to understand youth as a category. In view of this, there are three elements that determine the transition perspective of youth. First, moving from the stage of gaining education to the labor market, second; moving from family of origin to family of destination, and third, moving out of the parents' home. The transition perspective is considered to be a time of choices and taking decisions that will have a major effect on the future of youth. That means this perspective treats youth as a category between the period of childhood and adulthood in which they prepare themselves for the future (ibid).

I agree that these elements are important in order to understand the transition period, but again these elements cannot be taken out of context. Therefore, Cordon (1997) discusses how defining the period of being youth has changed – how it used to be over for girls when they married and for boys when they joined military service. He argues further that – in contrast with today – the category of youth is determined by the factor of economic and residential dependency, and that the duration of this stage is different from one society to another. Therefore, although leaving the parents' house is an important stage, it does not necessarily entail independent on the economic level because parents can still provide financial support without youth living with them in the same household. He adds that leaving the parental home for education is an important element in the transition process because it is a determinant factor for youth to become adults (ibid). Furlong (2009), in agreement with Cordon, discusses the factor of education and higher education and that today; the process of gaining an education is usually longer than in earlier times and this makes the period of transition longer than usual as well.

Altogether, youth are a social category that is constructed with social expectations. Additionally, leaving the parental home for education and being employed are the two major elements of the transition stage today. Accordingly, the transition period is different from one society to another; especially in the way education and employment are perceived (ibid). Supporting this discussion, Beauvais et al. (2001) acknowledge the fact that youth should be seen and understood within their specific context, because in their opinion, the differences in the social experience, which are determined by the factors of origin, race, and gender, have an effect on youth. Therefore, youth should be seen within their own context, taking various factors into consideration (ibid).

It can thus be noted that youth are not treated equally in society before they reach the stage of independence and therefore, they cannot exercise their rights of citizenship since equality is one of the aspects of citizenship. According to Beauvais et al. (2001), youth are considered to be in the process of becoming citizens, which means they will not be full citizens until they gain their

full independence. Authors further explain how there is no real citizenship without exercising the right of equality.

This discussion shows that in order for youth to be active citizens and participate in society, they need to be treated equally. However they cannot exercise their full rights before reaching full independence, taking into account the fact that reaching this independence is different from one society to another. In my opinion, the absence of a single definition of youth is good on the one hand, because the transition from being youth to adults is experienced differently from one society to another and from one individual to another. On the other hand, it does prevent viewing youth as a clear category, meaning that confusion will remain as to when and how they are allowed to exercise certain rights such as voting or owning property. All this together will lead us to how youth are perceived in society as citizens to be.

2.3 Youth as Citizens: Still to Be

Obviously, citizenship also has no clear definition, which is why, according to Wood (2009), citizenship is seen mainly as the relationship between the individual and the state. Moreover, it is related to a set of practices that determine how a person is part of the society. This means there are rights and duties that are associated with this membership (Wood 2009). Lindström (2010) discusses further that changes take place with these rights and responsibilities from time to time and from one society to another, and defines citizenship based on full membership for adults. As mentioned earlier the right-based approach is the agreement between persons who hold rights and persons who are obligated to provide them (Save the Children 2005). In my opinion, this is what makes this approach applicable to this topic because it will explore the relationship between citizenship that represents a set of rights and state that is obliged to provide them.

2.3.1 Understanding Citizenship

The concept of citizenship cannot be discussed without mentioning Marshall, who formulated the basis of what is written today about this concept. According to Manning and Ryan (2004), Marshall argues that there are three elements that provide equal participation in political life. These three elements are civil rights, political rights, and social rights. Lindström (2010) agrees on this discussion and adds that each one of these rights according to Marshall is related to a specific institution and was not achieved at once. First there was freedom of speech and the right to justice, followed by the right to vote, and finally welfare rights were achieved. On the other hand, Lindström mentions that Marshall was criticized because of his discussion about men's citizenship. Lindström argues that there is not only one type of citizenship and its content is different from one society to another (ibid).

Still Manning and Ryan (2004) discuss different ways to understand the concept of citizenship. Some people look at it from a legal standpoint, which is right and responsibilities, while others look at it as a set of practices so as to participate in society. Authors define citizenship as the rights given directly to a

person on reaching age 18. Furthermore, Beauvais et al. (2001) not only define citizenship as rights and responsibilities, but also expand the definition to include access to these rights and the feeling of belonging. They shed light on equality as a major element of citizenship that makes citizenship real and not limited to certain people. Wood (2009) favors the legal model, where the rights of individuals are guaranteed in the law and legal procedures. That is why equality again emerges as an important element, where all members of the society have the same level of access to these rights (ibid).

I agree with the fact that citizenship should be protected by law and also that all individuals should have an equal access to these rights, as I think it is easy for some rights to become exclusive to a certain category or group in society, especially when the state is weak. In this, I agree with Bratton (1989) when he discusses that state structure and elite cannot be analyzed away from the socioeconomic and sociocultural context, although I appreciate the point that Lindström (2010) brings up when she discusses that state citizenship should be defined more as a sociological concept with fewer legal rules, which means more norms and identities.

In sum, I think it is important to have a balance between legal rules and social norms. On the one hand it is important to take into account the context that people are living in and their culture. On the other hand, a legal system that protects people and allows them to exercise their citizenship equally is essential. That is to say to be a full citizen means to be able to hold to account the exercise of coercive power by the State possessing that power.

2.3.2 The Difficulty of Youth and Citizenship

In order to understand the limitations that youth face in becoming active citizens, the concept of active citizens first needs to be explained. According to Wood (2009), active citizenship is related to social, political, and economic levels. In other words, it is about exercising rights and responsibilities. Moreover, active citizens need to have an influence on public life and to be engaged in society as well as in democratic participation. Nonetheless, the author argues that youth as a category are most targeted by the political system in order to become active citizens, yet they are not achieving this.

Regarding the limitations that youth face, in Wood's view, the fact that there is no clear definition for youth and that the transition period is unstable and involves risks and uncertainty prevents youth from becoming active citizens (ibid). In addition, Lindström (2010) demonstrates that youth can take part at the informal level, which is participating in society through volunteer work or making efforts to improve the society. But at the same time one of the limitations they face is being locked out at the formal level, which means legal obligations and rights such as paying taxes, voting, and obeying laws (ibid).

Similarly, Manning and Ryan (2004) argue that the reason youth are not treated equally in society is because they are not fully independent at the economic level and this makes them unable to exercise their full citizenship. Furthermore, the authors explain that youth are not able to be part of the formal participation in society and that is not only with respect the restricted voting of

legal adulthood, but because they face age-based discrimination that reveals itself in owning property and being employed, and being under age – 18 years old – means there is no political citizenship. To put it more simply, Checkoway (2011) argues that without youth participating in society and exercising their rights, they cannot become active citizens (ibid).

This discussion sheds light on the nature of youth as a category and how the adults' perception of this category influences the extent to which youth are allowed to exercise their full rights. In fact, this shows us that youth are allowed to participate in certain areas decided by adults because adults themselves think that this is active participation.

Consequently, Checkoway (2011) defines participation of youth as a right that is protected by the convention of the rights of children. Deriving from the right-based approach, the basis for active participation according to Miller et al. (2005) is the critical participation in the process of decision-making and real participation is implemented as a mutual decision-making process where participants share power. The authors' critique is about the way youth are asked to participate in the process of decision-making and how an agenda that serves certain people is prepared in advance. This is obviously not active participation when the agenda is already set and this process cannot have any benefit for society (ibid). Further social policy of youth is not designed to change the system or to have an influence on the structure of society. He perceives citizenship as a goal in the transition period (Wood 2009).

Moreover, according to United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2006), the right-based approach is based on empowering people, especially marginalized groups. On the other hand Miller et al. (2005) point out that empowerment cannot be discussed without taking into account the power relation in society. They explain that visible forms of power such as policies and laws can be used to undermine the rights of certain groups of people, for instance youth. In addition to this, the invisible power relation shapes certain notions in society about what is acceptable and who is worthy, which will serve certain groups of people in society. In sum, the authors analyze that exercising rights and being an active participant is about challenging power relations in society (ibid).

I agree that in order for youth to exercise their rights they need to challenge power relations in society. That is to say the policies that are being implemented by the state and even the way adults perceive them. At the same time, that cannot happen without youth being aware of their rights, while taking into account that awareness of rights is a step closer to achieve them.

In light of this being an active citizen is about developing a political consciousness and understanding one's rights (Miller et al. 2005). After all Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010) express that although youth and children are the majority of population in many countries, their voice is not taken into account in the political process, and they are ignored by the people in power. Authors describe that the definition of active participation of youth usually ignores the

factor of youth civil rights. For this reason, it can be seen that the discussion is usually about empowering youth instead of giving them their own rights (ibid).

2.3.3 Political Participation: Losing Interest

All together, this brings us to the political participation of youth, which is the main focus of this paper. After all, active political participation by youth has an effect on the decision-making process and changes the structure of society in a way that provides youth with the rights of full citizenship. Following this, Forbrig (2005) shed light on the process of political participation, which requires the establishment of democratic institutions. The author thinks that it is not fair to blame the state and policy makers for not providing youth with their rights and in this course of action, youth must also take responsibility. He argues further that youth benefit from the expanding of democratic politics and procedures more than any other group in society (ibid). On the other hand, Manning and Ryan (2004) clarify that democracy is an ideal idea that has not been achieved, but societies are moving towards it and at a period of time, democracy was exclusive to certain groups of people in society. For instance, women were absent from participating in the process of decision making for a long time. Therefore, there cannot be a real and true democracy without the equal participation of everyone in society. As a result, the crisis of democracy is becoming stronger as youth are moving away from politics, which prevents them from being active citizens (ibid).

Regarding this, Beauvais et al. (2001) point out that youth feel excluded from political participation and the feeling of not belonging to this process causes them to lose interest in improving the community. Authors discuss that identity is the reason behind any interest in public participation and it is not the problem of youth if they do not have an interest in conventional politics and their lack of participation. Evidently, this discourse excludes youth and speaks on their behalf as Miller et al. (2005) explain that policy makers in general have unspoken assumptions and they think that they speak on behalf of the voiceless, while they do not.

In my opinion, all this points out the importance of understanding the term "including youth" within the power relation in the system. In other words, trying to question whether a program or a policy that targets youth is really empowering them and providing active participation or whether it is just happening under the condition of adults or people in power.

However, even though youth lost interest in political participation, they found different forms of expressing their opinions that are more attractive to them than the traditional forms (Forbrig 2005). Supporting this discussion, Lindström (2010) mentions that youth created new spaces and networks and the reason they stay away from voting is because they do not have access to formal channels. The author also brings up the issue that these channels might unintentionally exclude people who are not able to access these channels, and this will eventually cause inequality (ibid).

I think that youth are trying to express their opinion and express their needs. Beside this, the fact that they do not have access to the formal channels makes me realize the need to question the policies that placed such a limitation.

In view of this, Beauvais et al. (2001) conclude that there is a big gap between formal rights that are given to youth and policies that target youth, which makes them unable to enjoy the full rights of citizenship. This is mainly the result of the limitation of age, the contradiction between expected responsibilities from them and rights conferred on, as well as patterns of inequality on the social, economic and cultural levels (ibid).

2.4 Conclusion

It is evident from the literature that youth face many difficulties in becoming active citizens and exercising their rights. On the one hand, no one can deny at any point the rights of youth based on the human rights approach and principles. On the other hand, the implementation of these rights faces many restrictions that limit the participation of youth in society and consequently prevent youth from being real citizens.

Concurrently, I do think that there are many institutions that target youth in achieving real participation in the society. At the same time, the fact that there is a contradiction between rights and policies will eventually be a big obstacle in front of youth that at a certain point will cause them to understand their rights but be unable to practice them. Adding to that, I do believe that these limitations are implemented not only by the system or the state but also by they way adults perceive youth, which becomes a social norm and structure.

In fact, in my opinion the main contradiction comes from responsibilities that are expected of youth and the rights that must be given to them. They are neither adults nor children, which is why the state or policy makers are not able to find a way to deal with them. However, even though it is the responsibility of the state and civil society to encourage youth to be interested in participating in society, at the same time youth themselves should be interested in changing their situation. In other word, since they are a social force, they should be seen and present themselves as the subject for change. The question here is: Why they are not doing so?

Chapter 3 The Challenges of Becoming Real Citizens in Palestine

In this chapter, subsequent to the discussion about the concept of citizenship in the context of the globalisation literature, I will discuss, through interviews I made in Palestine, how the perception of the concept of citizenship is different from perceptions that have been discussed earlier. Since participation is one of the main elements of exercising rights and being active citizens in society, I will focus on the political participation of youth that is a kind of participation that gives legitimacy to the political system and is considered to be the first step towards full citizenship. Above all, I will present the obstacles that Palestinians youth face in order to have a real voice in Palestine. I think that besides the obstacles that youth as a category face in general, there are other obstacles that Palestinian youth face in particular that make their situation different.

The Palestinian situation is complicated and controlled by different elements. That is to say, answering the research question means exploring the relation between different elements and actors in the Palestinian society. Therefore, I am going to start with the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank that supposedly plays the role of state in Palestine.

3.1 The Dilemma of the Palestinian Authority

I think the dilemma facing Palestinian society and especially youth is that although they are aware that the Palestinian Authority is not a sovereign, independent state, in their daily life they expect it to act as an independent state and consequently overlook its limitations. Therefore, in the absence of a sovereign and independent state, full citizenship rights cannot be exercised. This argument makes it clear that citizenship cannot be seen out of context, as was mentioned earlier in the literature (Gearin 2003).

3.1.1 Citizenship Under Occupation?

As for the issue of citizenship in Palestine, according to Joseph (2000), even after signing the declaration of principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in September 1993, citizenship remains an unclear concept in Palestine. The author discusses further that Palestine itself has no clear definition yet, which makes the concept of citizenship even harder to define. In her opinion, the situation in Palestine is going through a transitional period of emerging as a national state and a process of developing the concept of citizenship on the one hand, which author considers a positive process. On the other hand, however, Palestinian citizenship is still under the control of the occupying power. For example, Israeli approval is required before a Palestinian ID can be issued. Moreover, Palestinians are facing the limitations of the Oslo accords, the formulation and implementation of new policies, and the changing patterns of political participation, all of which do not help the development of the concept of citizenship in Palestine (ibid).

It can be seen that youth questioned the concept of citizenship itself during interviews. They asked explicitly whether it is even possible to discuss the concept of citizenship under occupation. Haytham (23 years old) says:

> *"Citizenship means rights and duties, here, where are you a citizen? What does the PA provide you with as a citizen? When I get my rights, I do my duties. Here, they are not giving me my rights but only asking for my duties! I am not a Palestinian citizen because we don't have a state, I cannot take this concept out of context and implement it here, we are under occupation."*

To analyze the process of state building in the West Bank after the Oslo accords, Marshall (2011) discusses that there are two discourses; one states that there is no law, in the sense that there is no justice and no system and the other discourse states that, on the contrary there is law and at least people are able to walk freely in streets. The author argues that both discourses are true in way; there is law enforcement in the sense that there are police and soldiers who give a general feeling of governmental control. On the other hand, there is no independent judiciary enforcing law (Marshall 2011). Through interviews, it became clear that youth also think that these two discourses are true in a way. Ziad (27 years old), Hamas, states:

> *"When I see the intelligence agency is investigating the cases of corruption, it makes me feel safe. The police and security services, if they respect the freedom of people, give me a feeling of honor due to the existence of these services."*

On the other hand, Joseph (2000) brings up one of the clear privileges that the Palestinian Authority gained from Oslo accords and that is the foundation of a strong police and security force. Nevertheless, Marshall (2011) clarifies another aspect of the police and security role, which is an unspoken acknowledgment that Palestinian security forces are not there to provide security for the Palestinian people, but security for Israelis from Palestinians, and Israel made it clear that the authority that is given to the Palestinian Authority is derived from Israel itself (ibid).

The responses of youth regardless of their political affiliation showed that practices of the Palestinian Authority are drifting away from what good governance means. The Palestinian Authority is monitoring people in order to keep them and the situation under control. Tamer, who represents one of the leftist parties in one the Palestinian universities (21 years old), describes:

> *"The Palestinian Authority allocates 40% of its budget to the institutions of security, which forms the first line of defending Israel, which means in case of any political activity against occupation, the Palestinian Authority will arrest me first."*

Regarding the issue of security, Sara (20 years old), who is politically independent, meaning she is not affiliated with any political party says:

> *"I feel that they are controlling people, in any place, 90% of the time there is a spy who is recording your talk and taking notes; we are losing our freedom. For example, my friend faced a problem, a guy was harassing her in the street and she told him I will call the police and he took out his card and said I am from the intelligence agency, call whoever you want."*

In addition, Samih (20 years old), leftist and NGO activist, mentions:

> *"The intelligence agency asked me to meet them and the officer showed me a 27-page file, last page of which contained a report that I had hung a photo of my friend who was martyred by the Israeli military forces. This photo was under the name of the martyr's friends and did not belong to any political party. Then the officer asked me to give him the names of my politically active leftist friends."*

As the previous data shows, it is difficult for youth to participate in a formal political process. Hind, who is affiliated with Fatah, thinks that in the West Bank, people are allowed to express themselves within certain limits that do not threaten the existence of the Palestinian Authority; otherwise the person who does express his or her political view freely will face a serious problem. On the subject of security, Tamer reports that once the security forces of the university told him he should remember that there are limits for criticism and that the Palestinian Authority and Yasser Arafat are red lines that cannot be crossed at any point.

3.1.2 Policy for Youth in Palestine

These exercises of the Palestinian Authority make us wonder how the PA perceives youth as a category in law. Brakel (2009) states that youth were not a legal category under Palestinian law and that after the second Intifada in 2000, the intention to develop a policy for youth was not pursued. Afterward, in 2003, the national youth and adolescent policy was drafted by the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MoYS) and it was finalized in 2005. Brakel clarifies that although there was an initiation and there is already a national youth policy, it is clearly not implemented (Brakel 2009).

In fact, this law became active in 2011 and it contains 30 articles. In brief, I will address the articles that concern youth participation in society. These articles state that youth have the right to create or join political parties and the right of engaging in active political participation through voting. Regarding the parliament of youth, it states that youth should be trained in communication skills and democratic discussion. Moreover, they should be given the chance to participate in decision-making processes and encouraged to be politically active (Palestinian National Authority Ministry of Youth and Sport 2011).

Even though youth are accorded the right to join a political party by law, they were not always able to exercise this right. For instance, youth mentioned many incidents that reveal the existence of a serious contradiction between policies of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the active exercise of political

rights by youth. Particularly, I found out that the level of this contradiction was determined and dependent on the political party that the youth are affiliated to. For example, Ziad (27 years old) represents Hamas in one of the Palestinian universities in the West Bank; he was arrested by the Palestinian Authority and was imprisoned for ten days. He says:

> *"What hurts me is that I knew they arrested me because of my political membership in Hamas. They wanted to know everything and we are at a political time where no one shows all their cards."*

In addition, the Palestinian Authority did not follow legal procedures when they extended his detention. Ziad explains: "I contacted many human rights organizations and told them what happened to me in detail; they told me the extension of my detention had no basis."

In view of this, the youth I interviewed made a distinction between the image that the Palestinian Authority is trying to present, which is a democratic state, and its practices, which have nothing to do with democracy. This distinction shows a serious contradiction between the exercises and policies of the Palestinian Authority and the law, which is not being implemented. That is why Bailey and Murray (2013) acknowledge the fact that Palestinian law for youth is based on respect for human rights and individual freedom, but they argue that there is a gap between the law and its implementation. Abu Fasheh (2013) confirms that addressing the issue of youth should be within the framework of rights and not based solely on constitutional law, but be considered as a national duty.

3.1.3 Loss of Interest in Political Participation: Why?

According to Abu Fasheh (2013), political participation is important since it gives legitimacy to the political system. However, the author adds that despite the fact that youth have voting power in Palestine, they are facing a mechanism of power relations in society that makes them appear to be a marginalized group, especially on the political level (ibid). Miller et al. (2005) elaborate further; "Youth empowerment begins when they not only recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, but act to change the existing power relation" (ibid: 34)

By contrast, interviews that I conducted showed that youth do not even enjoy the right of voting. Specifically, out of nine youth I interviewed, only one participated in the national elections, and that is because he is twenty-seven years old. That is to say, the last national elections were held in 2006 when youth were less than eighteen years old and they were thus not yet eligible to vote. Moreover, youth explained that if they did not have the chance to vote or participate in the national elections, it is because there is not a democratic state. For this reason, they think it is not possible to talk about democracy or rights of citizenship without having the foremost right manifested by the right to vote. Sara (20 years old), who is politically independent, explains:

"Since we did not have elections for a long time we did not choose the people who are leading us. Without elections it is obvious that we don't have a say; they are deciding and choosing things that the people don't agree on. They do whatever they want."

Viewing this another way, Brakel (2009) expands the discussion to the point that although policies that target youth in the Palestinian law were decided with the participation of youth, some issues that youth raised are out of reach, for example, ongoing occupation, unemployment, and the lack of peace and freedom, which according to the author are beyond the control of the Palestinian Authority (ibid).

In comparison, youth that I interviewed explained why they think the Palestinian Authority is responsible. It is notable that the practices of the Palestinian Authority disappointed youth because youth feel that its policies do not express the people's needs. It was mentioned, in many interviews, that the policies of the Palestinian Authority are actually the policies of the World Bank and that Salam Fayyad helped implement them in Palestine. Moreover, youth think that Salam Fayyad is responsible for the deterioration of the economic situation and furthermore, that he turned Palestinians into a people who are in debt and have loans. According to interviewees, these policies were planned as a means of having control over people and are supported by the occupation. In addition, as a result of this economic condition, the Palestinian people will be busy feeding their families and will forget about the freedom of Palestine. Tamer (21 years old) explains: "The Palestinian Authority created a new reality that makes us slaves of our salaries and bank loans. People worry about losing their salary in case they go to demonstrations against the PA."

Moreover, youth also feel that the Palestinian Authority is giving the impression to people that everything will fall apart if they leave power. Therefore, Hamas will be in control and the overall situation will be worse. All these arguments bring us to the previous statement of youth that the policies of the Palestinian Authority were determined in order to make the Palestinian people, especially the youth, give priority to putting food on the table and stop focusing on political participation.

3.1.4 After Oslo: The Emergence of Elite

In this context, Brakel (2009) raises the fact that when the Palestinian Authority was established after the Oslo accords, the most important government posts were assigned to the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), who were 50 years old when they returned home, thus eliminating chances for youth to be active participants in decision-making process. In fact, the author mentions that most of the people who are in the Palestinian youth unions are over thirty years old and that most of the organizations are dominated by male youth and directed by adults (ibid).

Actually this came up in interviews that youth councils are limited to certain people. Interviewees also mentioned many times how they feel that the

actions of the Palestinian Authority are unfair and some rights are given exclusively to certain people. For example Ziad/Hamas (27 years old) says:

> *"If someone wants to work in the Palestinian Authority institutions, they investigate and if they find out your family had roots in or was active in an Islamic party, they refuse to employ you! Then where is this person is supposed to work? For example, my history would of course influence my career and me!"*

That was also the case for Samih (20 years old), who supports a leftist party, who says:

> *"Even if I wanted to work in the PA institutions, I would face a serious problem because I was a prisoner in an Israeli prison. I would face a problem if I wanted to apply for a job in the Palestinian Authority institutions because I am a former prisoner in addition to supporting a leftist political party, but if I were a former prisoner who supports Fatah, I would not face this problem."*

In sum, there was a general feeling among youth that the Palestinian Authority does not represent them. Some feel that only their political party represents them, while others feel that they should blame themselves for allowing the Palestinian Authority to speak on their behalf. One of the youth explains that he is not willing to hold the ID of the Palestinian Authority. In his opinion, this ID has no power or influence under the occupation. It can be noticed that youth feel that the Palestinian Authority is drifting away from representing the real identity of the Palestinian people and youth. Nevertheless, one of the female interviewees, Maysa, had a different opinion about whether the Palestinian Authority represents the Palestinian people, saying:

> *"I think in front of the public opinion, yes it does and we cannot deny how much it gave people in Palestine, and we ask ourselves what option do we have if not the PA? If they leave, who will be in charge, Hamas?"* [She said this in a tone indicating that she prefers Fatah over Hamas]

I think that Maysa raised a question that many politicians and people in power are afraid to ask, which is if not the PA, what do we have? I think that in order to have a better analysis and a good vision of the political future in Palestine, this point needs a long pause.

3.2 Political Parties: Between Promises and Fulfilment

3.2.1 Division: How is it Relevant?

The Palestinian situation cannot be discussed these days, without mentioning the division between the two political parties Fatah and Hamas. Christophersen et al. (2012) point out that Fatah and Hamas lost their legitimacy as a result of the Palestinian internal division and blocking the horizon of the political process. In the same way, youth that I interviewed point out that the division made the gap between the rights and policies even greater in Palestinian society, especially when it is related to youth who are affiliated to Hamas in the West Bank. Ziad/ Hamas (27 years old) says:

> *"The general political situation is an obstacle, for example I have many activi-*

ties in mind but I cannot implement them because of the bad financial situation that my movement (Hamas) is presently going through. Honestly, if I try to get financial support, I would go back to prison because I am affiliated with Hamas. All of this, of course as you know, stems from the division and the political tension between Fatah and Hamas".

Salem, who is affiliated with Fatah, also agrees that things changed after the division took place between the two parties. He explains that youth lost interest in being politically active. For example, only a few students participate in a demonstration against occupation or in solidarity with the prisoners, while if the activity is related to any other issue like sport, you can notice that everyone is interested.

The tensions between the political parties are not exclusive to Fatah and Hamas; tense relationships also prevail between Fatah and the leftist political parties. Maya (20 years old), who is an active member in the leftist party in one of the Palestinian universities, explains that the tension between Fatah and the political parties reaches its peak during election periods, saying:

"During the election, a lot of students were threatened by Fatah in order to get them to vote for them, and actually that happened with my best friend. They threaten not only the leftist parties, they threaten all the parties, but they feel most threatened by Hamas."

More to the point, a huge number of the Palestinian youth have been put aside by the ruling powers and the political parties instead of being real participants in the political life (Christophersen et al. 2012). Evidently in the interviews, youth perceive the relationship between them and the political parties as an inactive interaction and their answer to the question about their relationship with political parties was that this relationship is based either on a personal or academic level.

3.2.2 Disappointment in Political Parties

In general, according to the youth I interviewed, after the Oslo accords it became clear that these parties were losing their leading role, a role that they once had before the division between Fatah and Hamas. Moreover, youth were aware of the influence of the general political situation on the relationship between the political parties in the Palestinian universities. Interviewees mentioned many times how the relationship between the political parties in the universities is an example of what is happening outside the university. Accordingly, youth acknowledge that there is an interaction between students and the political parties in the universities but that does not mean it is an active interaction, which means it is more a personal interaction. In other words, the Palestinian political parties count on youth during the time of elections (Brakel 2009), but exclude them from political life and the decision-making process, leaving them with no space (ibid). That is why one of the youth mentioned that the role of these parties should go beyond merely solving the academic problems of students. Another interviewee mentioned that this interaction becomes active when the voice of youth can make a change.

Above all, in the interviews it became clear that political parties disappointed youth on one hand because they moved away from the national goal of the Palestinian people, which is the freedom of Palestine. On the other hand, they do not provide youth with space to express their opinion, whether between different political parties or within the same political party. Tamer (21 years old), a leftist, mentions:

> *"If any political party wants to invite a figure to talk about occupation or the political situation, this will mean criticizing other political parties, which will upset them and that is why the political parties avoid such activities; not only that but youth are also unable to express their opinions in their own political parties."*

Some went further in blaming the Palestinian Authority and mentioned how it played a role in youth losing their faith in the political parties. Tamer (21 years old) says:

> *"They did, especially after the Palestinian Authority was established, because the PA gave the impression that it is responsible for everything and everyone else should just stand aside and do nothing and here we notice that the political parties become weaker."*

However, youth also acknowledge the fact that when the leftist parties abandon working and cooperating with the PA after the Oslo accords as a statement against Oslo, leaving the PA to make decisions alone.

Correspondingly Zamareh and Abu Kamesh (2010) discuss that the leaderships of these parties themselves admit there is a gap between youth and political parties and that the situation after the Oslo accords and the shift in goals had an effect on youth.

> *"When Palestinian political work has been carried out within the framework of national movement that believes in pluralism and tolerance and aims at a unified goal of liberation and ending the occupation, Palestinian youth were engaged, playing an influential, active and leading role. When the role of the national movement has diminished in favor of factional considerations, leading to political polarization up to the degree of infighting and division, the partisan work began to cause disillusionment among young people and there has been increasing evidence of loss of confidence and disappointment with these parties."*
> (ibid: 10)

Resulting from this, it can be seen that corruption and political favoritism are seen by youth as two major problems and that is why both Fatah and Hamas are criticized by youth when it comes to the issues of democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression (Christophersen et al. 2012). That is why some of the youth I interviewed refused to contact these political parties in the first place. For example, Sara (20 years old), who is politically independent, says:

> *"I am against these political parties because I am against their policies. I am against the policies of Fatah, I am not with the ideology of Hamas, and you*

cannot be against the leftist parties because they do nothing, and if they do it is only on Facebook."

Another approach was mentioned in criticizing the political parties. Some youth feel that the idea of these political parties is not from the heart of the Palestinian society, and they are outsiders. Haytham (23 years old) who is independent says:

> *"Political parties failed. For example, one of the leftist political parties embraced Gandhi's experience that is based on peace. Gandhi had his own experience and he was very proud of his identity. Where is the identity of this political party? How will you change something in the society when people feel you are coming out of your context and bringing other ideas that worked in another context."*

In my opinion, political parties in Palestine have reached the point where it is the time to question their agendas and the implementation of these agendas.

3.3 Palestinian Youth: Limiting Themselves

After addressing the situation in Palestine and the role of Palestinian Authority and political parties in Palestine, It might seem that the only limitations for being politically active are PA and political parties. This view makes me agree with Forbrig (2005) when he mentions that is not fair only to blame the state or people in power, because youth are also responsible. Through interviews, I found out that youth are facing a political confusion that makes them unable to read the reality, which made them unable to locate the heart of the problem beside occupation in the Palestinian society. This leads us to question how youth understand the role of political parties and how does this understanding affect on their participation in society. Moreover, the nature of the Palestinian society plays an important role in encouraging or discouraging political participation of youth especially females. In addition to that is the effect of occupation, which cannot be ignored, since it is a big umbrella that covers and controls everything in Palestine.

3.3.1 Youth Understanding of Political Actors

As it became clear earlier, there is a general feeling among the Palestinian youth that the PA does not represent them, while at the same time they insist on the fact that only PLO represents them. According to youth, this feeling of disappointment stems from the Oslo accords that were signed by the PA. This position points out a serious confusion that youth have between the role of PLO, which is comprised all political parties expect Hamas, and the Palestinian Authority. The fact is, the PLO signed the Oslo accords with Israel (Joseph 2000) and in other words, the Palestinian Authority was established as the result of the Oslo accords (Brakel 2009).

Another issue that became clear in the interviews is the misunderstanding between the Palestinian Authority and Fatah as a political party. We can notice that in the interview with Hind (20 years old), who is the secretary of Fatah in one of the Palestinian universities, she expresses how unhappy she is with this common confusion. She explains further that although she is a supporter of

Fatah, she is against the PA and its policies. Hind sheds light on the fact that not every person who supports Fatah necessarily agrees with or supports the Palestinian Authority. On the other hand, Haytham explains that Fatah considers itself PLO because they form the majority of its members and that is why they control the voting and the decisions in PLO. This causes confusion not only for youth, but for adults as well.

All these together illustrate the confusion that youth are facing regarding the roles of different political actors. In other words, this confusion makes it difficult for youth to understand the duties of building the state under the limitations of the PLO agreements and occupation. Correspondingly, it is evident that youth did not lose faith in the old politicians such as Yasser Arafat, Al Hakeem, and Ahmad Yassin, and for this reason, most of those I interviewed answered that they feel proud when these names are mentioned in front of them and this is despite the fact that they do not agree with some of them. Maya (23 years old) says, "At the time of Yasser Arafat, you could feel that there was a political issue, a main goal that united people; that time has passed. Youth now are no longer interested in politics."

These data illustrate that Palestinians in general and youth in particular perceive the PLO as their legitimate representative, and they are ignoring the fact that this political body disappointed people and drifted away the national goal of Palestinian liberation. Yasser Arafat was legally able to sign the Oslo accords in the name of the PLO, since Fatah is the majority in PLO. When the PLO signed the Oslo accords, the leftist parties rejected the agreements and they did not participate in anything that related to them. For this reason, leftist youth were more able to express their frustration at what Yasser Arafat did. For example, Samih (20 years old) says:

> *"Politicians predicted the situation of today and they tried to warn us of present events. Of course, I am excluding the former president Yasser Arafat, because he and his cast are the reason for the present situation we are in today after the Oslo accords."*

Simultaneously, the leftist youth also criticize the position of the leftist parties towards the PA after Oslo accords. They think refusing to work and cooperate with the PA after Oslo was a weak way of demonstrating their opposition and that this left PA alone to control the political situation and make decisions. It is evident here again that youth have unclear understanding about the role of the Palestinian Authority, as the PA is only a tool for implementing the Oslo accords that the PLO signed and agreed on and the PA is not legally able to make any decision in the name of the Palestinian people.

We can see that despite the awareness among youth regarding Fatah's influence in the PLO and how they are also able to criticize the way leftist parties expressed their disagreement with the Oslo accords that there is an unclear understanding of the role of each political body and consequently youth blame and attack the wrong political bodies. To discuss this from another perspective, youth are refusing to admit that the real problem is the PLO itself, since the

PLO is their only legitimate representative and questioning it means at some point losing faith in any coming change that might free Palestine.

It is worth mentioning that there was a tone of disappointment in the voice of youth regarding new politicians such as Mahmoud Abbas, Salam Fayyad, and others. Many of them said that when they hear their names they would curse the time they are living in. Maya (20 years old) says: "I would feel bad. They do not convince me of anything; they did not do anything for Palestine."

However, the concept of citizenship in the Palestinian case cannot be discussed apart from the influence of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian people and society which is, according to Joseph (2000), still an occupying power at all levels. The impact, as it is stated by Al-Ghussain (2013), is not only on the physical level, but it is also on the psychological level and the Palestinian people face daily humiliation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from checkpoints, settlement expansion, and the impact of the separation wall on their life. All these factors are perceived as a form of a structural violence that targets people on a daily basis and is planned by the Israeli occupation. Primarily therefore, this occupation is an occupation of mind, and not only of land, so as to fracture the spirit of Palestinian people (ibid).

3.3.2 Limitation of Being Politically Active

Youth perceive occupation as a major actor and a continuous threat that cannot be undermined in hindering political activity. I interviewed youth who were arrested by the occupying power for different charges. For example, Ziad who supports Hamas, mentions that he spent nine years of his life in an Israeli prison and that makes him think a million times before being politically active again. Moreover, I discovered through my research that occupation was never mentioned alone and was always mentioned alongside the Palestinian Authority, which, according to youth, facilitates occupation.

On the other hand, some interviewees were aware that in the end the occupying power controls everything. Maysa (23 years old) says: "We are under occupation; even if the president or PA changed, we are still under occupation and that is why we are not completely free. I don't see any change in the near future!"

Accordingly, youth agreed on the point that the situation of youth is not good and there are no opportunities for youth to express themselves, but they disagreed on whom to blame depending on their political affiliation. For example Ziad (27 years old), Hamas supporter, says:

> *"The youth situation is really sad. They don't have space to express themselves and when they graduate, they don't have job opportunities. I blame the Palestinian Authority and the political parties."*

Youth who are politically independent, which means that they do not support any political party, and youth who support leftist parties think that the Palestinian Authority and the occupation are both responsible. Samih (20 years

old). A leftist supporter, says:

"If you think of changing the situation, the next day you will find yourself a prisoner either of the Palestinian Authority intelligence service or in an Israeli prison."

And Salem (21 years old), who supports Fatah, says: "The economic situation is very bad, they have a voice and they say what they want, but nothing changes on the ground. I blame only the occupation."

In sum, it cannot be claimed that Palestinian youth are not aware that occupation is the controlling power in Palestine. Through interviews, it can be seen that this fact is in the back of their minds. At the same time, the policies and exercise of the Palestinian Authority that are supported by Israel have caused youth to switch focus from the occupation to the PA, which is a strategy that the occupier is fully aware of and working on.

3.3.3 Youth Perception of Political Participation

That is why Abu Fasheh (2013) perceives that youth are responsible in this process and that they should express their needs and exercises their rights, while acknowledging the fact that it is difficult for youth to express themselves in Palestine because of the influence of family and norms in the society. Furthermore, Brakel (2009) argues that the major problem for youth in Palestine is that adults are the main actors in shaping the situation, which does not give any space to youth participation. In addition to this, any change that youth are planning to make will be under the overall political situation (ibid).

According to youth I interviewed, the most effective ways of expressing themselves and participating effectively in society are through social networks, writing, stand-up comedy, conferences, and planting and cleaning the streets. When the discussion was more specific about the situation in Palestine, they would mention how there is not a body that gathers youth together or one specific way to make a revolution against the PA and resist the occupation. They describe that they are living in a time where political participation for them in Palestine means writing a blog under a fake name. Youth mentioned through all the interviews that it is not even possible to talk about political participation when there are not even elections.

Evidently, there is a general feeling among youth that they are not being politically active because of the fear of occupation and the PA. For instance, Maya (20 years old) says:

"My parents worry about me because of the Palestinian Authority and the Israelis. Once I uploaded a photo on Facebook criticizing the Palestinian Authority policies and my father told to me to remove it and that I should not upload such a photo. My parents were also afraid for their business, which will be negatively affected."

Further, Maysa mentioned that there is no motivation for youth to change

the situation or go out to demonstrate. Adding to that, Hind explains how the priorities of youth are to have a stable economic situation. Sara (20 years old) went further in analyzing the situation:

> *"Some of us don't care anymore, some care but lost hope in any change, and some do things even though they know it would not change anything, they just do it to make themselves feel better. They are like that as a result of the Palestinian Authority policies, and also because they have something to lose now like loans and if your parents are working for the PA, then you cannot do anything as you would be afraid."*

Moreover, it became clear that especially boys are afraid to have political activities because that might end them up in the Palestinian or Israeli prison. Considering this from another angle, Haytham thinks that youth do not have a safe area, where could they go? And against whom will they stand? That is why they should build their own safe area first because they are the biggest category in our society.

Another factor that plays a role in being an active participant in society is awareness. Regarding this issue, interviewees mentioned many times how some youth are still lost and do not know what they want, and they need someone to direct them. Supporting this discussion, youth who are active in the student unions mentioned how youth in general are not aware of the political situation. Hind thinks that is because youth are not interested in the problems that society faces, they are not aware of their own rights. This feeling was not limited to the students who are politically active at universities but also included students who are active in NGOs. Sara (20 years old) says:

> *"During the time of the war on Gaza, we used to collect donations for the people of Gaza. The irony was that when we were collecting these donations, we noticed that the donations were products of the settlements. Can you feel how ignorant people are! And again I think the Palestinian Authority after the Oslo accords made all this happen."*

Interviewees perceive this as the result of the work of organizations that focus on cultural awareness and ignore political awareness. Consequently, youth support a strong party without understanding its goals. In addition to this, there is another factor that plays a role and that is the nature of the Palestinian society, which is patriarchal and controls relations between people. Further, Brakel (2009) discusses the difficulties faced specifically by young women and the restrictions imposed on them that are the result of social norms in the Palestinian society (ibid).

For example, Hind describes how it is a challenge for a girl to be politically active in a society where the majority of people who control the decision-making process are males. She talks about her personal experience and says*:*

> *" In our society, a girl is not supposed to be active on many levels. At the beginning, it was hard for my extended family to understand my activities, it was strange for them, they would tell me 'Stop, you are a girl; focus only on your studies'. But after that they accepted what I do and they got used to it."*

Girls whom I interviewed discuss that girls are not politically active for two reasons: fear and not being aware of their rights. They think that if girls were aware of their rights, then they would be able to face the society. According to them, society is responsible for raising the awareness among youth, especially girls, and at the same time girls also bear some responsible for this.

However, Haytham brings up another point, which is the lack of identity awareness and explains that it is a problem when you feel that you are a stranger among your own people. He mentions further that the identity and women's rights should always be taken into account. After all, even if Palestinians get their freedom, without the identity and women's rights, Palestinians will remain strangers in their own society.

To sum up, Christophersen et al. (2012) clarify that youth in Palestine reached this point because they give priority to their family and employment, despite the fact that they are unhappy with the condition of their job. The authors bring up the fact that there are many reasons behind Palestinian youth being passive in politics. First, it is the political elite that claims to represent the resistance of the Palestinians vis-à-vis Israel and the international community. Second, the culture of fear that is related to political activities and being politically active, acknowledging that the two political parties Fatah and Hamas are both making youth think twice before getting involved in politics. Third, the international aid to Palestine intends to reduce energy for political activities and focuses only on cultural and social initiatives. Finally, Palestinians do not think that the situation is bad enough to realize their full human potential (ibid). Moreover, the organizations that target youth are working on building citizenship rules without focusing on the real participation and engaging youth in decision-making (Bailey and Murray 2013).

Chapter 4 Conclusion

Being a full citizen requires an active state, which means a state that is capable of defending rights. The Palestinian Authority is expected to be a state or to be in the process of building a sovereign state, but unfortunately that is not the case:

> *"The art of not governing becomes the art of governing –that is, in this neoliberal logic, the state thrives out of its retreat. Even more importantly, such an approach also serves an economic purpose. As a matter of fact, the Israeli administrators have proven to be exceptional neoliberal administrators, managing to deny social services to a population under their control."*
> (Plasse-Couture 2013: 461)

In this context, the occupation controls everything in Palestine, even the areas over which the Palestinian Authority is supposed to have complete control. That is why the Oslo accord appears to have set up a state with no sovereignty in terms of day-to-day protection of its 'citizens' against external coercion, but which has a capacity for internal coercion and uses that capacity to maintain order and produce elites. In this case, the creation of a neocolonial administration resulted in confusion and facilitated the plans of the occupying power. All this eventually caused the split between political parties, systematically changed the priorities of people, and led to a lack of direction among youth.

"The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Magaziner 2011: 54). Therefore, the ooccupation has a great interest in encouraging Palestinian youth to be politically passive and lose interest in political participation. However, Palestinian youth are not helping by retreating into fantasizing and idealizing the resistance of the past as a psychosocial response to frustration. At the same time it is understandable that this came as a reaction to the fact that political parties as well as the Palestinian Authority have drifted away from the national goal, causing people to lose interest in what they have to say.

As a result, it is important here to keep in mind the two main strategic tasks of the Palestinian people: the national liberation task of building a state and the national goal of meeting the social, economic and cultural needs of the Palestinian people. These two tasks should be implemented in harmony; otherwise any contradiction between these two tasks will lead us to a crisis. This is the main challenge faced by all Palestinian bodies – PLO, PA, political parties and civil society – as well as by Palestinian youth.

This situation makes us understand that effective citizenship in the limited context of globalization can never happen for the majority of Palestinians, and this is recognized by young, politically active Palestinians who sadly can only fantasize about the pre-Oslo struggle against occupation as relevant, authentic politics, while their less politically active contemporaries are possibly lost in cynicism and dreams of migration. It must be taken into account that the interviews I conducted were with youth who are politically active and yet

are still discouraged by the wider Palestinian political context in which they have to operate. This leads to the tentative generalization that young people who are not active are probably even more discouraged.

This discussion concludes that adults and youth in Palestine are both still citizens to be. Moreover, there is still a long way to go to achieve a sovereign state and this requires the courage to criticize what has been done thus far, in the hope of finding our place again – not only on the map but in reality.

> *"Think of Palestine as a small, extremely congested piece of land from which we have been pushed. Every effort we make to retain our Palestinian identity is also an effort to get back on the map."* (Said and Mohr 1999: 62)

Appendixes

Appendix A: Interview Questions

- How do you evaluate your work with the NGO or student union at your university?

- What challenges do you face in your work?

- What organizations have you become in contact with in your work?

- How did you come in contact with the Palestinian Authority?

- How did you come in contact with the political parties?

- Which political party will you vote for?

- Did you vote in the last national or local elections? Who did you vote for?

- What do you think are the most effective ways for youth to express their opinions?

- What do think about the state of democracy in the West Bank?

- Do you feel as a Palestinian youth that the Palestinian Authority represents you?

- What do you think about what is happening in Egypt?

- If I give you quotes from former Palestinian politicians what would you feel?

- If I give you quotes from the new Palestinian politicians what would you feel?

- If you had the choice, would you leave Palestine?

Appendix B: Date of Interviews

Alias	Gender	Political affiliation	Interview Date
Samih	Male	Leftist	10/7/2013
Tamer	Male	Leftist	13/7/2013
Hind	Female	Fatah	13/7/2013
Maysa	Female	Independent: not affiliated with any political party. NGO activist.	18/7/2013
Salem	Male	Fatah	19/7/2013
Ziad	Male	Hamas	22/7/2013
Maya	Female	Leftist	29/7/2013
Sara	Female	Independent: not affiliated with any political party. NGO activist.	3/8/2013
Haytham	Male	Independent: not affiliated with any political party. NGO activist.	6/8/2013

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