Restrictions of Movement in Palestine
Intersectional Impacts and Strategies of Resistance

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Abstract

In this study I use semi-structured interviews and participant observation, in an intersectional and post-colonial theoretical framework, to look at one specific aspect of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory: the restrictions of movement that are a result of the occupation, and how these influence different groups of the population in different ways, more specifically by analysing intersections of gender and age. I consider not only restrictions caused by physical barriers, but also barriers caused by fear of violence or detainments and arrests. In the second part of the study I analyse strategies of resistance against the issues caused by the restrictions of movement and their gendered aspects. I show how the effects of the Wall, barriers and restrictions of movement are gendered and age-related, identifying multiple vulnerable locations at different intersections of gender and age. I also demonstrate how both individual strategies of resistance and the possibilities to participate in organised forms of resistance are gendered.
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1. Introduction

In this study I will look at one specific aspect of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory: the restrictions of movement that are a result of the occupation, and how these influence different groups of the population in different ways, more specifically by looking at the intersections of gender and age. In the second part of the study, I analyse strategies of resistance against the issues caused by the restrictions of movement and their gendered aspects. The main questions that this study attempts to answer are: *Do the restrictions of movement in Palestine have gendered or intersectional aspects? What are the existing strategies of change and resistance, on an individual level, with regards to the restrictions of movement in Palestine? What are the gendered aspects of these strategies?* I have not attempted to do an exhaustive analysis of all of the effects of the occupation on the Palestinian population, even though such an analysis would surely be useful – but it is a much larger project that hopefully I will be able to take on in the future.

I chose to focus mainly on the intersections of gender and age to delimit the area of study, given the limited time and space available for this study. There are other categories and intersections that probably also would significantly influence how an individual experience the restrictions of movement, and the possibilities to develop strategies of resistance, such as for example disability, sexuality, and geographical location, however given my need to limit the scope of this study I focus on gender and age as they can be considered to be among the main determinants of an individual’s location in the Palestinian society.

I believe that any study on Palestine needs to take into account the historical events that have shaped the country into what it is today – the 1948 Nakba (disaster) and the forced displacements that it entailed, as well as the military occupation of the rest of Palestine in 1967. In 1948, after the end of the British Mandate over Palestine, and the formation of the state of Israel, more than half of the country’s Arabs were forced to leave their homes. As Rashid Khalidi explains, this meant that: “[…] a majority of the Arab urban population of Palestine, the most highly educated, the wealthiest, and the most culturally active, had lost their property and become refugees.” (Khalidi 2007:2) After the war in
June 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. The military occupation has since been followed by the construction of settlements, effectively absorbing much of the occupied territories into Israel. (Khalidi 2007:210) These major events have understandably had an impact on the lives of every Palestinian, and the effects of the occupation are on-going, touching nearly all spheres of life, from work, school, family life and decisions on migration, living arrangements and so on. (Taraki 2006:xvi-xvii)

In terms of restrictions of movement, an event that has had a major impact is the decision that the Israeli government declared in 2002; that it was going to build a barrier along the border with Palestine, stating that this was being done to prevent attacks in Israel. However, this barrier, which I will hereafter refer to as the Wall, according to the definition of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) 2004, does not follow the Green Line (which is the border that was established in the Armistice of 1949), but rather runs inside the West Bank for about 85% of its route. The completed Wall will be approximately 712 km, which is more than double the length of the Green Line. Currently, around 65% of the Wall has been completed. In 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an Advisory Opinion on the "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory". This advisory opinion declared the Wall and its associated regime illegal, and called on Israel to terminate construction and dismantle those parts built beyond the Green Line. Up to this day, Israel has chosen to ignore this sentence and kept on building the Wall.

Around 85% of the Israeli settler population live in the area between the Wall and the Green Line, an area that also is home to approximately 11,000 Palestinians, who now require permits to keep on living in their own homes. The Palestinian communities who live in this area, which is also referred to as the “Seam Zone”, are particularly vulnerable in terms of their access to workplaces and other essential services since they need permits to cross the Wall and access the rest of the West Bank, a situation that also divides many families. (OCHA 2013:1, BMU 2012) The communities on the Palestinian side of the Wall are also hard hit by its effects, since they in many instances were cut off from their farm lands, lost access to their workplaces or have to spend long periods of time waiting at checkpoints whenever they want to go somewhere. (OCHA 2014, BMU
Access and movement have been especially restricted, not only because of the main Wall but also due to other barriers and checkpoints, in the Seam Zone, in the Jordan Valley, in villages in the vicinity of Israeli settlements and within the Israeli controlled part of Hebron City. (UN ESCWA 2015:4)

My original plan for this research project was to look at the direct effects of the Wall on the communities living near it and the gendered or intersectional aspects of those effects. After arriving in Palestine, however, I quickly realised that I was facing first of all an access issue. The Palestinian communities that are located behind the Wall, on the Israeli side in the so-called Seam Zone, are understandably among the most affected, but difficult to reach for me due to the need for special permits to visit these areas. Therefore I chose to focus my research on the areas that I was able to reach, and also on areas that even if not affected directly by the main Wall¹, are still very much affected by restrictions of movement caused by other walls, barriers and checkpoints constructed as a result of the Israeli occupation. These areas are also among those that have to face the biggest issues due to the restriction of movement and loss of access to land. I also take into account the effects of illegal settlements in proximity to my informants’ homes and workplaces, as in some cases, particularly in Hebron where settlements are present inside the city centre, this has a major impact on people’s overall sense of security and possibility to move around freely. Thus, my interpretation of the term “restrictions of movement” does not only take into account physical obstacles such as walls or checkpoints, but also obstacles created by psychological dimensions of fear and strategies to avoid being arrested or detained. These latter ones might not be as immediately obvious as the striking images of walls and checkpoints that you see almost anywhere you travel in the Palestinian territories, but they are nonetheless very evident in people’s descriptions of their everyday lives.

I have chosen to look not only at how the Wall or other barriers affect the population, but also on what the population’s strategies of resistance and change are. Lisa Taraki specifies in the book “Living Palestine”, with regards to the lived reality of Palestinian households, that: “Resistance to colonial domination stands out as an important component of this lived reality, as Palestinians have struggled in many different ways,

¹ Such as the city of Hebron and the surrounding areas.
throughout most of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, for freedom from domination.” (Taraki 2006:xvi) The fact that the population of Palestine has been living under occupation for several decades has in fact made resistance an integral part of their lives, both as a necessity and as an active choice. Taking inspiration from post-colonial feminists, such as Chandra Mohanty (Mohanty 1986), in researching Palestinians from my position of a Western woman, I want to avoid painting an image of Palestinians, and especially of Palestinian women, as a unified victimised group. I wish to reflect the nuances and diversity of the group I have chosen to focus my research on, and I hope to achieve this by leaving ample space for their own accounts of their lived reality and by showing how they are actively working to resist and achieve change.

2. Methods and theories

I fully agree with Gayle Letherby who, in her book, “Feminist research in theory and practice”, emphasizes that “[...] the choices that researchers make, the practicalities that need to be considered when doing research and the process of actually doing the research are all likely to affect not only the dynamics of particular research relationships and the research process, but also the research ‘product(s)’: the ‘findings’, the ‘results’, the ‘knowledge’.” (Letherby 2003:100) For this reason, in this short chapter on methods and theories I will not only account for what methods and theories I have used in my research, but also explain why I chose them, and how the choices I made during the research process might have influenced the results.

Donna Haraway, in her famous article on situated knowledge, argued that a researcher should use a reflection on one’s own position in the world and the reality one lives in, in order to achieve a partially objective knowledge. (Haraway 1988) Nina Lykke summarizes this idea of partially objective knowledge as: “[...] a knowledge of the specific part of reality that she or he can ‘see’ from the position in which she or he is materially discursively located in time, space, body and historical power relations”. (Lykke 2010:5) I agree with this need to position myself, in order to understand the possible effect my identity might have on the research itself as well as on the interpretation of the results, and will therefore do so in this section.
I somewhat struggle to define myself in terms of nationality, having spent half of my life living in countries different from that of my origin, Sweden, and my answer to the question “where are you from?” is often slightly confused. But I am a white European woman, I define myself as feminist, and I am an activist, in particular when it comes to issues regarding Palestine. I have been doing volunteer work on advocacy projects concerning Palestine, an activity that has increased my interest in this area and is one of the reasons why I want to explore these issues in this study; with the hope of creating knowledge that can be used to make the situation better, somehow. As Sandra Harding puts it, when writing about standpoint theory, explaining how standpoint research projects depart from the experience of oppressed groups but do not stop at the mere description: “Standpoint research projects are focused on critically examining what’s wrong and what’s still useful or otherwise valuable in the dominant institutions of society, their cultures and practices.” (Harding 2009:195) In this study, I hope to be able to critically examine the dominant framework of the Israeli occupational power by looking at how the Palestinian women and men that I have interviewed position themselves in it and see themselves as affected by it, as well as how they negotiate resistance to this dominant power into their lives.

During the field phase of the research I reflected a lot on how my identity, primarily as a Western woman, gave me access to different spheres. Especially when meeting activists in Hebron I felt that since that environment was very male-dominated, my identity as Western was what helped me gain access. Would I have had the same access, or been able to interact with them in the same way, if I had been a Palestinian woman (of the same origin as these activists)? I am not sure.\(^2\)

How to dress was also of importance. The need to dress modestly so as not to offend anyone on cultural/religious grounds and make the people I was interviewing uncomfortable was always in my mind, but also the importance of not wearing what could be seen as typical Palestinian clothes or apparel that might be associated with activists, so that I would not be denied access at the checkpoints – given that many of the

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\(^2\) I will briefly consider obstacles to female participation in organised resistance in the section on strategies of resistance.
communities I accessed for the research are located behind Israeli military checkpoints it was crucial for the result of the research to be able to pass them.

2.1 Semi-structured interviews

I conducted a total of 7 interviews with people living in areas affected by restrictions of movement; five of the respondents are women and two men. This is a small number and the interviews are therefore not to be seen as representative of the issues that the whole population face, but rather as examples of what the effects of the barriers and settlements can be on the individual level. With regards to the validity of this method, I draw on Steinar Kvale’s points on communicative and pragmatic validity. Kvale argues that: “Method as a guarantee of truth dissolves; with a social construction of reality the discourse of the community becomes focal.” (Kvale 2007:125) He also claims that there is not always a need to generalize, if the aim is rather to analyse socially and contextualised ways of understanding the social world, and that the validity of the findings can be tested in a number of ways. (Kvale 2007: 124-128) In this study I am mainly relying on what Kvale calls “member validation”, where the interviewer engages with the subject in a conversation about the correct interpretation of their statements.

When doing the interviews I had a set of prepared questions, but in most cases the informant preferred to just tell her or his story, without answering questions. In those cases I let the respondents tell their story as they wished to do it, since I feel that one of the important aspects of this research is to give space to the voice of the people I interviewed. I am using the case study method according to the definition of Leslie McCall, according to whom many feminist social science researchers “[...] use the case study method to identify a new or invisible group—at the intersection of multiple categories—and proceed to uncover the differences and complexities of experience embodied in that location. Traditional categories are used initially to name previously unstudied groups at various points of intersection, but the researcher is equally interested in revealing—and indeed cannot avoid—the range of diversity and difference within the group.” (McCall 2005:1782) to try to identify intersections of particular interest, and to understand whether the lived experiences of different parts of the researched group bring them to choose different forms or strategies of resistance.
Interviews were conducted in English, with the help of interpreters who translated to and from Arabic, with the exception of one interview that was conducted directly in English. As B. Filep mentions in the 2009 article “Interview and translation strategies: coping with multilingual settings and data” using an interpreter puts the researcher at risk of receiving an "interpreter version". (Filep 2009:63) It makes the interview more complicated in that as not only the interactions between the interviewee and the researcher can influence the result but also the interactions between the researcher and the interpreter, as well as the interactions between interpreter and interviewee. For this reason I chose to rely on interpreters that already knew the informant, as I felt that introducing two unknown persons (myself and an interpreter) when discussing issues that can be quite emotional and sensitive might be detrimental to the flow of the interview. The fact of relying on interpreters that were already familiar with the situation of the people we were meeting though could also have a negative effect, in that that certain things might not be mentioned or emphasized since they seem “obvious” to both the informant and the interpreter given their familiarity with the situation.

Working through an interpreter only for the duration of the interviews also proved to be a challenge when transcribing the registered interviews, as I would have liked to have access to a translator at that point as well, in order to double-check that the translation was accurate. In some cases the translator spoke in third person (“she says that...”), and in those cases I have switched to a first person account when transcribing.

What made the interviews complicated were in some cases the presence of other people in the room, or people entering and exiting the room, sometimes causing the informant or me to slightly lose our focus. Again, I believe that the language barrier might have had an impact – if I would have understood the exchanges that happened in Arabic during these little breaks in the conversation it might have been easier to pick up the interview again and understanding more of the mood or general atmosphere in the room. One last limit to the amount of information I could collect through the interviews was the lack of time available for the field research. Since the theme of the research often touches upon issues that can be sensitive and emotional, and it is hard to establish a strong enough connection and trusting relationship with only one meeting and interview, I think I might have gotten more information if I would have had more time at my disposal. I
believe that ideally it would have been better to firstly do a short introductory interview and then return to do a second, more in-depth interview. In this way it would also have been possible to double-check any information from the first meeting and ask follow-up questions.

Even though there were some issues in doing the interviews, particularly because of the language barrier, I believe that these problems were not strong enough to affect the final result.

2.2 Participant observation

"By participant observation we mean the method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of researcher or covertly in some disguised role, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time." (Becker and Geer 1957: 28)

I used participant observation during the field phase of this research in several instances. Traveling through the West Bank on the shared taxis many Palestinians use to move around allowed me to see which the main obstacles to movement are, as well as observing the general mood in the taxis as we approached the Wall or other barriers and checkpoints. I also tried to get a general feel for the places where most of my research took place, Hebron and Qalqilya, by walking around in the cities, observing the physical barriers present on the ground as well as the general atmosphere. Also, I spent time with the members of an activist group in Hebron, simply observing their daily activities and walking around in the city with their volunteers. My observations were gathered in my field notes, and extracts from those notes are present in this study.

In terms of the type of participant observation it was mainly of two different kinds; first, as an observer, where my identity as a researcher was known to all present, when spending time with the activists; and secondly, participation in the normal setting, where my identity as a researcher was unknown. However, given my difference from the “normal setting” in terms of origin, language skills and physical appearance it must have been apparent to everyone that I was an outsider, somehow. This might also have
influenced what happened – there could be a possibility that for example Israeli settlers/military would change their behaviour somewhat in the presence of an international. (Although I first hand witnessed settler children violently insulting the Palestinian volunteer who accompanied me through the Old City in Hebron, so at least on that occasion my presence did not stop them from going about in the same way that my informants described to me during the interviews).

2.3 Ethics

With regards to research ethics in interview situations, the “Good Research Guide” specifies that social researchers: "[...] are expected to be open and explicit about what they are doing – to let people know that they are researchers and that they intend to collect data for the purposes of an investigation into a particular topic.” (Denscombe 2007:144) as well as making sure that the participants will not suffer any harm due to their participation in the research project. (Denscombe 2007:141-143) Following these guidelines, all of the people I interviewed were informed about the purpose of the research and verbally agreed to do, and in some cases, register the interview.3 No one objected to have their names in the study, but to protect their identity I will not use their full names.

In terms of research ethics in participatory observation, when spending time with the activists in Hebron, my identity and the purpose of my presence there was known to everyone. I still will not use the names of any of the volunteers I met; only the name of the official representative and founder of the organisation, who is already publicly well known. While using observation in other instances, my role as a researcher was not known, but since I will not be disclosing the identities of anyone I encountered during these observations I consider these to have been conducted in an ethical manner. (cf. Denscombe 2007:220)

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3 Two out of 7 interviews were recorded, for the remaining five I choose to rely on note-taking only given that the conditions were not ideal for recording – for example in outdoor locations with windy conditions. While note-taking might not allow to record every detail of the conversation I nevertheless found it a valid and useful method, given that it also allowed me to insert reflections on other details that were not merely part of the spoken interaction, for example on how the informant was acting (relaxed, stressed, etc.) or what the surroundings looked like.
2.4 Theory

I am basing this study on an intersectional theoretical framework. Nina Lykke defines intersectionality as “[...] a theoretical and methodological tool to analyse how historically specific kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normativities, based on discursively, institutionally and/or structurally constructed socio-cultural categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue and so on, interact, and in so doing produce different kinds of societal inequalities and unjust social relations.” (Lykke 2010: 50) The focus on not defining people, for example Palestinians in general, and Palestinian women in particular, as a homogenous monolithic category, but finding out how gender interacts with other systems of oppression or discrimination based on socially constructed categories is something that intersectionality has in common with postcolonial feminist studies, another theoretical stream that I have taken inspiration from in this study.

Speaking of postcolonial studies in relation to Palestine could be seen as complicated. Perhaps I should rather define it as anti-colonial? Ania Loomba suggests, with regards to the term "postcolonial" that "It might seem that because the age of colonialism is over, and because the descendants of once-colonised peoples live everywhere, the whole world is postcolonial.” (Loomba 2005:12) and then goes on to suggest that it might be more helpful to think of postcolonial as not simply following colonial, but rather as "[...] a word that is useful only if we use it with caution and qualifications. In this it can be compared to the concept of ‘patriarchy’ in feminist thought, which is a useful shorthand for conveying a relationship of inequity that is, in practice, highly variable because it always works alongside other social structures.” (Loomba 2005:21) I choose to interpret the term as defined by Loomba, and thus see Palestine not as a post-colonial state in the strict sense of the word, since the country is still in the midst of its struggle to achieve a globally recognised nationhood and freedom from domination, but a place where postcolonial theory can be applied to analyse power differentials in the society that are a result of the unequal relationship between the occupational power and the Palestinian nation.
The roles of the people of Palestine are still very much shaped by this struggle, in all aspects, not the least when it comes to the role of women or men of different ages in society. I take inspiration from postcolonial feminist studies, in focusing on Palestinians, and in particular Palestinian women, as a non-homogenous group. I wish to highlight the nuances of what it means to be Palestinian, how the different people I have interviewed situate themselves in their society, how they are affected by the inequities caused by restrictions of movement imposed by the occupational power, and how their experiences differ from one another depending, among other things, on their age or gender. I believe, as Ania Loomba argues, that "Given their historical awareness of past forms of empire and the structural connections between colonialism and neocolonialism, postcolonial scholars are well positioned to trace contemporary global inequities in the often-confusing landscape of contemporary economics, politics and culture." (Loomba 2005:227), and that it is particularly important in the case of Palestine to not only take into account the history of colonial domination but also the contemporary landscape of military occupation and international political discourse surrounding Palestine and the existence or non-existence of its state and people.

Gayatri Chakravory Spivak has argued that the “subaltern cannot speak”, and that even in research projects that claim to retrieve the silenced voices "[...] the assumption and construction of a consciousness or subject sustains such work and will, in the long run, cohere with the work of imperialist subject-constitution, mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilisation. And the subaltern woman will be as mute as ever." (Spivak 1988:295) The wish to highlight the heterogeneity of the Palestinian population by giving room to their own stories and voices is an attempt on my behalf to avoid speaking in the place of, or “for” them and rather, in particular through the analysis of strategies of resistance, emphasize the agency of my informants and how it is expressed through the diverse strategies of resisting and/or coping.

3. Previous research

Previous research on this subject mainly includes reports by different United Nations bodies or agencies, and NGO’s working in the area, as well as academic papers and
books. In this section I will briefly outline the main contributions to research in this field.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA) publishes a regular update on the situation of women and girls in the Palestinian Territories, which includes analysis on how the Wall and the restrictions on movement affect women and girls, as well as on how women and girls are affected by settler and political violence. (UN ESCWA 2015) This is a large-scale study that draws on statistical information and a desk review of numerous other organisations’ contributions to research on this theme. While it gives a good overview of the situation, and as such provided me with useful background for my own study, it does not leave much space for the narratives of the affected population. This is where my study can be useful, in that it looks more at the impact on the individual level, through narratives, and without drawing any generalised conclusions, given the small scale.

Multiple UN agencies regularly publish fact sheets and updates on the situation of the Palestinian population and the effects of the Wall. In this study I have mainly used information from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which has proven to be useful for the detailed information on the physical state of the Wall, that I have been able to use to verify statements from my informants, for example with regards to passage points in the Wall and the procedure required to use these passage points. Other materials that have been useful for background and verification purposes are reports from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Bank, and some materials from the Barrier Monitoring Unit (BMU) of UNRWA, a unit that was dedicated to the research and analysis of the effects of the Wall, but that unfortunately closed down in 2013.

In terms of analyses of the strategies of resistance and change, there are a few texts that look at household coping strategies in the occupied Palestinian territories. In particular, in the book “Living Palestine: Family Survival, Resistance and Mobility Under Occupation” (Taraki 2006), Lisa Taraki defines household coping strategies as a method of resistance – a definition that I fully agree with and, as I will elaborate further on in this study, have found that many of the subjects I interviewed also explicitly mentioned
as their way of resisting. The book contains texts by various writers on the coping strategies of households in Palestine, ranging from analyses of the economical coping strategies to accounts of the life stories of several families living in the West Bank, making it a valuable resource for any researcher wanting to explore strategies of resistance in Palestine. Another text on household coping strategies as a form of resistance in the West Bank, with a specific focus on gender, is a report written by Laura E. Mitchell. The report specifically focuses on economical coping strategies, but also underlines that “Households in the West Bank also employ coping strategies in dealing with the on-going colonising practices […]” (Mitchell 2009:12). One of the objectives with this study is to explore precisely those coping strategies or forms of resistance that are not merely economical.

There are also some articles that explore popular resistance among women in Palestine, focusing mainly on organised or political forms of resistance where women have mobilised into groups and organised protests or formed associations (Farr 2011, and Richter-Devroe 2012). Differently from these articles, I am mainly interested in exploring individual forms of resistance, rather than organised or political forms (although I will briefly touch upon the case of one activist association and the gendered aspects of participation in it), to see how individuals negotiate resistance into their daily life.

Many of the existing texts on forms of resistance focus on the years of the two Intifadas (1987-1993 and 2000-2005); among these a paper by Iris Jean-Klein on “Nationalism and Resistance: The two faces of Everyday Activism in Palestine during the Intifada” (Jean-Klein 2001), as well as a paper by Rema Hammami on the strategies of resistance seen at the sites of the checkpoints, “On the Importance of Thugs: The Moral Economy of a Checkpoint” (Hammami 2004). Presumably the coping strategies and forms of resistance have changed since the end of the second Intifada given the general improvement of the situation (even though many difficulties remain, the prevalence of extended periods of curfews and war-like conditions are no longer present in the every-day lives of Palestinians), and I will explore this further in this study.
4. Analysis

As outlined in the introduction, the research questions that I attempt to answer in this study are: “Do the restrictions of movement in Palestine have gendered or intersectional aspects? What are the existing strategies of change and resistance, on an individual level, with regards to the restrictions of movement in Palestine? What are the gendered aspects of these strategies?”

4.1 Intersections of gender and age in restrictions of movement

In this section I will first introduce the different forms of restrictions of movement that are present in the two areas that I visited, Qalqilya and Hebron. I will then, based on the answers and accounts of their lived experiences with regards to the Wall, barriers, and other forms of restrictions of movement that my informants gave me during the interviews, outline what the main issues my informants experience are, and analyse these, to see whether there are gendered aspects or if it is possible to identify particularly vulnerable locations at the intersections of gender and age.

The two settings are quite different from one another, Qalqilya being a small city in a rural area where most of the population live from farming, and Hebron being a large city. The difference in atmosphere between the settings is almost palpable; even if the Wall is always present in Qalqilya, the heavy military presence in Hebron makes the setting very different. I noted this in my field notes during my research, when looking back at the interviews I had done that day in Qalqilya:

“Somehow these interviews were easier than the meetings in Hebron though. Maybe because of the settings that seemed so much more peaceful, sitting outside in the sunshine on the farmlands of the interviewees. Even though the Wall is always present and visible, here there was a sense of quiet peace, not the intense sense of tension that makes the air in Hebron almost heavy to breathe.”

4.1.1 Effects of restrictions of movement
Having introduced the difference between the settings in the above section, I will in this section show which the actual effects of the obstacles and restrictions of movement are, and how they affect the people I interviewed for this study.

The Qalqilya Governorate is located in the northern part of the West Bank. The city of Qalqilya and nearby villages is almost entirely encircled by the Wall, with only two roads connecting them to other areas of the West Bank, one road that leads to the nearby village of Hable and one that leads toward Nablus (the town was described as situated in a “bottleneck” by one of my contacts at the Governorate office in the city, a very fitting description).4 While the Wall was being built around the city, in 2002, the population of Qalqilya was put on curfew for months at a time, restricting all movement. (Beinin & Stein 2006:330)

In my interview with Hudna, an elderly woman who together with her husband owns about 150 dunams5 of land in the Qalqilya Governorate, all located behind the Wall, she repeatedly mentioned that her main problem were the issues related to obtaining the necessary permits to work on their land:

“When I need them [her children] to help with the land I submit an application for permission, to let them to go and help us to work in this land. The Israelis don’t give them the permission. They only give permission to who has the name of the land. Even the sons or grandsons are not allowed – so how can we work in this land?”

Many people residing in this area are farmers that have been cut off from their lands by the Wall, and now need special permits to access their land. According to OCHA, these permits are very difficult to obtain, with an approval rate in the northern West Bank of only 50 per cent over the last four years. (OCHA 2014:4) This leads to decreased productivity of the crops that are located behind the Wall, given that delays in or failing to perform any necessary activities such as ploughing, fertilizing, irrigating etc., will impact the productivity. Another issue stemming from the need to cross the Wall to access the land is the points of access, or lack thereof. The farmers access their lands

4 For a visual representation of this, please see a map of the Wall in the Qalqilya Governorate, retrievable on: https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_closure_map_2011_12_21_qalqiliya.pdf
5 One dunam is the equivalent of 1000 m²
through gates that often remain closed for most of the day, and open only during specific hours in the morning and in the evening. According to OCHA, out of the total of 81 gates in the Wall designated for agricultural access, only 9 open daily, and for limited hours (OCHA 2014:5). Hudna described the effects of these restrictions of movement:

“At the time of the olive harvest, the olives have limited time to harvest, in October. Only if they want to give the permission, they give me and my husband and only our sons – while the other generations, the youth, they don’t give them. Not even my daughter. My daughter came to help, they gave her the permission but she came with the baby. When she came to the Wall they asked for the permission for the baby…
Me: “For the baby?!”
Hudna: “Yes, for the baby. And then they cut her paper also, and did not allow her to enter, and he told her “I cut the paper because not to allow you to come back here tomorrow”

Hudna told me that the gate that she needs to use to access her land only used to remain open for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening. She later explained that the Israeli authorities now have issued an order that there should be a soldier present at the gate at all times, in order to open the gate, but that the willingness of the soldiers to do so varies and “depends on their mood”. Sometimes the soldiers would claim that there were important Israeli visitors in the area and that for that reason the gate would remain closed. Hudna recalled that once this went on for 17 days during the time of harvest of the java fruit. As a consequence all of their fruit was lost, they found it on the ground the day they were finally allowed to access their land. She emphasized that this takes a heavy psychological toll, losing all that you worked so hard for, and spent a lot of money on, during an entire year.

Another person that I visited in Qalqilya, Hussein, an man in his 50’s who is the owner of a plant nursery and farmlands that are also mostly located on the Israeli side of the Wall, also emphasized the psychological toll of the Wall in my interview with him:

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6 This number refers to the gates present in the full length of the Wall and not just to the section that is present in the Qalqilya Governorate.
“The psychological weight for a labour man, who wants to go to his work, in his land or in the Israeli factories – when he wants to reach his work there is a lot of suffering, he has to wait at the gate, show papers, they search his body, so when he reaches his work he is very exhausted. It makes working very hard for him.”

Hussein also talked about the economic effects that the Wall has had for him and his business. While before the Wall was constructed, he would receive clients from all over the West Bank and sell his plants and produce even to markets in Jordan, now he is struggling because of the difficulties to access the land. He has lost clients because of the difficulties in getting his products through the gate in the Wall:

“Imagine, trade men came from al-Khaleel, 3 to 4 hours from Qalqilya. This time when I want to bring trees from outside of the Wall, they [the Israelis] said that the gate was closed, and he had to wait for another 5 or 6 hours. How can we deal with this?”

Hebron, or al-Khaleel in Arabic, is situated in the central southern part of the West Bank, and is differently from Qalqilya not directly affected by the main separation Wall. However, it is one of the areas in the West Bank where movement has been most heavily restricted, and there are numerous minor walls, barriers and checkpoints present throughout the city. The restrictions on movement in this area started after a massacre in 1994, when an American-Israeli settler, Baruch Goldstein, entered the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron’s city centre with a gun, killing 29 Palestinians and injuring hundreds. Claiming that the measures introduced by Israel following this attack were put in place to protect the Palestinian population from settler violence, the main commercial street, Shuhada Street, was closed first to Palestinian vehicular traffic and later also for pedestrians – forcing well over a thousand shops to close down and more than a thousand homes in the affected area to be abandoned. (OCHA Nov. 2013)

7 According to OCHA, there are over 120 physical obstacles segregating restricted areas of Hebron from the rest of the city, including 18 permanently staffed checkpoints. (OCHA, Nov 2013)
8 The number of people that had to leave their homes could be as high as 13,000, according to the website of the local organisation Youth Against Settlements. (http://www.youthagainstsettlements.org, accessed on May 12 2015)
Hebron city has been divided into two areas, H1 and H2, following the approval of the Hebron Protocol in 1997. H1 is under the control of the Palestinian Authorities, while H2, which comprises the Old City, is under Israeli Military control. H2, which is the area I have been focusing on in this study, is home to approximately 30,000 Palestinians and 500 Israeli settlers. (TIPH 2015)

The difficulties in working and accessing land are present in Hebron as well. On the outskirts of the city, I interviewed a man who gave me some answers on what the effects of the restrictions of movement had in his family, and how it affects him and his family. He is 53 years old and lives in a house right between two settlements on the outskirts of the city together with his extended family. He has 6 daughters and 7 sons, and a total of 25 people live together in the house, which is attached to their land. He explained that he used to work as a blacksmith in the Old City of Hebron, but after the restrictions on movement were put in place, the store closed down, he was forced to leave his job and decided to try to make a living by farming instead. He explained how the restrictions on movement makes it difficult not only to work his land, but also life in general; the road that leads up to their house is closed for unauthorised Palestinian vehicular traffic, with checkpoints or roadblocks at all entrances to the road (and permits are hard to obtain), so bringing any materials or vehicles needed for the farming is difficult and requires permits and coordination with Israeli military. But it is not only the closure of the road that makes movement difficult. He also mentioned that he regularly suffers attacks by settlers when he tries to work on his land. His neighbour, a man of the same age who also has land in the area, who was present during our interview also confirmed this and told me that he had been attacked just a few days earlier.

In the Hebron area, settler violence adds to the physical barriers that restrict movement, creating further restrictions due to the fear of suffering attacks. This was evident in

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9 The Hebron Protocol was signed by the Israeli Government and the PLO, and regards the responsibilities of both parts. Many parts of this protocol still have not been implemented though, most evidently the part on the “Normalisation of Life in the Old City” (Hebron Protocol, 1997) where it is stated that the movement of vehicles on Shuhada Street should return to the pre-1994 situation.
10 For a visual representation of the closures and barriers in Hebron, please see: https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_closure_map_2011_12_21_hebron_old_city.pdf.
11 I was in touch with contacts in Hebron after I finished my field work, who told me that only a week after I visited the family they were prevented by Israeli military and police from harvesting their crops. When they started harvesting, they were first verbally attacked by settlers, and then the military arrived and declared the area a “Closed military zone” to stop them from harvesting their crops.
almost all of the interviews I did in the area. Fatema, a middle-aged woman who lives with her husband and four children in a house that is very near an Israeli settlement told me how the settlers have blocked the main road to reach their house, so that the only way to get there is on narrow footpaths, which makes it quite hard to reach. The house is in need of a lot of maintenance work and reparations but the difficulties in reaching it and bringing the needed materials make any maintenance work difficult. Fatema also mentioned that they hardly ever get visitors anymore, given that the house is hard to reach and people are scared of the settlers, who often throw stones toward their house. They have put up a metal net over the entrance to the house to protect themselves from the stones, but these episodes of violence are still frightening and limit their possibilities of moving around freely. When I asked whether these attacks and restrictions of movement affect their possibilities to go to work or their children’s possibilities to go to school, Fatema answered affirmatively:

“Yes. My daughter has been attacked by settlers on her way to school, it is very bad”.

One of the places where the double effect of both physical barriers and barriers created by fear of violence was most evident was in the homes I visited that used to have their main entrance on the part of Shuhada Street that is totally off-limits to Palestinians. Following the closure of the street to both Palestinian vehicular traffic and Palestinian pedestrian access, the families living in these houses are no longer allowed to use their own front door to access their homes and must access by passing through houses of neighbours (who have their front door on smaller side streets), going up on the roof to pass over to their building and accessing their house from there. These buildings are also subject to frequent disturbances and attacks from settlers, who are allowed to drive and walk on Shuhada Street.

One of the people I interviewed living in this situation was an elderly woman, Umm Zahera. Explaining how the restrictions of movement affect her, she told me that since...

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12 At the time of my visit the family did not have electricity, due to a malfunctioning in the house’s electrical system that had happened the day before. They told me that they would need to change the whole electrical system but that it was hard to get someone to come there and that the cost would be too high (neither Fatema nor her husband are working and they depend on economic help from relatives). After the end of my field work I received the news that a local volunteer organisation had helped them to do the required maintenance work and that they now have a functioning electrical system.
the barriers closing down Shuhada Street were introduced she can only access her house from the roof, crossing over from the neighbour’s house. There are a lot of stairs and the door to enter her house is tiny (about 1 meter high). She has trouble walking and struggles to leave the house. Her children are afraid to come and visit her due to the attacks and harassments from settlers and Israeli military, so she is highly dependent on help from neighbours and volunteers from organisations working in the area. She explained that she is very frightened of the settlers, and has put up metal grates on the balcony to protect from the stones the settlers would throw into her apartment, but she is still afraid that someone will enter her home.

Also another family, living on Shuhada Street, on the section of the street that is still open to Palestinian pedestrian access, told me about the issues they are facing because of the barriers. I interviewed the mother of the family, Umm Abed, who has been living on Shuhada Street for 25 years. She now lives in the house with her children. Her husband owned a tailor shop next to their house on Shuhada Street, but settlers burned it to the ground with all the materials and equipment that was in it, and he consequently decided to move and open a new shop in the H1 area. Like other families living in this area, Umm Abed explained how she also has had to cover the courtyard of her house with metal grates to protect them from stones and rubbish that settlers used to throw down from an abandoned space further up the hill, as well as from settlers trying to intrude. To access the family’s house, it is necessary to pass through a permanently staffed checkpoint with turning gates and metal detectors. Umm Abed emphasized the fact that due to the very size of the gate, and the fact that you need to pass through the turnstiles, it is impossible to bring any large objects with you. She noted that this creates many difficulties in maintaining a decent living standard, as it is virtually impossible to bring any materials for repairing things in the house or substituting broken pieces of furniture.

Another major impact of the restrictions of movement is the difficulties in accessing emergency medical care. Zleikha, a middle aged teacher and human rights activist in

13 Umm Abed’s son, who was present during our conversation, defined this checkpoint as “the checkpoint of humiliation”, due to the fact that every single time they need to pass through it they're required to remove belts and other metal objects, empty their pockets and open all bags for inspection.
Hebron who lives in the Old City with her family, explained the situation that people in her neighbourhood are facing when they need emergency care:

“People have to use animals; horses or donkeys, or carry the sick person. Ambulances need permits or coordination with the military and it can take more than 4 hours. You can imagine what happens in an emergency, a heart attack for example. Heart attacks don’t give warnings, there is no time to wait for coordination to get an ambulance. Same if a woman needs to deliver a baby, there is no time to wait.”

All of the other women I met in Hebron also told me about the difficulties they face when they need emergency medical care. Fatema, who lives in a house where the settlers have blocked the access road, explained that since the health workers can’t access their home the sick person needs to be carried to the nearest point where vehicles can access. Umm Abed also noted similar issues, and explained to me that while before the checkpoint was constructed they could have an ambulance there in 3 minutes, now, ambulances have to go through the entrance in Kiryat Arba14, and wait for coordination and permits. Coordination takes about an hour, if not more, and then the drive itself takes about 30 minutes (this used to be a 3-minute drive). She also reported that often the Israeli military and settlers obstruct the way for the ambulances that manage to enter:

“The military stops ambulances that have already passed the checkpoint and ask them to show their permit again. Settlers sometimes lay down on the street, blocking access for the ambulances.”

In Qalqilya, Hudna also told me about how the restrictions of movement had caused her and her husband serious harm when they needed to access emergency medical care. Her husband had once injured his face when working in the farmlands and was bleeding profusely. He tried to get through the gate in the Wall to reach a hospital, but the soldier at the gate refused to open it before the official opening hour. Hudna had also had a very similar experience to that of her husband:

14 Kiryat Arba is a major Israeli settlement attached to the city of Hebron.
“Once, I fell down and my hands, fingers, broke, and I fell down on my face, I wanted to get out from the land, through the gate, but there was no soldier. So I remained inside, suffering from the pain, until the soldiers came and opened the gate to go to the hospital.”

In this section I set out to answer questions on what the effects of the restrictions of movement are, and how they affect people. I find that the difference between the two settings, that I described in my field notes, is also reflected in how my informants in the two different communities answered the questions. As I have demonstrated in this section, while in Qalqilya the recurring issues were mainly the difficulties of accessing farmland, and the ensuing economical difficulties, in Hebron restrictions of movement are not only caused by physical barriers but also by other less tangible barriers present in the minds of the population and thus affect people differently.

As is evident from the replies I have outlined in this section, the effects of the Wall, barriers or other restrictions of movement are multiple and touch upon a diverse range of areas of people’s lives. Farmers, such as Hudna and Hussein in Qalqilya, struggle to access their farmlands because of the restrictions and limited opening hours of the passage points in the Wall. People in Hebron told me about how physical barriers and violence from settlers and military limit their possibilities of going to school, to work, or as in the case of Umm Zahera, simply leaving her own house. The difficulty of accessing emergency medical care because of the restrictions of movement is also an issue that was brought up by many of my informants, both in Qalqilya and in Hebron. I have outlined how the effects of the restrictions of movement also affect less visible and more intimate areas such as being able to live free from fear of violence or simply feeling that one actually is free.

4.1.2 Gendered and intersectional aspects of the Wall, barriers and other restrictions of movement

In the previous section I have outlined what my informants brought up as being the main effects of the restrictions of movement on their lives. I will in this section analyse the differences and similarities in their experience based on gender and age.
The fact that conflict situations affect people of different genders and age groups differently has been widely studied, in particular by NGOs and international organisations working in humanitarian contexts. (Cf. ICRC 2001 and Mazurana, Benelli et al. 2011) Even though the conflict in Palestine might not be classified as being constantly armed and violent, the country is still under a protracted military occupation and suffers occasional outbreaks of violent conflict. As such I believe that the same logics could apply, with regards to vulnerabilities of particular groups at the intersections of gender and age. While the restrictions of movement in Palestine create challenges that affect nearly everyone in the Palestinian society, the impacts and effects of these challenges are not the same for everyone. As I have shown in the previous section, older, sick or wounded people face larger obstacles than younger and physically fit people. Other groups, such as breastfeeding mothers, or people with disabilities, and so on, would perceive the obstacles differently.

However, even though the barriers and restrictions on movement that Israel has imposed have had a profound impact on all of the Palestinian population, particularly in terms of loss of land and economic opportunities, from the information I gathered in the Hebron area it seems as if the impact of the barriers and abuse by soldiers is very hard on children. Given that children also are gendered, I was interested in finding out whether boys and girls are affected differently depending on their gender. I did not interview any children in this study, but according to representatives and volunteers of the activist organisation that I spent time with in Hebron, as well as according to some of the women I interviewed in the area, boys are targeted disproportionately when it comes to detainments and arrests of children – they are subject to abuse and detainments by police and military that arrests them on the street, in school, or enters their houses during night raids.15 The targeting of young boys is confirmed by a report of the Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron, which records the number of children detained and arrested in the period between December 2014 and March 2015, showing that a clear majority of those arrested are male. (CPT, 2015: 8) The activists that I visited in Hebron showed me their videos (they always carry video cameras, since it is their only way of proving their innocence in case they are arrested) of children being arrested

15 The methods of arrest are clearly described in the book Stolen Youth. The Politics of Israel's Detention of Palestinian Children. (Cook, Hanieh and Kay, 2004)
by the military, sometimes under quite violent circumstances. One video in particular showed a young boy, maybe around 11 years old, who tried to hide in a rubbish container. He was crying as he was pulled out by a military that then dragged him away toward a military vehicle that took him away. The cruelty of the arrests is also confirmed by a UNICEF report from 2013, which identifies “[...] examples of practices that amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention against Torture.” (UNICEF, 2013:9) with regards to the approaches that the Israeli military uses when arresting children.16

According to my informants, the effects of this abuse include increased dropout rates in schools, in particular among male students, as confirmed by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (Ministry of Education 2014:50-51) Men, like boys, are also subject to arrests and attacks, something that was also confirmed by the interview I did with the farmer on the outskirts of Hebron. From his answer concerning how the settler violence affects him it seemed as if according to him it becomes easier with time to handle this kind of violence, or developing strategies for doing so17:

“I don’t care if they attack me anymore, I am not afraid to die.”

One of my informants in Hebron emphasized the psychological impact on children, both boys and girls, not only of the arrests, but also of the need to pass through checkpoints to access their schools and having their bags searched on a regular basis. She explained that teachers are also targeted and are often searched and humiliated in front of their students. According to her, this is a strategy of the Israelis to make the students lose their respect for the teachers, to disturb their educational process by making them arrive late and miss out on school hours, and eventually to make students drop out of school.

Many of my informants in Hebron told me about nightly raids by the Israeli military that enters their homes, often arresting one or more members of the family. Generally, it is the men in the family that are arrested, but not always – both Zleikha and Umm Abed,

16 Israel is currently the only country in the world to systematically put children in military detention and take them to trial in military court, according to UNICEF (UNICEF, 2013:1)
17 This answer might also stem from a wish to not show himself as vulnerable in front of me.
who both live on Shuhada Street, told me that they had been detained and arrested, in the case of Umm Abed more than 20 times. (I will return to this aspect in the next chapter, which will look at strategies of resistance).

As I have outlined above, according to the information I received during the interviews, it seems as if violence, detainments and arrests have a gendered aspect in that men and boys are more subject to these treatments than girls and women. So how does this affect women and girls?

While the two men that I interviewed, as well as all of the (male) activists at the organisation I visited in Hebron, mentioned being subject to episodes of physical violence from settlers or Israeli military, the five women mentioned the constant worry of being attacked, or their children being attacked. In Palestine, employment rates among women are very low, only amounting to around 17% in 2011 according to the International Labour Organization, and both the region of Qalqilya and the region of Hebron are among the Palestinian regions where the numbers of unemployed women are the very highest. (ILO 2011) In fact, nearly all of the women I met spend a lot of time at home on their own, and these women emphasized the psychological weight of not feeling safe in their own home – all of the women in Hebron had had to put up some kind of protection on their house to avoid settler attacks, but still suffer from fear even if the stones that the settlers throw might not be able to reach them anymore. Even when the fear or worries were not explicitly mentioned, they were still evident. During my interview with Umm Abed she was constantly worrying about the children that were at her house that day (her grandchild and a neighbours child) who were playing on the street outside the house, and she would get up and go out to look after them or shout to see that they were ok. According to Umm Abed, settlers living in the area drive by very fast without looking out for kids playing and the kids are also often subject to harassment from them.

Also Hudna, in Qalqilya, mentioned the fear of being attacked either by settlers, or by the pigs that the settlers have set free on her fields. Given that she often works alone on

\(^{18}\) Hudna explained that when settlers moved to the area they brought pigs with them that they then set free in the area. These pigs cause a lot of damage to the cultivations of the farmers in the area since they
her land she does not feel safe. These results, on the gendered aspect of violence and attacks from settlers and military are also confirmed by a report by UN ESCWA on the situation of women and girls in Palestine, where it is stated that the mass arrests of men in Palestine has an important effect on women, who are left to care for the household and the children alone. (UN ESCWA, 2015:7) The report also emphasizes how: “Political violence, including settler violence, has a gendered dimension. While men and boys are more likely to be exposed to physical security risks, women and girls are indirectly affected by the trauma of death, injury or detention of family member; and by experiencing high levels of anticipatory terror from the threat of night raids, child arrests and settler violence. A recent United Nations fact-finding mission also revealed that women alone in their homes were easy targets for settler violence.” (UN ESCWA, 2015:7)

Then, if the effects of the restrictions of movement, and in particular those created by harassments and arrests have gendered aspects, what effect does age have on how people experience the restrictions of movement? I found that while the younger women that I interviewed are not necessarily confined to their homes all of the time and can still, albeit with difficulties and having to confront the fear of being attacked or harassed, go out and move around, the elderly women find themselves in a position in which, like in the case of Umm Zahera in Hebron, the physical obstacles to movement add on to the psychological ones. Umm Zahera, due to her high age and her age-related health issues that causes her problems walking, is left in a condition in which she seriously struggles to leave her home. At the same time, as I have outlined in the previous section on the effects of the restrictions of movement, in her home she is exposed to attacks from settlers. During our interview she also explained how she is hesitant to call for help since she does not want to expose anyone to risks, and thus confronts many of the difficulties on her own. It was evident that this causes her emotional distress as she exclaimed:

“There were a lot of settlers on the street today, I was scared!”

dig up vegetables and also damage trees. In addition to this they are quite aggressive and Hudna told me of people that have been attacked by the pigs.
The age aspect is also evident in the case of Hudna, in Qalqilya. After her husband, who used to be the main responsible for working on their land, suffered a heart attack he has been struggling to walk and is unable to work. Hudna has thus had to take on the responsibility of working on their farmlands herself. However, she is struggling, since it is hard physical work and she also is suffering from various age-related health problems. The refusal on behalf of the Israeli authorities to grant her children the necessary permits for accessing the land throughout the year leaves her no choice but to do most of the work herself. The physical barriers to movement make it harder for an elderly person to manage; even just the fact that the gate is not open all day long could potentially create issues as there is no possibility to go back home and rest during the hottest hours of the day. A young, fit, person may not suffer from this, but an elderly person might. As I will elaborate on further in the next chapter, both of my informants in the Qalqilya area explicitly mentioned that this is a strategy of the Israelis to eventually make it impossible for people to work and consequently abandon their lands.

In terms of other aspects that can influence how one is affected by the restrictions of movement, Zleikha, in Hebron, mentioned in my interview with her that she had been working trying to help a family who, similarly to the family of Fatema that I visited, had had the access road to their home blocked by settlers. Differently from the family of Fatema though, this family had one son suffering from a physical disability that doesn’t allow him to walk very well. Zleikha explained that after the road was blocked this boy had been experiencing severe difficulties in leaving the house, leaving him mostly confined to his home.

In this section I have shown how there are gendered and age-related aspects to the effects of the Wall, barriers and restrictions of movement. Many of my informants mentioned children as being seriously affected by the restrictions of movement, in particular those restrictions stemming from violence or the fear or anticipation of attacks, albeit in gendered ways – boys seem to be more subject to direct violence and arrest. Men are also subject to violence and arrests, but given their older age might have had more possibilities than young boys to develop strategies for coping with these difficulties. While girls, such as the young daughter of Fatema, also sometimes suffer physical violence, it seemed from the interviews that women and girls are more subject
to a psychological dimension of violence, limiting their possibilities to move around but also of feeling safe in their own homes because of the fear of being attacked.

It was also evident in both of the areas where I interviewed people that while the effects of the barriers and restrictions of movement affect all parts of the population, in gendered ways, it appeared from the interviews that the actual physical barriers have a stronger impact on those who are old, such as Umm Zahera or Hudna, pregnant or sick and in need of emergency medical care, or those who suffer from a physical disability. Although I have not been looking in-depth at how the restrictions of movement in Palestine affect people with disabilities, it is quite evident only by seeing the actual obstacles on the ground that anyone with a physical disability would have trouble moving around, and I believe that it would be an interesting topic for further research.

4.2 Gendered aspects of strategies of resistance

What is a strategy of resistance? As I outlined in the introduction to this study, I am interested in exploring individual strategies of resistance, how people negotiate resistance into their everyday lives. I thus consider a strategy of resistance any act that serves to counteract the restrictions of movement imposed by Israel, as well as coping strategies and mechanisms that allow people to live with the difficulties and effects of the barriers and restrictions of movement. Given that the Palestinian population has been living under occupation for several decades, resistance is an integral part of society, rooted in a myriad of different forms – from organised forms of resistance to the everyday acts that might seem small but are just as significant as those more visible. My aim with this study was not only to look at strategies of resistance in general but also to find out whether there are gendered or intersectional aspects to these existing strategies.

4.2.1 “We will not leave our land”

“I will not go anywhere, I will not leave this house to the settlers. I am staying here with my children.”
These were the words of Umm Abed, living on Shuhada Street in Hebron, in response to my question on why she continues to endure all the difficulties and had not chosen to leave the house on Shuhada Street to go and live with her husband in H1. And her reply to this question echoes many of the other answers I received to similar questions during the field phase of this study. All of the informants seemed to agree on one thing: that the final purpose of all these Walls, barriers and other restrictions of movement is to make the Palestinian people leave their homes and land for the Israelis to take over. As Hussein, in Qalqilya, put it:

“*Their purpose is to make us leave our land. The people understand this purpose, so they insist, to remain in their land, more than before. There is challenge, a challenge between the Palestinians, the simple farmers, and the Israelis. Even though they have a lot of problems they insist and remain in their lands.*”

This strategy of resistance, of staying put, refusing to move, seems to be a very common one. What varied though, in the answers I received, was the motivation that the person I interviewed gave for using this particular strategy of resistance. While in some cases, such as the case of Umm Abed, or the case of Zleikha, who chose to move into an empty house on Shuhada Street in Hebron with her family after the restrictions of movement were put in place, precisely in order to prevent settlers from taking over the empty building, this strategy is a conscious choice and an open challenge to the Israeli settlers and military, for some of the other people I interviewed this is not the case. In fact, for some of the people I spoke to the fact of staying in their home notwithstanding the difficult situation they find themselves in seems to be more of a necessity, or a consequence of a lack of other options, rather than a choice to resist, even though the final result might be the same as if it would have been an active choice. Such is the case, for example, of Fatema, who, to answer my question on how they try to solve all the problems they are facing, answered:

“*What can we do? We stay here, we don’t have anywhere else to go.*”

Hudna, in Qalqilya, gave me a similar answer to the one of Fatema. She explained that continuing to work their land, to fertilize it and to try to harvest the fruits is the only
chance they have to survive. While she also told me that she does not want to leave the land to the settlers, and that she knows that the Israelis create all these problems for them in order to make them leave their land, it seemed like the main reason for staying where they are, not leaving their farmland, is mainly an issue of economic survival.

I found that the determination to stay put, to not leave one's land and one's home, was most clearly expressed by the women I interviewed. While the men that I interviewed both did mention this way of resisting, they spent most of the time discussing the economic impact of the restrictions of movement on their lives and families. This might reflect the fact that in the Palestinian society the man would generally be the main breadwinner of the household, and thus is mainly preoccupied with the loss of economic income, but also of the fact that men generally have more opportunities than women to explore other ways of resisting, in locations other than the household. (Cf. ILO 2011, and Kuttab 2006:257-263) In fact, most of the women I talked to spend a large part of their time at home, so it would only seem logical that their preferred choice of location for developing their own way of resisting is precisely there. This is also relatable to an argument made by Sandra Harding, who writes that: “Moreover, the household and its kin relations are where the most stubborn resistance is found to imperial and colonial projects […]” (Harding 2008:226) During the fieldwork for this study I was struck by the determination and strength of the women I interviewed, something I noted several times in my field notes. This determination is well described in a quote from Umm Abed, referring to the harassments of the Israeli military and settlers that she suffers on a regular basis:

“They try to provoke me and make me angry, but they can’t. They arrest me and I still smile and laugh. The settlers, their life isn’t easy either, always doing bad things. What kind of life is that?”

As I have shown in this section, the main individual strategy of resistance that I found during the interviews, a strategy that takes on gendered aspects in that it was most clearly expressed and frequently used by women, was the refusal to leave their homes or land. To stay put, even if that means struggling to make a living, as in the case of Hudna in Qalqilya, or suffering attacks and abuse by settlers and military as in the cases
of the women I interviewed in Hebron. I have also shown that this strategy does not always stem from an active choice to resist, but that in some cases it is the only choice people have, if their economic situation does not allow them to move elsewhere. Also, this choice of strategy, interestingly, does not seem to depend as much on age as it does on gender, since it was expressed by women of different age groups, showing that individuals who are positioned at vulnerable intersections of gender and age still in many cases can exercise their agency in creating strategies for change or resistance. This dynamic is described, with regards to older women in gender theory and social gerontology, by Clary Krekula who argues that: “[...] it might be productive to distinguish, theoretically, between the structural and the individual level. Even though the interplay between power relations shows a double jeopardy on a structural level, when it comes to the micro level, individuals are actors, who interpret and define their reality and also work out strategies to change structures and societies.”(Krekula 2007:167)

4.2.2 Organised resistance, breaking barriers

While this study is not focused specifically on organised forms of resistance, I nevertheless find it useful to take into account those forms of organised resistance that were explicitly mentioned by the people I interviewed, as well as the forms of assistance that they may receive (or not receive) from various authorities or organisations since those contribute to their individual possibilities of coping or resisting. I also found during my research that there are some interesting gendered aspects to the participation in organised forms of resistance and I will outline those aspects in this section.

Few of the individuals I interviewed take part in organised forms of resistance or protest. Only Zleikha, who identifies as a human rights activist, specifically mentioned actively working on a community level to resist against the occupation and achieve positive change. She also mentioned that many of the individuals and families that are suffering from the effects of the restrictions of movement are not aware of the existence of support systems and mechanisms that can help solve at least some of the problems:
“There is some help to get but you need to be well informed and know who to call, what strings to pull”

Before talking to Zleikha, in fact, I had interviewed a few women and nearly all of them answered my question on whether there was any authority or organisation that assists them saying that there is no help to get. Only Umm Abed mentioned the role of international observers as being helpful in preventing some of the attacks in Hebron, in particular on children on their way to or from school. Hudna, in Qalqilya, recalled that she once received 1000 Jordanian dinars from an organisation as a compensation for a lost harvest during the intifada, and expressed her frustration with this situation:

“One, we and other families got 1000 dinars, during the intifada, from some organisation, I don’t remember the name. What is the use of these 1000 dinars, if you compare it to the land and what we lost? Take me to the United Nations, I have a lot to say there! [Laughing]”

I find that the comment of Hudna, on taking her to the United Nations, even if expressed in a joking way, is meaningful. It symbolises a lot of the frustration I found that people would express with regards to the lack of discourse around the problems they are facing. Many, if not all, of the people I interviewed and spoke to are very aware that their situation is not well known outside of their own reality, and the lack of a space for them to tell their stories to the world, struggling to be visible, is challenging.

It is somehow in relation to this issue of providing the visibility that so many people lack, that the activist organisation that I spent some time with in Hebron enters the stage. This organisation, Youth Against Settlements, is, among the many other activities they organise, trying to document violations of human rights, and sharing their videos or images on social media, as well as collecting and sharing information about settlements, and organising tours to raise awareness of the situation in Hebron. The very placement of the centre for Youth Against Settlements could be seen as an act of resistance, as it is strategically placed between two settlements. The founder of the organisation, Issa Amro, told me how the building is owned by a Palestinian family from Jerusalem, but had been used as an Israeli military base for some years and later occupied by settlers.
He went to court to get the right to rent the space from the Palestinian owners and won the case. Since then the organisation has been based in this space, confronting abuse and attacks from settlers and military with their non-violent ideals and actively working to achieve change.

I found that the influence of this organisation extends beyond sharing information and raising awareness. The volunteers of the centre try to assist many of the families living in the areas that are most affected by the restrictions of movement and presence of the settlements, for example by helping with maintenance work (as I have outlined in the earlier section on the effects of the restrictions of movement, it is difficult for people living in certain areas to bring the necessary materials for repairs or maintenance work to their homes, as well as finding skilled workers that are willing to come to the area to help them), and it seems that this has helped to create a sense of community in the area. A few of the women I visited in the area have children who are volunteers at the Youth Against Settlements centre, and many families in the area now send their children to the recently opened kindergarten nearby the centre, that the organisation has founded.

What struck me when spending time at the Youth Against Settlements centre though was how male-dominated the centre seemed to be. All of the activists that I met were male, of different age groups, but mainly teenagers. I asked Issa about this and he explained that while they do have some female volunteers, girls face more obstacles than boys in attending these environments. According to him, girls participating in these kinds of public spaces can easily become targets of attacks against their reputation, something that is taken very serious in this society. The organisation is trying to involve girls in different ways, through other forms of activism (more online-based work for example), and through activities organised specifically for girls. The difficulties that women in Hebron face when participating in public spaces, or the lack of women doing so, is described also from a historical perspective by Lisa Taraki and Rita Giacaman in their chapter on “Modernity Aborted and Reborn” in the book “Living Palestine. Family Survival, Resistance, and Mobility under Occupation”, where the authors suggest that the obstacles for women wanting to engage in activism have historically been, and remain, higher in Hebron than in other areas of Palestine, and that this is due to the conservative attitudes toward women and their place in society that can be found in the area. (Taraki
and Giacaman 2006:49) The intersection of social gender hierarchies with youth activism has been studied in the Latin American setting by Coe, Goicolea, and Öhman who show that social gender hierarchies often are transferred to the youth activism setting rather than being challenged by it, despite the fact that youth activists “[...] may be among the sub-populations best situated to challenge gender hierarchies” (Coe, Goicolea and Öhman 2013:695). Due to the limited time I had available to complete the field phase of this study, I was not able to do a comparison of the activist organisation in Hebron with similar activist organisations in other parts of Palestine. It would have been interesting to, along the lines of the study of Coe et al., look at whether social hierarchies are transferred to the activist environment in Palestine, as well as analysing possible differences in young women’s participation in activism based on regional belonging or between urban and rural settings and further investigate the reasons for their participation or lack thereof.

To conclude this section, I thus found that few of my informants participate in organised forms of resistance or protests. Many of them expressed that they would not know who to turn to for help, that they have never received any assistance, or that the little assistance they received was not enough to cover what they had lost, as in the case of Hudna, in Qalqilya. I have also tried to demonstrate the strong sense of frustration that the people I spoke to demonstrated with regards to the lack of visibility of their situation on an international level. In terms of participating in organised forms of resistance, such as activism with the youth organisation that I visited, the ways and possibilities of participation seem to be strongly gendered, and investigating this further would be an interesting topic for further research.

5. Conclusion

In this study, I have looked at effects of the Wall, barriers and other restrictions of movement in Palestine, and how they affect people differently depending on their intersectional location. I have also analysed strategies of resistance, and how these have gendered or intersectional aspects. I began from an interpretation of the term “restrictions of movement” that did not only take into account physical obstacles such as
walls or checkpoints, but also included obstacles created by psychological dimensions of fear and strategies to avoid being arrested or detained. I have connected my study and findings to previous research on gendered aspects of the occupation, and strategies of resistance, but also provided a new perspective of these issues, by using an intersectional approach and by focusing on the voices of the individuals that I interviewed, leaving room for their own accounts of the situation.

I have demonstrated that the effects of the Wall, barriers and other restrictions of movement are multiple and touch upon a diverse range of areas in people's lives. Farmers, such as Hudna and Hussein in Qalqilya, struggle to access their farmlands because of the restrictions and limited opening hours of the passage points in the Wall. The individuals that I interviewed also told me about how physical barriers and violence from settlers and military limit their possibilities of accessing medical care in emergencies, going to school, to work, or about situations like the one of Umm Zahera, who struggles even to leave her own house. I have also outlined how the effects of the restrictions of movement affect less visible and more intimate areas in people’s lives, such as being able to live free from fear of violence or simply feeling that one actually is free. I find that this last part, on the lack of freedom, is well exemplified by a comment of the former mayor of Hable, a village near Qalqilya, who intervened during my interview with Hussein:

“If someone asked you a question, where is the greatest prison in the world, you can say Qalqilya. Only two roads, one to Nablus, and the other to Hable. Only two gates and they are closed from time to time. We are thankful to the European people, for their support, politically and financially, but excuse me if we are more greedy, and say that we want more support, because our situation is very difficult. We are in a prison.”

I set out to try to identify intersections of particular interest, according to the definition of McCall in relation to case studies, to “[...] uncover the differences and complexities embodied in that location.” (McCall 2007:1782) By using an intersectional analysis I have shown how the effects of the Wall, barriers and restrictions of movement are gendered and age-related. I have identified multiple vulnerable locations at different intersections of gender and age; in fact, while boys and men might be more subject to
physical violence and arrests, their possibilities of coping with this differ based on their age, and while the girls and women I interviewed all seem to be subject to a psychological dimension of violence, which limits not only their possibilities to move around but also to feel safe in their own homes because of the fear of being attacked, the physical barriers to movement appear to have a stronger impact on those who are old, sick, or suffering from a physical disability.

In relation to the intersectional effects, including different types of informants in the study and/or increasing the number of respondents, to better cover a variety of age groups, as well including people with disabilities in the studied group would surely have allowed me to provide an even more nuanced picture of how people experience the Wall, barriers and restrictions of movement differently depending on their situatedness. I noted in particular in the study that it is quite evident only by seeing the actual obstacles on the ground that anyone with a physical disability would have trouble moving around, and I believe that it would be an interesting topic for further research, as would a further analysis of the gendered effects of abuse and violence by settlers and soldiers on children.

By looking at individual stories of the effects of restrictions of movement, I have added to the existing studies that largely draw on statistical information (Cf. UN ESCWA 2015), finding that even if the overarching results may be similar, for example in showing that women and girls are more subject to psychological violence, my study does an in-depth analysis of what this actually means on an individual level, taking into account the intersection of gender and age.

I have also looked at what the population’s strategies of resistance are. I have focused mainly on individual strategies of change, to see how people negotiate resistance into their everyday lives, both as a necessity and an active choice. I have demonstrated how the main individual strategy of resistance that I found during the interviews was the refusal on behalf of the people I interviewed to leave their homes or land, and that this strategy was most frequently used and clearly expressed by women of all age groups. I draw the conclusion that this is due to societal norms that see women spending a lot of time in their homes, making this their preferred location for developing their strategy of
resisting. I have also shown that this strategy does not always stem from an active choice to resist, but that in some cases it is the only choice people have, if their economical situation does not allow them to move elsewhere. I found it interesting that this strategy does not seem to depend on age as much as on gender, showing that individuals that are located in vulnerable positions on the intersection of gender and age can still in many cases exercise their agency in creating strategies for resistance or change.

I found that few of my informants participate in organised forms of resistance or protests. When looking at the participation in organised forms of resistance, in the context of activism with the youth organisation that I visited, I have shown how the ways and possibilities of participation in this context seem to be strongly gendered, and individuated this as an interesting topic for further research. In the context of this study it would have been interesting to include other informants relevant to the area of organised resistance, perhaps volunteers from activist organisations in other parts of Palestine, or female volunteers from the organisation I visited in Hebron, to gain a broader perspective on the gendered aspects and possibilities of participation in organised resistance.

Also when it comes to strategies of resistance, this study complements previous ones by providing a current view of gendered aspects of strategies of resistance. I have analysed individual strategies of resistance, similarly to other authors (cf. Jean-Klein 2001, Hammami 2004), but in a slightly different context, given that these studies focus on the years of the Intifadas, and with a more explicit focus on a gendered analysis. Abu Nahleh (2006) does an excellent analysis of the effects of the occupation on different components of families and the dynamics these families develop to cope with the situation, in the context of the second Intifada and the war-like conditions that prevailed during those years. My study can provide an updated vision of what resistance at the individual level can look like today, with the changes that the Palestinian society has undergone in the ten years that have passed since the end of the second Intifada.
Throughout the study, I have also demonstrated the strong sense of frustration that the people I spoke to demonstrated with regards to the lack of visibility of their situation on an international level, as was clearly expressed in Hudna’s comment:

“Take me to the United Nations, I have a lot to say there!”

However, with this study my wish was not to depict Palestinians, and especially Palestinian women, as a unified victimised group that lacks possibilities to make their voices heard. My focus throughout the study on highlighting their own accounts of their lived reality, leaving space for their voices, has been key in identifying the differences in experience, but also in emphasizing the agency of my informants and how they all negotiate some forms of strategies of resistance or coping into their lives. This is also an attempt on my behalf to avoid speaking in the place of, or “for” them, which, as highlighted by postcolonial feminists, is important when studying these issues from the perspective of a Western scholar. (Cf. Mohanty 1986, Loomba 2005, Spivak 1988) I find that it is important that these voices are heard, that their struggle for freedom and resistance is acknowledged, and I hope that I have been able to contribute to that through this study.
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Abstract
In this study I use semi-structured interviews and participant observation, in an intersectional and post-colonial theoretical framework, to look at one specific aspect of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory: the restrictions of movement that are a result of the occupation, and how these influence different groups of the population in different ways, specifically by analysing intersections of gender and age. I consider not only restrictions caused by physical barriers, but also barriers caused by fear of violence or detainments and arrests. In the second part of the study I analyse strategies of resistance against the issues caused by the restrictions of movement and their gendered aspects. I show how the effects of barriers and restrictions of movement are gendered and age-related, identifying multiple vulnerable locations at different intersections of gender and age. I also demonstrate how both individual strategies of resistance and the possibilities to participate in organised forms of resistance are gendered.

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