An assemblage of affective sounds: resistance and power through the Palestinian electronic music scene

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فلسطين حرة من النهر الى البحر

From the river to the sea,

Palestine will be free

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Bahar. Male cultural centre owner and DJ living in Bayt Sahur. In person interview, May 2022 (Bayt Sahur).

Murd. Male DJ and producer living in Bayt Lahm. In person interview, May 2022 (Bayt Lahm).

Samah. Female fashion designer and actress, living in Ramallah.

Nadia. Female writer and partygoer from Ramallah, living in London. In person interview, June 2022 (Ramallah).

Ali. Male DJ and musician, living in Ramallah. In person interview, June 2022 (Ramallah).

Ahmed. Male DJ and photographer, living in Ramallah. In person interview, June 2022 (Ramallah).

Jana. Female singer, producer and filmmaker, living in Ramallah. In person interview, June 2022 (Ramallah).

Lami. Male bartender and partygoer, living in Ramallah. In person interview, May 2022 (Ramallah).

Yasir. Male musician and bar owner, living in Ramallah. In person interview, June 2022.

Syam. Female, Jordanian musician, DJ and writer, living in Canada. Online interview, June 2021.

Farash. Male, Jordanian DJ and radio curator, living in Amman. Online interview, February 2022.

Yara. Female DJ living in Ramallah. Online interview, September 2019.

Zaynab. Female partygoer living in Ramallah. Online interview, August 2019.

Mira. Female artist living in Berlin.

Note: some of the people I interviewed are not quoted in this thesis. All the names have been anonymised. All but Syam and Farash are Palestinian, therefore, I only emphasise where they live at the time of the interview or the conversation.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This thesis is an exploratory, descriptive, conceptual research about the Palestinian electronic dance scene. First, it sets out to make sense of social relations and elements traversing and constituting this space, locating the scene chronologically, geographically and affectively through anecdotes, interviews and encounters in different dance floors and spaces. It explores how music, affect, class and space are bound together to produce a layered and mobile assemblage of people that relate in diverse ways to the practice of resistance.

Second, this project focuses on the meanings and practices related to resistance within the scene. Departing from a critical standpoint on subcultural theory and traditional frameworks for resistance, I interrogate and amplify the meanings of resisting in this context. The idea of 'generative resistance' is articulated in this process and examined in terms of its production of new spaces, communities, affects, intimacies, alternatives and culture, disputing diverse power structures.

This thesis uses a participant and feminist micro-ethnography. Developed between 2019-2022, the methods employed are mainly participant and sensory observation, interviews and informal conversations, and online analysis. I conducted fieldwork in Ramallah (Palestine), Amman (Jordan), Berlin (Germany), Athens (Greece) and London (Britain). Through this process, I developed a critical 'anti-research' epistemology that questions my positionality and generates an 'affective' epistemology: a way of doing research and producing knowledge that is based on difference, discomfort, solidarity and transformation.

Preface

I am sitting in the kitchen with Samah[1], one of my Palestinian housemates, a hot day in May 2022. I arrived in Ramallah just a few weeks ago, and I am starting to gain confidence with her. Enough confidence to ask for a formal interview for my thesis. She responds to me, over-dramatising on purpose her response: "Oh I can't, it is just *traumatising* for me to talk about the scene". I can't avoid smiling. "Alright", I say, "but we can just talk a bit, share your thoughts on some stuff". She smiled back while rolling a cigarette, "I'm tired of talking about these things, of having to explain things… It is always about how we are so nice and tolerant, but why it is never about our music?" This question, which had been articulated in many ways before, accompanied me for the rest of the project. It encapsulates very well the tensions this thesis and research alike address and the context that surrounds it: the burdened, scrutinised, exoticised reality and the people's tiresomeness of being approached and represented, not because of what they do, but for who they are. This question arrived at a time when I already had to navigate this concern, why I was doing this and how I was able to do something different. Why am I not focusing only on music if I am researching an electronic music scene? Why were Samah and others opposed to this? When did this all get started?

I have always wanted to research electronic music scenes, mostly due to my involvement in these, and I have always been interested in international politics. Without having any special connection or relation with Palestine beyond my solidarity and outrage for the occupation, trying to know and contribute to this field seemed a legitimate task. But while doing so, I encountered a much more complex scenario, a complexity that has been both productive and exhausting. As Samah's question represents, music opens a whole entanglement with questions of power, society, and politics. It is never only about music. To understand the processes of music scenes, we need to understand what traverses them. I wanted to delve deeper into how the scene worked and what energies created and maintained it. I wanted to understand how practices of resistance function in this context. How the scene could be an inspiring political space for other dance floors that live in the 'safety' of our cities. This thesis allowed to develop and explore important questions that relate to diverse fields of inquiry and that can be applied to different contexts: how communities generate leisure and music, how they relate to power, how resistance is a burdened but still powerful idea, how affect and

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[1] All participants' names are anonymised and therefore, real names do not appear and there is not a lot of details about participants in general so they cannot be identified.

intimacy constitute and intersect subjectivities, and how research is messy and contradictory, just like scenes are. This thesis encapsulates research's double nature: the process related to the writing, the theories, the findings, the questions on the one hand, and the process related to the privileges, the access, the implications and the intimacies on the other. As with music, it is never only about research itself but all the relations that surround and emanate from it. I treat them as equally important.

I never interviewed Samah. We would have breakfast almost every morning, we would go for coffee, for car rides, worked on our projects together at Garage[2] many times, go out for drinks… We became close, but that interview never happened. This thesis also embodies these informal encounters, these multiple uncomfortable and exciting conversations that are present in many shapes in this thesis, the silences and refusals, the impossibilities and diverse relationships that became real in many forms, not only through participants, but also due to Covid-19 and the slowdown I had to have in my research.

In the next chapter, I will introduce in more detail the themes and questions that guide this thesis. Through a brief exploration of the research questions and topics, I will present some of the relevant concepts that have emerged during this research and that are particular contributions that help to understand the nature of many processes that I explain.

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[2] A bar in Ramallah that will be later explored (chapter 3).

Introduction

1. Overview of the thesis

This thesis is an exploratory, descriptive, conceptual research about the Palestinian electronic dance scene. First, it sets out to make sense of social relations and elements traversing and constituting this space, locating the scene politically, chronologically, geographically and affectively through anecdotes and encounters. Second, it focuses on the meanings and practices related to resistance within the scene. That is, it explores how music, affect, class and space (the social relations I referred to) are bound together to produce a layered and mobile assemblage of people that relate in diverse ways to the practice of resistance. More specifically, it starts by developing an introductory overview of the scene beginnings to later develop, thematically rather than chronologically, the main social dynamics that, articulated in multiple ways, potentially generate new ways of resisting. The thesis departs from the traditional work on resistance and culture, as developed by the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies, and instead locates resistance within a network of practices and discourses which, when articulated through the scene and in *relation* to diverse power structures, generate new spaces, communities, affects, intimacies, alternatives and culture.

The scene is formed of an intimate small community of young Palestinians, 'electronic music' genres and a series of leisure and social practices. The scene is understood here in fluid and informal ways that include regular nights out to the bars in Ramallah, the production and distribution of music through online radio and social media, the slowdowns, tensions and cancellations that it has encountered in recent years, the afterparties in flats, the car rides to Haifa, the travels to Amman… Like resistance, the term 'scene' is critiqued, however by some participants due to the particularities of this context and the universalising tone of this notion. The ambiguity of the word 'scene' calls for a problematisation and deconstruction of its meaning. This thesis will put into question some traditional accounts (Straw, 1991; Bennett, 2002; Peterson & Bennett, 2004) on scenes that take for granted its fixity, its venues, its stability or its audiences. The Palestinian 'scene' unfolds in non-linear and unstable ways into different directions, moving away from the dominant conceptualisation of music scenes as materially bounded to a series of places: the clubs, the

record shops, the bars, the fashion stores, or the recording studios. These places are not central for the Palestinian electronic music scene due a lack of them. Hence, this scene is seen more as a movement, an affective network of people and sounds, moving in between the few bars where the odd party occurs, the online world, the tours outside Palestine, the collaborations, the friendships, and the hardships.

Geographically, the scene is based in different territories and diasporic networks. Subsequently, fieldwork was conducted in '67 Palestine (West Bank), through the cities of Ramallah and Bayt Lahm (Bethlehem), in Haifa ('48 Palestine) and also virtually, through online radio. It also follows other presence in diverse cities such as Amman, Berlin, Athens and London. In all these locations I conducted fieldwork of some kind, whether going out, interviewing or getting to know the people. However, the main field-city was Ramallah, due to its role in its origins and the place of birth and residency of most of this thesis' participants. Consequently, Ramallah bears an important role in the scene, showing how these spaces constitute and de-centre at the same time, being traversed by tensions politics, social confrontation, international presence and neoliberal development. As a raver and electronic music lover, the connection with participants through this shared identity was key to navigate the scene and be welcomed to it. As my positionality is traversed by whiteness and privilege, the love and knowledge of music and dance floors joint us closer than anything else. Without this shared identity and passion, this research would not have been possible.

2. Aims and objectives of the project

After having set a general overview of what this project is doing and where it comes from, I will introduce here the aims and the objectives to accomplish those. It will help to anchor the directions that have been opened in the first pages. In the next section, these aims will be translated into research questions, and I will add depth to the concepts that have started to emerge.

The first aim is to **(1) describe, explore and analyse the Palestinian electronic music scene in an affective, critical and political way**. This is a broad sociological aim: to develop and understand a concrete music scene and therefore, the social relations that constitute it. Questions of music, affect, class, space and mobility will be developed to reach this aim as well as interrogating the notion of scene. Departing from a definitory and explanatory aim

settles the necessary understanding of a scene as a musical, social and political phenomenon such as found in the classic work of Straw (1991), Shank (1994), Thornton (1995), Malbon (1999), Bennett (2002), Bennett and Peterson (2004) among others, to later suggest important differences to these. The exploration of such, directs the thesis towards potential sites for an understanding of electronic music scenes, immersed in a myriad of different structures (authorities, religion and family) and spaces (the local, the virtual and the global).

The second aim of this research is **(2) to look at generative and fluid ways of resisting through these practices** such as in Foucauldian and post subcultural understandings of the term within electronic music scenes (Redhead, 1993; Thornton, 1995; Malbon, 1999; Ueno, 2003; St John, 2009) and leisure (Shaw, 2001); whether these are perceived as resistance by participants, and what discourses are attributed to the concept. This aim is twofold, as the exploration of practices and meanings of resistance within this context leads to a building on and contribution to resistance theories, but also it challenges some traditional and hegemonic ideas in relation to resisting and more concretely, to Palestinian resistance.

This research, while acknowledging and underpinning in its core the intersectional nature of Israeli settler colonialism, critically problematises the tie between culture and resistance (to occupation) as sometimes an essentialist, fixed and instrumentalist approach that erases other forms and targets of resistance. Whereas this lens of analysis has proven extremely useful to understand the pervading and lasting Palestinian resistance on the ground, it has been rendered insufficient for this particular project, as this work intersects with practices that escape traditional activism, organised politics, or social movements. The practices that this research explores are understood as generative instead of only ever oppositional and reactive. Moreover, it is more alternative, specific, unstable and contradictory than the widespread and popular Palestinian resistance (*sumūd* صمود). This, as it will be seen, does not mean that they are completely disentangled or autonomous of the wider context of resisting and colonisation, rather, that it incorporates an intersectional approach.

Importantly, these aims are underpinned by a third one, the commitment to **(3) generate an affective, participatory and feminist methodology and epistemology engaged with transformation and decolonisation**. This aim is not only methodological as a way of doing sensitive and ethical research, it lies at the heart of how I try to put care and social justice at the centre of my life. The dynamics of privilege, neo-orientalism, romanticisation and over-

scrutinisation that crosses the Palestinian context, and consequently, this research, must be addressed and transformed. Acknowledging and interrogating the limitations that academic research has in this sense, this thesis defends an 'affective epistemology' and 'anti-research' position when the contribution is blurred and mostly individual, and risks reproducing the same reifying relations. Therefore, I develop an affective epistemology, a way of navigating discomfort and privilege not as self-centring practices of guilt or white empathy with the oppressed (Lobb, 2022), but as working with these towards a transformational sense of difference and solidarity.

These three aims are met through a series of more concrete objectives. Some of these condense several points within, for instance, conceptualisation and exploration of some process, but they are arranged in thematic similarities.

1. To examine the scene as 'a multispatial assemblage of intimate networks, sounds, spaces and affects' where self-expression, fun, pleasure, trauma, escape and resistance intersect, (Shaw, 2001; Salih and Ricther-Devroe, 2014 Junka-Aiko, 2016; Khalili, 2016) in order to re-think the white and universalist notion of the music scene (Queiroz, 2019).

2. To develop the meaning and role of a series of social relations: music (De Nora, 2000), affect (Saldhana, 2007; Anderson, 2009; Garcia, 2011), class (Bourdieu, 1990; Thornton, 1995; Taraki, 2008a, 2008b), space and mobility (Peteet, 2007, 2017; Creswell, 2010; DeLanda 2016) within and outside the scene in this context. Each of them will be deepened and informed by recent literature and micro-ethnographic anecdotes and interviews.

3. To understand the nature, discourses and practices of resistance, broadly situated in Foucauldian and post-Foucauldian understanding of resistance (Foucault, 1978, 1980, 1982; Abu-Lughod, 1990; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015, 2016, 2019) as generative, ambiguous, contradictory and agonistic, within the Palestinian electronic music scene.

4. To observe interactions, dynamics and power relations in this scene through embodied and affective micro-ethnography and participant observation during the events; to collect and reproduce their opinions and narratives around various topics (the scene and its characteristics, resistance, politics, personal life) through in-depth interviews and conversations with the scene's participants; and to place and contextualise the scene's

practices and views with the broader Palestinian and international context as a way of locating it historically and politically.

5. To develop an affective, reflexive and feminist methodology, methods and epistemology to approach and understand these phenomena. I use the term 'affective' because this thesis is very much embedded and informed by the intimate and sensory aspects that form social life. This entails developing a critical approach that questions assumptions or generalisations within the fields of inquiry.

3. The concepts and research questions

These aims are articulated in more specific research questions that at the same time contain important concepts to tease out. In this section, the research questions are developed and the notions within them too.

1. How do different social relations *constitute* and *traverse* the Palestinian electronic music scene?

2. How is resisting *understood* and *practised* in the scene?

1. The scene is framed as a diasporic assemblage, encompassing diverse elements that operate together to form a moving loose network of people, music and affects. The goal of this question is to explore and give a detailed account of what relations produce/create (*constitutes*) and cross (*traverses*) the scene and how. In other words, what elements, social relations and processes have come out as relevant and necessary to generate the scene as it is, and what power structures cross the scene influencing it. This question establishes a detailed and reflexive account about how the scene works and interacts with itself and its surroundings. In this question, there are two notions[3] to clarify: the term 'scene' and the term 'social relations'.

As said already, the notion of scene is at some points limited due to some connotations it entails but serves as a general idea due to its generalised use in the public imaginary. It is not the goal of the question to prove whether this is a scene but to examine the social relations that constitute it. Nevertheless, there is a conceptualisation of this idea in chapter 5 which locates the particularities of it in comparison to dominant theorisations on music scenes

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[3] The notion of electronic music has already been framed and it is included within the notion of 'scene'.

(Straw, 1991, 2006; Shank, 1994; Thornton, 1995; Malbon, 1999; Bennett, 2002; Peterson & Bennett, 2004; Driver & Bennett, 2014; Queiroz, 2019 among many others). Coming back to the substantial part of the research question, the notion of social relations encapsulates the development of the scene's main dynamics that form the core of the project. In brief, social relations refer to music, affect, class, and mobility/space. These have emerged as prominent themes and structure the development of chapter 4.

2. The second research question explores the understandings and practices of 'resistance' within the scene in a fluid and mobile way. When referring to *'understood'* (meanings and discourses) and *'practised'* (actions and concrete materialisations), I approach the idea focusing on participants' discourses and their practices in the scene. This perspective opens the door to reflect on the political role of the dance floor as a generative force of transformation, dispute, care, pleasure, intimacy, friendship, escape or boycott. All these ways of 'resisting' are analysed in depth in chapter 5. I draw on post-Foucauldian developments (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015, 2016, 2019) to underpin the entanglement of resistance and power. Power, as previously stated, holds a relevant place within this project as a generative force, relational to resistance, both *conviving* and producing in the same spaces, and contingent, always in movement, more individual, ambiguous and rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). By centring affect and power as constitutive forces that re-assemble social relations as contradictory, non-binary and cyclic, it allows me to rethink music practices from another position, one that is far from an all-encompassing narrative of resistance or enjoyment. The term I use to explain the existence of agonist and supposedly contradictory elements at the same time is *conviviality* (Puar, 2009). The concrete existence of what is framed as binary (modernity/tradition, power/resistance, pleasure/politics) in the same space is used in this thesis as a line of argument to show the complexity, hybridity and mixture of social life.

Reshaping this axiom, the goal of this exploration is to instead emphasise the plural and changing nature that resisting encompasses, not to deny the resistant nature of Palestinian existence. Hence, this thesis puts together the ontological narrative of existence as resistance, and the critical analysis of the nationalist and traditional meanings, articulated by participants through fieldwork. This thesis problematises this attribution and follows other possibilities in understanding resistance. Through the exploration of resisting in a practical, embodied, and discursive way, a concept of resistance emerges to give sense of processes linked to a

burdened, contradictory and at times ambiguous relationship of this notion and the different power structures that produce it.

4. Body of literature and original contribution to knowledge

This research is located at an intersection between resistance studies, Palestinian studies, music scenes, affect theory and feminist epistemology, sub headed below as *Palestine, resistance, anti-research* and *affect* as both bodies of literature and contributions to knowledge. The research moves between various theoretical places and uses concepts, ideas and contributions from across disciplines in a rhizomatic way.

Palestine

Naming and locating Palestine is of essential importance and it is the first body of literature developed in the literature review. As the reader will see, the literature review is completely traversed by Palestinian complexities, putting the focus on understanding the region and its recent history rather than developing literature on electronic music scenes. Palestine is understood as a historic, material and affective entity that unfolds beyond its artificial borders imposed by Israel and is also subjected to a deterritorialising process (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; DeLanda, 2016). When I refer to the Palestinian electronic music scene, it includes the spaces within the West Bank ('67 Palestine), and Israel (known as '48 Palestine by many Palestinians). Also, I include the reality of many Palestinians that live permanently or temporarily in the diaspora, all contributing in different ways to the articulation of a moving assemblage of networks, identities, and practices that are summarised under the name of 'scene', albeit not without critique.

I contribute to the exploration of a cultural world that is still minoritarian within Palestinian studies, but growing steadily (see Stein & Swedenburg, 2005; Tawil-Souri, 2011; Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014; El Zein, 2016; Junka-Aikio, 2016; Withers, 2016, 2021). These works amplify the locations from which Palestine is narrated and understood. Through this work, a quest for de-romanticisation, de-essentialisation and pluralisation of experiences is sought.

Resistance

Whereas the study of Palestinian resistance has largely been discussed (Peteet, 1991, 1994; Massad, 2005; Baroud, 2006; Abufarha, 2009; Maksidi, 2010; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015; Stein & Swedenburg, 2005, Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014), the notion of resisting through practices related to electronic music, brings a series of novelties and particularities.

First of all, this research broadens and challenges some of the traditional paradigms about resistance, leisure and identity related to Palestine, mentioned above. The reality of occupation and settler colonialism is not erased or put aside, but complexed and reframed to incorporate critiques of essentialist and over-romanticised accounts of Palestinian everyday life and culture. This does not intend to silence the necro-political constraints of settler colonialism, but to include its significance from a transformational perspective that looks at participants beyond subjugated objects of a totalising other. Using solely the framework of violence and occupation would obscure the role of the Palestinian authorities, religion or society, as well as global circuits of consumption and exchange, in shaping the scene.

Second, the notion of resistance that this thesis develops draws from Foucauldian and post-Foucauldian frameworks. The importance of resistance and power as forces that are generative and pervading (Foucault, 1978, 1980, 1982, 2008), creating contradictory effects and the idea that resistance is a moving network that encompasses alliances and deterritorialising elements (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; DeLanda, 2016) is the theoretical core that informs the analysis. Rather than seeing resistance as only a concrete, oppositional and organised action, the contribution to knowledge I make is the focus on 'generative resistance' through music and the creation of alliances and community, practices and social dynamics within it in the Palestinian context. Researching Palestinian electronic music through resistance (unexplored in itself) is the concept that emerges from this study with 'generative resistance', a way of understanding these practices as always complex, ambiguous, and productive.

Hence, this project contributes to the study of resistance, and Palestinian leisure by incorporating these Palestinian voices that question and critique the epistemological and material consequences of the traditional articulation of resistance, especially when articulated by outsider or academic platforms, wrestling in a sort of simplification, neo-orientalism and exoticism. In short, I depart from a model which seeks to understand resistance only in terms

of opposition, and instead reframe it as generative of new modes and networks of community, leisure, affect, intimacy, and music.

Neo-orientalism and 'anti-research'

This thesis also highlights a critique encapsulated in certain concepts, such as 'neoliberal orientalism' (El Zein, 2016), 'political orientalism' (Steward, 2013) and the exoticisation of the scene through dynamics of representation and distribution. This critique is incorporated in this thesis' methodological and epistemological framework: it stands in a feminist, participatory and transformational ethos, embedded in decolonising research's practices and ways of being in the field. However, the term 'decolonising' and its derivatives is carefully (and barely) used in this research, as I assume the limited possibilities of actual decolonisation through a PhD thesis. As Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, decolonisation is not a metaphor, and the theoretical moves towards denouncing colonisation or positionalities that stand hand in hand with social transformative justice, do not equate to decolonisation *per se*. 'Decolonising' Palestine entails deep, committed to justice, material actions that fall outside the scope and impact of this thesis but this does not deny the importance of also denouncing and sharing the situation through this channel and all the possible ones.

The methodology here has become a major reflective point of this research. It draws from the experience of doing fieldwork and the many conversations I had on the matter and enlarges its importance beyond being the guiding framework to pursue research. It is read as an autoethnographic critique that seeks transformation, not only an acknowledgement of privilege and power (Ahmed, 2006). As a result, jointly with the experience of fieldwork, the thesis stands in an 'anti-research' position, whenever is needed, meaning to stand back and contribute from another place other than academia. This anti-research position generates an 'affective' epistemology: a way of doing research and producing knowledge that is based on difference, discomfort, solidarity and transformation.

Affect

This research is also embedded and contributes to another body of literature through an affective epistemology. It draws on many critical feminist epistemologies that have been contributing to this field for decades. Affect, atmospheres and intimacies, all widely developed in recent studies (Warner 2002; Ahmed, 2004, 2006; Clough & Halley, 2007;

Ngai, 2007; Steward, 2007; Berlant, 2000, 2008; Anderson, 2009; Gregg & Seighworth, 2010; Garcia 2011, 2023) are centred to explain social relations, with particular focus on the dance floor. Through these works, I build upon the relationship with whiteness, not as a complete detached tourist but when one is part of the local group (Saldhana, 2007), and intimacy (Garcia, 2011, 2023) as mediated by familiarity and discomfort in a context of 'intimate publics' (Berlant, 2008). Affect is used more as a guide and a lens than as a theory. It came afterwards, during my fieldwork, as a way of making sense of the intensities, non-verbal interactions, participants feelings and my owns, all intersecting in a mingle of mundanity and abnormality that are characteristic of the parties. In this sense, the work of Ahmed (2004, 2006) is helpful to problematise my own centring in this thesis and the performance of anticolonialism through my writings. Indeed, there is a striking limitation when it comes to exploring affect: the impossibility of translating what others feel and sense, especially within different cultural worlds (theirs and mine).

5. Methodology and methods

As such, this research extends methodologies and ways of thinking about positionality and negotiation, especially in relation to whiteness, and also the relation of insider/outsider research. As a white Spanish young female, residing and studying in Britain and coming from a middle-class background, a reflective and sensitive methodology are an essential part of this project. The micro-ethnographic process, my positionality and the data analysis itself has meant encountering what I call 'affective discomfort', making me think about my role in the dynamics of others and my potential centring of 'white guilt' (Ahmed, 2006). This experience has turned into an epistemological critique that is now part of this thesis, echoing what has been an essential part of the fieldwork and following the reflections of many feminist scholars (Alcoff, 1991; Mohanty, 1991, 2004; Nast, 1994; Kobayashi, 1994; Nagar, 2002; Ahmed, 2004; Spivak, 2010; Lobb, 2022).

In terms of methods, I developed a micro-ethnography due to the scope, location, duration and participation of this research. The focus on a small scene, with a reduced number of venues as research sites, and the duration of the actual fieldwork on the ground makes this project a micro-ethnography. The research was conducted between 2019-2022, starting as a master's dissertation in April 2019 and as a PhD in September the same year. As mentioned already, I stayed in Amman (for over a month), as well as Berlin, Athens and London for

short periods of time to attend parties, festivals and meet participants. Then, after many impossibilities and travel restrictions due to Covid-19 (Israel had a harsh closure of their borders for internationals, I had to postpone fieldwork in Palestine for more than a year), I managed to live in Ramallah for 3 months (visa length) in spring/summer 2022. In addition to this, since the start of the thesis, I conducted online analysis which included researching social media, watching videos, documentaries, movies, listening to music and reading interviews, which made up for the other side of the fieldwork and took place over more than three years.

6. Findings and thesis structure

Now that I have set up a general overview, the research questions and aims and the methodology, I will introduce my key arguments and explain how they are developed in the chapters.

Chapter 1 – Literature review locates the Palestinian context within the thesis. It reviews questions of coloniality and postcoloniality, it continues by mapping Palestine: a geographically scattered territory and its diasporic ramifications. Then it settles an overview of recent Palestinian developments and how they intersect with cultural practices: the impact of the Intifadas (1987-1993 and 2000-2005) in everyday life and the post-Oslo period of neoliberalisation and despair, initiated in the late 1990s, where this generation has grown up. A key argument that will follow in the rest of the thesis is drawn in this chapter: occupation is a pervasive and central structure in influencing Palestinian lives and the scene, but the scene intersects with many other structures and factors that constitute and traverse it in plural ways.

The second part of chapter 1 focuses on developing the different approaches around resisting in Palestine, with a special focus on cultural practices (popular culture) and *sumūd*. It deepens in the critique of resistance paradigms that coalesce around a fixed and nationalistic framework that does not reflect the diverse pluralities on the ground in regard to resisting, leisure and culture. It is in the last part of the literature review where diverse frameworks and concepts that inspire this thesis' perspective on resistance emerge: Michel Foucault's theories

of resistance/power, the idea of *conviviality*, Gramscian readings on hegemony, the contributions of the CCCS and affect theory.

Chapter 2 - Methodology outlines the methods and contains the epistemological section, which has already been briefly detailed above. It is a long chapter that contains, apart from the fieldwork process, the methods and data analysis, reflectivity and critical development on my positionality and the ethics of this research.

Chapter 3 – Attuning to Ramallah opens the thesis' findings section. Through the use of ethnographic anecdotes, it establishes a typical night out is in Ramallah and the specificities of this city. It anchors the scene's origins and current development, traversed by Covid-19, Israeli violence and internal tensions. It aims to transmit to the reader the feelings that traversed fieldwork: going out and partying, living in Ramallah and crossing nightlife in different senses.

Chapter 4 – Social relations through the scene goes deep into the scene, answering the first research question. It explores the set of social relations I have already mentioned: music practices, affects, class relations and mobilities that produce a particular dance floor entangled in different power structures. It includes music links, maps and photographs to give an interactive and sensual idea of these. These social relations are affective and intimate, and also distant and elitist, that operate across and within different layers. A key argument underpinning this chapter is how the scene is produced by (sub)cultural and economic capital that differentiates participants, in general, from the rest of Palestinians, allowing a certain intimate space and a dynamic of mobility, internal and external. As such, the affective atmosphere succinctly grasps these dynamics and my own role in sensing and observing them.

Chapter 5 – Resistance builds upon the social relations analysed in chapter 4 and answers the second research question: the understandings and practises of resistance. If chapter 4 is about the social relations, chapter 5 is about the practices that are articulated from these: making parties, challenging spatial scattering, building safer spaces, escape and fun and solidarity and boycott. All these are analysed as forms of resisting through culture, music and leisure, but they are also problematised, highlighting the entanglement they encompass with power in some senses. The second part of this chapter focuses on resistance discourses: how

participants make sense of resistance in their everyday life, in relation to society, as well as in relation to Western representations. The chapter importantly explores the key question as to whether then resistance should still be thought of as a relevant frame to understand this context and others, or whether it should be discarded due to its overly burdened and romanticising connotations.

Chapter 6 - Discussion ends the thesis analysis, discussing and conceptualising some of the pivotal contribution of this project. Following the rhizomatic character of my writing, I come back to the notion of scene to develop it fully as an *affective assemblage* and to problematise it in relation to literature on music scenes mentioned above. The same is done with resistance. I dedicate a section to assemble all the elements that have been emerging in relation to this notion and conceptualise the idea of *generative resistance* in its own right. The idea that resistance can be generative rather than reactive, is the central contribution of this thesis. Indeed, both notions are interconnected and exist along each other, as both are found by the practise themselves, the practise of action, of movement, of becoming. They are not fixed images or abstract notions; they only exist when exercised.

The second part of chapter 5 picks up the epistemological debate that has been outlined and which grows during the thesis, starting in chapter 2 (methodology), implicitly in chapter 3 and in chapter 4 through the discourses on resistance. It analyses dynamics of representation and recognition and questions the intentions and call for solidarity of Western audiences, often falling in neo-orientalism and romanticisation (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Steward, 2017; Nooshin, 2017). In this sense, it concludes with the recognition of 'anti-research' positions as sometimes necessary (not researching when there is not clear contribution to the community or need) and the development of an affective epistemology.

In this introduction, I have provided an initial contextualisation of the research that follows in the next chapters. Understanding the scene more as a movement of peoples, as a plural space that moves in different layers, as a conviviality of contradictions and networks that have rapidly evolved and changed since its inception, is a necessary point of departure.

Chapter 1 – Literature review

1. Introduction

This chapter is a summary of the literature from which this research starts. It aims to settle a common ground of departure and to review scholarship in relation to the main themes of the thesis. In order to do so, the chapter lays out debates on Palestinian recent history and coloniality, resistance and culture. It purposely focuses and departs from the Palestinian question and details general aspects of its current context. This is done so mainly because this chapter aims to centre the reality to the reader as the first and most important task. Instead of departing from a close look at alternative nightlife, electronic music or intimacies on dance floors, I consciously chose to focus on the Palestinian context to later amplify other questions. There will be time to focus on the concrete, on the materialisations and relationships of these 'themes' when exploring the scene. This chapter seeks to give the reader enough perspective on the context and importantly, to not marginalise or reduce it within general discussions of electronic music, global dance floors, or youth subcultures.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is dedicated to set up the main debates that traverse the thesis in a contextual way (settler colonialism, neoliberalism and post-Oslo society). The second section of this chapter focuses on theories of resistance, subcultural debates and the inclusion of affect in this context. The first part of this chapter contemplates the crossover between colonial and postcolonial temporalities and sovereignties, as well as the necessity of addressing its diasporic nature, which all constitute the complex dimensions of this context. The structuring aspect of power regimes is not solely correspondent to Israel. Despite many scholars on Palestinian resistance and politics focusing on Zionism and its effects, this relationship cannot be understood outside the collaboration of the Palestinian authorities (the government, the Palestine Liberation Organization political ruling party, the police and different organisations), together with the role of international players in perpetuating and benefiting from the situation.

To understand how and why the debate around the potential for resisting through a dance scene and the possible anti-hegemonic subjectivities is so complex and entangled with wider

social and cultural processes, a development of the recent changes in the political context needs to be outlined. The social climate since the end of the Oslo Accords and the second Intifada have shown an increasing lack of trust in their own institutions parallel to a rampant rise of neoliberal policies. There are many accounts of this (Khalidi & Samour, 2011; Khalidi, 2014; Da'na, 2014; Haddad, 2016; Morrison, 2020; Toukan, 2021) and my goal here of examining the neoliberal framework is to link these societal changes in lifestyles and imaginaries with the scene, emphasising on class and the urban enclave of Ramallah, as well as the generalised despair amongst many people. It seeks to imprint a critical outlook to what could be uncritically celebrated as a rise of consumerist and individualistic practices. Just as it is important to understand the role of Israeli occupation, it is equally relevant to locate the internal dynamics that I have chosen to summarise in tandem; 'neoliberalisation and despair'.

In the second section of this chapter, I locate resisting in the cultural context of Palestine, with an emphasis on the traditional frameworks and debates around popular and cultural Palestinian resistance. The second part develops a critique towards these frameworks, incorporating the voices that warn about the romanisation and fetishisation of resistance. The question of music, resistance and identity within a context of erasure, and ethnic cleansing raises heated debates on authenticity and tradition that will be addressed. As previously mentioned, this part aims to set a clear context of how resistance is lived and understood by the majority of the population, and how these frameworks have been translated by scholars into hegemonic ways of understanding resistance, music and leisure in this context.

As a way to start exposing how this thesis approaches this debate, the second part also lays the perspectives that inform this thesis' understanding of resistance. The subcultural model, Gramscian hegemony, Foucauldian (and post) theories of power are set to show the need to broaden and develop a critical understanding of resisting, that grasps the generative, *contradictory* and critical discourses and practices of participants in this sense. Importantly, affect comes in to disentangle the limitations that these approaches hold, moving away from the focus on rationalising these 'contradictions' to incorporating them as productive and meaningful. A focus on affect theory builds on ideas of intimacy among strangers (Garcia, 2011), the mediation of whiteness (Saldhana, 2007), estrangement and discomfort as a key elements of the dance floor. The Deleuzean-Guattarian and DeLandan notions of assemblage and alliance help to emphasise the contingent moving relationship of distinct elements that comprise resistance and in an analogous relation, the scene. I construct the relational view of human action and interaction, apply it to a very concrete context which Deleuze and Guattari

(1987) develop as an interdependency between the social, the material, the geographical and I add an extra layer, the affective. As such, this chapter tries to unfold a different direction for conceptualising resistance that, while embedded in the frameworks explained below, takes into account the complex entanglement with the term that participants and the scene have.

2. Understanding the current historical moment in Palestine

The following section exposes one of the first layered realities that constitutes Palestine, the location within coloniality, but with many postcolonial imaginaries operating at the same time. This intersection, I will argue, layers the Palestinian context through an ongoing colonial experience with hints of postcolonial imaginaries, that is, a limited and troubled sense of autonomy and agency. It is important to settle this clearly since it helps to understand and direct the thesis to answer the research questions: the social relations within the scene, the scene's relationship with the rest of Palestinian society and the articulation[4] and practice of resistance.

2.1. Coloniality and postcolonial studies

This section starts by outlining an initial review of certain postcolonial debates applicable to this context (Said, 1978, 1984, 1992; Shohat, 1992, 2006; Mbembe, 2001, 2003; Spivak, 2010). I start here because, first, as a practical and political reason, there are many attempts, scholarly and politically, to frame Palestine as a failed, violent, non-advanced/willing to cooperate 'territory' that has already had its fair political process (Oslo Accords), with de-facto borders and a government whose relationship with Israel is framed as a 'two-sided' conflict, and therefore, is in a sort of postcolonial position that alienates any talks on liberation struggle, decolonisation, the return of Palestinian refugees, the illegal annexation of the land or the status of Al-Quds (Jerusalem), among others. In other words, it obscures the need to openly name Palestine as a colonial and occupied country. The second reason for starting here is that there are relevant postcolonial debates that are linked to the Palestinian reality. Even when the different possibilities and strategies that people undergo to disentangle

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[4] The use of the term articulation here differs from the one Mouffe and Laclau develop (1985). It follows a broader meaning, as a means to understand the relations and connections between various elements of the context (Hall, 1990, 1996). It is mostly used in reference to the practise of resistance: entailing a process, an exercise of different practices linked together to generate resistance, in contraposition with an 'static' ontological conception of resistance as something that simply *is*. The same will apply to the assemblage: a need of multiple elements to connect and relate to allow for the construction of something new, in this case, the assemblage.

their realities are still subject of coloniality, but do not exist *only* in relation to this coloniality, as the Palestinian electronic music scene shows.

Fieldwork, however, has proved key in this sense: the debate around its specific postcolonial elements and imaginaries cannot obscure the settler colonial context of ongoing violence and dispossession. In order to explore this, this thesis incorporates some of the theorising around postcoloniality that helps to deepen and sharpen culture and leisure (Junka-Aiko, 2016; Khalili, 2016; Toukan, 2021), and also questions essentialisation, romanticisation and neo-orientalisation (Said, 1978; Abu-Lughod, 1990; Steward, 2013; El Zein 2016; Nooshin 2017). Culture and leisure are embedded in the multiple trajectories and projects where Palestinians create and maintain their own spaces, projects and discourses. In other words, the postcolonial is an 'interlocking of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other pasts, presents, and futures' (Mbembe, 2003:83). As such, the term refers not only to a historical time or transition (which has not arrived yet), but a condition, a different dialectical position between ruler and ruled which underpinned a new relational binarism similar to colonial times. This relational binarism emerges as a crude, violent and pervasive occupation that has nothing to do with a 'postcolonial' relationship with the coloniser. In this sense, Palestine is understood as a 'postcolonial colony' (Massad, 2001), as 'pre-postcolonial' (Shohat, 1992) or directly as 'colonial' (Pappe, 2008). These terms share the commonality of emphasising Palestine as still a colonial reality, despite Zionist and scholarly efforts of framing the relationship as ultimately 'postcolonial'.

There is yet another important issue at stake in framing this colonial/postcolonial relationship that structures much of the positionality of this thesis and participants: the effects of 'coloniality'. As Loomba (2015) argues, some of the analysis of 'postcolonial' societies portrays them as if colonialism is the only relatable past of these societies. As will be seen in the next section in more detail, the constitution of Israel through settler colonialism, apartheid and occupation, and the resistance against this by the Palestinians, frames their identities and existence through this opposition. It renders the subject to be only understood and experienced through this relationship of oppression and domination. This rupture and pluralisation of their existence is precisely what this thesis examines.

The importance of the 'colonial' rupture (or continuity in the Palestinian case) leads, hence, to another problem: the reconstruction of what came before the colonial rule and what other realities co-existed with it. The task of unfolding this pre-colonial past, recovering and

reinscribing the fragmented indigenous senses of belonging, collective memory, languages and stories have been an enormous effort carried out by communities that have experienced colonialism. The case of Palestine is paradigmatic of this effort, in past and in *present*, having pushed Palestinians to locate, at the centre of their everyday life, not only the maintenance of their collective identity and memory, but also the defence and pursuit of it against the systematic efforts made by the Israeli regime to erase this past since the first settlements. However, this task also risks essentialising and homogenising this pre-colonial past (and present), as if they were unified and harmonious societies with no political agonism within them. Shohat clarifies this further when she explains 'a notion of the past might thus be negotiated differently; not as a static fetishized phase to be literally reproduced, but as fragmented sets of narrated memories and experiences on the basis of which to mobilize contemporary communities' (Shohat, 1992:109). As previously stated, for the political context of this thesis, the past and the present are being continuously revised, reimagined and defended, alongside being fixed and essentialised. In this sense, Shohat continues: 'a celebration of syncretism and hybridity per se, if not articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations, runs the risk of appearing to sanctify the fait accompli of colonial violence' (Shohat, 1992:109). Endorsing a condescending critical position towards these retrievals of the past and present also entails some problematics. It implies a lack of understanding that these are ways of resistance and survival for communities which have had their past manipulated and erased. This should then be carefully negotiated and addressed through strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1988) that reconciliates both arguments: recognising the contingent nature of the past and the present while developing a discourse that defends these same elements as necessary parts of culture and survival. In addition, these arguments strive to lead to another important debate: the relationship with modernity and authenticity in cultures embedded in these multiple trajectories of imperialism, neocoloniality and liberation. This will be discussed further in the second part of this chapter and further into the thesis.

Settler colonialism: grasping the nature of occupation

This emphasis on the still ongoing coloniality connects with recent scholarship on settler colonialism, deeply developed by Veracini (2010, 2011, 2014, 2015) and Wolfe (1999, 2006). The term emerged due to the limitations in the postcolonial field and the need to frame this specific settler colonial relations (such as Israel, Australia or South Africa). It seeks the

elimination of the native (Bubsbridge, 2018:92) and the creation of a nation through securing land and resources (Wolfe, 1999:184). In addition to this, settler colonialism connects the different stages of displacement and splintering of the Palestinian population: from the early colonisation, through to the *al-Nakba* النكبة (the 'catastrophe' and expulsion of 1948), the 1967 war until the present situation (Bubsbridge, 2018:96). This will be later linked to the idea of 'deterritorialisation'.

The notion of settler colonialism sheds light on two important tensions of this thesis. First, because many of the scene's practices might be seen as resisting precisely because they disrupt this settler colonial project (elimination, separation, deshumanization). They challenge joint efforts that Israel does to portray a very fixed and detrimental idea of Palestinians: terrorists, conservative, violent, a logic that seeks their 'denial' (logic of elimination), by hampering international solidarity and any identification with Palestinian lived reality. Israel tries very hard to represent itself internationally as a LGTBQ+ and liberal destination for partying and leisure (Puar, 2013, 2017; Schulman, 2012). In this regard, the Palestinian scene challenges this vision by their practices that articulate an engagement with multiple political spaces. The plurality argument that this project develops risks reinforcing neo-orientalist readings on the subject, falling into describing tolerance, happiness, queerness or dissent (Bayat, 2000) as markers of acceptance for counteracting islamophobia and racism.

Secondly, the paradigm of settler colonialism has been criticised for its reification of structures of domination and fatalism (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013; Snelgrove et al., 2014). As such, Wolfe's developments of settler colonialism, one of the founding authors on the subject, do not leave space for contingency, heterogeneity and agency (Merlan, 1997; Rowse, 2014), since its framework depicts two homogeneous polarised subjects (settlers and natives), where the later are left as passive entities, a problem that this research seeks to explore and address. Following this line, Veracini (2014:314) also recognises the paradigm as an interpretive one, not transformative, meaning that it does not advance strategies for change.

Palestinian reality pushes us to address the direct and devastating consequences of settler colonialism and occupation in an alleged postcolonial world to 'address the politics of location [which] is important not only for pointing out historical and geographical contradictions and differences but also for reaffirming historical and geographical links, structural analogies and openings for agency and resistance' (Shohat, 1992:112).

For some decades now, some scholars (Said, 1992; Shohat, 2006; Williams & Ball, 2014; Moore-Gilbert, 2018) have criticised the 'absence' of Palestine within the postcolonial field, whose 'label' does not completely include this settler-colonialism context. The avoidance of Palestine and Israel also bore out the preference of the field 'to focus on (post)colonial conjunctures which were, typically, safely historical – rather than on more contentious and therefore more ethically and politically challenging contemporary problematics' (Moore-Gilbert, 2018:11). That said, this avoidance and the numerous interests in the region have contributed to pushing its establishment as a separate area of study: Palestinian studies. In any case, it seems that the location of Palestine within these fields of study depends on many variables, not only theoretically related ones, such as the hegemonic position of Israel within academia (Williams and Ball, 2014:128). Nevertheless, it is important to stress that interest and a radical and plural scholarship on the region has risen in the last decades, not without problems of over-research and romanticisation (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2012). As Stein and Swedenburg (2005) emphasise, it is no longer the 'lonely' enterprise described by Said's 1979, *The Question of Palestine*.

From this notion and framework, it is central then to understand that there is much more to this than occupation and violence. Culture, leisure, and in summary, everyday life, entail a plural and rich dimension that these frameworks might fail to emphasize or locate. The literature until now shows how post coloniality unfolds in various directions and while geographically and politically the presence of Israel and other international figures dominate in a settler and neo-colonial manner, Palestinian everyday life goes beyond this framework. This framework is important as it links to a key argument of the thesis: the relationship with the occupation as a determining structure that as of now has not been able to subjugate Palestinian existence. The scene's practices and discourses firmly encapsulate the ideas outlined here: the defence of anti-colonial struggle which entails building up a practise of life that is not merely reduced to such structure.

The next section in this chapter will reflect on these sites of possibilities and locations, addressing the difficulties that have emerged when situating this context within academic research. The main argument to be developed is precisely the potential of its study from different and overlapping perspectives.

2.2. Locating Palestine's geography: diasporic deterritorialisation

The task in this section is to locate Palestine within its geographical and political context and to reflect on some of the arguments in 'naming' Palestine (in Arabic Filasṭeen فلسطين). The relationship between how Palestine is located in this research and the scene will be addressed in depth in chapter 4. Indeed, the territorial situation of Palestine is mimicked by the territoriality of the scene: as a scattered, controlled geography unfolding in different territories outside of Palestine. After fieldwork, multiple conversations and the impact of Covid-19 and other events on the scene (many moving out of Palestine) have all been incorporated. As a means to do so, the notions of deterritorialisation and diaspora will underpin this location. Put simply, deterritorialisation implies a loss of land and rituals (DeLanda, 2016), while diaspora is the scattering of a population. Both will be contextualised, whilst thinking through the deterritorialisation and beyond the imposed border of the so-called occupied Palestinian territories (West Bank and Gaza), accounts for and recognises the way Palestinians themselves understand their existence. Jointly with the term deterritorialisation, the notion of mobility is also necessary to address the move outside Palestine that participants have undergone, some through travelling and some others through moving out permanently.

Before the 48 Nakba, Palestine was comprised of what nowadays includes the so-called State of Israel, the West Bank (*Al-Ḍaffah al-Gharbiyyah*) and the Gaza Strip. In a territorial sense, current Palestine has been reduced to a scattered territory formally known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), reaching two main and separated regions: the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem). This map (see Figure 1) is the result of the post-1967 war and the on-going occupation since 1948. The whole region has remained under Israel control since 1948 (and also under Egyptian and Jordanian occupation between 1948-1967), when Israel was constituted as a State within Palestinian land[5]. In brief, Palestinian people have seen their territories reduced and divided since the arrival of the first settlers and the intrusion of international actors, such as Britain (1920-1948), before the establishment of Israel.

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[5] Palestine was a British colony known as the 'Mandate' for Palestine between 1920-1947, and before the First World War it was under Ottoman rule.
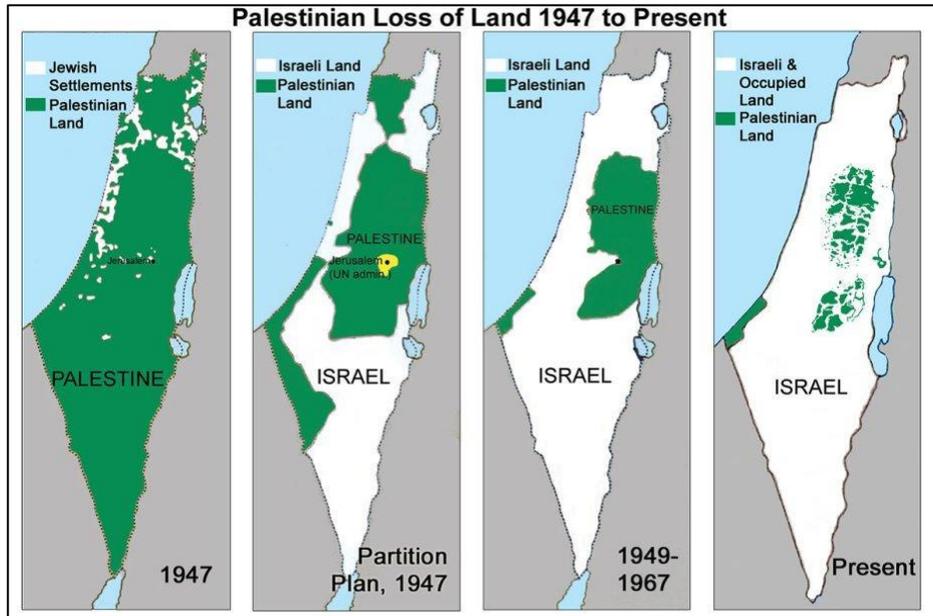
Figure 1. Palestinian map

However, this project rejects focusing and naming Palestine only by its actual and partially 'recognised' borders and territories, and follows the terminology and discourses of Palestinians in this sense. I will develop the notion of 'Palestine' as an historic, diasporic, geographical and virtual reality that falls beyond the coloniality that affects it. This does not mean that the presence of occupation is dismissed, erased or relativised. The idea of 'beyond' does not entail overcoming it or leaving it behind, but incorporating Palestinian assertions and views of their own reality: a scattered and plural community with a shared identity that understands their common past and present in a richer and deeper way than just being colonised. This, at the same time, recognises the profound implications in different senses of identity and living as Palestinians. As such, the notion of 'occupied Palestinian territories' will not be used. To escape the Israeli discourse that divides the land between Israel and the OPT, Palestinians refer to Israel as '48 Palestine and to the West Bank and Gaza as '67 Palestine; thus, distinguishing different temporal markers of occupation (Karkabi, 2013:309). As Massad argues, 'the very naming of this space is, in fact, a process of historicizing it. To call it Palestine is to refer to it as a colonized space in both the pre-1948 and the post-1948 periods and to signal its continued appellation as such for a postcolonial period still to come. To call it Israel is to refer to it in the post-1948 period after the coming to fruition of the Zionist project forestalled any notion of a post-Israel Palestine. Naming, therefore, functions as locating in history' (2000:312).

Diaspora, mobility and space

Today, more than 1.5 million Palestinian people live as refugees since the 1948 expulsion (UNRWA source), which indicates a total of 5 million Palestinians in the diaspora (Peteet, 2007). If the scene cannot be circumscribed anymore to a single territory or city without falling into a simplification of their reality, interrogating the idea of a 'diasporic scene' helps to set straight the nature of the scene's connections, sense of identity and mobility. The idea of a diaspora requires it to be treated with distance in this case, since following the literature there is no agreement whether the impossibility of return (Hall, 1995:206), or the forced displacement (Schulz, 2003) are essential constitutive elements of the Palestinian diaspora. As it will be seen in chapter's 4 discussion on mobility, the fact that the scene's participants do 'voluntarily' choose to leave and have the possibility (most of them) of coming back, problematises their classification as diaspora. Nevertheless, according to the general public, the term is often used to refer to the whole community living outside Palestine for more reasons than the forced exile, and with an emphasis on belonging. Significantly, this implies an identifiable ethnicity and consciousness at departure and in exile (Peteet, 2007:629), which is our case. Peteet argues that 'diaspora circulates simultaneously with a host of terms, such as migrants (voluntary and forced), internally displaced persons, refugees, exiles, guest workers, seasonal workers, overseas labour, expatriates, settlers, jet-setters, and tourists, to capture a broad range of mobilities' (2007:629).

Within music and art scenes, the term diaspora is often used as an exoticisation of the people involved. In this sense, this review outlines the uses of the term and incorporates the multiple identifications that it entails for people living outside of Palestine, broadening what means living 'outside', even when they have the possibility of returning. But for the time being and due to the multiple usages it has, this thesis refrains from using it as an inherent element of the Palestinian electronic music scene to not fall into generalisations or exoticisations. What it is clear from the literature is that the term in this context advocates more for a consciousness and an identity than a social condition of a permanent exile.

The process of the recent scene's deterritorialisation has emphasised even more this diasporic and virtual nature. As DeLanda puts it, 'deterritorialising processes include any factor that decreases density, promotes geographical dispersion, or eliminates some rituals' (2016:30). For this thesis, the term entails a moving element that refers to it as a process in constant change, as the evolution in the last three-four years demonstrates. In this sense, it is necessary

to attend to the concrete practices of mobility and geographical dispersion, the implications of occupation and all the disciplining elements that constrict Palestinian mobility. Participants' mobility is complex, as it opens a more privileged mobility in terms of social practise and draws to ask not only about physical movement but the potentiality/ability and desire to move (Urry, 2007; Cresswell, 2010), allowing some of them to travel, party and live in different places. This exposes a different trend from the literature on Palestinian mobility and freedom of movement (for instance Taraki, 2006; Parsons, 2008; Peteet, 2017) which, understandably, focuses on the restrictions, confinements and multiple borders traversing this land.

Second, the notion of deterritorialisation also serves to understand the scene's decentralisation in many cities, merged with other music and artistic projects. Through this term, it is possible to reflect on the relations within the scene that construct identities as a coherent but messy lived experience of what the Palestinian community is, through a network of 'alliances' and dialogues, subjected to context transformations over time, as I explored.

2.3. Post-Oslo neoliberalisation: despair, new forms of leisure and popular culture

The following part has the aim of setting up the last framework of events and processes that intersect with the scene in a structural way. That is, as a set of relations that comprise to the context where the scene operates and therefore, influence it. It aims to grasp the changes produced in society during these years and how these, two decades later, have laid the ground to the social dynamics explored in this thesis. Literature about this period is extensive, having referred to this era as a period of neoliberal 'state building' (Mitchell, 2002; Harvey 2005; Dana, 2015; Tartir, 2015; Haddad, 2016), the fall of the 'two-state' solution and the Oslo Process (Usher, 1999; Hirschfeld & Roling 2000; Shikaki & Springer, 2015), the rise of a generalised political and social despair after the second Intifada (Peteet, 2005; Kelly, 2008; Maksidi, 2010; Lori, 2013), the articulation of radical Islam and support of Hamas, (Nusse 1999; Robinson, 2004; Rougier, 2007), and the emergence of new forms of leisure and consumption (Taraki, 2008a, 2008b; Abourahme, 2009; Junka-Aiko, 2016). What interests this thesis is the *new* forms of (late modern) leisure (Junka-Aiko, 2016) ascribed to more globalised patters and how these intersected with the rise of an accommodated class, especially in Ramallah.

The Oslo Accords and the period that followed links to the postcolonial narrative that pervades imaginaries on Palestinian culture, art and leisure, structuring a paralysing in-betweenness of coloniality and the post, between the at once impossibility of escape and on-

going multiple daily resistances. The research's protagonists (born in the late 1980s and 1990s) have grown up in the so-called 'post-Oslo' era, after the signature of these accords in 1993, in between the two Intifadas انتفاضة, being the first Intifada (1987-1991/1993)[6] and the second *al-Aqsa* Intifada (2000-2005). This generation has inherited this context and the consequences of this political period: the peace process and the later *'Fayyadism'*, the period comprising 2007-2013 referring to PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, who culminated in the institutional reform towards 'economic freedom' and 'stability' (Dana, 2015). The Oslo Accords signalled, then, the start of a steady move within Palestinian society.

Neoliberalisation and new leisure/consumption

Politically and economically, the post Oslo years hardened the colonial relationship between Israel and Palestine even more, since while Israeli increased their politics of annexation and control over the territories considerably, they portrayed the negotiations in the international context as a conflict between two equal parts (Andoni, 2001). Especially important is the opening of neoliberal policies into the region as a way of demonstrating the Palestinian 'state' capacity, willingness and obedience to the global (and Israeli) economic mandates (Haddad, 2016), and Palestinian civil and appropriate behaviour (Seidel, 2019). This mandate of demonstrating tolerance and a renounce to armed resistance is important when trying to understand part of the scene's (and society) reaction towards outsider interest, as many of the Western approaches on Palestine reproduce, sometimes implicitly, this recognition of 'civility' and 'capability of intelligible leisure', as Samah's "always about how we are so nice and tolerant" made clear.

Neoliberalism is a vague and ample term. It will appear many times along this project to reference a specific economic development in Palestine during the last decades, also present in other postcolonial countries (Timothy, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Seidel, 2019) that result in a paradoxical economic interdependence with the 'colony' and international agents, rising inequality and new consumption patterns. For the purpose of this thesis, the meaning of neoliberalisation is related to these concrete elements: the nature and role of Ramallah

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[6] The first Intifada is regarded to have finished until the Madrid Conference in 1991 or with the signing accords of Oslo in 1993. It was characterised with a widespread civil participation, with violent and non-violent actions, reclaiming to stop the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories that had begun in 1967. This popular uprising has been one of the most significant recent events in shaping Palestinian identity and politics. It was characterised by a popular mass participation and organisation that, for the first time, did not depend on their Arab neighbours' intervention. Palestinians committed themselves to re-nationalizing the cause and re-articulating Palestinian identity with a sense of hope and unity, embracing, in general terms, popular disobedience (Karkabi, 2017:173), recovering Palestinian folklore and the idyllic rural symbolism (Swedenburg, 1990; Abufarha, 2008).

(Taraki, 2008a, 2008b; Abourahme, 2009) as a postcolonial neoliberal city that represents this trend of urban development and privatisation, class changes and new forms of leisure (Junka-Aiko, 2016) linked to consumption and aspirational capital: the scene is as much about DIY practices and a subcultural (being 'cool' and known) capital.

Ramallah, as later shown, appears as the initial hub of the scene and is the city of the main fieldwork, archetype of this emerging late modern forms of leisure that it contrasts with. It is known as the city that exemplifies the political disconnection between the people and the elites since it is the base for the Palestinian Authorities, class difference and neoliberal patters of consumption (Taraki, 2008a, 2008b; Abourahme, 2009). These changes have shown the importance of youth on those aforementioned and the role 'generations' play in Palestinian social and political life. As Maira (2017) argues, the 'suspicion' towards new forms of expression and belonging emerge 'through a discourse that is both gendered and generational' (2017:192). For instance, people seem to have a different take on everyday life and pleasure politics (Kelly, 2008; Karkabi, 2013, 2018; Junka-Aikio, 2016; Richter-Devroe, 2011; Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2013) which is explored in depth in chapter 5. It is, perhaps, in the opening of these apparently apolitical and escapist spaces where new forms of productive resistance are appearing, fluctuating between normality (the everyday occupation and the struggle) and normalisation (the aspiration for an 'ordinary' different life) (Kelly, 2008; Richter-Devroe, 2011). The imposition and adoption of a neoliberal agenda after the Oslo accords has clearly produced a series of deep changes in the ways power operate in the Palestinian territories (Hilal, 2015), as well as in Palestinian leisure and consumption. This context has favoured the emergence of new leisure and consumption practices (Junka-Aikio, 2016), whereas at the same time, inequality has risen, the occupation is more pervading, and the disappointment with Palestinian authorities is greater.

In terms of class, the last decades have been characterised by a rise in a large Palestinian middle class in urban areas such as Ramallah (Taraki, 2008a, 2008b, Abourahme, 2009). Processes of neoliberalisation and professionalisation have permeated Palestinian society (Hilal, 2015)., deeply influencing the city (as shown in chapters 3 and 4), and the way leisure and culture is produced and consumed by some Palestinian youth, has been opening ways to alternative and underground leisure (Withers, 2016).

Expressions of popular culture, martyrdom and despair

Linked with these changes and emerging forms of leisure, the Palestinian popular cultural landscape also changed in the 1990s and early 2000s. Before the onset of 'peace talks', the Intifada set a culture of struggle based on a deep sense of sacrifice and austerity, directing all forms of culture, art and leisure towards the national cause, suspending 'everyday life' (Jean-Klein, 2001). The ordinary was viewed as directly political, directing efforts into civil disobedience and activism, or put the other way around, self-nationalisation occurred in all spaces of everyday life. The Oslo process gradually complemented this commitment for national-state-building with a revival of everyday cultural expressions and festivities (Al-Taee, 2002, Stein & Swedenburg, 2005:12, McDonald, 2013).

When cycles of violence intensify, as witnessed in May 2021 with the Gaza attacks, or in 2022, the year that encountered more killings than pre-2006 (IMEU, 2022), many everyday activities, including partying, are suspended. Literature on the relationship between violence and everyday life has analysed this phenomenon (Jean-Klein, 2001; Kelly, 2008) and this thesis critically follows the argument traversing these works: the suspension of everyday life happens when martyrdom occurs. In the findings of this research, I will explain how these events, apart from the general need of observing religion and tradition, have profoundly highlighted the debate around partying, its connotations and social correctness, not only amidst martyrdom, but amidst occupation.

The events outlined speak for the wider changes in relation to resistance and leisure time (suspended or embraced) that have permeated Palestinian society in the last twenty years. Changes between the beginning of the 1990s (first Intifada), characterised by mass mobilisation, popular and armed resistance and intense cultural activity (Al-Taee, 2002:51, Stein & Swedenburg, 2005:12, McDonald, 2013) are contrasted to the early 2000s (second Intifada), when there was a generalised minor mobilisation, which lead to less hope and more despair, suffocating the different strategies for resisting and any intents of change.

According to Khalili, the *representation* of Palestinian nationalism has shifted from the heroic to the tragic (Khalili, 2007). Narratives of heroism, victims and martyrdom might only relate to one aspect, usually masculine, of living (and dying) under occupation. Nevertheless, this period gave rise to more polarised forms of understanding resistance, whether institutionalised through the Palestinian Authority, marginalised armed/religious (not always but often together) through Hamas and groups alike and then completely co-opted expressions through pacification discourses from the international arena (Khalili, 2007). In

other words, this period de-articulated a unified sense and strategy of resistance with authorities condemning armed resistance and developing an 'ambiguous' nationalistic discourse on 'popular' resistance. As a consequence of this, some authors have argued about the necessity to rethink these frameworks as some scholars have already claimed (Stein & Swedenburg, 2005).

It is paramount to bear in mind that the focus of this research is on a very specific idea and practice of resistance, very far in many senses from what the majority of Palestinians understand as such and does not equate with a critique to other practices of resistance as a strategy, but as a practise of life. In this thesis, it accounts for an interrogation of nationalistic and institutional discourses coming from the Palestinian regime and some academic sectors that insist on an instrumentalising and simplifying discourse that obliterates some of these cultural realities (Stein & Swedenburg, 2005:5-6). Moreover, in the last years (especially since 2022), there has been a rise in armed resistance in '67 Palestine, particularly localised to the cities of Nablus and Jenin as a response to the intensified violence by the Israel military and settlers. Not picked up by the literature yet, some media articles discuss 'how a new group might be changing Palestinian resistance' (Al-Shamahi, 2022), the 'revival of armed resistance against Israeli colonialism' (Barghouti & Patel, 2022) and 'the rise of new resistance groups which combine armed and popular struggle' (Al-Masri, 2022).

Until now, these frameworks inform and help to locate points of departure, interrogate to what extent these are fruitful for my argument, and show the complexities and layers of the context. The focus on its settler colonial, deterritorial and diasporic nature shows how Palestine is not yet postcolonial. But also, that the scene's entanglement with occupation is part of a myriad of other structures that matter and need to be taken into account, especially its internal context. This is a key argument that I am presenting and that informs how the scene understands itself: as a space that does not emerge in response to the occupation, nor that its existence and impossibilities are circumscribed only to it. This might generate another type of resisting, closer to Foucault and some subcultural models of leisure than to *sumūd* or liberation movements (Fanon, 1963; Winder, 2020; Baconi 2021), that recognises and even participates in other forms of resistance. The objective of the following parts will be to analyse and reflect on this relationship, and to incorporate different perspectives on Palestinian popular culture, as well as to conceptualise resistance further than its reactive and oppositional nature.

3. Understanding resistance and the location within the scene

My point of departure, following the participants voices, is to interrogate the idea of resistance solely 'as a response to' oppression, imagining a different conceptualisation and practise of resistance through music and leisure. The ideas unfolded until now have helped to locate the context and the shifts on resistance and in general, in society, that influence how I frame resisting through the scene. The linking between the first and the second section aims to draw a line between the general political context and the unfolding of resistance/culture in relation to that. Therefore, this second part explores the question of resistance in depth.

It focuses on exploring what has been said about culture and resistance in Palestine and how these arguments intersect with the project in general and the second research question in particular. Interrogating the nationalistic-dominant perspective and considering the hegemonic takes on popular culture and music, and the romanticising discourses all form part of this section. Even though the literature focuses on frameworks and expressions of resistance (principally popular culture and *sumūd*), this thesis is preoccupied with the practices and manifestations of resistance within the scene (creation of culture, building safe spaces, boycotting…) and these will be reflected in chapter 5.

3.1. Cultures and resistances in Palestine

In this section, the main argumentations will be developed. The first one is that resistance and nationalist discourses act as meta narratives and hegemonic spheres and have informed Palestinian culture for almost a century. The second one is that these frameworks secured a representation after the second Intifada of fixed ideas of culture and resistance as survival, reaction or preservation. This project is particularly interested in those sites of culture and leisure where the political is not explicitly so, where tensions and productivity between the culture and the political emerge as creative forces, where the questioning of these secure spaces of 'culture as resistance' brings to light other relations that have attracted less attention.

Everyday leisure and pleasure, not to say alternative/underground forms of these, remain relatively unstudied, although with increasing and important works from Karkabi (2013, 2017), Junka-Aiko (2016), Khalili (2016), El Zein (2016, 2020), and Withers (2016, 2021) among others. This is due to (1) the 'imperious' and logical necessity of focusing on the occupation related issues, (2) the reluctance of focusing on what is considered 'apolitical' or

'unauthentic' amidst this context, if such a thing is possible, especially in Palestine and (3) the usual limits of scholarship in what does get attention and funding, as the discussion of postcolonial studies has indicated. In consequence, the frameworks through which popular culture is analysed and lived by some, respond to the centrality of certain structuring realities like the *Nakba*, the Israeli occupation and the nationalist enterprise, portraying culture as almost always determined by the realm of politics, and in particular, of one kind of politics.

The conjunction of the terms 'Palestinian resistance' emerge as an ontological natural entity. Palestinians resisting colonisation, dispossession and exile dates back to the Ottoman rule. Traditionally, literature on Palestinian resistance tends to focus on two main types: violent and non-violent, and within the second, several interrelated types: cultural, popular, or civil resistance (Peteet, 1992; Amos, 2003; Abufarha, 2009; Qumsiyeh, 2011; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015; Barghouti, 2021). The purpose of this research is, indeed, to broaden and question the 'traditionalist' and structuralist approaches to resistance (and popular culture or leisure) by including other practices and activities that might not conflate these resistance paradigms.

Popular culture(s)

The political nature of culture and its location has been a central focus in scholarly discussion. Culture has often been framed through notions of resistance, especially in contexts such as the Palestinian, as seen in the first section of this chapter. Traversed by settler colonialism, culture and the everyday are means of resistance. In broad terms, I understand culture as a series of practices, common meanings and imaginaries that are produced in 'the everyday' and which give a sense of both identification and disruption in society in general and within communities in particular. For the purpose of this thesis, culture is related to music (and created), and also partying, nightlife, dancing, drinking, and other activities surrounding the scene which are all considered cultural practices. Hence, leisure (the sort of practices mentioned before) is framed as a cultural practice here.

El-Ghadban and Strohm (2013) locate 'three ideological frameworks that have informed the roles and meanings attributed to cultural practices in Palestinian society: culture as survival, culture as resistance, and culture as a site for humanitarian intervention and development' (2013:176). All these perspectives conflate cultural production, creativity and representation through the reality of occupation. As said before, the intersecting nature of occupation and

the imperious necessity of creating and protecting culture reify these dynamics. In other words, 'Israeli policies concentrate so ferociously on disintegrating all cultural forms that evoke the national reality, Palestinians carefully protect the memory of those same symbols' (Swedenburg, 1989:268). In this sense, studies on popular culture, art and music in Palestine are widely developed through a resistant and nationalist perspective, with an ability to mobilise or build collective identity. This can be found in Palestinian songs, poetry, literature, the folk dance *dabke* or hip hop and graffiti culture among others (see for instance Massad, 2005; McDonald, 2013). There is an Arabic term '*adab al-moqawameh*' that emphasises the role of arts and literature in Palestinian resistance, used by the Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani in one of his famous works. As such, 'the importance of culture is directly proportional to its perceived ability to reflect, serve and exemplify the political' (Stein and Swedenburg, 2005:6).

Culture, or what some people might frame as 'popular'[7] culture is intertwined with the political (Hall, 1981, 1996). In this context, it is located as the means through which to ensure and protect identity and foster national struggle. Culture, and any manifestation of life, is summarised in this ontological axiom: 'existence is resistance', meaning that existing as a Palestinian is resisting, thus any act of creating culture in this context is resistance (Tawil-Souri, 2011; Kanaaneh, 2013:9). The idea that everything is resistance gives Palestinians a platform from which to narrate and embody their experiences, as not only political, but resistant[8]. It might also reconcile a classical debate within (Western) cultural studies about the productive nature of culture and leisure, which the CCCS also tried to rescue by developing a whole body of theory linking leisure and the political, as I will explain below. This scholarly 'politicisation' of music takes us back to the preface anecdote from Samah, and the inherent tension that comes with 'why it is never about our music': the political/resistant aspect of music and cultural practices and the rejection of those involved to be read only through those lenses.

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[7] I understand the distinction made between culture and popular culture to reflect on the practices and artifacts related to the majority of the population, the people and the masses. In this research, I do not follow such distinction as I understand that popular culture is ultimately, culture. Another question is whether the electronic music scene could be considered related to the majority of the population, accessible and relatable, which seems it is not.

[8] The difference between political and resistance is that the second requires a certain level of articulation, of movement, of process to become from the 'political' (which is 'everything') to resistant. This is an important distinction that will come up in interviews.

In this sense, (popular) culture, as is being seen, occupies multiple spaces of meaning: a space where power, belonging and social encounters get articulated and as Gramsci would say, struggled for (1971). It is not only an expression of power but a constitutive part of it; it 'constructs, subverts and resignifies cultural meanings and dominant aesthetics that are vital to the (re-)production of power relations, irrespective of whether artists/cultural producers intend or do not intend to be political' (Said Mostafa et. al., 2021:2). Tripp (2021), contrary to Hall (1996) and other similar theorists on the matter (Williams, 1958), suggests using the term 'popular cultures' in plural to include the varied 'structures of feeling' of particular classes or groups, escaping from the conception that popular equates only with the oppressed' (Tripp, 2021:9). These popular cultures 'are not always top down and do not always mirror the political hierarchies of the state' (Tripp, 2021:13), as is the case with the participants of this thesis. The 'popular' meaning of the scene precisely interrogates in this direction, showing how the differences between popular and non-popular implies that there is High culture only for certain classes.

This discussion is important for the context under study as the Palestinian electronic music scene is a relatively small, non-normative, contested movement and its relationship to the 'popular' is contested by some. Nevertheless, as Tawil-Souri argues, when discussing the meaning of culture in Palestine: 'culture is what is created, performed, negotiated, disseminated in everyday lived experience – from cooking to folklore, from cinema to music, by the bourgeoisie and the *fellaheen*', and therefore, includes the 'popular' (2011:471).

The idea of the popular in this context and in Arabic speaking contexts is linked to *sha'abi*, an adjective derived from the word *sha'ab*, and meaning literally, 'of the people'. 'Unlike in English, the term in Arabic has connotations that associate it with modesty and humility, as opposed to the notions of mainstream or success, as synonymous to widely consumed in Western cultures (*sha'abi* is closer to 'populist' than 'popularity'). Hence, 'referring to 'popular' culture in the SWANA region[9] has political intonations that are both charged with class and infused with state discourse' (El Zein, 2016:28). As such, whether the scene can be regarded as *sha'abi* or popular in the most traditional sense, is intertwined with a multiplicity of spaces and voices that form this realm of popular 'cultures', making it difficult to draw a

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[9] The term SWANA refers to 'Southwestern Asia' and it is preferred by participants instead of Middle East due to its colonial connotations. Nevertheless, the term SWANA/MENA are not exempt of problematics due to the heterogeneity of countries labelled with the term 'Arab' which denotes a homogenisation of different peoples and cultures around a language. In this thesis, I will use the term SWANA and Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) principally, and 'Arab', if I am citing another author or wanting to emphasise its blurring meaning.

line on what is 'popular'. The importance of the discussion is related to the importance which the popular and symbols have in Palestine, being from the people and for the people, rather than if the scene fits such categorisation. Among these popular practices, there is one that is most fitting among others due to its linking to the idea of 'existence is resistance'.

Sumūd (صمود) as popular resistance

The centrality of *sumūd* (صمود) for everyday life in Palestine and the scholarly interest in this practice has paved the way for the consideration of other everyday activities and popular culture dynamics, and also political arenas in dispute and articulation, as will be seen in the following part. Everyday popular resistance in Palestine is a fundamental component of existence, previous to the outburst of the Intifadas that started to be more consciously articulated as *sumūd* during and after 1967. This is the second point of departure to study and conceptualise different frames for approaching the practices on the scene after the notion of popular cultures: the everyday activities that pervade the 'abnormal' normality in the territories and how they are articulated towards resisting.

Sumūd (صمود) means steadfastness, persistence (resilience) and carrying on with life, entailing large combinations of acts and practices displayed daily. It is a fundamental way of understanding existence for Palestinians, part of the non-violent resistance and struggle for maintaining traditions, memory and symbols. However, the way *sumūd* is experienced is not linear or homogenic but depends on multiple factors of family, age, gender, class, and generation (Richter-Devroe, 2011) and I add, territory. There is not a unified practice of *sumūd*, but a whole set of different practices.

There are multiple *sumūd* practices and it seems that the more passive notion of 'steadfastness' is giving space to a growing 'new' force of resistance (Hammami, 2005) which started after the second Intifada, combining the traditional passive approach of 'remaining on the land' with a proactive 'life must go on' (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015:131). According to Ricther-Devroe, 'a redefinition of what constitutes resistance has taken place and certainly, by now, enjoying life and finding hope, despite the hopeless situation, is considered by many Palestinians a part of resistance and *ṣumūd'* (2011:38). In this sense, *ṣumūd* is relevant precisely to exemplify these shifting and plural meanings that the practise of resistance has.

From the experience of fieldwork and meeting communities that practice *sumūd* in the everyday against the confiscation of their land and demolition of their houses (Jordan Valley and Masafer Yatta), the scene's practices if regarded through the framework of *sumūd* need to be approached with caution. *Sumūd* could relate to the scene as it also tries, not only to continue with everyday life, but it also generates culture, builds spaces for expression, enjoyment and collectivity. Nevertheless, the scene is in many senses distanced from the more concrete meaning of steadfast determination of staying on the land, protecting homes, crops and water springs against demolition and confiscation in very harsh conditions. The importance for now about the discourse and framework of *sumūd* is the presence it has within the meaning of resistance, endorsing culture and leisure as means for it.

'Music as resistance,' authenticity and tradition

Moving the discussion to the concrete field of music, similar trends are reproduced. The long history of Palestinian music is traversed by a long history of exchange with other Arab cultures and occupations (Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Arabic, Turkish, British, or Israeli) that has made Palestinian music 'both strengthened and weakened' (Kanaaneh, 2013:3). This occurs because 'the experience of subjugation to foreign occupation has given birth to increased musical activity and the development of various genres and repertoires' (Kanaaneh, 2013:3), whilst at the same time, suffocating its musical autonomy.

As a result of different historic processes of occupation and foreign rule, Palestinian music, in line with other cultural practices, articulates and expresses the shared experience of occupation and '48 *Nakba*, along with preserving memory and identity. It is seen as a performance 'between the self and the nation' (McDonald, 2013:21). Hence, music is intertwined with resistance as another way of facing dispossession and erasure, as a way of constructing a collective sense of identity, as previously stated. Kanaaneh claims, music under occupation is 'inevitably music of resistance, whether it is political or not, politicized or not' (2013:9). This grasps again the axiom of 'existence is resistance', translated now into, 'music is resistance'. This means that the conditions of the context and its multiple restrictions make music, on a first and general level, a way of resisting. 'Music of resistance', from political song to poetry or traditional *maqam* music, talks of shared Palestinian experiences and history that draw on a way of understanding, expressing and feeling Palestinianness: an identity that is built around 'authentic' and shared traditions. As such,

resisting through music equates to being Palestinian, putting resistance alongside an 'authentic identity'.

The problem again, emerges when this postulate leads to an 'instrumentalist perception of the nature of the relationship between expressive culture and politics, according to which politics and politicians strategically use expressive culture as means to their ends' (Kanaaneh, 2013:9). It draws a line of authenticity and distinction where music is tied to cultural heritage and 'active' (direct, politically charged) resistance, subjugated to meet certain nationalistic ends. Although this does not mean that music in Palestine does not work autonomously as a cultural expression or a way of enjoyment, there is a subtle line that divides music which falls into the spectrum of the political/resistance discourse due to the long history of occupation and intrusion. Indeed, it is interesting to see how scholarship has conspicuously developed many studies in this sense. I can outline two main groups: the music that directly 'talks' about resistance (folk music, poetry, political song, rap) and the music that is made by Palestinians and therefore, it is music of resistance due to the context where it is developed and the people that develops it (Massad, 2005; McDonald, 2013; Kanaaneh, 2013). Then the question is: what makes music *not* resistance in this context? It could be the people that create it (non-Palestinians), the origin of such music (outside of Palestine or Arabic traditions) or the intentions behind it (not resisting), maybe?

The difficulties of answering such a question, which is a central tension in this thesis, show the textual and meaning-attribution limitations of 'music in itself'. The research questions themselves embody this tension, as both focus on social practices and meanings that go beyond music itself[10]. In this case, electronic music is also made by Palestinians and there are many other music styles in the region that come from 'abroad' as well, such as Moroccan rai. Also, intentionality is not relevant for 'existence as resistance', meaning that the ontological position of the subject is already enough to resist. Therefore, it seems that the context and the practices that surround and derive from the music directly classifies music as resistant or not.

Apart from the current situation of Palestinian music and its link to long historic foreign occupation, Kanaaneh (2013) highlights 'four more processes of cultural intrusion that have been decisively shaping and determining Palestinian music's course of development: 1)

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[10] How do different social relations *constitute* and *traverse* the Palestinian electronic music scene?
How is resisting *understood* and *practised* in the scene?

globalisation, 2) political Islam, 3) Arabisation, 4) Western humanitarian aid' (2013:3-6). These are important to contextualise Palestinian music and its different influences. The first is the mix of other cultures and sounds with the Palestinian such as the presence of hip hop in the region or electronic music. The second relates to the Islamisation of Palestinian society and the rise of Hamas, where Islamic music blurs national distinctiveness towards similar Islamic *anashid* (anthems) of Muslim countries (Berg and Schulz, 2013). The third influence will be explored more in detail in chapter 4 as it relates also to electronic music, is the hegemony of SWANA music and singers among Palestinian listeners. Finally, the fourth influence relates to the dependency on international aid and funds to develop music projects and careers, which also shapes which music is supported and why. All these forces have an impact on the rise of electronic music in the region and in its relationship with Palestinian music, tradition and authenticity. Also, the authenticity debate, historically rooted in the region and entangled with both orientalist and internal drives, is tied up in the memory and experience of cultural imperialism (Toukan, 2021:127), which definitely determines how 'Western music' is perceived.

There are no cultures that have been able to develop on their own without external cultural influences, and Palestine, with its own dynamics, is no exception (Sabry, 2010). Given these influences, and even a certain replacement of national music by other SWANA countries, the notion of there being a unique authentic Palestinian music starts to tumble. In other words, the lines of what is cultural imperialism, and what is authentic music, are unfixed and contested and subjected to many dynamics. As already stated, it is not just about the music itself, but how and where, what practices surround it, and what effects and affects it has. Gilroy (2003) can shed some light on these areas. He discusses the location of Black culture (also specifically in relation to music) beyond national borders, as an interdependent and mutually influenced culture across the Atlantic, articulating an intercultural exchange and hybridity (Gilroy, 2003). His work is a quest of de-essentialisation of origins, while recognising the particularities that comprise Black culture and identity, in a way that this project embraces through the notions of assemblage and conviviality, which will later be addressed.

This discursive authenticity (Grazian, 2010; Sabry, 2010) is then challenged by electronic music in Palestine, coming from a wide range of foreign and internal influences and sounds. It is also challenged by the practices related to it (dancing, drinking alcohol, taking drugs), since they do not accommodate traditional (and *hallal*) notions of leisure, dance or nightlife.

However, along the thesis it will be seen how the lines between so-called 'contraries' such as alternative or normative nightlife, or electronic and traditional music, are very much blurred. These spheres and others *convive*, influence each other and exist in the same space: traditional music is included in electronic music and electronic music is used to create traditional sounds. The same with nightlife. One can easily go to alternative bars and then go to a traditional Palestinian café with their father or to a *dabke* show with friends. This takes us back to the initial postcolonial debate around the past and present of colonial realities, and in particular, how Palestinians narrate and experience music's differences, influences and intentions, as Gilroy would say, as a contemporary global dialogue (2003). One of these distinctive recent SWANA sounds is contemporary rap in '48 and '67 Palestine, a genre that has often been regarded as music of resistance by the literature (f.i., Massad, 2005; Gana, 2012; McDonald, 2013; Swedenburg, 2013; Andersen, 2013; El Zein 2016; Maira, 2008, 2017).

Rap: 'music as resistance' and a critical voice

There are many scholars that have analysed this phenomenon (f.i., Massad, 2005; Greenberg, 2009; Swedenburg, 2012; Gana, 2012; McDonald, 2013; Andersen, 2013; El Zein 2016; Maira, 2008, 2017), some of them infusing a critical perspective on the narrative of 'rap as resistance' (Swedenburg, 2012; El Zein, 2016 among others). Swedenburg asserts that 'only aspects of Palestinian rap that promote the cause of Palestine are deemed worthy of attention and promotion' (2013:18). The discussion of hip hop/rap is relevant in two senses: it shows the liminal spaces where 'music as resistance' works, how its consideration evolves through time and context, how it is diverse in itself (hip hop culture is plural in the Palestinian context, having groups from refugee camps, '48 Palestine or experimental/underground bedroom producers), and how its meaning is in constant negotiation. It is important also in the sense that it is a 'predecessor genre' of electronic music in this context, which will be deeper explored in chapter 4.

Crucially, the idea of resistance music directed at Israeli occupation is challenged by some of these artists and the public that listens to them, pluralising the themes and motives from which they narrate their reality (economic inequality, love, despair, everyday life in the streets, corruption…), many of them being part of the scene as well. El Zein (2016) refers to these cultural expressions as 'feeling politics', 'illustrating a political process that does not champion specific political objective(s)' (El Zein, 2016:2).

This is leading towards two main arguments that add to the discussion about popular culture, and how music is understood and represented in this context. First, the scholarly and foreign/public/neoliberal funding's attention to political representations through music does not necessarily imply that other subtle expressions are not being developed or are part of Palestinian culture (Tawil-Souri, 2011). Although they intersect with tension in terms of authenticity and heritage, especially for those more conservative, lesser attention does not mean inexistence, but lack of representation, and perhaps an acute detachment between people and experiences. The lack of public and private spaces for these genres to develop and have their audiences, with a fast neoliberal development in cities like Ramallah also hinders the possibility of making their own space alongside traditional music (El Zein, 2015). Second, as happens with expressions of popular culture in general, a focus on the political in ambiguous and non-overtly political is a more complex task, especially in a context burdened with meaning as is the Palestinian, having brought even certain rejection of the resistance paradigm by some artists due to tiredness of essentialisation and romanticisation. This discussion will be broadened in the upcoming chapters.

3.2. Resisting resistance: the romanticisation of music as resistance

The study of the scene developed here tries to open a discussion about different scene practices beyond fixed frameworks, to explore the political[11] and resisting through dancing, having fun, boycotting, building community and alliances. There are already some empirical and theoretical tensions regarding this attribution of resistance. Moore (1998) identified an emergence of resistance studies during the 1970s and 1980s that were met by critiques to these ethnographies some decades later. A general critique has been the overgeneralisation, overuse and romanticisation of the term (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Theodossopoulos, 2014; Steward, 2013; El Zein, 2016; Nooshin, 2017), or even its 'theoretical hegemony' among ethnographers (Brown, 1996). In particular, SWANA people are often orientalised 'through

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[11] One terminological clarification between the notion of 'the political' and 'politics' is required before continuing. I use the term 'political' in a wide sense to refer to the capacity of affecting social life and the individual, from music to advertisement. Following this, everything is political and entangled with power. This emphasises the potential transformative nature of culture (in any sort of way) depending on the articulation of its different elements, following Mouffe's (2005) conceptualisation of 'the political' as the arena of agonism and contingency, where disputes and negotiations over meanings and political actions are displayed. The political might relate to transformative practices and discourses around subjectivity, bodies, sexuality, leisure and the everyday within the scene.

Differently, although intertwined, the term 'politics' is used to refer to the series of institutions, discourses and power relations that operate at a 'structural' and hegemonic level in the Palestinian society, feign consensus and eliminating the political agonism, which could be, for instance, the nationalistic discursive frames, traditional accounts on 'Palestinianness' or the role Palestinian Authority. The political and politics are both present in the scene in distinct ways.

politicisation' (Steward, 2013): ascribing an always revolutionary aim and ethos to their doings. Scholars of dance and electronic music, in a similar way to the postsubcultural model, have engaged with the analysis of resistance through these practices (f.e., Thornton, 1995; Redhead, 1993; Reynolds, 1997; Malbon, 1999; Ueno, 2003; St John, 2009), not exempt to reproduce an exotic dance floor removed from the context under study. Perhaps this ethnographic boom has ceased a little, especially in the relationship between dance music and resistance. Nevertheless, the echoes of these critiques resonate within this thesis.

In the Palestinian context, this is even more complex to unravel. As previously highlighted, in general, culture is seen as a by-product of politics and power, rather than a constitutive, expressive force that intersects and influences power too (Belkind, 2021). I argue that this is rather a scholarly theoretical perspective than a reality on the ground. People engage in everyday cultural expressions, such as playing or producing music, dancing and partying, that are not epiphenomenal to politics, even though they are interrelated to them.

Moving down from this first onto-political frame to its everyday applicability, this meta resistance framework loses its strength when applied to certain practices that require some articulation and action to be regarded as resistance, some *generation* and activity. In a certain level of practicality, this perspective might expose a subtextual overgeneralisation and a passive effect, leading to see any activity under occupation or done by a Palestinian as direct resistance to such regime, demeaning other frameworks or concepts that might give more accountability to such practices. There are then two layers of this: the ontological resistance is existence, and the second layer which is the necessity to put this frame into practice. As El Zein points out, 'I am sceptical that the celebration of all activity under occupation as "resistant" is able to advance radical politics – especially, perhaps, in the context of intense neoliberal urban growth' (2016:24). Hence, the discussion does not question the ontological attachment to resisting, rather the empirical and concrete consequences of leaving resistance at this abstract-identarian level. There are many accounts complexing this view to ensure it does not fall into romanticisation, essentialisation and simplifications.

Indeed, 'this contemporary understanding of the role of music in the conflict does not necessarily reflect the different ways in which Palestinian resistance was locally conceived and practiced during specific historical episodes' (Belkind, 2021:16) and I add, can lead to over-simplification of the diverse ways music gets to exist. In other words, Palestinian resistance has also evolved and adapted to each historical period, varying in strategies and practices on the ground, as will be seen next in 3.3. Another example of this critical narrative

within the arts field comes from Barghouti (2004) when talking about El-Fanoun, a famous Palestinian popular dance group:

> throughout the 1980s and during the first Palestinian intifada, resistance meant nourishing the roots and expressing the attributes of Palestinian national identity that had been suppressed by the Israeli occupation. Starting in the mid-1990s, however, El-Funoun's mission has transformed itself. The group found that preservation and survival were no longer sufficient—to create and participate in forging a contemporary cultural identity became more urgent. To this day, El-Funoun respects Palestinian heritage but also explores, absorbs, and integrates modernity. The challenge is to intervene in the development of Palestinian identity, to critique stagnation, capitulation and despair, to envision a new, modern identity that is rooted, yet in dialogue with life, with progress, with universal rights and freedoms (Barghouti, 2004 in Taraki, 2008a).

These narratives, apart from showing the changing and different aspects of resistance, link back to the suffocation of the colonial framework. Importantly, these critiques should not be read as liberal accounts that minimise coloniality and oppression, but as transformative accounts that seek to amplify the intersectionality of realities. As such, some literature activists and participants of this research have seen the need to de-romanticise resistance as a fixed, one-directional category linked to very concrete practices against occupation (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Steward, 2013; Swedenburg, 2013; Theodossopoulos 2014; El Zein, 2016; Nooshin, 2017). Apart from broadening its meaning, part of this critique aims also to challenge the overuse and neo-orientalising drive towards seeing everything as resistance. This is especially relevant to break with the dialectical framework that Palestinians exist only in relation to occupation, since 'Palestinian selfhood unfolds as more than solely defined by the stasis of being a "victim" or subject of "trauma" and/or "resilience"' (Sheehi & Sheehi, 25:2021). This line of argument has been recently gathered by Toukan (2021:132) who asserts that:

> there is also a need to go beyond the framework of resistance that sees Palestinian art as a form of counterhegemony by virtue of its colonial reality. By moving beyond established paradigms we can begin to uncover how Palestinians take control of their own narratives in other ways that do not simply respond to how they are represented

by others but rather how they contribute to global culture and art discourses on countering hegemony in all its other guises.

The debate around the resistant nature of culture is not exclusive to the Palestinian landscape, even though its particularities present it more crudely. The importance of this project relies also on its ability to reflect and open these debates that also permeate other contexts and fields. Hence, the location of this scene and practices, where everyday life is caught between this tension of struggle vs enjoyment or modernity vs tradition as if they were opposites, wants to show that both coexist and influence each other, in a tense but also generative way. The revindication of these alternative cultures as places of excitement and fun might entail the broadening of meanings that nightlife and partying have.

The exploration of these frameworks of resistance has started with an overview of popular culture and the practice of *sumūd* as the paramount of popular resistance in Palestine. This has been followed by a general exposition of music as resistance and in particular of rap music, both discussions to be later developed in the findings. These approaches, centring the struggle and nationhood as main components and expressions of music, have been critiqued by some Palestinians and academics as romanticising and essentialising. This thesis takes these views into account and tries to problematize this relationship while at the same time developing a different meaning of resistance, which makes the last section of this review.

3.3. Generative resistance: the proposed lens

There is a constitutive or generative drive that underlies culture, as a potential productive force that is not just a result of the context where it exists, but also creates it. This also enables a reconsideration and expansion of the sites and modalities of resistance in the cultural field (Stein & Swedenburg, 2005). The cultural is a contradictory, layered and changeable ground, subjected to 'constant potential of dearticulation and rearticulation' (Hall, 1996:158). Even in a loaded political context, where constructivist claims are harder to locate. As Salih and Richter-Devore beautifully express it using subcultural terminology, 'these youth subcultures, by operating outside the hegemonic Palestinian cultural field of classic nationalist resistance art, reorder and rework the frame of our perceptions and the dynamism of our affects' (2014:19). This project, even with its post-foundational positionality[12], is not detached from its context and the meanings participants attribute to

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[12] There is not an 'essence', a foundational 'truth' of things.

these elements. As such, it is important to be aware of 'the tradition of well-intentioned but imperious scholars and psychologists using theories from "abroad" in an attempt to "give voice" to colonized and oppressed peoples' (Sheehi & Sheehi, 2021:26).

The following section establishes a point of departure which discuss the different resistances emerging through the scene. First, there is a critique of subcultural and postsubcultural contributions, especially in relation to Gramscian hegemony and then the symbolic oppositionality of youth through their practices are analysed. Second, the work of Foucault on power and resistance is used in this section as a means to explore a series of recent conceptualisations on resistance and power (Butz & Ripmeester, 1999; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Williams, 2009; Lilja, 2008; Johansson & Lalander, 2012; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Lilja, 2018; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019). The main Foucauldian contributions that are incorporated in this thesis are the concept of power, its productive nature and how it relates to culture and resistance, with an emphasis on how power can be re-articulated and generate changes in disciplining regimes and discourses. Finally, the inclusion of the notions of assemblage and alliance by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and DeLanda (2010, 2016) open up the way to incorporate the deterritorial and diasporic nature of the scene and the approach that this thesis is trying to unfold.

(Post)subcultural studies and Gramscian hegemony

The idea of a rebellious Arab youth rebelling against the social order that surrounds them has been a common topic of research (Bayat, 2010). The earlier subcultural theorists developed a model that focused on analysing youth leisure and practices as symbolic, 'counterhegemonic' and 'resistant' (Hall & Jefferson, 1975, 2006; McRobbie & Garber, 1975; Corrigan & Frith, 1976; Willis, 1977; McRobbie, 1978; Corrigan, 1979; Hebdige, 1979) which was later further developed by post subcultural contributions that focused on the emergence of electronic music scenes and social dynamics within them (Thornton, 1995; Redhead, 1993; Reynolds, 1997; Malbon, 1999; Buckland, 2002; Ueno, 2003; Kosnick, 2007, 2015; St John, 2009; Garcia, 2011), some of them developing new forms of affiliation and belonging (Maffesoli, 1988; Bennett, 1999), nevertheless, all of them with concrete (white) European and American objects of study.

Some recent scholars have used the term subculture to refer to SWANA underground music circuits because of its small market share, its experimental nature and its antagonistic relationship to the mainstream, at least for rap (El Zein, 2016). My argument, inspired in many senses by these schools of thought, sees leisure and popular culture as central aspects of people's lives (Hall and Jefferson, 2006), and as political arenas of affect, pleasure, encounter, negotiation, social transformation and privilege (Gramsci, 1971; Mouffe, 2005; Thornton, 1995; Maffesoli, 1988; Bennett, 1999) but also as spaces of discomfort, tension, trauma and violence. I move away from subcultural readings on the scene that would ascribe resistance to symbols, aesthetics, style or rather visible political proclamations. As I argue, understandings of resistance are linked to the exercise of it, to the creation of spaces that speak to power.

The question of class is central to this project, as it is for early subcultural theory, but with important adjustments. In the scene, class traverses and constitutes relations and possibilities, but does not work as a result of pertaining to a 'one unified social class' as the working-class subcultures. Indeed, if following subcultural theory to analyse the scene, they would be a 'counterculture' rather than a 'subculture' (Hall & Jefferson, 2006) due to their accommodated position, as the hippie movement. In other words, it is a movement that is based on certain aspects of privilege and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990; Thornton, 1995) and it moves away from being a class response to the dominant order. There are many factors contained in this class aspect of the scene that difficulties overarching categorisations. However, the relationship with parents' culture (Hall & Jefferson, 2006), translating this as the amalgam of moral, familiar and Islamic religious values (the hegemonic culture), is important to locate the wider power relations that coalesce in the scene and the crucial weight they have in shaping people's possibilities. This relationship between 'hegemonic culture' (parent culture and moral order), and some minority among youth, symbolises the changes that Palestinian society has experienced in the last decades, an 'intergenerational difference' (Ali, 2012) from where alternative forms of leisure, music and identities have emerged.

This thesis, as previously indicated, challenges all-encompassing narratives that see these phenomena as responses 'dependant on the 'historical conjuncture' (the balance of forces between domination and subordination) and always 'intensely active' (Hall & Jefferson, 2006:44). This idea of *response* also entails certain oppositionality, intentional or not, that will be addressed. Through participants' voices and narratives, the micro and the individual

motivations are also central to understanding the scene, creating music and parties not as a response to occupation or parents' culture, but intertwined with it. Whether the Palestinian context determines the directions that new formations take and the possibilities of existence, the idea of a *collective response to something* subjugates these as merely reactions to their context. The binarism domination/subordination does not grasp the multiple power relations that are also produced and reproduced by participants, as post subcultural theory later signalled (Maffesoli, 1988; Bennett, 1999; Muggleton & Weizerl, 2003). The collective is ingrained in this movement, but it cannot be explained solely departing from structural perspectives of oppression or domination.

To locate the importance of the hegemonic culture (parents' culture in conjunction with Palestinian institutions and authorities), and the tense relationship it has had in recent times with the scene, Gramsci brings the importance of a 'truth' ideological regime (the Palestinian Authority and traditional institutions) that has the power to mobilise and structure social relations (Gramsci, 1971:376-7). The power regime of Israel, despite the occupation and co-optation in economic terms, does not hold a cultural hegemony in an analogous way as Palestinian institutions do, especially in '67 Palestine. As Salih and Richter-Devroe highlight:

> States and national elites in the Middle East (including Israel) rely heavily and strategically on cultural production. Often artworks, be they music, paintings, poems, or other genres, function to construct, reify, and normalise national(-ist), patriarchal, or tribal identities and ideologies (2014:15).

Hence, hegemony is not simple 'class rule', it is not a top-down system of domination, as Foucault defends in his theory of power. The perspective employed then is to take this hegemonic regime and its relationship with the scene and participants as layered and multiple: it is intersected by different powers (Israel, Palestine, family, international powers) in which participants also hold and reproduce power. Subcultural and post subcultural theories contribute by centring the political and symbolic aspect of leisure, its class component (even though in this case it is not a working-class culture), the relationship with parents' culture and dominant culture as agonistic and tense and brings Gramsci in to better understand the opposition of regimes of power to these expressions.

Michel Foucault: 'where there is power, there is resistance'

Some of the limitations that the early CCCS had in relation to how power operated and how subaltern groups (youth) related to it (in a rather messy, contradictory, not always class-related structural responses) were addressed simultaneously by Michel Foucault. The importance of Foucault for the study of resistance is that the author re-articulates the productive possibilities of resistance and power, giving them a generative and relational nature that leads to a more flexible (and pervasive) approach to the functioning of power relations.

Using Foucault at this stage could seem outdated and forced, especially due to the right critiques that this author has received for his lack of addressing coloniality (Stoler, 2002), a haunting presence in his work (Legg, 2016). For this thesis, I have reviewed many SWANA authors in relation to power and resistance, some of them developing relevant concepts to understand these contexts, such as Mbembe's 'necropower' (2003) in relation to Israel. However, these authors have focused on developing resistance in the lens of liberation movements and anti-colonial struggles (Fanon 1953, 1961) that are not explicitly applicable to the thesis' context. Being aware of these contributions and the distance that Foucault resembles from these contexts in many senses, the author's theory still offers an applied and flexible way to understand power working through the everyday and multiple structures in this context. Foucault's theory emphasises the pervasive and contradictory nature of power: everywhere, constituting subjects. It restructures the subcultural model of 'response and opposition' to parents' culture and dominant culture that this thesis follows. It is part of how music gets produced, listened to, enjoyed, and danced to, in this case. And at the same time, it helps to see the potential capacities of resisting. Hence crucially, in application to this thesis, resistance emerges as an idea of 'creating something' (like power does), rather than a direct opposition and response to domination, an ongoing messy process rather than a static position of intentional resistance. Certainly, partying in Palestine relates to occupation, and fosters the need to escape everyday life.

Through the infamous statement, 'where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (Foucault, 1978:95), Foucault emphasises that the relationship between these two concepts is not oppositional, as it is normally perceived, but relational. This reshapes the oppositional nature that resistance 'has' in relation to power, offering a new perspective. It does not mean

that, in consequence, resistance is not opposing power anymore, but its existence, as well as power's, is related to the other in a constitutive manner.

The second main contribution in this realm, as previously stated, is the productive nature of these categories: power is neither merely repressive nor merely oppositional, as resistance is not merely reactive. Power is the constraint to our freedom, 'the limit of our modes of subjectivity' yet is the condition of possibility for discourse as well as for new subjectivities to exist (Simons, 2013:302). Hence, it allows spaces for contestation. What Foucault is trying to untie and develop is the generative capacity of power. This opens the door to a more generative/productive idea of resistance, an argument that will be informing this thesis. Both systems enable generation and production within them, which initially allows a whole new field of possibilities. As the anthropologist Abu-Lughod (1990) argues:

> Foucault is using this hyperbole to force us question our understanding of power as always an essentially repressive (…) he is interested in showing how power is something that works not just negatively, by denying, restricting, prohibiting or repressing, but also positively, by producing forms of pleasure, systems of knowledge, goods and discourses (1990:42).

This derives into two main ideas: resistance always confronts power and is never exterior to it (Foucault, 1978:95). When Foucault writes: 'to say that one can never be 'outside' power does not mean that one is trapped' (1980:141-142), he indicates that to be in power relations does not necessarily mean to be only dominated, but constituted by it, being in a way more complex and imbricate system where power is a synonym of reality.

Yet, Foucault's understanding of resistance in relation to power raises some problems that need to be teased out. Following 'where there is power, there is resistance' literally, risks reading all forms of resistance as mere signs of the system failures or gaps that power is not able to tackle, subordinating resistance to power and freezing this relationship as if all situations of power generate specific forms of resistance, but the way the scene unfolds demonstrates the contrary. This risk might be reinforced by Foucault himself, when he suggests using 'resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used' (1982:209-211). Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of

analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies of resistance/power (Foucault, 1982).

Some of these theorisations appear at the core of the post-Foucauldian contributions on resistance. Moreover, Foucault does leave many questions unanswered, and it is necessary to push forward this analysis to deepen the complexities of resistance. An articulated theory of collective action (where post-Foucauldian and post-Gramscian interpretations come into play), how to understand the agents of resistance (intentionality) and its functioning beyond its link with power are among some of the points that later studies on resistance try to address. One common point within post-Foucauldian understanding of resistance is the inclusive and broader definition of the concept, adding diverse interpretations to focus on its ubiquity, daily practices and generative or 'constructive' nature. The relevance of power is present among these scholars as it is going to be seen next.

The concept of agonistic struggle (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) concedes that there is no potential for complete removal from a field of power relations, but there is the realistic hope of creative and partial liberation from particular local strategies of power recognised as especially constraining: a conceptualisation that insists on subordinate's ability to recognise power relations and to act (Thiele, 1990). This means regarding resistance more as *resisting,* as 'an activity in dynamic interaction with opposition to power' (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013).

This idea has a lot of potential for resistance, and it is closely related to 'hegemony'. If power is at once productive and oppressive, there is necessarily some space for the creative, non-conforming application of the socio-cultural rules and resources that it produces: resistance as a struggle for, and not only a struggle against. This reinforces the idea of resistance as a process, entailing generation and creativity (in the forms of making music, parties, social events, new embodiments) that lately or indirectly challenges certain power structures. In brief, there is always a space for resistance strategies or even non-intentional resistance whether the political arena is always open, contingent and disputable, even though holding disparate power positions. That is particularly powerful when these practices become 'cultural property' and start operating from a 'subcultural site of mutuality' by the disempowered (Butz & Ripmeester, 1999:5), appearing to be very typical in certain music scenes such as the free party movement (St John, 2009; Giaever Lopez, 2022). Then resistance can entail, as in my research, a discursive *fight* for the right to party, to be happy,

to enjoy youth as much as everyone else. This is the argument that I am outlining through this chapter, resistance as an idea of 'creating something' (like power) rather than a direct opposition, an ongoing messy process rather than a static position of intentional resistance.

The emphasis in the generative potentiality of resistance and its imbrication with more ordinary and daily practices, with a deeper approach to resistance than Foucault, gave a renewed insight to resistance studies, moving beyond the structural and organized conceptions of it. This resonates with the aim of studying the scene from its political potentialities in generative, pleasurable and collective ways by using individual narratives as points of departure. As noted, the amplification of the meaning of resisting to include the generative and pleasurable sphere of it does not mean the disappearance of opposition to the Israeli order or Palestinian hegemonic discourses, it is implicit (or explicit in some discourses and practices). It cannot be obliterated, less in this context of daily occupation and apartheid, but it should be regarded as a dynamic interaction where the 'activity' or 'process' of resisting seeks its own means existence and reproduction, and not merely opposition.

Assemblages and conviviality: framing resistance in a deterritorialising scene

Until now, it has been said that resisting is not only still central for Palestinian everyday life and that in this sense, there can be many forms of resisting operating and being practised, but that it exists in a layered, contradictory and messy way. The notion of assemblage, first introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and later conceptualised by DeLanda (2016), puts together the scene's practices and allows it to develop a mobile, rhizomatic and generative understanding of resistance. Puar states the following about the assemblage and its non-binary nature:

> [it] moves away from excavation work, deprivileges a binary opposition … underscores contingency and complicity with dominant formations. This foregrounding of assemblage enables attention to ontology in tandem with epistemology, affect in conjunction with representational economies, within which bodies interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects and effects to each other (Puar, 2007:205).

When putting these elements together, an emphasis appears on the blurring boundaries between these (as the author's work on queerness shows). Hence, it is useful to think about

how the scene moves between affects and spaces, how it encompasses agency and how it constructs itself in an unstable movement.

Precisely, this instability and movement is also picked up by the notion of deterritorialisation. It is especially relevant to disentangle and expose the changes that the scene has undergone in the last three years (2019-2022) due to Covid-19, rising tensions with Palestinian authorities and the Israeli attacks on Gaza in May 2021 and locating the deterritorial nature of the scene which was explained at the beginning of this review. As has been pointed out, there is neither one single space in terms of territory where the scene develops, nor one single music genre around which the scene coalesces. Therefore, the multiplicity, in terms of spaces where it unfolds (the local, regional, global and virtual), types of music, peoples involved and 'structures' pervading it (identity, authority, neo-orientalism, neoliberalism), forms a heterogeneous relationship. As such, 'the assemblage's only unity is that of a co-functioning' (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007:69) one. Conceptualising the scene as an assemblage puts the emphasis on the 'relation', the 'co-functioning', the 'conviviality' of heterogeneous, even supposedly, contradictory elements.

In the introduction, it has been seen how conviviality and assemblage were two important concepts for the thesis. To understand many of the relationships already mentioned and further developments along the thesis, the idea of conviviality is articulated. The notion loosely inspired by Puar's (2009) development of affective conviviality, argues for the material coexistence of supposedly (excluding) binaries in hegemonic and non-hegemonic moves. During the thesis, these 'binarisms' (modernity/tradition, power/resistance) will emerge constantly, and they require to be thought of as co-producing each other, moving through an in-betweenness that does not allow us to think of them separately. The notions emerge from the material and the experience: the constatation that they exist alongside each other. It does not imply free of conflict or tensions. Thinking conviviality through agonistic terms is helpful (Mouffe, 2005), since it recognises the political forces and points of violent contact between them, but also emphasises the existence of contradictions altogether. Existence is contradictory, and it still exists and develops everyday. Conviviality is affective and intense, far from an abstraction, when 'bodies come together and dissipate through intensifications and vulnerabilities' (Puar, 2009:169).

An alliance that does not equate convergency or a unique direction is agonistic (Mouffe, 2005) in the sense that there is not a single space or practice to be endorsed and that is has its

tensions and contradictions. It encompasses a transformative moving nature that is contingent, agonistic, deterritorial, and still co-functioning and influencing each other. It is in this rhizomatic dancing of getting together, of creating something, where the potential for a generative resistance emerges. The diasporic dialogue of peoples builds a network despite restrictions, structures, powers and reclaiming leisure and music for themselves in which resisting is articulated because these practices exist.

3.4. Affect, intimacies and atmospheres

The last idea to incorporate into the proposed framework is the notion of affect, an idea that has had an important development in relation to dance floors (Buckland, 2002; Saldhana, 2007; Garcia, 2011, 2020). Affect here nonetheless is important mainly as a tool or method, as a way of sensing the world and being in it, rather than as a theory. As I indicated in the introduction, affect came in the middle of fieldwork to help me make sense, as it has to many scholars, to my experiences and the atmospheres that I found myself integrated in. In contrast to resistance in this thesis, which is a practise and a 'concept', affect is, more than anything, a lens, a structure of feeling (Williams, 1953).

In application to the Palestinian music context, there is already literature that focuses on 'political feeling' to 'comprehending one of the myriad ways in which life continues under [occupation]' (El Zein, 2016:38) instead of employing the framework of resistance to give sense to leisure or music practices. El Zein (2016) argues that Palestinian rap and concerts are not about finding a subcultural answer to occupation. However, when El Zein (2016) rejects the notion of resistance, she is implying that 'resistance' can only occur against Israeli occupation. It is precisely the broadening and re-thinking of this notion and the still potentialities it might have that this thesis is trying to understand. A focus on the in-betweenness, the contradictions and the affective intensities that travel along this notion will be demonstrated in chapter 5.

It is important to understand resistance in relation to affect and the 'political feeling' (El Zein, 2016) that emerges in this context. It emphasises the personal, emotional, corporeal and non-verbal aspects of the scene and ultimately, of resisting. It helps to re-capture a practise that it is very much related to strategy, organisation and ideology, but sometimes this is not the case. The incorporation of affect contextualises why resistance is such an important, burdened and criticised idea, since it carries an intense affective load. This affective load, close to their skin, is what makes resisting a contested and layered term. Affect, as resistance, cannot be

regarded as a homogenous, coherent, or fixed approach (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). There is ambivalence and messiness, which adds to the complexity of the context and social life. Affect refers to the encounters, feelings, energies and intensities that are present in the 'assemblage' (the scene). According to Kouri-Towe (2015:29):

> Affects govern the realm of our encounters –encounters with the world, with ourselves– they structure how we are moved and move through the world. Affect theory raises questions about what roots us in belonging, at the same time that it constantly encounters the uncomfortable limits of belonging.

It works as the glue that sticks together the different social and individual processes that participants experience: the intensity of the parties, the embodied interactions and encounters, the trauma of violence, the energy of creating. It puts the materiality of experience, and the agency that accompanies it, at the centre. As such, the physical, the emotional, surroundings or language are bound together.

Affect theory helps to approach resistance from another perspective, rather than the political/social movement view of an organised, intentional and oppositional resistance, it allows for a focus on the non-binarism of the practice, on the process, the emergence, the movement and the becoming. It suspends binarist ways of thinking, as with the notion of conviviality (Puar, 2009) which is demonstrated above. Sedgwick refers to applying a non-dualistic thinking for looking in-between domination and liberation (*power and resistance*) to find the creative (*generative*) shapes of agency (2003:12). The idea of agency is important as well. As has been pointed out throughout the literature review, the structuralist approach on a pervading coloniality is problematised here, incorporating individuality and agency, not as freedom of choice or determination, but as ways of experiencing, acting and 'being in the world' (Casey, 2001) that entail consciousness, emotions and decisions. DeNora views agency as 'feeling, perception, cognition and consciousness, identity, energy, perceived situation and scene, embodied conduct and comportment' (2000:20). This stance on agency might sound 'obvious' as it refers to how people sense and interact with their surroundings which is somehow implicit within existence itself. Agency therefore is a non-reductionist standpoint that accounts for how context impacts and influences people's lives and what they generate/create through, and from it.

Hence, this thesis looks at the processes 'whereby the affective richness of scene (as a cultural phenomenon) is produced in the first place' (Driver & Bennett, 2015:110). More

concretely, through the notion of affect, this thesis looks at the role of intimacy (Garcia, 2011) and familiarity (and their 'contraries') in the scene as main drivers of the scene. The contraries are also important. Even though gossip, secrets, fights and dynamics alike do not hold a central space in the thesis mainly due to privacy commitments, it is important to consider that familiarity and the size of the community comes along with incompatibilities, controversies, or rivalries between people. Therefore, intimacy is not just a positive effect of union and care, it is also a network of powers traversed by my own presence and whiteness (Saldanha, 2007).

A sense of intimacy (Berlant, 2000, 2008; Garcia, 2011, 2023) links to the obliteration of social norms of strangerhood and familiarity, giving space to corporeal proximity, touch and verbal and non-verbal spontaneity between strangers on dance spaces. I include this perspective but problematise it with whiteness, and how intimacy in the scene is traversed by other affects to take into account. For instance, Stewart (2007) relates these affects to the intensities they carry and build (3). In this sense, emotions, like familiarity and intimacy, interact with a wide range of other social processes of pleasure, class, belonging and mobility. These 'ordinary affects' intervene in the ways of being, knowing, relating and mobilising (Steward, 2007:3) through music and leisure. Hence, affect here draws on two complementary approaches: as social emotions and feelings (Ahmed, 2004) that are mediated and felt through intensities (Steward, 2007). This second conception refers to the capacity to affect and be affected (Massumi, 1987; the Spinozean *affectus*). In this context, these intensities are also deeply political and contextual: war, martyrdom, closures and suspensions get mixed with the subjective intimate intensity of the dance floor, as will be seen. The importance of these spaces, especially in a context of vulnerability and surveillance, has been explored by Warner's 'counterpublics' (2002) and Berlant's (2008) intimate publics, both sharing the significance of attachment and intimacy that is created within these spaces as a contraposition of domination and violence. Especially in Berlant, the idea of an 'intimate public' or 'affective publics' within the scene highlights the importance of creating an alternative safer space in this context through the scene, similar to what Munoz (2007) develops through queer utopias, a relationship between the private and the public in a space where participants share, negotiate and experience their emotions. These points of contact between the public and the private, such as the scene, are blurred and often entangled with the broader context as it is narrated in the following chapters.

These dance floor's affects, intimate and fragile, also encompassing suspension and slowdowns have been theorised by Anderson (2009) through the concept of 'affective atmospheres'. Narrating ethnographic encounters will help recreate these affective atmospheres interlinked with electronic music scenes, as Saldhana (2007) develops with the 'eerie' and 'viscous' atmospheres of trance Goa. Atmospheres talk about particular ways of enclosure (the room, the bar, the swimming pool), and the ways of circulation in these (Anderson, 2009). Again, they are never fixed, but 'perpetually forming and deforming, appearing and disappearing, as bodies enter into relation with one another. [...] [It] creates a space of intensity that overflows a represented world organized into subjects and objects or subjects and other subjects' (Anderson, 2009:79). They are important as they are able to grasp non-verbal feelings and energies that get articulated on the dance floor: a successful party, an uncomfortable encounter, a disastrous event, a boring set, and so on.

4. Conclusions

This literature review has placed some of the theoretical debates that permeate Palestinian cultural and resistance studies. There is still much more that could be added, and this literature review was logically subjected to change over the course of the fieldwork. These changes will be further developed and debated in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

This chapter has discussed the Palestinian context within postcolonial theory, showing its limited applicability in a region embedded in a settler colonial and 'not yet' postcolonial reality. This complex location demonstrates the uniqueness of Palestinian reality, entangled in a network of power relations and interests that make it difficult to give clear-cut categorisations. As such, this project critically places Palestine in a distant position in regard to this field of study and focuses on both the settler colonial nature and diasporic reality of its people. The particularity of the emergence of an electronic music scene amidst this context and how it relates to notions of resistance and culture, does deepen this location of contradiction, ambiguity, messiness and conviviality.

The singular focus of 'music as resistance' is challenged since it risks fetishising resistance and relegating other relevant aspects of the music and the social processes that accompany it, as the participants have emphasised. As insisted already, this does not deny the weight of occupation and resistance within cultural practices. Rather, it constructs understandings that account for multi-layered realities beyond binarisms. To do this, this thesis focuses on the

scene's practices and discourses, its entanglement with power and the social dynamics within it. However, the notion of power is not circumscribed to Israel, but also to Palestinian authorities and the participants themselves. As will be seen in chapter 4, the presence of a set of different hegemonic institutions (religion, government, police) does shape and regulate the scene, being a coercive force that does need to be included in this tandem of power. Indeed, Palestinian institutions and other regulatory powers have not been analysed with the same scrutiny as Israel received, which will be tangential to the study of the scene. Scholarship often focuses on the weakness and asymmetry of power between Israel and the PA (Frisch & Hofnung, 2007), which makes the application of the same Foucauldian frameworks, like those used with Israel, difficult.

The importance for this thesis relies on the understanding of power as also a generative and productive force, demonstrating how resistance and other social dynamics are always pervaded by contradictions and different driving movements that leave culture and music (the scene in this case), as a non-pure space of relations. The same happens with resistance in this context: it is contradictory, a constant messy process and is non-hierarchical. It is contradictory in a sense that it does generate and exercise power as well as resistance. Its contradictory and messiness comes from the plurality of discourses that turn around resistance, since many participants reject the idea of the scene as resistance, while others defend that there is a resistant element due to the opposition of Israel and Palestinian authorities to these practices. It is also messy and non-hierarchical since many participate in it through different degrees of commitment and participation: people that barely party and people that are at the forefront of articulating the scene. This horizontal unfolding comes as well from the many meanings and practices that could be regarded as resistant: sexuality and non-normative gender, dancing and touching in a conservative environment, creating community, feeling pleasure, having fun in a necropolitical context, and so on. It also generates power in terms of exclusion of other Palestinians and access, being a subcultural hub of distinction that separates it from the rest of society. Following Shaw's conceptualisation of leisure and resistance (1991), it implies seeing the scene as a cultural space of contestation, and I would add to this: of expressiveness and generation and of other modes of subjectivity that imply a transformation even though not done purposely.

'the sense of adventure, drama, mystery [and] fear' which produces research is not easily articulated in part because it risks revealing, perhaps even 'exposing', the so-called unscholarly, anecdotal, irrational and unscientific dimensions of the research process'

(Fraser & Puwar, 2008:4)

Chapter 2 – Methodology

1. Introduction: contexts, doubts and potentialities

The introduction and the literature review have introduced and set up the main debates and directions this research is taking. It has already been seen how this project tries to reflect and build an epistemological self-critique and this chapter tries to do justice to that.

In the methodology, I discuss the fieldwork process and the different aspects that are included within it. In the first section, I will reflect on the context where the research takes place, the concepts under exploration, the corresponding research questions and the main theoretical frameworks used. In the second section where I explore the research methods, I will provide an overview of the scene itself (the field), discussing the (micro and auto) ethnographic methods employed to gather data (participant observation, interviews and secondary data collection) informed by the principles of participation, sensitivity and reflexivity. At the end of the methods' part, I provide an account of the data analysis, which follows discourse, thematic and narrative analysis. Finally, in the third part of the chapter entitled positionality and ethics, I will develop the epistemological underpinnings of the methodology used in order to reflect on what a 'decolonial feminist' methodology entails, the tensions imbricated with my own positionality and the ethical dimension of fieldwork.

The methodology starts with a sense of discomfort and illegitimacy that is met with a deep sense of commitment to the different people that have participated in this project. During the past four years, I have tried to develop a methodology and a research practice that aligns with my values and my ethics, that respects people's times and intimacy and also considers my

own sensibility. The context we live in, traversed by discomfort and privilege comes from the endless self-examination around the aims and questions I explored during these years: not knowing exactly what I am looking for, trying to be as open as possible whilst attuning myself to the structures of academic research, assuming the constant negotiation and tension that entails doing research from this privileged position. The shifting terrains of 'otherness', the stranger that comes into other people's lives for a while and then leaves, the researcher that co-opts other people's voices are images that strongly resonate within me that I want to address and articulate differently.

I understand that this research, like many other scholars have performed before me, to be at the junction of my everyday life and experience as a committed young person to the 'dancefloor' and to 'global justice' and my academic interests. As often happens, the personal has become theoretical, and the theoretical has become normality within my life. My personal interests have become theorised, but this theory should be seen not as an abstraction because it is close to home, 'close to the skin' (Ahmed, 2019:8). All these categories (the dancefloor, the everyday, theory, academia, the political) are merged together in a melting pot of aims, intentions and doubts that started way before this project and will continue when it finishes.

1.1. Aims, objectives and research questions

Before entering into the methods section, I will outline a summarised reminder of the aims and the research questions that lead the thesis. The aims are:

(1) to describe, explore and analyse the Palestinian electronic music scene in an affective, critical and political way, developing and understanding a concrete music scene and therefore, the social relations that constitute it;

(2) to look at generative and fluid ways of resisting these practices;

(3) generating an affective, participatory and feminist methodology and epistemology engaged with transformation and decolonisation.

The research questions are:

1. How do different social relations *constitute* and *traverse* the Palestinian electronic music scene?

2. How is resisting *understood* and *practised* in the scene?

1.2. Theoretical frameworks and concepts

First of all, the reluctance to set up a concrete hypothesis is underpinned by inductivism, linking the concrete research, individual responses and researcher observations, to a wider theoretical framework, focusing on theorising the concepts explained above and opening new questions and problems yet to emerge. I heavily rely on this rhizomatic inductivity that allows themes to emerge and waits to theorise till the end. Secondly, critical interpretivism and social constructivism are the epistemological positions of the research and the ontological departs, as shown in the literature, in a poststructuralist, decolonial and feminist methodology. These were later met with the affective and anti-research epistemology as a contribution. According to interpretivism, the social world is not simply an objective entity existing independently of our ideas, but is based on interaction, reflection, meaning, action, interpretation, reflection, further action and so on (O'Reilly, 2005:103). All of these are explored through the fieldwork focusing how different subjects struggle over meanings (Saldanha, 2007) and give sense to their experiences.

There are a series of concepts and theories that are used as frameworks for the analysis. The theoretical framework is divided between the introduction, the literature review and the methodology, so most of the concepts and frameworks have been already outlined. The frameworks of (generative) resistance/power, conviviality, affective epistemology, anti-research and neo-orientalism have been explained and problematised, developing meanings, the gaps and usages that they have for the research. In this section, they are going to be summarised and articulated through how they are going to be applied. They will appear constantly during the research, working as guiding principles, being reshaped and adapted to the concretion of the context.

The notion of *power* inspired by Foucault is a central framework for this research. It helps to locate subjects as both subjugated to power relations and also as producing and reproducing them. Power is seen as a horizontal moving network that is present in the realm of culture and people's lives, and used in this sense, it emphasises the political nature that is embedded in social relations, even when apparently 'apolitical', 'mundane' or 'superficial'. Power as productive and pervasive helps make sense of the nature of the occupation and how it intersects with subjects and their lives, a network which is difficult to escape, but which nevertheless allows for resistance and agency. Also, the way it is employed in this thesis

helps to de-romanticise how certain types of resistance are practised and lived and how subjects are entangled in more complex relations than the binary coloniser-colonised.

This possibility of opposing and divergent elements coexisting together is underpinned by the notion of *conviviality* (Puar, 2009). It is used to problematise the pervasive binaries that exist in this context, not denying the tensions and complex relations between them, but addressing them outside the exclusion that these binaries often entail one thing or another. This notion of conviviality helps to explore supposed contradictions through a queer lens of assemblages and interactions.

The notion of *affect* is employed in many senses and ways, as a lens, as a method of research (Buckland, 2002; Pink, 2009; Garcia, 2011; Sharma & Tygstrup, 2015) and lately as a 'finding'. First, it is conceptualised as a lived thread that links the different social processes altogether: music, class, mobility, and the immediacy of the dancefloor. It comes to help give sense to many processes that lie in interaction and contradiction. It grasps and completes a certain nature of resistance and the discourses around it that cannot be teased out from the realm of politics alone. Affect is used as a way of centring emotions, feelings, non-verbal forces, intensities and atmospheres that coalesce around and in the scene. It is a loaded emotional context and I have experienced it as such; thus, it is a crucial way of understanding the relations that occurred around me and to make sense of processes that escape the intelligible and explainable through words.

Another framework informing this research is *neo-orientalism* as a discursive category that is present in research of this kind, and a series of effects linked to it: romanticisation, exoticisation, fetishisation, or objectification. Including this notion helps to problematise and reflect on the possible effects this thesis can have on othering, romanticising and essentialising people through static and simplified accounts of complex phenomena. In order to tackle these, this thesis is informed by critical whiteness scholarship (Ahmed, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021; Hunter and van der Westhuizen, 2022; Lobb 2022) that problematises performative acknowledgements of guilt, that are not transformative, criticises neoliberal celebratory discourses on diversity, making structural racism invisible and locates whiteness as a global phenomenon.

2. Research methods

The methods used to immerse myself in the field, get to know the participants and the culture need to correspond to the feminist decolonial standpoint and the ethical principles informing the research. To explore and answer the research questions, the following data collection techniques were used: (1) a participatory and sensorial micro-ethnography, (2) interviews[13] (recorded and non-recorded) and (3) online secondary data analysis. I conducted the research between September 2019 - July 2022. 15 interviews were conducted in Palestine, 4 online and 11 in person and in addition to the recorded interviews, there were approximately 20 non-recorded interviews and conversations which deeply informed the research findings.

I use this combination of methods to ensure a holistic and multifaceted dataset that allows me to focus on particular aspects depending on each 'encounter'. Importantly, trying to adapt these techniques to be more sensorial and participatory (beyond the spoken), that often occur on dance floors (Buckland, 2002; Pink, 2009; Garcia, 2011). Capturing affective atmospheres and assemblages entails a key dynamic of cultural difference and attribution that makes it impossible to fully translate non-verbal experiences. Therefore, it is acknowledged and incorporated that they are mediated by my own gaze. These methods intend to reflect on the various scales and layers the research intends to cover:

1. to account from wider social processes in the scene and the dancefloor (participant observation). This was developed during my fieldwork in Palestine (Ramallah, Haifa, Beitlhem) and Amman and the short visits to Athens, Berlin and London.

2. the more individual experiences in relation to it (interviews and conversations). This was implemented mainly in Ramallah, Bayt Lahm, Haifa and Amman and online.

3. the virtual interactions and unfolding of the scene and its participants online through videos, interviews and posts (online secondary data analysis). This was conducted during the course of the thesis, starting back in 2018-2019.

These methods and evolved through the thesis. This project was conceived as ethnographic research with interviews and participant observation in the 'physical' field as the two prominent methods. As the time advanced, Covid-19 came and the virtual world unfolded

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[13] See Appendix for examples.

richly in my computer, online methods were included as important and as necessary as the other two. Much of what helped to understand the scene happened online: in radios, on social media, in streamings… Also, as I will explain in detail, interviews also changed their shape and opened to more flexible formats such as 'conversations' (non-recorded interviews) and the participant observation was completed with this virtual micro-ethnography. Hence the field (and its challenges) appeared as a combination of layers that required a combination of methods beyond its physicality, in a similar way I understood the scene as not spatially fixed.

2.1 The field: territoriality, virtuality and diaspora

The field being researched is one of the variables that has changed the most over the course of the years under observation. It unfolds in multiple interconnected spaces: 'historic' Palestine ('67 and '48), which are known as the West Bank and modern day-Israel, outside of Palestine (European cities such as London, Berlin, Athens), in Jordan where many Palestinians live and finally, online. This plurality responds to the diasporic nature of the Palestinian electronic music scene. Although its original hub is in Ramallah, the main city within the occupied territories where the electronic music scene develops, alongside Bayt Lahm (Bethlehem) and Al Quds (Jerusalem), the scene is also present in other territories and cities (outside the West Bank), thus the field of research moved to capture the political and diasporic elements of it.

Ramallah was an important place for the fieldwork. Here I conducted fieldwork for three months between May-July 2022. During this time, I went to the cities of Haifa, Jaffa in modern-day Palestine and to Bayt Lahm and Al Quds. I also stayed in Amman, Jordan for more than a month during September 2021. I went to music events and festivals that were organised by Palestinian collectives such as the Exist Festival in Athens and Berlin (March 2022 and November 2022) or a Refugee Worldwide collaboration party at the Envisioning Free Space conference in Berlin (November 2021).

In all of them I met Palestinians and Arabs involved in these scenes that enabled me to develop a clear understanding of the affective and mobile network of peoples that nurture these. Finally, I spent thousands of hours online, following artists on social media, mainly Instagram, and listening to online radio where many people showcase their work.

Limiting the field only to the occupied territories would be denying the dispersed and mobile nature of this scene, especially after Covid-19. This scene is tied to the local –the city of

Ramallah–, to the regional with its collaboration with Palestinians living in '48 Palestine and other SWANA countries (mainly Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon but also Tunisia, for instance), to the global with Palestinians living in European and North American cities, and to the virtual with the rise of platforms and online radios in the region. This shows how the scope of the research could have been much bigger. Giving a complete account of this would have required me to visit and stay in all these locations.

The difficulty of 'mapping the scene' challenges some of the traditional meanings that the concept of scene usually has. The concept emerged in the last decades as the main conceptual framework for analysing the production and consumption of popular music, but it is closely tied to universalist white conceptions of the term (Queiroz, 2019). As mentioned in the introduction and the review, there is relevant applicable literature on the term 'scene' (Straw, 1991; Pini, 1997, 2001; Peterson & Bennet, 2004; Garcia, 2011; Driver and Bennet, 2014) that develops its transnationality, affectivity, corporality and mobility. However, the notion has emerged as a methodological challenge due to the time I had to study it (Covid-19) and the particular events that traversed Palestinian society between May 2021-May 2022 (a deeply violent year and continues to be so) that made it even more essential for there to be the need of, at least, problematising its general meaning, as I do in the discussion. For now, I remind the reader that I frame the Palestinian electronic music scene as a local, deterritorial, virtual and affective community, intertwined with other cultural and music scenes (visual arts, film, hip hop, social media that I have also closely examined since the start of the research) and, determined by a series of political structures that make a complex scenario for its development and accessibility, it challenges the idea of locality in the first place.

Moving from the 'field' (the scene) to the actual places were these practices unfolded, there were two main figures of analysis: the physical venue (bar, club, private house and so on) and the online world (radio and social media). The venues where the events happen are very important not only for fieldwork, but for the scene, as many of them are not fixed regular spaces, but are rented or found for each particular party. Many of the parties I attended were organised in rented or sporadic venues that did not have a 'club use' normally: a restaurant with a swimming pool, a camping place or a cultural space. Kabareet in Haifa was the only regular club that I went to. Radio, in Ramallah, which hosted Tuesday nights with a music jukebox (local and amateur DJs selecting songs rather than mixing them), is a bar that hardly throws parties anymore.

As said before, the field is politically and contextually situated. The club/venue does not mean the same in Ramallah as in London or Haifa, and does not mean the same having a venue close to the Ramallah municipality than to a refugee camp (as happens with Radio). They are subjected to different regulations, surveillance and audiences. Neither is the same freedom experienced doing online than in '67 Palestine or '48, so each location has mattered. The scene, as something unfixed and 'eventual', is subject to redefinition, due to the season of the year (during the winter there is less scene), the participants and artists currently in the city (enough DJs and people to attend) or the permits and venues they are able to get. Especially with the outbreak of Covid-19, the scene in Ramallah and '67 Palestine was compromised and decimated. Lockdown and regulations were followed by a series of tensions with Palestinian society that made the scene evolve with enhanced difficulties, as will be seen. As a result of this, Haifa is having an increasing importance since it is easier and safer to organise parties there. This shows again the shifting territoriality of the scene and the different places that have relevance.

2.2. Micro-ethnography: participant observation on the dancefloor and beyond

Ethnographic accounts seek to develop a complete, nuanced, non-reductive and non-detached analysis of reality in a concrete 'field'. Although it is difficult to achieve a non-reductive ethnographic account, since it 'inevitably entails the *representation* of human experience' (Nayak, 2006:412), which is irreducible (the limits of representation as a discursive practice). Especially important is this emphasis for this research as the 'Palestinian electronic music scene' to be sustained by a reduced part of Palestinian youth since it is yet quite unknown and non-representative of the rest of youth practices in Palestine. Departing from this acknowledgement, the limitations of research in terms of representation, time, and access have been incorporated, embracing the micro and the auto ethnography as central tools.

The ethnographic process has been influenced by this multiplicity of spaces to look at and by the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020. My first trip to Palestine was planned to happen in January 2021, then during the summer that year, then in September 2021 (when I was only able to enter to Jordan, but not cross into Palestine due to Israeli restrictions) and in November 2021, when Israel closed its borders again. After these tries, I finally started my (micro)ethnography in May 2022. These interruptions and short stays contrast with the necessary long presence that nightlife ethnographers need in these communities to participate

and establish trust (Garcia, 2013), which I did not have due to Covid-19, visa restrictions and the PhD time-scale structure.

The main method of research has been a (micro)ethnography (Fenkse & Bendix, 2007). I focused on a particular and relatively small group of people in a very specific settings, during a relatively short period of time. The project 'goes micro' in terms of field time and participants, but also has developed an online analysis over three years, has visited different locations and has developed a macro contextual review of literature that anchors the research in the ethnographic realm too. Moreover, one of the characteristics of 'micro' ethnography is a 'finely grained account of participants interactions' (Alvehus & Crevani, 2022:232) which is not among the ways findings are presented. Even though the outline of the project aimed and could have been an ethnography in length and content, the circumstances surrounding it and the lack of a long stay there refrain from labelling it as an 'ethnography'. As a result of this, there is certain in-betweenness between the micro and the ethnography.

Research derived, almost inadvertently in some instances, in an auto-ethnography as well. I used my experiences and autobiography as tools for analysing what happened around me, especially in relation to whiteness and intimacy. Being Spanish, female, young and middle class and importantly, 'unknown' to most of participants had so much weight in my interactions. This method allowed me to develop the research as both a process and a product (Ellis et al., 2010). My ways of knowing and being part of music scenes, my whiteness, my estrangement in the places, and how they have been theorised, have shaped the research towards conclusions that I consider more useful than sometimes the findings.

In total but not linear, there were around 5 months of physical fieldwork (without counting online research) adding the short trips to different cities. The main method to accomplish this was participant observation through the scene, in and outside it, in the spaces where the scene happens (clubs and houses) and also in its margins, the outside that is also intertwined with the scene (physically: the street, the queue, and virtually: social media). There is no other way, if one wants to embody a sensitive, sensory and participative research than immersing oneself as much as possible. Only close participation and observation provide the decolonial and feminist approach that this project intends to develop.

Importantly, research on club and dance scenes have typically entailed long participant observation and interviews to deepen into dancefloor's dynamics (McRobbie, 1993; Thornton, 1995; Pini, 1997, 2001; Buckland, 2006; Hutton, 2006; Kosnick 2007, 2015;

Saldanha, 2007; Muñoz, 2009; Garcia, 2011, 2013; Karkabi, 2013; Collin, 2018; Khubchandani, 2020). These allow researchers, who often are participants themselves of such scenes, to sense and grasp the moment, to get to know the people involved and observe interactions and the affective atmospheres (Anderson, 2009) not without estrangement and help with access (f.i. Kosnick, 2007, 2015). The ethnographic use of these methods in club spaces and the focus on 'dancing' as a pleasurable, sexual and political practice (putting the focus for the first time on gender and female presence), initiated by McRobbie (1993), followed by Pini (1997, 2001), Thornton (1995) and Hutton (2006) among others, are followed in this project. Also, I follow the recent developments of queer and LGTBQ+ geographies of dance and the night (Buckland, 2002; Kosnick, 2007, 2015; Muñoz, 2009; Garcia, 2011, 2020; Khubchandani, 2020).

These have informed my research by addressing the particularities of accessing and observing parties: the third space and intimate cultural norms (Garcia, 2011, 2013) that dance floors embodied and how to navigate these respectfully. Having to adapt methods to the non-verbality, spontaneity, spontaneity or people's highness, helping be to be more fluid and adaptative, for instance, mitigating the role of interviews at the place or note-taking, as they are complicated for practical reasons (intimacy, noise, drunkenness and highness). Crucially, they have indirectly provided a refuge to come back to when I needed to during my fieldwork, as an intimate therapy of writings and voices close to mine.

The politics of access and reflections on the barriers encountered

Getting access to and getting to know participants has been one of the most challenging and complex aspects of this research. During my time in Jordan and Palestine, the familiarity and intimacy between participants contrasted with my outsider presence. Mostly thanks to knowing some people from before, every time I went to an event, I would meet people, get introduced to new people and talk with many. I would be seen and present myself as a 'global raver' (not with these words, but this was the overall idea), a positionality linked to an international electronic music scene that share similar values, taste, aesthetic codes and knowledge. For instance, having been to the same parties or music festivals in Europe or sharing the love for a specific music genre. Most of the trust with participants was built through these common traits, sharing music taste, or knowing the same scenes. Many interviews were traversed by hours sharing favourite artists in the middle or jamming music

together afterwards. Most of the friendships were initiated and sustained by a common passion for music and dancing. In each of our contexts, we suffered raids from the police, first ecstasy pills, spent hours digging music or travelled for hours to a party. Especially the unstable and secret world of free parties in Spain and Europe with its own codes, difficulties and police repression generated a connection of experiences. All this created a sense of similarity within difference, belonging and togetherness that would not have been possible through other channels. Indeed, that is what it has stayed after this research: we keep sharing music, parties and festivals, dreaming of getting together again some day on another dance floor.

However, merging from these interactions and with actual research (setting up interviews for instance) was harder than expected. The politics of doing research in Palestine have proved, as I partially knew before starting, to be a long process of negotiation, patience, sensibility and networking. My gender and body's involvement and influence on the normal flow of the scene was as an unfamiliar and/or as a foreign researcher. Even when the affective pulsations of music help you to get lost and be part of a unified dancing body, you are always traversed by your gender, your whiteness, and especially your outsideness. Every interaction was mediated by this, and I felt that many of these encounters happened *because of* this, out of curiosity of who I was and what I was doing there. In general, as I analyse in chapter 3, there were internationals in the events and nights out, most of them working in the NGO field or travelling. I did not meet many activists that frequented those places. Beyond some chatting and short interactions it was not common to see mixed groups of internationals and Palestinians hanging out together, apart from very concrete cases (international friends visiting Palestinians, for instance). The figure of the international, and concretely, the journalist, NGO worker and the researcher were seen with suspicion and apathy. A lot of international presence was very short (the tourist visa is up to three months) and usually linked to some personal project that was seen as little help or interest to Palestinians. This had a lot of weight on myself and made me start a more complex relationship with my research and my motives.

This is not to say I did not make friends or that it was impossible to gather information, on the contrary, I met great people along the way who helped me a lot, and who I call now friends. People were really open to talk about the scene and to guide me through it. But precisely because it seemed that they were close and helpful, I could not understand why it

got difficult when I wanted to get to do more formal research, such as recording our conversations. I can now differentiate three lessons that I learned through this process:

1. the importance of being direct and honest about intentions rather than trying (even sincerely wanting to) to be build certain intimacy and trust prior the interviews, which touched an important debate within research: are we participative and make relations because we are doing research and feel we should be as ethical as possible or because we naturally want to? Some close friends told me that I should be as direct as possible with my intentions, but it was difficult to be straightforward with my intentions without feeling extractive and selfish.

2. The different participants' timing and motivations for collaborating in the research through interviews. In general, it felt they needed quite a lot of time to build trust to collaborate or simply some of them agreed to participate, but it was very difficult to arrange an actual interview because there was always something going on. As Kosnick says, 'more prominent DJs and organizers who did not see the point of being interviewed for academic purposes, but would more easily be willing to have brief conversations' (2015:20). As signalled before, people were weary of having deep long conversations (and much less an interview) when partying, meaning that they would have to meet you on purpose another day and this sometimes never actually happened.

3. A more general rejection of because of being part of research that feels objectifying and extractive as part of Western academia which is discussed below in relation to Robinson's (2020) critique of Western extractivism of Indigenous music, and is further discussed in chapter 5 and 6 as part of the findings and the discussion.

4. The politics of freedom of expression and speech in these communities as part of their cultural and historical heritage. Being quite different between, for instance, Egypt, Palestine or Jordan, the repression in the region deeply influences the eagerness and openness of people to talk about certain topics, especially with strangers or foreigners. Many people have recalled having friends or family members detained or imprisoned for no clear reasons. It is understandable then that the politics surrounding talking freely and openly are intersected by premeditation and suspicion, especially if it leads to recorded conversations, and particularly in Palestine, where it could end up in

Israeli hands. This is an important lesson I had to learn that really differed from the Western experience of doing interviews, being recorded by a 'stranger' and talking about politics. We, usually, do not consider the consequences of this. Perhaps it is not about a direct fear of anything when being interviewed, but a cultural imprint of reservation and hesitation when it comes to sharing thoughts and ideas with a researcher than on top of everything, intends to record the conversation.

5. Finally, contacts, gatekeepers and knowing the right people proved essential to make ease and foster interactions and connections. In every setting, there was always someone that acted as a gatekeeper and introduced me to the rest of the people. Without them, all the process of accessing would have been much slower. As said before, going out and being a familiar face also helped. At the end, one realises that participating within a community is ultimately out of one's hands, and that there is part of the context, people's feelings and motivations, that cannot be planned in advance or forced to go in the direction we aim. Hence, the sooner one relaxes, does whatever is possible and does not put too much pressure on herself, the better for the research and the researcher.

2.3. Participant and sensory observation: dance floors and the everyday scene

The terms 'participatory/collaborative' and 'sensory/embodied' are the two main principles informing my ethnographic approach. A participant and embodied ethnography tries to challenge the notion of 'the rational mind' and its ways of observation, which traditionally has located the body and the senses in a secondary or complementary position. 'Participation' tries to go beyond its traditional account of 'collaborating in the field'. As Pink notes, 'the notion of ethnography as a participatory practice is framed with ideas of learning as embodied, emplaced, sensorial and empathetic, rather than occurring simply through a mix of participation and observation' (2009:63).

Participant observation has revolved mainly around parties and nights out, happening both during the day and night with the aim of observing, feeling and learning *through* affect and the senses (Pink, 2009). On the dance floor, I engaged in a non-mediated approach (being one more dancer) to the dancers, their bodies, the sound, the chronologies, vicissitudes and affects (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). Through dancing and feeling I developed a different kind of relationship that words could not provide. I remember many nights that started without much

talking or interaction but after dancing for a while and being 'corporally' close to people, an intimacy and empathy started to develop and conversations, usually next time we saw each other, flowed a bit more. As Kosnick (2015) accounts on her study of various club cultures in Europe, participating through dancing and being there allows the researcher 'to develop an understanding of practices that are often difficult to verbalize, by virtue of their specific sensory qualities and unspoken dynamics' (2015:20). Being in the 'crowd', feeling the vibe (Garcia, 2020), the sounds and vibrations (Henriques, 2010) and the general energy are among the ways I have tried to implement my participant observation. Embodying the 'partying' experiences and its affective atmospheres (Anderson, 2009). As such, a sensory ethnography puts the body and experiencing it through it as a source of knowledge and agency (Pink, 2009:22). Especially if it is applied to research on dance scenes, where dancing, touching and non-verbal communication are essential constitutive elements.

Indeed, the everyday soon appeared as a strong component of this participatory process. Direct and sustained contact with protagonists is the 'only' way to produce an enriching and fair account of the phenomenon. I lived with Palestinians involved in the artistic and cultural scene of Ramallah, so every day was a constant process of learning and talking with them. We got along well and did many things together, so I ended up developing a sort of routine where I was meeting with friends on a regular basis for cooking, having coffee, going to see some performance or gig, or going to the beach in '48. Hence the micro-ethnography stretched its limits and was part of my everyday life, not only when we were going out.

The fact that we communicated in English was not a problem in the sense that participants spoke a high level of English. The language barrier appeared more subtle and did not seem a problem for interviews and individual conversations, but posed an alienating feeling when I participated in collective moments. It was more in these sorts of situations where I felt that not speaking Arabic was a handicap as it left me outside many conversations where I could just grasp random words due to my limited knowledge. Some people tried to translate the conversations and gave me some context, but there were many moments that the conversations unfolded intensively and naturally, and I could just be there without knowing what was going on.

Note-taking and photographing

I embodied what Garcia calls 'passive participation' (2010:39), focusing on arriving at the place, interacting with people, listening and dancing, and leaving where I would take notes until I returned home, with exceptions when I went to the bathroom and sat for a while to write down my thoughts and impressions.

The dancefloor is a sensual place where one is part of the dance, the interaction, the touching and the sweating while also an observer, a detached piece in a constant balance between the inside and the outside, between feeling alone and part of the crowd. The ways of touching, of talking to each other, of coming together and apart, of listening to the sets, how gazes and looks are displayed between participants, what feelings the music transmits and how loud it is, how dark or bright the dancefloor is, and what type of visualisation it present, were researched through an embodied and sensory approach that proved note-taking on location was unfeasible and not sensible within my surroundings. Doing interviews on site or note-taking in front of participants would have hampered even more my presence there.

A similar process with taking photographs happened. I did not record or take photographs of the venues, dance floors or parties. I felt very uncomfortable and awkward doing it, as if taking a picture would materialise the extractivism I was trying to mitigate. In many senses it is a pity not to have graphic accounts of the scene or the venues I talk about, even if they were not meant to be public, but to support my analysis. Nevertheless, it was more important to respect the intimacy of the people and places and the scene-codes of being present in the moment, thus, I used social media when I needed some specific pictures about places or venues, for instance. It will be seen how the few pictures I use that I took myself are quite impersonal, not featuring any recognisable body.

2.4. Interviews

In this section, I will outline the second and most central method for this research: interviews. I will give a general introduction to the process and limitations, the rationale and participant's profile. I conducted 15 in-depth interviews in a semi-structured and flexible format to let the participants shape the direction of the interviews and the way topics were addressed. Apart from this 'recorded' formal interviews, I engaged in many non-recorded conversations that were very similar to interviews.

For the interviews, I had main themes that I wanted to explore (see Appendix). I always started with how they got involved in music/the scene and how important was for them. Usually, it followed with a question about their actual involvement in the scene and what they thought about the moment the scene was traversing. Depending on the answers, I would follow one path or another: music, tensions, politics, resistance, class, and so on. I covered all these themes but always depending how the conversation unfolded. All interviews lasted between 1-2 hours. I had a few that were more than 2 hours and turned into very long conversations.

This method presented a series of problems. Many people that I met did not want to be recorded or felt that formalising our conversations through an 'interview' made them uncomfortable. Some participants pointed out the importance of how freedom of expression works in the region in a sense that many people do not like to be asked direct questions that require certain personal information, even though it is not very sensitive or political. Also, many said that it was okay to have a conversation or help me out, but they did not agree to be recorded, as explained before. This led me to deepen the reflection on the role of interviews in research and the possibilities of gathering meaningful data without having numerous interviews. As part of decolonising methodologies, many authors have followed this path of reducing the centrality of recorded interviews as ways of doing robust research. As Tuhiwai Smith says, 'some stories were not mine to tell or too precious to be recorded. Sometimes ancestral knowledge is only for us, but not to transcribe or publish (2021:xxviii)'. This is not about 'ancestral knowledge' or sensitive topics, rather about really acknowledging people's sensibilities, rhythms and motivations on participation. For instance, with one of my closest friends there, a DJ that connected me to a lot of people, included me in her plans and her group of friends, the interview never happened (the same as with Samah). We kept postponing it and when my departure was close, she was so busy that I left without that interview. She is the person I talked to and discussed things the most, but only informally as I was never able to interview her. This illustrates the messiness and frustrations that performing interviews entails. As a result of this, I had to rely on both interviews and conversations as a way to inform this research, adapting to the context and its limitations.

More concretely, the conversations and interviews unfolded very differently, constructing with each of them an individual interview that covered different areas. I always started by talking about their experiences and involvement in the scene, and then let the interview to

evolve naturally. In most of the cases, participants had very articulated opinions and thoughts about everything I asked. It was very easy to have these conversations as I did not have to push for any answers. This allowed me to have very rich sets of data with a lot of information. Perhaps the question or topic that most reluctance or confusion generated was about the political/resistant nature of the scene, as will be seen.

Interview's rationale

My initial plan to place the interview as a central method and to use it to provide a deep insight of the scene, had to be partly reshaped. Although interviews are still important and gave a lot of relevant data, I had to be more flexible in terms of how I approach and collected this information. Thus, I still embrace the idea that qualitative interviews are an opportunity to delve and explore precisely those subjective meanings in deep (O'Connell Davidson & Layder, 1994). Interviews have the potential of producing sensitive, emotional research dialogues, giving participants a central role and autonomy in shaping their own stories and narratives. Also, interviews foster the aim of participatory research, as according to Pink (2012:41):

> they can show us how people represent verbally and classify their sensory experiences of specific environments, localities, performances and practices (see Pink 2009a), and in this sense offer a useful way of understanding the representational layers of everyday life.

The importance of using this method remains, but the role of informal conversations, without recording them, gained prominence as another way of gaining insight and data. Informal conversations, part of the ethnographic participant observation, helped to centre the individual experience, their views and thoughts, to gain trust between us, and foster participation, all of which were central concerns of this project. I was able to use the information given through these conversations, some of which led to semi-structured recorded interviews, and consent was gained also in these conversations, meaning that participants knew I was going to use what they told me for my research.

In addition to this, as stated in the introduction's aims, these interviews and conversations helped to foster discussion and connections beyond the research, being able to build relationships and collaborations through potential future musical and visual projects. In brief,

sensitivity, reflectivity and a consciousness of my positionality (explained in section 3) guided these interviews and any interaction with the participants.

Participants

I interviewed both dancers/attendants, bartenders, bar owners, musicians, artists and producers as part of the scene. All of them build the dance floor and the scene, having different relationships to the night and music, that are also collected in this thesis. The majority of the participants are Palestinians, living in Ramallah or in the diaspora (outside of Palestine), some more permanently than others. I also interviewed people from the Middle East that participated in various ways with Palestinians and the scene, whose contribution was very valuable. They were aged between 23 and 40 years old. Most of them were born in Ramallah, but I also met participants coming from Bayt Lahm (Bethlehem), Al Quds (Jerusalem), Haifa, Gaza, Nazareth, Tulkarem and Jordan. The different places of origin or family background showed how Palestinians, also more middle-class ones, have had to migrate and move from their original birth places. The variety of residences and origins proved my argument about the scene being a loose network of different peoples, some not being Palestinian, but nevertheless building up the scene with them.

In general, participants are part of a young, privileged class, educated in arts, music and some in international schools, endorsing quite significant cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990; Thornton, 1995). One participant referred to it as a 'bubble', in consonance with the cosmopolitan and neoliberal growth that Ramallah has encountered. The participants' (sub)cultural and economic capital makes them able to travel and study abroad when they are able to get the necessary permits to exit Palestine. They also enjoy this type of late-night leisure which requires certain economic capacity to pay entry fee and drinks. This position, especially within Palestinian society, moves the participants away from the one-dimensional vulnerable/oppressed profile that decolonial methodologies try to deconstruct. The participants' socioeconomic position, as explored later in the positionality section, restructure the research relationship from one of power (the researcher) and imbalance (the participant), to one where we moved through different axis of power and privilege.

2.4 Online secondary data collection

Online secondary data was also an essential method completing the thesis as a virtual ethnography, part of the overall (micro)ethnographic project. I was able to learn and gather

data from social media, media interviews and radio podcasts that proved very helpful in deepening my own research, also as a way of contrasting it. Since it is a relatively new phenomenon, there is scarce literature about the electronic music scene in the Palestinian territories. It was also useful to comprehend the different discourses around the scene that were shared on media platforms, and how these sometimes diverted from the conversations and experiences I had on the field. In this sense, some of the social media I followed was from the research participants themselves, but many others were not, consisting mostly of public and known figures, such as DJs or artists that shared daily content on various topics.

There is such a large international Palestinian network, especially on Instagram, where interacting and sharing content is carried out on a daily basis. This gave me an idea of what some of the common discourses are and the aesthetics of the scene. Mainly, they demonstrate curated, aesthetic and political content in their pictures. Many of them related to photography and graphic design as well. The growing importance of online content shows the somewhat inaccurate distinction between online and offline worlds, building an ethnography that is both physical and virtual. I approach this online content then as a continuation of this scene and being part of it, especially due to its diasporic nature. Interactions on social media therefore constitute an essential part of it. The ethics involving performing research on online 'public' content will be reflected on later.

Social media was used as a daily learning process rather than for concrete, specific data. I did not like the idea of taking their posts and images and publishing them in my thesis. Even the idea of asking for permission to use/publish them felt uncomfortable, thus, I only used those posts from public accounts of music collectives, bars and venues. For this, I focused on social media content (Instagram), audio-visual elements such as videos, documentaries and posters of the parties that allowed me to create a chronological and visual map of the connections and developments of the scene of both the dancers and the artists. For instance, there is one well-known short documentary on YouTube, called 'Palestine Underground – Hip Hop, Trap and Techno Documentary' (2018) by Boiler Room[14], 4:3 and Ma3azef. It was quite celebrated because it depicts the first Boiler Room set (a platform that organises DJ sets around the world and streams them live) in Palestine as part of their 'Contemporary Scenes' project. It marks, as it will be seen in the chapter on resistance, the breaking point where the scene became a global object of attention. Although now I watch it from a different perspective, it

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[14] Boiler Room documentary (2018) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-R8S7QwO1g&t=130s

had a huge impact on me when I first saw it. It depicts energy of a burgeoning music scene undeterred and fuelled by political restrictions, building bridges through a shared sound and identity' (Boiler Room Palestine, 2018) following Palestinian music collectives from inside '67 and '48 Palestine (Haifa).

Other relevant sources for secondary data analysis were online interviews from different journals and magazines such as *Jadaliyya, Electronic Intifada, Ma3azef, MixMag, Scene Noise, The Guardian* and *Resident Advisor* with the scene's artists. These interviews provided accounts on the artists and musicians' (Jazar Crew, Sama', BLTNM, Ramallah Underground) point of view on many issues that I also address (the scene, resistance, politics, etc). Although they need to be approached with caution since the nature of these interviews and the fieldwork are different, they have already provided a lot of data to tackle some of the scene's dynamics, for example, the artists' tiredness of the Western focus on occupation for making music. However, these online artifacts only depict the artists and musicians' point of view. Towards gaining a more holistic approach, there is a similar weight on participants that are not musicians or artists, but dancers. By including them we get a more enriched account of the scene.

2.5. Data analysis

The process of data analysis was not linear. During the first years, prior to fieldwork, I started doing online analysis and data gathering. Then, during and after the fieldwork the biggest part of the data analysis started. The interviews were recorded and kept in secure and protected devices only accessible by me. A record of the sensory and the night experiences/reflections were written up in fieldnotes during the participant observations (on mobile phone notes) and directly after leaving an event so all possible details were retained. I deleted all data from my computer before leaving Palestine for security reasons.

Following this, data analysis which included content, narrative and discourse analysis was performed on the interview transcriptions and fieldnotes. These modes of analysis are common tools in qualitative research where the participant's accounts are the main data to explore (Bryman, 2016). Firstly, personal narratives are especially important in a context where the personal is often blurred into the political, and social research purposely seeks political accounts on everyday issues. At the same time, the analysis of individual experiences needs to take into account the social influences on these narrativity and

discursivity. These tools are also important for simply explanatory purposes, when there is not much known about a particular topic, in this case the 'history' of electronic music in Palestine.

Thematic analysis

An inductive approach to data analysis was incorporated which allowed for the 'themes' to emerge from the interviews and fieldwork. As a way of addressing the relevance of the topics and how to work with them, the first layer of analysis was thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Guest et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2015; Terry et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was employed as a way of distinguishing the most talked about and felt topics, and how I could make sense of these, how they related to each other and what sort of subthemes emerged as well.

Through an 'immersion with the data' (Terry, et al., 2017:19), I deepened the main categories of the research questions (scene/social relations/resistance). It was important to see how relevant they were for participants and what topics derived from these main categories. As will be demonstrated in the findings, four main categories were brought up from scene/social dynamics: music, affect, class and mobility. In this sense, thematic analysis was extremely useful in helping to answer the first research question. For instance, through thematic analysis, it was evident how affect and mobility came to be very prominent, as they were not developed at the beginning of the thesis, or the 'suspension' of the scene as an event that needed to appear in the project. In this sense, these were the main themes that were explored on purpose through thematic analysis:

- Resistance
- Class
- Mobility
- The scene (involvement, initiation)

And these the themes that later emerged through interviews and observation:

- Affect (intimacy, atmosphere, discomfort)
- Music
- Tension/violence
- Neo-orientalism/romanticisation

All these were coded and organised as a way to see similarities, links and changes between the meanings attributed to them by participants (Bryman, 2016). Nevertheless, my thematic analysis had its limitations, and it has not followed established approaches such as Braun and Clarke's (2012) guidance. It worked as an initial form of analysis rather than a substantial approach because it risked over-thematising and categorising ideas and elements that were transversal to many dynamics, such as affect, or rather than single 'themes' that were articulations of many, like assemblage. After having set up the themes mentioned above, which also changed in terms of relevance, location or conceptualisation during the whole writing process, narrative and discourse analysis followed.

Narrative analysis

Through narrative analysis, I focused on how participants' lives and experiences were represented, how they are told and what sort of details are emphasised by the participants (online and offline, from the interviews but also from documentaries and secondary interviews). Using Buckland's beautiful words, I looked at 'the ways informants performed their memories, located them both in the theater of ethnography and in the theater of the everyday' (2002:19). Narrative analysis 'interrogates language– how and why events are storied, not simply the content to which language refers' (Riessman & Quinney, 2005:394). Accounts participants gave were influenced by multiple circumstances, personal (their age, the city they were from, whether artist or dancer, male or female…) and contextual (me as the listener, how long has passed from the event we were discussing).

Indeed, in many occasions there was a layer of 'correctness' and immaculate articulation of their opinions that made me wonder to the extent this was spontaneous or they were saying what I wanted to hear. Nevertheless, by using narrative analysis I prove that I am not interested in the veracity and truthfulness of these accounts, but in the way participants interpret, 'construct and structure their accounts to present themselves in particular contexts' (Temple, 2008:356). For instance, the narratives around the notion of resistance, emphasising that the scene should not be regarded (again) as part of Palestinian resistance but as a mean of expression and fun is irrelevant in terms of 'truth' or 'veracity' (is it *really* resistance?). The important point therefore is why they present the scene like this, why they reject the resistance paradigm or why they embrace it.

There was also a potential language barrier that we, both researcher and participant, could have encountered since English was not our first language, thus, making it difficult to grasp the precisions in the language that narrative analysis requires. It is very important to recognise the social and cultural context of where these accounts are told, since cultures have 'narrative conventions' (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006:165). Consequently, the process of analysis could mislead and misinterpret these. There was a need therefore to treat these stories as mediated representations, performances and accounts (its rhetoric, persuasiveness, justifications, evaluations of others and events), not as authentic interior unfolding. Although 'truth' is not a property of the data quality, the need to read these accounts remains. So as to mitigate this potential misunderstanding, an effort on cultural understanding in the way Palestinians narrate themselves was achieved with the help of the gatekeepers, recommending me not to believe everything I was told.

In this sort of project, where personal stories and biographies of the participants emerge and are part of the data, narrative analysis helps to analyse and locate these accounts as subjective, contextual and 'important' for the way they are told. I was interested to see how the teller assembles the stories (events, peoples, concepts), and puts the blocks (stories) together, what idea or event leads to another and how they are linked ('turning points'). In general, the tone of the interviews came in a very straight and articulated way, showing self-consciousness and confidence. That is why the way in which the interview progressed was very important: to let the participant shape the narrative so we can see the dots that connect these, and to observe how the teller remembers, interprets, constructs events that have been individually experienced. Interviews are the ideal tool to assemble the subject, the scene and their structural conditions, and narrative analysis allows the researcher to see this in combination, identifying the turning points and specificities between the 'stories'.

Discourse analysis

The second tool for data analysis was discourse analysis which was used to locate the participants' narratives and researcher's fieldnotes into the realm of the discursive, the structural underpinning the individual experience. Since this research recognises its location amidst, and is interested in, cultural politics, power relations and a complex geopolitical context, an approach towards these connections (set of ideas and common grounds to 'make sense of the world'), was conducted. This thesis does not aim to set up a concrete set of conclusions or truths to represent the scene, but rather make sense of how social processes are

lived and constructed by participants. To do this, therefore, I followed a Foucauldian (inspired) discourse analysis. This meant looking for the power relationships imbricated in participants' way of understanding their life and their context, and how they built up through these a set of realities. These 'realities', in plural because they vary between groups of people, classes and ages, were more often presented to me through discourses (in the interviews and conversations) than through my own lived experience. Thus, Foucauldian discourse analysis was key to understand these. The Palestinian context, as any other, was carefully constructed through powerful discourses on resistance, religion, tradition and so on. I thought of 'discourse' as 'the ways that an issue or topic is 'spoken of' (...) to build up a picture or representation' (Carabine, 2001:268). These discourses presented contradictions, dissimilarities that were crucial to develop the *conviviality* framework to give sense to participants' experiences and voices.

The objective of using this tool was to focus on the representations and images produced by participants' discourses (online and through interviews) and ideally the sensory/embodied night out fieldnotes (non-verbal interactions and dancing, fashion and aesthetics codes, location of the bodies; in other words, other types of symbolic non-verbal language), that are related to the research questions.

In the analysis, emerging principally from interviews and social media, there were three main broad discursive categories: (1) power, (2) resistance, (3) affect. These three discourses (apart from being objects of analysis in themselves), were used to analyse and identify how other thematic elements were constructed, such as the 'scene', 'society', music, class, mobility, violence, the West, having fun or escape. In other words, power, resistance and affect were subtle elements that were often not even mentioned as such (especially affect) but they were present in the discursive construction of most of the themes. Using a Foucauldian perspective, every theme that emerged could be analysed through the lenses of power, resistance and affect, all deeply interconnected.

As such, discourses of power, of resistance or of the other, arranged and 'translated' certain ways of seeing and being in the world. Linking back to narrative analysis which focuses on how participants made sense of their experiences and how they articulated them with other elements, discourse analysis complements this as it was used as a 'meta layer' of these

experiences and thoughts, first as a narrative, then as a discourse (with effects on their 'reality').

For instance, participants, when talking about the scene, generated discourses that related to power and music (being repressed, being traumatised or being privileged), related resistance and music (building something for themselves and creating a safe space), or related to 'the other' and music (how the West romanticises the scene, how the scene was seen through the eyes of others such as Western media or audiences). In this sense, the subdiscursive category of the 'West' which encompasses a myriad of different meanings, but generalising an idea of 'the other', was very present in much of our conversations, influenced because I was also white and European.

I looked at how affect, power and resistance were exercised through discourse, many times unintentionally, intersecting with how they constructed their relationship with society, with the scene, with friends or with themselves. This approach is embedded in the Gramscian (1971), Hall (1986, 1992) and Shaw (2001) perspectives on leisure and culture as political arenas where articulation, negotiation and struggle over meaning occur. Both the struggle over meaning and the political aspect of practise are key elements in how I approached this research. Applying this lens of analysis showed how participants' discourses (their meaning making) were sometimes not aligned with their practices. This is a whole discussion in terms of the second research question and the attribution of resistance: whether in a discursive realm (that also constructs reality) the scene is negated to be resistant, and in the empirical realm (linked to the discursive) is read as resisting by me.

I tried to disentangle any hegemonic or generalised views in this context (how discourse frames their world view) and especially, what challenges truthiness and hegemonic ideas (such as Palestinian authority, religion or resistance) all notions directly drawn from the participants ('counter or anti discourses'). On many occasions, there were a lot of divergent or individual discourses that made it difficult to generalise some ideas. The intersection between discourse, resistance and agency in this case might demonstrate that although from an ontological-outsider point of view, the scene is embedded in resistance practices, participants' discourses and agency which construct a different reality by emphasising other dynamics (pleasure and fun), and which criticise the inclusion of resistance as an on-going feature of Palestinian youth.

Importantly, relevant figures of the scene tend to share quite a lot of their opinions on social media. Social media gave insight especially in relation to the other (the West) and resistance. Many of the opinions shared related to calling on international decolonisation, solidarity or any type of related action or denounced some martyrdom by Israel. Hence, social media was used as a platform to share political views (as said, not by all), looking at the outside (shared in English, for instance). For instance, I performed discourse analysis on some relevant events, such as the escalation of violence in May 2021 and how the scene responded to those, as shown in chapter 5.

Finally, Foucauldian discourse analysis incorporates a critical historical perspective and hence explores the ways in which discourses have evolved and how these changes shape historical subjectivities. This is particularly important in relation with how generational changes on resistance, identity and leisure have permeated Palestinians through the Intifadas and the post-Oslo era (Massad, 2010; Maira, 2013; Junka-Aikio, 2016).

Analysis' reflections

To conclude this section, it is important to state how these tools of analysis are informed by my positionality (feminist and decolonial), the principles of participative, reflective and sensitive research that are developed in the next section. Before that, there are few issues that directly influence the process of analysis. First, the question of objectivity. As said, this research draws on feminist and poststructuralist epistemologies (see next section) which understand the production of knowledge as neither objective nor universal but mediated and constructed representations. Hence, the recognition that these research findings will be subjective, partial and specific (limited by the research questions and researcher's assumptions, the time of the fieldwork, the circumstances that I encountered, the methods employed, my positionality and identity, the openness of participants, quality of the data obtained) is what sets up research 'objectivity' (Harding, 1987:9). This partiality is due, not only because of the nature of knowledge and reproduction itself, but also because of the scene as also a partial, small and specific space within Palestinian youth and global dance scenes.

The notions of generative, processes, intensities, becoming rather than being that are linked to the concepts underpinning this research also relate to knowledge as something that opens rather than closes, that does not generalise but questions and problematises. Also, as a way to give account of the implications of my positionality, theoretical underpinnings and

assumptions, I give account of the shifts in the theoretical perspectives that I use and how they influenced the research differently as will be seen in depth in the subsequent chapters.

The question of representation in the analysis goes further than acknowledging the impossibility of theoretical neutrality and truth. It also chooses which voices to represent. In this realm, I want to balance the quality of the data with equally representing the voices of the participants in terms of gender and participation in the scene mainly (not only focusing on the artists/DJs voices is fundamental).

Having said this, a reflection about the standpoint and ways to pursue these questions and objectives will be developed next. I will come back to the ideas of discomfort and illegitimacy to draw a methodology that acknowledges and deals with these tensions, transforming them into potentialities. For this, I depart from understanding this research and the methodology that accompanies it as a feminist and decolonial practice, *becoming* decolonial feminist ethnographer rather than *being* one that acknowledges the constant process of learning and deconstructing one-self. As such, the principles (participatory, reflective, embodied, sensual) informing fieldwork will be embedded within these epistemologies.

3. Positionality and ethics

Having explained the methods, the chapter finally introduces the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of the above explained tools. To do so, a reflection on feminist and decolonial methodologies is developed to justify and set up the principles informing the research, already named (participation, sensitivity, embodiment, reflectivity). After this, I develop how I locate myself within the scholarly tradition of Palestinian studies in relation to culture, power and resistance. Finally, I move to the ethical challenges this research encountered.

My positionality is linked to a series or privilege and structures that align with the stereotypical Western researcher: white, middle-class, educated in different countries, young and woman-cis identifying. To this it has to be added my political commitment with international solidarity and social justice, jointly with an active participation in DIY and feminist collectives both in Bristol and Valencia. This constructs a position traversed by acknowledgments of whiteness and privileges and a will to transform and deconstruct these.

3.1. How did I get to know? Feminist and decolonial methodologies

Feminist and postcolonial scholarship has been concerned with how knowledge is produced and by who, emphasising that research is not the mere 'discovery' of knowledge as if it was a neutral and objective process. Indeed, 'fieldwork is always contextual, relational, embodied, and politicized' (Sultana, 2007:374). Hence, there is an emphasis on 1) pointing out the existence of non-objective/universal academic discourses which can be partial and subjective and 2) building a methodology that challenges and more importantly, builds upon new political subjectivities and participatory academic practices. These principles inform this project as it draws from the feminist debates around epistemology and methodology that emerged during the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, many feminist scholars have discussed the ways knowledge is produced and have problematised issues of positionality and representation in research (see for instance, hooks, 1981; Anzaldua, 1987; Haraway, 1988; Spivak, 1988; Mohanty, 1991; Nast, 1994; Katz, 1994; Kobayashi, 1994; Nagar, 2002; Raju, 2002; Nayak, 2006; Sultana, 2007, Hemmings, 2012; Lobb, 2022). These methodologies are an intervention into particular (masculine) hegemonic discourses of 'objectivity', 'scientific method' and 'universalism' that permeate social sciences, focusing on other voices, experiences and fostering different ways of knowing.

As such, a decolonial methodology approaches 'Palestine' as a reality embedded in settler-colonialism and apartheid fostered by Western geopolitical powers and knowledge. A decolonial perspective does the same but crucially seeks to constitute a useful and empowering tool for those who participate in the research, and not as an imposing act. In this sense, as my understanding of social phenomena comes in terms of domination, hegemony, multiple resistance and human rights, I clearly position myself in solidarity and defence of Palestinians and against the ongoing Israeli occupation.

However, the term decolonial has also proved to be problematic. Describing or positioning all research as decolonising just because it engages with anti-colonial and anti-racist critique does not equate to a decolonising impact per se (Tuck & Yang 2012). After fieldwork and my experience in Palestine, I am very much reluctant to use these categories as performative speech acts (Ahmed, 2004) that show good intentions and solidarity, but do not necessarily entail a transformative framework of decolonisation. I am committed with the critique of the over-use of these terms within research as if they magically solve our relations of power and privilege. I could not escape them during fieldwork however, and even though I really tried to

negotiate and mitigate these, the structures that underpin and surround this project make it very difficult for an individual to engage in decolonial research beyond the performativity of saying it. The truth is, and this is a matter for the future, that the relationships and bridges built through this project can lead to other realms where more decolonial struggles and committment might happen. Hence, I prefer not to overuse the notion of decolonisation.

Feelings of discomfort and illegitimacy alone might lead one to simply withdraw from any research that has to deal with cultural difference, power imbalances and coloniality. There is still potential for transformation and impact if such types of research continue to be carried out, as 'fieldwork can be productive and liberating, as long as researchers keep in mind the critiques and undertake research that is more politically engaged, materially grounded, and institutionally sensitive' (Nagar, 2002 in Sultana, 2007:375). The 'transformation' and impact I am referring to are, in very general terms, cooperating towards international solidarity and awareness of the Palestinian reality, alongside recognition of their dance scene and fostering participation among scenes. As will be seen, this research discusses these epistemological questions as part of the discussion, balancing in between theory and auto-ethnography to articulate an affective and anti-research defence that sees the importance of knowing when research is not needed or contributing, and how affective dissonance and difference between people are indeed generative (Hemmings, 2012; Lobb, 2022)

In addition to this, when writing about popular music, dancing and creativity, the scholarly approaches encounter particular problems: traditionally, 'scholarly attitudes to studying those cultures and traditions of indigenous peoples destroyed by colonialism or under threat from globalisation have been quite different to scholarly attitudes applied to forms of 'popular culture' in contemporary Western societies. The former tends to position its subjects as essentially passive receivers of cultural knowledge and sensibilities (Ingold & Kurttila, 2000), the latter as free-thinking creative appropriators of material culture' (Driver & Bennet, 2014:104). This is something that preoccupied me very much and continues to do so.

Even though, this dichotomy has been relativised within later developments of Palestinian studies as the literature review showed (see Stein & Swedenburg, 2005; Junka-Aikio, 2016), there are some views and media representations that still reproduce the dichotomy of victimhood/passivity versus free will/entrepreneurism. In addition, there are some voices among the artists themselves and scholars (El Zein, 2016) that also criticise the over-romanticising analysis of their scene as liberating and resistant while their members comprise

a reduced elite and neoliberal consumerism. The task of a decolonial feminist methodology preoccupied with not falling into any of these two categories is precisely to escape from a reductive view of, in this case, Palestinian's agency and creativity and instead critically acknowledging their economical and geopolitical limitations. As such, the aim of exploring the scene and the meanings of resistance and belonging directly interpellates and seeks to examine these tensions. If understandings over what does resisting, belonging or pleasure mean in this context are contested and contradictory between scholars, members of the scene and between the whole society, this project intends to deeply explore what these tensions are and what they do involve in a broader sense.

3.2. Palestinian ethnographic encounters

The last three decades which have focused on Palestine, have been referred to as the 'anthropological rise on Palestine' (Asthan, 2021) or 'the ethnographic arrival of Palestine' (Furani & Rabinowitz, 2010). This has been coupled with, in the last few years, a rising music media interest on the Palestinian music scene and DJs. Many ethnographic accounts have sought to demystify its peoples and investigate the rise of pluralistic perspectives and the humanisation of 'those otherwise marginalized and demonized, giving them a voice and bringing their life experiences to others' (Peteet, 2005:x). The Palestinian ethnographic space brings some general problematics and tensions, some of them already outlined such as 'the crisis of representation' of the subjects under study which is common to many disciplines and the ethics of researching in a 'still colonial' region. There are also very specific problematics, due to the nature of the Israel/Palestine occupation, the cynicism and disappointing agenda of international and humanitarian aid (Allen, 2008) and the rigid nationalist and resistance frameworks (Swedenburg, 1989; Peteet, 2005; Stein & Swedenburg, 2005; Tawil-Souri, 2011; Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2013; El-Ghadban & Strohm, 2013; El Zein, 2016) that permeate narratives of Palestinian identity, resistance and daily life. As has been developed in the literature, the nationalist frameworks focusing on the Palestinian struggle, the conflict, Israel apartheid policies have methodologically 'limited' the study of culture by discussing its ability to mobilise or to reflect opposition (Stein & Swedenburg, 2005:6), leaving it as being a rather epiphenomenal effect of politics. This is precisely why I include in the analysis, the question of power (not as monolithic or top-down), inspired by Foucault (1978, 1980, 1982, 1985), Gramsci (1971) and Hall (1981, 1986, 1992) in this sense, as fundamental for understanding cultural practices in this context: to rethink the nature of the relationship

between culture and the political, and to explore culture (the scene) as something constitutive (nor just a side 'effect' or necessarily resistive) and deeply political, always in articulation with different and broader processes.

Many ethnographic accounts have narrated the hazard, psychological and ethical challenges (crossing checkpoints and borders, loss of close friends, riots, etc.) they have encountered while doing research in Palestine (Swedenburg, 1989; Long, 2006; Kelly, 2008; Prasad, 2014a, Prasad, 2014b). Among the numerous interstices that can be enumerated, some of them have little familiarity with the context, the language or the culture at the beginning, the psychological effects of being in the field (distress, illegitimacy, sensibility, getting close to people and then leaving), the dangers of being in a conflict zone (checkpoints, raids, detentions, demonstrations, unforeseen violence), but also the enriching, welcoming and empowering people and culture they have had the privilege to meet and collaborate with. I definitely recall these events in my fieldwork, as it was an intense period due to the context surrounding me and where I felt somehow safe and accompanied, at the same time feeling troubled and frustrated. Much of my research experience was traversed by the impotency of not being able to do absolutely anything on the ground. Even going to protests and joining daily *sumūd* activities (such as accompanying children to school) for a long time felt very disheartening.

Another dynamic that contrasted with the view of the researcher as 'someone who will record and circulate their stories to a broader audience and whose boundaries of belonging and acceptance are expansive' in Palestine (Peteet, 2005:xi) is that I encountered reluctance and sometimes direct apathy in relation to 'my research', distancing from the idea that I was useful in circulating their stories or fostering a plural image on Palestinian everyday life.

Many researchers before me have encountered similar tensions and contradictions. They will be always there, our task therefore is to counterbalance and address the colonial legacies we embody. As I said before having cited the work of Buckland (2002) and Garcia (2011) through providing refuge, these narratives about doing research in Palestine helped in providing also comfort and refuge too.

3.3. Ethics

There were many ethical considerations and potential hazards that I needed to consider beforehand. That said, it was not until the fieldwork started that I was really able to engage in

the practical ethical dimension of my doing. This shows the short-sighted design of my ethics plan that required a detailed account of the potential risks and a very corseted way of doing research that does not reflect the real dynamics on the ground. Informed consent guided both interviews (asked at the beginning of the recording) and conversations with all the participants knowing what my aim was and how I was going to use the data.

The main ethical reflection that has been surfacing in this chapter is related to positionality and building an ethically sensible methodology. In this sense, Nast (1994:60) warns against idealising our possibilities and methods to create and work out perfectly non-hierarchical relationships. There is not a magical methodology that resolves privilege and extractivism completely. The context I immersed myself in proved to be very aware of these dynamics, and as I explained, many participants were reluctant to participate fully in the research. However, as Robinson notes in *Hungry Listening* (2020), our listening positionality involves a 'self-reflective questioning of how race, class, gender, sexuality, ability and cultural background intersect and influence the way we are able to hear sound, music, and the world around us' (2020:10). This is further incorporated in chapter 3 and the experience of *listening* on the dance floor.

Hence, one of the few transformative outcomes of this thesis is what I do with future involvement and positionality in research, how do I incorporate this 'self-reflective questioning' (Robinson, 2020:10), which has radically changed the way I relate to my own work. While chapters 4 & 5 explore the research questions, chapter 6 discusses more in depth the epistemological effects of this research aiming to contribute to some change in academia. Besides my writings, during my months there, I joined solidarity campaigns and weekly protests, where I learned and contributed beyond my Ramallah bubble in numerous senses. Travelling to Masafer Yatta, a 12-village rural area that is facing demolition to become an Israeli firing zone or joining the Friday protests in Beit Jala, expanded the realities I interacted in and, even though I hardly contributed to 'any change', at least I did not act as just a mere observer of my surroundings. This type of participation, also, did not came without problems because even activism and international solidarity was seen with suspicion by some people (mostly participants from the scene).

This experience is not something new or particular to my case. Research participants often 'felt a sense of being used and then discarded once the research was over' (Van Den Berg, 2019:2), illustrating how informants are often treated passively and subjected to research

processes. Entering into the field and staying there also becomes an imposing political act (Nast, 1994:58) that needs to be acknowledged and carefully balanced with participants. The capacity of selecting an area of study, coming from another country and then leaving when the data is collected reveals another power position. As Katz (1994:68) notes, displacement 'imposes me/the fieldworker on the time-space of others', an imposition that is particularly noticeable where the researcher holds more power than the researched. For instance, some artists from Ramallah have reported in interviews, in El Zein's doctoral dissertation (2016), for example, about the interest Ramallah's nightlife gathers and how it felt:

> 'I remember this period of like one month when maybe ten or fifteen broadcasts came out, and they all did the same report on the same theme, and that was: "Nightlife in Ramallah." The first and the second one, we were pleased, whatever. But then we started to feel like something wrong was happening. [It's like people were surprised that], even though there's an Occupation, people are still living. What does this mean, people are still living? Like, what are we supposed to do, die? And then all of a sudden we stopped hearing from these journalists. [And we were like,] what was that, you finished? Everything is fine because people go out at night? Look: it's our right to go out. And, we want to go out. And we still have problems. It doesn't mean that everything is ok, that people are living normally' Sami Said (El Zein, 2016:200).

Moving on, it is necessary to be aware that the context of occupation makes all types of research in Palestine more likely to touch upon, or end up linked to sensitive issues (politics, family activities, involvement in activism). Therefore, the context implies a series of psychological and ethical challenges for the researcher, especially for an unexperienced one (crossing checkpoints and borders, possible riots or violence, language barrier, etc.) that I myself had to undergo. Especially when dealing with Israeli soldiers, which generated a lot of anxiety and unease.

Another important reflection that links with the idea of how separated sometimes ethical guidelines are with reality is that participants are not always what is classified as a 'vulnerable profile' in research (according to the definitions provided by the UoW Ethics Committee). In this context, they hold a relatively stable cultural and economic position that translates into empowered and assertive positions. Obviously, this does not erase the potential for harm, distress or objectification, but it is important to recognise that the participants in this research all embodied a confident and conscious self-image, reinforced by their

knowledge of the English language, international education and experiences abroad jointly with the proudness of being Palestinian. Hence, when assuming that participants need to be 'protected' from harm that might arise from the encounters, this can derive in an often 'paternalistic, distrustful and ethnocentric' approach (Kohn & Shore, 2017; Connor et al., 2017). Some scholars have started to criticise dominant and standardised approaches to research ethics as they are frequently structured around an overgeneralising, unreconstructed and patronising view of research relationships (Thapar-Björkert & Henry, 2004). In this sort of 'delicate' and 'complex' settings as these Ethics boards refer to places such as Palestine, distinct psychological and physical challenges (sudden violence, going through checkpoints, cultural difference, language barrier) can emerge.

The processes that fundamentally focus on the dangers to participants, instead of questioning the paradigm of powerful researcher versus powerless participant, risk the infantilisation of the research subject (Thapar-Björkert & Henry, 2004; Fujii, 2012; Kohn and Shore, 2017). In order to tackle this, this thesis has been made in collaboration with the participants that, in Foucauldian terms, are embedded as anyone else in multiple power relations, as well as autonomous and conscious of research processes. Hence, I approached participants with honesty, care and respect, stating beforehand (with previous informal conversations) the parameters of the interview and our research relationship, always listening and disclosing aims and progress (checking afterwards, sending and letting them read the transcript and add/change/remove that was part of the respondent validation and checking part of the ethical guidelines).

In brief, this type of research endorses many dimensions and makes us aware of numerous contradictory layers. In addition to this, safety measures, for the participants and myself during the fieldwork and afterwards, at places of encounter, travelling in and around Palestine, data protection and confidentiality were essential considerations.

4. Conclusions

To conclude this methods chapter, for any project located in the parameters of this research (Palestine, the 'Global South', an occupied territory), the first step towards reflecting one's position in the field is to acknowledge my whiteness and my already colonising perspective, mainly due to my European upbringing and education. Whiteness, understood 'as a structural advantage, standpoint, and set of historical and cultural practices', powerfully shapes research

in the global South (Faria & Mollet, 2016:81). Even if 'acknowledgment', as Ahmed points out (2004) should not be seen as a performative act that concludes the problematic. It should incorporate 'action', in conjunction with the assumption that some structural tensions cannot be erased, and importantly, not turning the methodology into a self-centred discussion. The use of decolonial theory and scholars, privileging participants' voices (without leaving aside the 'analytical' perspective), the learning and respect of the Palestinian culture and language and adopting a non-paternalising standpoint of people's agency and subjectivity are among these actions. Chapter 6 will interrogate whether these are sufficient. Additionally, to make whiteness visible and its dynamics of power in our own research, writing and reflecting about daily experiences, self-disclosing to participants and being sensitive with both participants and one-self are essential. In this sense, 'we can never *not* work with 'others' who are separate and different from ourselves; difference is an essential aspect of all social interactions that requires that we are always everywhere in between or negotiating the worlds of me and not-me' (Natz, 1994:57).

Summing up, this chapter has presented the methods used to answer the aims and research questions outlined in the introduction, and highlighted the epistemologies, positionalities and ethics that underpin this thesis. The principles of participation, sensitivity, reflectivity inform this research with the aim of developing a feminist decolonial thesis where participants collaborate and shape the project. In this sense, the study of electronic music dance scenes seeks to make visible the plurality of views and bodies that comprise dancefloors, to deepen the practices and particularities related to the Palestinian scene and explore, develop and challenge the notions of resistance and pleasure in this context. The next chapter will introduce the scene, its beginnings, the typical night out and my own attunement to the city of Ramallah.

Chapter 3 – Attuning to Ramallah: nights out, beginnings and suspensions

It is my first night in Ramallah, I just moved to the city after some days travelling around Palestine. And it is my first time in Beit Aneesh (Radio), a very frequented bar by the people from the scene (see figure 2). I felt as if I was in a movie, in a scenario I have watched so many times before. It is the place of the famous Boiler Room set[15] (June 2018) and I have been listening and reading about it for quite a long time. It feels familiar. Its terrace, with the limestone construction and a few separated tables provoke in me a *Mediterranean* feeling, a certain sense of shared architecture with Spain probably fosters this aesthetic familiarity. It is a chilly night, people are talking, there is no music playing. Not even from the radio. These are silent, cautious, mourning times, since only one day ago Israeli's 'occupation' forces killed the beloved Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. People's mood is chatty, but not festive.

Here is where I finally meet Yara. We bumped into each other on the terrace, outside. I felt the same energy as the first time we spoke over the phone, almost 3 years ago. We hugged as if we were long-time friends, but it is the first time we had met in person. She started talking about the scene immediately, giving me a sharp and critical context, something I hadn't heard from anyone else yet. As in the first interview, listening to her left me mind blown and very moved. So much information and things to process in just a few minutes. I look at my friend, Lola, more unaware of the Palestinian scene, she's completely absorbed into Yara's words. What she says and the way she says it is intense, somehow hypnotic: her body movements are totally calm and slow, she does not spend extra energy emphasising or embodying what she is saying. However, what she is talking about is far from a calm topic: the scene, the slow down, the tensions that have surrounded it during the last few months. She does this slow blink with her eyes that I will never become used to, a blink that gave her an aura of an old movie star. While we were rolling one cigarette after another sitting on the terrace (I don't smoke but the adrenaline of the moment made me do so), the conversation unfolded towards other directions.

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[15] Sama Abdulhadi's Boiler Room set (with 11M views):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9VYKrtziSg&t=1s There are more videos from that party made by other artists: Muqata'a, Dakn, Al Nather, Makimakkuk. I find it especially beautiful how this set catches the sunset and the changing light, one of the most beautiful Boiler Room set ups I have seen.

We decided to go to the bar inside to get some more drinks. She opened the cash register to get us some tickets to pay for the beers as she was a member of staff. She is a known figure in the local scene. "I am in good hands", I thought. As the hours passed (it was still quite early, I think they closed at 2), we became increasingly drunk. She introduced me to some people. Everyone knows each other, and the atmosphere felt as if it was a big, unique conversation, bodies that move around organically, jumping from sofa to chair into people's conversations, saying hello to whoever has just passed by in front of you.

It is time to leave. Lola and I take a taxi home. I live very close to several governmental ministries, the headquarters of the PA and just behind Arafat Mausoleum[16]. It is a highly guarded area, with security (armed with M-16s) men patrolling from time to time in my street. As we arrive, we realised we had left our keys inside. We decide to jump the wall, as the indoor door to the house was probably open. But we are seen by some of the guards who approached and shouted in English, "what are you doing?" "Is this your house?". We explained what had happened and nothing much followed. They let us climb into the house. I can see how it looks from outside: two unknown white internationals, not from the neighbourhood, trying to climb a private house and enter, just a few meters from government buildings, after a night out downtown. It definitely was an interesting image for them, and for us.

Figure 2. Beit Aneesh (Radio)

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[16] This is where the Palestinian leader shielded during 41 months before his death in 2004.

This initial anecdote of my first night out in Ramallah contains a series of elements that are going to be used to structure the following chapter: the night out, the city, politics, violence and martyrdom. First, I am going to develop Ramallah's nights out, the DIY parties outside of the city and Ramallah's characteristics, a place where government, alternative nightlife, elites, internationals and refugee camps *convive* in a reduced space of kilometres. The city where most of participants live or have lived, and where most of my research was based. Getting to know Ramallah, attuning myself to it, into the affective and intense landscape of tense convivialities[17] helps to get to know the scene and to understand the close context that has witnessed the scene's emergence.

This part, without focusing specifically on any of the research questions, presents a 'map' and an 'atmosphere' to the reader that will help navigate the rest of the chapters. Later on, the scene's origins and current 'suspended' moment will close the chapter to give way to the analysis. The nightlife I experienced has changed quite a lot in the last few years according to its participants, from the active initial years to the suspended and decimated last ones. Hence, this also serves as a transitional chapter, that links the underground celebratory beginnings (2006-2019) with the later tensions and slowdowns (2020-2022), including the impact of Covid-19.

1. Mapping the scene: 'nights out' and 'parties'

1.1. Walking the city: nights out

In this section, a descriptive account and a differentiation between regular nights out and partying will be developed. Much of the people met and socialised through nights out, especially in the last couple of years with fewer parties. 'Nights out', the first archetype, refers to the more regular, every day, mundane encounters and nights that happen in Ramallah almost daily. These, because of their everyday nature, are the membrane of the scene, the coverage that holds the collective aspect together.

There are three distinct characteristics of nights out: they take place in Ramallah (so these have to be read as typically from this city), they happen in a reduced set of venues (bars most

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[17] This has been explained in the literature review. The notion, loosely inspired by Puar's (2009) development of affective conviviality, argues for the material coexistence of supposedly (excluding) binaries in hegemonic and non-hegemonic moves. These 'contradictions' show co-existence in an agonistic terrain of tensions and contact. For instance, the conviviality of pleasure through non-normative (disruptive) leisure and *sumūd* among youth.

of the time, the odd cultural centre) and occur indifferently any day of the week, but the more common night out is Thursdays because Friday is a religious day-off and therefore, people do not work.

The two main bars are Garage and Radio, and to a lesser extent, Shams. Garage and Radio were a 5-minute walk from each other. While Garage had clientele during the whole day, Radio was more oriented for the evening-night. In this sense, you could find people having lunch, working or taking coffee in Garage the whole day until it closed, around midnight. Usually, Garage was busier than Radio, whereas on a Thursday night they were both typically quite full. Both bars shared almost the same crowd, which I call 'the people from the scene', not only in relation to music, but also young creatives, artists, journalists and internationals alike. Being these the few spaces to socialise, drink alcohol, listen to music and behave 'freely' and feel safer, they are an 'institution' within Ramallah's alternative nightlife, and a strong hub of socialisation for young (and not that young) alternative people.

Radio (or Aneesha as it also called) is the bar from my first anecdote, the venue that sometimes turned into a 'party' or 'concert' during the first years of the scene. It is the first bar that hosted alternative electronic music parties and a central place for the development of the movement, where the 2018 Boiler Room took place. Almost every DJ and rapper has performed at Radio. Now, it does not host any party, as in the past they had many issues with the police and their neighbours. However, now Radio accommodates 'Jukebox Tuesdays' a sort of 'listening to-night' where people (usually related to the scene, but not always 'known' DJs, also amateur or friends) go and play some tunes with a computer/controller. These nights sometimes get very animated, and people dance, showing the eagerness for partying, and the fun that implies having a friend playing music for everyone. It is also a good opportunity for emerging DJs to showcase their playlists and music taste in front of an audience. They are not intentionally parties, and the venue does not have a specific or demarcated dance floor, but every time I went to a Jukebox night, it ended up so bouncy and vibrant: everyone dancing in front of the bar (the place where the DJs stand), in a very energetic fan moment. Belonging, friendship, safety and fun were the tonic of these spontaneous dance floors.

In general, a typical night out starts in Garage with drinks and then continues in Radio. Due to the proximity, it is common to shift between the two, looking for the best atmosphere and crowd. After some drinks, and when Radio closes (around 1-2 am), people head home or to

someone's house in a kind of 'after-night out' where they chill, talk and drink a little bit more. Indeed, almost every night that I went out in Ramallah ended at someone's home for some more drinks. Hence, these nights out finish around 3-4 am or even later. Definitely, one of the most interesting characteristics was the spontaneity with which one would go out and have a few drinks on a Tuesday, even until quite late, having to work the next day. Bar culture, as I will insist later again, endorsed a relevant role in leisure for most of the people I met, a way of socialising, seeing friends and keeping the *wasta* capital dynamics (Robinson, 2013) flowing (who knows who, what is happening or what is the main gossip). Indeed, on many of the regular nights I attended Radio or Garage the dance music was not the central feature. The regular night coalesces around drinking and talking, perhaps there is some music in the background or events like Jukebox Tuesdays.

As happens with many other small cities that concentrate on very distinct districts in one small space, I had to pass through very different areas when going from my home to Radio or Garage (see Figure 3). I would leave my house in Al Bireh, the twin city of Ramallah, which is where, as I said, all the governmental premises are based. These two twin cities are separated by a road that goes further north and south, connecting the city with Al Quds in the South-West and Nablus/Jenin in the North.
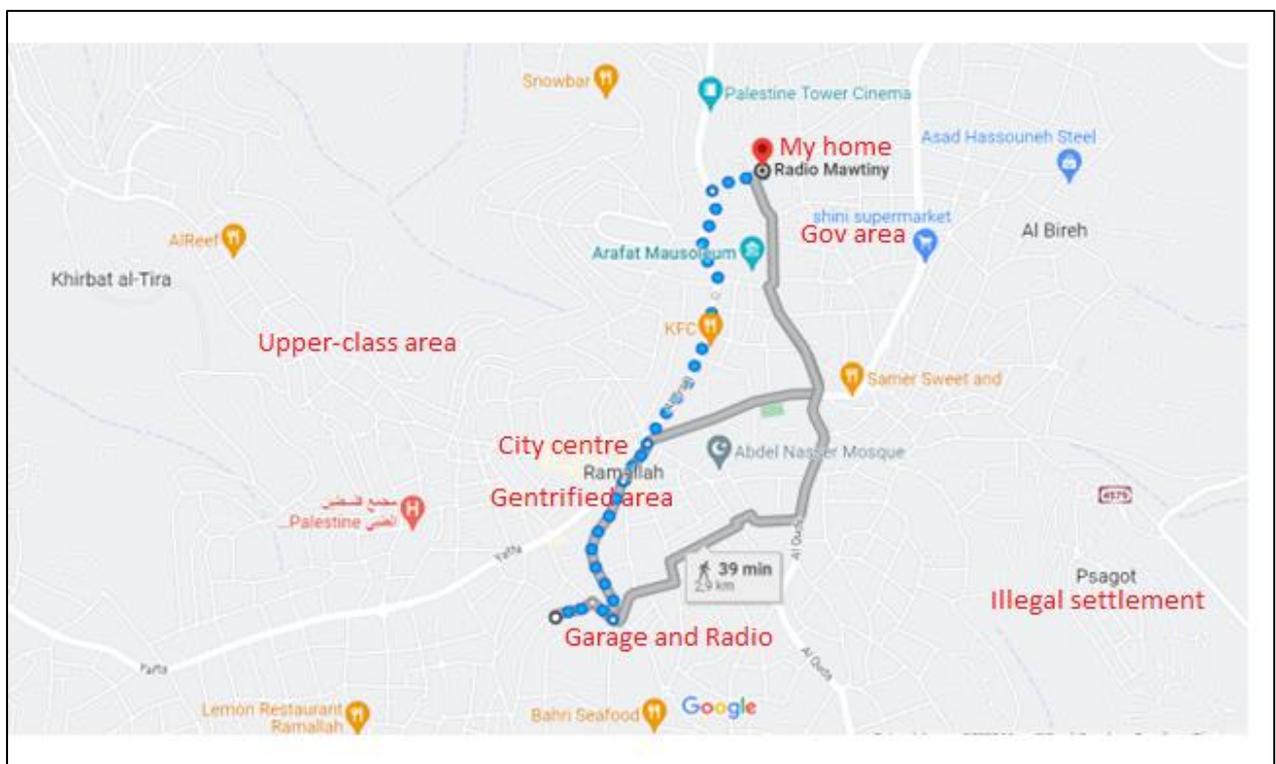
Figure 3. Map of Ramallah/Al Bireh.

On an average night out, I would walk down the road, after leaving my home in the 'political district' in Al-Bireh, and pass by the monumental Arafat Mausoleum where there would be lots of cars driving around. I would cross the epicentre of the town with its busy traffic and street vendors to enter Ramallah-Tahta, one of the gentrified neighbourhoods with nice cafes and restaurants. A bit further down, there you can find Radio and Garage bar, which are also close to a refugee camp. In a 30-minute walk (see Figure 3 for the route) one traverses many different and opposing spaces that convive in this relatively 'new' city: the political district; the alternative circuit, almost secluded from the public view; the gentrifying cafes; the old and new restaurants of the city centre; the informal street markets, characteristic of other Palestinian cities, multiple mosques, and a few cultural centres (like Khalil Sakakini and the French-German centre) or museums (like the Arafat Mausoleum or Dar Zahran Heritage Centre). Close to this there is also an Israeli illegal settlement, Psagot (see in Figure 3). The maps of leisure in any city, especially when leisure needs to take more underground and unseen forms as means to exist without disruptions, and particularly in Ramallah, show clearly the different structures and social dynamics that traverse Palestinian life.

1.2. Driving to somewhere: DIY parties

Differently, the parties I attended took place in various locations around Palestine (inside and outside '67). As a practical consequence, I went in my friends' car to all these parties, sometimes crossing borders and sometimes close to home. A general scheme of the diverse parties is presented below, which will show the plurality of 'party types' in terms of location and venue. They are different from nights out since they are more planned, with a DJ line-up and a specific location that it is either booked for the occasion (DIY parties), or in a regular club (Club parties). All the DIY parties have occurred in places that are not party venues *per se* but were rented purposely for the occasion (a swimming pool, a camp site in the mountains and two cultural centres).

DIY Parties	Club parties
Pool party at 'Charlie's' Saturday 04.06.2022 Location: Birzeit (north Ramallah) Venue: Christian-owned restaurant with a swimming pool Music: afrobeat, dub techno, drum&bass, 'arabic' techno From 16h to 00h Cost 100 NIS (£24)	**Kabareet** Thursday 09.06.22 Location: Haifa Venue: two-dance floor small club with terrace Music: rap, dancehall, breaks[18] From 22h to 03h Cost 30 NIS (£7)
Sensation Friday-Saturday 10/11.06.22 Location: Me'lya, North '48 Venue: camping area in the mountains Music: psytrance, afrobeat, drum&bass, tech-house, hard techno[19]. From 14h to 00h Cost 80 NIS (£20)	**Kabareet** Friday 17.06.22 Location: Haifa Venue: two-dance floor small club with terrace Music: melodic techno, afrobeat, breaks From 18h to 04h Cost 80 NIS (£20)
(Un)building listenings Thursday 23.06.22 Location: Dar Jacir & The Citadel, Bayt Lahm (Bethlehem) Venue: two cultural centres Music: experimental[20], dub, techno, trap Cost free	

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[18] Al Finik set, one of the DJs of the night:
https://soundcloud.com/ali-asfour-207796244/al-finik-002

[19] Ya Hu set of Saturday night mixing Arabic, d&b and hard techno:
https://soundcloud.com/yasminhul/miilya

[20] One of the songs that was played that evening, experimental and dub infused production by Sama Abu Hamdieh: https://soundcloud.com/user-15849538/vcolvdbhtfvc

The main difference between both types of party is that 'club parties', in regular dedicated venues, do not happen in '67 Palestine (West Bank) at the moment. As said already and explored later, there are no regular venues/clubs for this in Ramallah, so places are booked for the accasion, and a DIY party is held only for one day. This results in people from Ramallah going to play or party in Haifa, more specifically Kabareet, as it is right now the only Palestinian regular venue in both territories.

In parties and nights out, the issue of security is important and therefore, door policies apply. These parties, apart from inaccessible to many economically, are exclusive in terms of awareness, sexuality, behaviour and cultural capital to those who share these. People (mostly men) will get refused at the door (not always) or will not receive the required invitation to access. In a city where everyone knows everyone, the scene closes itself to the unknown single male in order to prevent conflict, so say its participants. Garage and Shams do not have a door policy and operate as regular bars/restaurants, so everyone can come in and they are proud of that. Radio does have a bouncer during the night that prevents not familiar single males or groups of males from entering. Parties operate in a similar way or are even more low key, without online publicity and through private invitation and always with someone at the door checking who is coming in. This is due to the possibility of receiving some hostility or incident from outside the party. In almost every party I went to, both DIY or Club, some kind of interruption, attack or harassment occurred. From neighbours complaining about the noise and having to shut it down (Unbuilding listenings), to young men coming with knives and stones trying to enter the party violently (Sensation), or being pepper sprayed at the terrace in Kabareet by someone from outside (17.06.22). Also, some events directly were shut down by the police, for example, a rap concert with Makimakkuk, Haykal and Julmud in Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre in Ramallah, due to the number of noise complaints received (at 7pm) or at a Bashar Suleiman concert, a queer artist from Al Quds that had to close due to the violent attacks on the venue before starting (in Al-Mustaw3da, Ramallah). In general, these attacks were not received by surprise. Even though they were annoying, triggering and disturbing for the participants, they were used to people, usually young men (Israeli or Palestinian depending on the venue/place) causing some sort of nuisance. The reasons were usually, in broad terms, not being let into the party or opposing the party ethos and practices. However, the rising violence as the one in Al Mustaw3da (addressed in chapter 5) and the increasing number of attacks in the last years have influenced the trauma and demotivation for going out.

In the city, the scene is the result of a diverse range of dynamics and motivations, ranging from collective and individual reasons, that are definitely entangled in socio economic changes and external influences: 'foundational to this scene is that time and money for leisure increased for some Palestinians after the country adopted neoliberal policies. It is therefore necessary to locate raves within these emergent capitalist relations and shifting aesthetic practices' (Withers, 2021:7). The scene is, also, tied to consumption, social/subcultural (*wasta*) capital (knowing each other, endorsing certain values and aesthetics) and music production (hardware, sound systems, any sort of equipment to produce). All these are linked to recent neoliberal development in the region and the class position that participants hold in general. Although this network of economic and social relations is highly restricted, controlled and dependent on Israeli and foreign capital, it has generated a change in consumption habits, leisure and (entrepreneurial) perceptions of the self that do permeate the scene.

1.3. Ramallah 'bubble'

Ramallah has been framed as the paradigmatic space of the political disconnection between the people and the elites, youth and older generations, dispossession and neoliberal consumption (Taraki, 2008a, 2008b; Abourahme, 2009; Toukan, 2021). As seen with the previous map of leisure and convivial spaces (Figure 3), nightlife, class and religious relations contain some special features in Ramallah. Formally West Bank's political and cultural capital, it was not until the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the 1990s that it became the 'city' that is today (40,000 people in 2018). As Abourahme (2009) grasps: 'yet Ramallah is a city under siege—encamped and militarily surrounded. It exists in a curious liminality: tethered between indirect colonial occupation and the restless mobilization of local urbanity—neither directly occupied nor free, besieged but somehow vibrant' (2009:500).

In terms of religion, Ramallah has historically had a significant Christian population, even though today the majority are not Christian, nor the majority are native from Ramallah (Taraki, 2008a). Therefore, it is not a Palestinian 'historical' city, and it is not very big in population, which hinders more the feeling of it being a 'bubble' of isolated and fragile realities. Indeed, it is far from having a historic privileged and traditional class dominant in the affairs of the city as other families in Nablus or Khalil. Ramallah's privileged class comes from the political establishment and the neoliberal development that the Oslo Accords

brought in the 1990s, with an emerging private sector invested mainly by expatriate Palestinian capital (Hilal, 2015:355). Another type of elite within the privileged class of Ramallah is the 'humanitarian aid' sector, also a product of Oslo as seen in the literature, whose cultural investments and role in the city have been faced by critics and even opposition from the scene. As it happens with hip hop artists (El Zein, 2016:202), the scene represents this change of paradigm towards aid and foreign intervention, having a strong critique towards NGOs and humanitarian aid in general, which translates also in a suspicious and distant relationship with international working in NGOs. However, Palestinian artists depend on them and their initiatives for showcasing their work and resources. An example of this is Radio Atheer, a radio station in Ramallah funded by the Goethe Institute where a lot of rappers and musicians collaborate.

In Ramallah, the neoliberalisation of the post-Oslo years and the relatively comfortable standard of living have brought forward new patters of consumption (Taraki, 2008a:16-17). New public spaces were created to suit residents' aspirations of nightlife and leisure: 'internet cafés sprang up, new hotels and restaurants were established, several swimming pools were opened, a number of upscale and more modest fitness centres were set up, and even a disco was allowed to operate' (Taraki, 2008b:71). This shows, as Taraki demonstrates, the 'protection' and investment that the administration brought to new lifestyles (2008b:71). During my fieldwork there, I was able to discuss many times with different people (related and unrelated to the scene) about how the municipality focused on building unaffordable housing, supported the creation of chains and restaurants and attracted international investment through these practices. Even though the alternative bars are not run by only profit-seeking entrepreneurs and share similar values with their clientele, the typical night out presented before can be part of this growing alternative nightlife that allows young people to drink alcohol and socialise out of the traditional public leisure circuit. Importantly, the inclination towards this type of leisure from a reduced segment of society makes class inequality visible and finds its particular characteristics in the 'Ramallah bubble' (Taraki, 2008a, 2008b), the 'physical manifestation of the singularity of 'post-colonial colonialism' (Abourahme, 2009:500). The majority of the population does not participate in this leisure and cannot access it either due to prices or social dynamics of belonging and exclusion. Prices are very elevated in Ramallah, one 33cl beer costs between £3,5-5 in these bars, for instance. The same happens with party tickets, which cost between £10-25 per party. This

generates a circuit that moves between exclusion and safety, elitism and DIY organising, openness within the inside and closeness with the outside.

Locating the centrality of Ramallah links back to the literature and the recent changes in the region. By zooming into the city where the scene started, the political and social dynamics of the post-Oslo era can be found and disentangled, affecting the scene in different ways. Whereas DIY spaces and alternative parties in other places are an answer to capitalist and neoliberal co-optations of leisure, here the relationship is more ambiguous, being neoliberal development and resources facilitators in terms of individual (people with money or cultural capital), and collective (emergence of plural nightlife) possibilities. This does not entail that neoliberalism is what allows the scene to emerge, it has rather paved the way to create an elite which many participants are linked to. Until now, a specific focus on neoliberalisation, disconnection and exclusivity have been framed, influencing the development of the scene and how it is perceived by society. As said, the structure of the city in terms of venues and the recent rising tensions mean that fewer parties are held in Ramallah or the West Bank in general.

This chapter demonstrates how geography and the distribution of spaces, infrastructure and venues, are determinant in many ways on how music and artists are able to move, consolidate and expand the scene. In chapter 4, a more detailed account of how these separation and mobility between spaces (and parties) happen will be developed. In this *conviviality* of spaces and agonistic realities, the material consequences of blockade and limitation of movement that impede the expansion of the scene in the Palestinian territories do coincide with the flows of exchange, distribution and virtuality that have been accelerated by the pandemic. These parties are disseminated around all historic Palestine, entailing complex dynamics of mobility due to the control, the permits and restrictions (chapter 4). This is a map traversed by land confiscation, illegal settlements, borders, restrictions, urban development and different regulations depending on the 'area' and its administrative status (A, B, C)[21]. This makes the 'geographical space' scattered, complicated and crucially, slow and time consuming to navigate, having many consequences. The first one is the isolation between cities and territories, and correspondingly, between Palestinians. The outbreak of Covid-19 in

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[21] In the Oslo accords, the following territorial administrative division was settled: Area A is administered by the Palestinian Authority, Area B is administered by the Palestinian Authority and Israel and Area C under Israel (being the majority of the territories and restricted or closed to Palestinians, although some living in Area C). Ramallah, for instance, is in area A.

March 2020 also deeply impacted the scene and has fostered its mobility and virtuality. In the last two years (2020-2022), due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2021, and rising internal tensions with society, the scene has suffered from a slowdown and activity suspension that it is still recovering from. The next section will explore how the scene emerged and developed, where it is now and how Covid-19, the suffocating Israeli violence and the persecution from certain conservative people have suspended its development. The scene has transformed from being a thriving, underground, relatively unknown scene in the rest of Palestine, to a well-known, pressured and reduced scene that hosts fewer parties with fewer participants.

2. Beginnings

Tracing back the origins of any scene is often complicated. Agreeing on a year, the first parties, venues, the first DJs or genres played is often difficult to pinpoint or has been altered by posterior events that obscure the details. Also, being able to disentangle all the processes that worked together and to determine their role in the emergence of a scene requires looking at music dynamics, economic development, creative culture, leisure, spaces, fashion, urban city planning and a myriad of factors. Often, they emerge from a confluence of different dynamics that coalesce in space and time: the first time someone listened to a track that fostered further exploration or the first time someone tried to organise a party at a bar are among these individualised aspects that initiate a music scene. These are underpinned by other processes that are engrained in society at large: local culture, leisure, economy, traditions, technology, music platforms (YouTube) and networks of distribution, to name a few. In the next section, adding to what has been exposed in the literature review, some of these 'original' processes are going to be outlined, focusing on concrete developments in terms of the first artists, venues and genres. In the previous chapters, popular culture and music are outlined as central spaces for Palestinian everyday life and identity, being influenced and mixed by diverse historical processes (Arabisation, occupation, Westernisation, Intifadas). These have been later coincided with a rise of neoliberal policies in the region that have broadened social inequality and also, brought new patters of consumption and leisure ('alternative nightlife') where participants are located.

Electronic and dance music have been growing among young Palestinians (aged between 18-35) in '67 (West Bank) and '48 Palestine (modern-day Israel) over the past fifteen years (starting between 2006-2008). The emergence, as already pointed out, was influenced by a

series of factors: the important presence of hip hop culture in the region that introduced concert culture, production skills and new sounds (El Zein, 2016; Swedenburg, 2013; Maira, 2013), the connection and mentoring between '48 and '67 Palestine, and the effect of other scenes and genres (SWANA and European) in a global and more local sense. Global because the rise and importance of techno and dance scenes around the world starting back in the 1990s have determined the formation of many other scenes through the influx and exchange of music genres, especially since the availability of the internet and streaming platforms. Local because of the material experience of Palestinian people within those scenes that later brought this output to their region. There are many individuals and artists, especially from the first generations, that learnt and studied these sounds abroad (mainly in Egypt and Lebanon, and also outside the region, in Europe) and later disseminated and shared their knowledge with their peers. There are also artists that have learnt in a DIY way, at home, in workshops or taught by others, and continue to do so. Hence, the availability of equipment such as controllers (devices for DJ mixing), brought from outside, are key to allowing this autonomous learning and DJing. Nowadays, since 2021, there is a music production course which is completely free and organised by Nicolas Jaar in Bayt Lahm where Palestinians can attend a 3-month training and learn music theory and production skills, entailing a completely new programme of learning within Palestine.

In this sense, technology and travelling, studying abroad and being others' influence, are central aspects of the emergence in a region where endogenous and autonomous development of electronic music skills has proved difficult. In addition, the presence of rap among many young people in Palestine paved the way to start an exploration of genres and sounds due to its shared hardware for producing music and similar taste for electronic music. Moreover, as El Zein (2016) points out, after a few quiet years during and after the Intifadas, 'concert culture' existed –although limited– and established ground for artists to offer gigs, live performances and ultimately, throw electronic music events and parties.

As the account from the nights out shows, bar culture has turned out to be a central characteristic for youth in Ramallah and spending leisure time in cafes is a common feature of Arab cultures (Hilel, 2019), now intersecting with Ramallah's recent neoliberal development. This also works as a previous infrastructure, jointly with a culture of celebration (weddings) and dance (*dabke*), setting an eagerness for socialising in public spaces around drinking, chatting and if possible, dancing. Before this underground and

experimental music culture started to grow, leisure and concerts existed, but it was not common to 'party outside of religious holidays' (Faber, 2018a), shaping the materialisation of many leisure practices. The owners of Radio (one of the main venues in Ramallah) confirms this idea: 'before 2008, concert culture was limited [...] they used to happen in a dull [*ghabi*] way. [...] There were no drinks, you couldn't smoke, there was no interaction. [Concerts] used to be like this: in a proper, official, cultural venue; or in the street during a festival' (El Zein, 2016:203). As Bahar, one male participant in his forties from Bayt Lahm (Bethlehem) once quite active within the scene recalls, his first event of this kind was a house party organised by internationals around 2006, where he got the opportunity to listen to dubstep for the first time and absolutely loved it. From there, he started to listen to electronic music on YouTube, learnt how to DJ and started to organise his own parties in rented places or outdoor locations.

As I was told, the Palestinian scene started to grow in the cities of Haifa and Jaffa (Palestine '48/modern-day Israel) before moving and rooting in '67 Palestine, namely Ramallah. It was developed by Palestinians born in '48 Palestine[22] in the mid-2000s who lacked spaces for partying. '48 Palestine has a lot of venues and an environment that fosters clubbing and nightlife which has been labelled as gay/queer friendly and progressive (Misgav & Jonhston, 2014, Blau, 2016) in their quest for pink-washing Israel discrimination against Palestinians (Schulman, 2011, 2012). Indeed, usually Palestinians are not allowed in or are directly refused entry[23]. They are often asked for military IDs at the Israeli-run clubs, which they do not have because Palestinians do not do military service. Apart from the relationship between Palestinians from '67 and '48, the connection between Jordan and Palestine was also decisive to nurture the growth and collaboration between both scenes. Since Palestinians cannot use Israeli airports, many cross through Jordan to travel outside of Palestine, meaning they started to meet each other and collaborate together musically during the last ten years. Many of these connections created the first underground parties of this kind in Jordan.

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[22] Palestinian-Arabs born in '48 Palestine hold an Israeli passport and therefore, have Israeli citizenship. These people were originally from the 1948 Nakba and stayed within the borders of what is today called Israel. They represent around 20% of the population (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

[23] This discrimination on door policies happens also to Mizrahi Jews (Jews originally from Middle Eastern and North African countries). The majority of Jews in the region are Ashkenazi (originally from Eastern Europe) and are predominantly white, which contrasts with Mizrahi Jews.

Hence, both scenes ('48 and '67 Palestine) were disconnected from each other and many years had to pass until Palestinians from both territories could start to collaborate together more fluidly. Israel's severe freedom of movement restrictions on Palestinians from the West Bank did and still does not allow participants of both scenes to collaborate regularly. The emergence of the scene in '67 Palestine (West Bank/Ramallah) dates back to 2006-2008 according to the participants. A reduced group of organisers, DJs and producers started to throw the first events and people in general started to discover electronic music, usually in bars that functioned as music venues and hosted private house parties. Figures such as Jazar Crew (Haifa/Berlin now), Sama Abdulhadi (Ramallah/Paris now), Odai (Ramallah/Amman now), Nasser (Shefa-Amr/Ramallah), Makimakkuk (Ramallah), Julmud (Ramallah) are among the ones that started producing music and articulating this scene. From that time to now, Bayt Lahm (Bethlehem) has seen two radio stations develop (Radio Nard in 2014 and Radio Alhara in 2020). These are an important space for the scene in '67 Palestine. Apart from the DJs that come from hip hop culture, many started as wedding DJs, which is quite a lucrative profession since weddings in Palestine are an important celebration, showing how traditional leisure structured their possibilities. Slowly through gaining mixing skills and a taste for exploration, some of these DJs went further and engaged with electronic music and techno.

2.1. First electronic music genres: the influence of hip hop and music trends

The second relevant element that has influenced the emergence of the electronic music scene is hip hop music. These two worlds are intrinsically linked in Palestine. Many DJs/producers are also rappers. Hence, it is important to understand them relationally, sharing crowds, spaces and references. If there is a unifying generational music genre in Palestine, then it is most definitely rap. The 'second wave' of Palestinian rap (after DAM) were the first ones to start exploring and producing, as well as creating a space for their work to be showcased with 'Ramallah Underground' (formed by Boikutt/Muqata'a and Stormtrap) and 'Saleb Wahed', with Makimakkuk, Haykal, Dakn, al-Nather, Shua, Julmud, Faragh, Riyadiyat. The second wave rappers from Ramallah captured a different way of understanding rap's role and message. Some of them, such as Sama Abdhulhadi changed to techno music during those years, but the majority stayed in both worlds. Alongside rap, other electronic sounds and genres such as dubstep or drum and bass started to be listened to and explored by this crowd, and continue to be important nowadays, due to the global popularity of these genres and also due to the connection with Britain as a music reference, and as a country where many have

studied. If American hip hop and Black culture influenced the first and second wave of rap, this second wave of rappers were highly influenced by the UK scene with breaks, drum and bass, dubstep, dub and jungle being some of the favourite sounds. Finally, in relation to the genres that existed at the beginning, deep house and tech-house were also present following the general global trend that minimal techno/house was experiencing. It proved to be a good initiator for non-electronic music audiences that had been evolved in making tech-house more marginal and rising the importance of techno and hard techno. Finally, psytrance, due to its proximity to Israel was also re-appropriated and played by some, especially those in '48[24].

In the findings section, there will be a deeper exploration of current sounds and influences. The question of a Palestinian or an Arab/SWANA 'sound' is a complex one, as there exists a plurality of different styles that makes it difficult to rigidly categorise them. Starting to explore these genres in front of audiences (friends) in the few bars that allowed this was key to start generating a new scene out of these interests. In brief, bar culture as a space of encounter and hip hop culture are the two relevant elements to understand the underground beginnings and its continuation.

3. Last years: suspension of the night and Covid-19

2020-2022 have been characterised by a series of events that slowed down and sometimes 'suspended' the usual development of the scene in its social aspect. The pervasiveness and continuity of Israeli violence, raids and attacks, the outbreak of Covid-19, combined with the impossibility of knowing 'what will happen next' has decimated its growth and vitality, having lesser parties during these years in comparison to the previous period (2017-2019).

The outbreak of Covid-19 in February/March 2020 deeply impacted the scene, as any other public space in the world. The case of Palestine, due to the ongoing blockade on public health, supplies and access to equipment, and a high population density (especially in Gaza) the effects of Covid were much worse than in other places. Rates of poverty and unemployment rose (19% solely in the West Bank in December 2020), businesses closed, and curfews were applied. While the whole world was getting used to restrictions in movement, socialisation and curfews, Palestinians have lived under restrictions and lockdowns for

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[24] The question of psytrance, not very controversial in my fieldwork experience, can entail contradictions since it is a music genre closely associated to Israelis. I have not listened to a fully psytrance set there, but some Palestinian DJs play psytrance songs in their sets and it is in general accepted among the audience without much fuss.

decades, with the pandemic making everything just a little bit worse. Travel and trade with '48 Palestine and neighbouring countries were (even more) restricted and entering to '67 Palestine was prohibited for foreigners/tourists until 1st of November 2021 by Israeli authorities, more than a year and a half after the outbreak started. As a result of this, parties were put on hold, which inevitably slowed the fruitful growth of the previous years. It was not until the spring of 2021 when parties could resume, even though abruptly interrupted again because of the Israeli attacks on Gaza and the Sheikh Jarrah protests in May 2021. How Murd, a DJ and radio curator from Bayt Lahm explains to me the evolution, encapsulating this fluctuant nature:

> *Many of us during the Covid left the country (...) [it] smashed the wheel. Not the wheel, of course. Smashed the energy, back to zero. And then, eh, the politics, every time we hit something, it goes back down* (in person interview, May 2022)

The pervading violence of Israeli occupation also disrupts its development, with a particular brutality in 2021-2023. In 2022, Israel killed more than 200 Palestinians and in 2023 until March, more than 80 (Euro Med Monitor, 2023). In May 2021 Israel bombarded Gaza and killed more than 250 Palestinians people. When there is a martyr (a Palestinian assassinated by Israel), parties are cancelled in mourning and respect of that. This leads to the suspension of parties and events and makes organisers refrain from organising parties as there is always the possibility of having to cancel them due to last minute martyrdom or escalation of violence (Sama in Balram, 2023). Thinking about the scene as undergoing a slowdown cycle, however, should not be translated to mirror 'cycles of violence' in the Palestinian overall context, as some voices have been denouncing it as it has been obliterating the structural and ongoing violence for almost one hundred years (Abukhater, 2023; Iraqi, 2023).

This is not new. The scene has experienced tensions and difficulties from the onset, also within Palestinian society and their security forces. However, its relatively underground aspect kept it secluded from the general public during the first years. This low-key aspect has changed due to the popularity that some events have fostered (such as the Boiler Room in 2018 or the Nabi Musa[25] incident in 2020), making participants and their practices scrutinised

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[25] Nabi Musa is the name of a Holy site for Palestinians and Muslims where it is believed the prophet Moses is buried that nowadays has touristic and leisure usage. In late December 2020, after the performance and recording of a DJ set for a video project of Sama' Abdulhadi, a storm of people interrupted the 'party' and this resulted in the detention of the DJ. It received global coverage, reinforcing the idea of a divide between Muslim social conservatism and alternative youth. The DJ and her crew got official permission by the Palestinian

and more known inside and outside Palestine. This has opened a period of tension and certain repression from Palestinian authorities and young radical men, coinciding with discourses around 'authentic' and 'resistant' leisure and music against occupation. These discourses will be explored in relation to resistance. Up till now, these series of tensions and difficulties and the reshape that Covid-19 brought, with many artists and musicians out of the country, and many others wanting to leave, it seems that the scene has deeply changed. In this sense, it will be seen how new spatial dynamics are emerging as a result of this decline.

Ministry of Tourism to record and play on these premises, as long as she respected its 'religious significance'. The mosque, apart from being a famous destination of pilgrimage, is also a tourist location, an events space, a hostel and a former drug rehabilitation centre (Kingsley, 2021). After a storm of people interrupted the recording, her detention for more than a week and her current ban on leaving Ramallah was motivated by the offence to Palestinian tradition and religious feelings.

Chapter 4 – Social relations through the scene

Politics? Of course. It is all politics. It started political. First of all, it started political, I told you, Ramallah Underground, eh… yaani[26] and these politics, in this area, the politics is not just Palestine-Israel, it's also Palestine-Palestine, and the community and the PA and all about the family. There are issues in how we look at it, how the family looks at it. Eh, so the politics in it, [it] is for us first to understand what we need, what we can expand, how we express… The more, the more we express, the more [we] understand what we are in. And then the more people understand what we are referring to. And it's… yaani, for the Palestinian community. It's for us to understand what is around us, from Palestine-Palestine, from Israel-Palestine. We all understand what Israel is to us. It's DNA shit what Israel is. But what Palestine is, it's foggy and it became clear very recently. So, uh, when internationals come listen to us, not just the international, also the Arabs, outside of Palestine, when they listen to us, eh, they also relate, uh, they somehow understand the story.

[…] so for the, for the people that don't speak the Arabic language and don't understand the whole story about Palestine, Israel and stuff. Yes. We… I think you would understand what we are talking about from the music itself. You would know what we are talking about without knowing what it is as we are angry, for example. The way to the politics in the music here is to not prove a point it's to, to make a scene out of it, to show that we are here as the politics. For the Israeli, is to prove that we are here, when they listen to us, they groove to us, easy yaani.[27]

<div align="right">Murd (in person interview, May 2022)</div>

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the first part of the findings from this thesis. The literature review and the epistemological framework/methodology have underpinned the main debates that traverse this thesis. Palestinian multiple political intersections, the effects of the Oslo Accords, the

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[26] Yaani is a slang Arabic interjection meaning something like 'like' in English. In a conversation, especially between young people, it is one of the most listened to words.

[27] Participants' quotations from my fieldwork are italicised. There are other quotes from the scene's participants that I take from other interviews, those are not italicised.

neoliberalisation of the region and the meaning of music and culture, which wrestle in-between different discourses have been explained to help understand the context of where the scene emerges and develops.

Importantly, this research understands the conjunction of influences and drives that intervene in these cultural processes as something impossible to tease out completely. As Murd says, "it's foggy". This tries to make a stand in relation to the over-scrutinised Palestinian context and everyday life through scholarship that, compared to other places in the region, receive more attention (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2012; Ashtan, 2021) and even despite it, this thesis recognises the limits of knowledge and research as partial portions of reality. It centres the experiential, affective and cyclic fluidity of the scene focusing on, thus, the processes that accompany getting to know and feel it. Far from generalising or giving objectivist pretensions, these upcoming chapters recognise the irreducibility of experience and do not pretend to represent them as such. As reflected in the methodology, my outsideness, my participation in the Palestinian electronic scene for this short period and my general involvement in DIY practices related to music scenes inform my positionality of the Palestinian life and struggle in particular ways. My position is engaged with those voices that pluralise 'the political' in this context and how different practices (non-normative or hegemonic here) are also legitimate and purposeful. The experiences I narrate contend temporary and partial experiences that I have been lucky enough to be involved in. However, as explained before, the constrained relationship between time (a 3-month visa), cost of living in Palestine and fieldwork –and the impossibility to go before due to Covid– made it difficult to participate longer and deeper in this context.

This chapter responds to the research question: *how different social relations constitute and traverse the Palestinian electronic music scene?*

If the first chapter (introduction to the scene) was read as a descriptive piece, this one is structured as a rhizomatic[28] assemblage: different interconnected themes emerging at the same time and influencing the other (music, space, class and affect). To answer the research question, the chapter explores four key themes:

(1) music

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[28] A nonlinear network, without hierarchical order which 'connects any point to any point' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:21).

(2) affect

(3) class

(4) mobility

These main threads have been chosen because they have been prominent during the fieldwork: they were there constantly, in our conversations and in how the scene unfolded.

I have not included gender and sexuality here because they show up in broader dynamics that will be developed in other sections, especially in relation to tradition and families (chapter 5), resistance (chapter 5) and the neo-orientalist readings Palestinians receive (chapter 6). This last dynamic was key for me to decide not to incorporate the question of gender and sexuality as a 'single', separated topic, rather a permeating one through the thesis. Gender and sexuality will come back in some parts of the chapters, similarly to how they appear in the interviews and conversations: as entangled and connected to other topics.

Similarly to the question of resistance, the interrogation of gender relations and sexuality as a distinctive and researchable feature was received by suspicion and tiresome by participants, and, in general, the conversation did not flowed naturally when gender was introduced. I see the risks of obliterating its importance by not including them as a characteristic of the scene. However, they did not appear or feel as 'defining' in the same way as class, music or mobility did. Indeed, probably the 'void' of gender in our conversations unless I asked to talk about it, but nevertheless appearing indirectly through other topics, shows this conscious rejection to 'talk about gender issues' in order to stop reproducing the Western fetishization of Palestinian woman.

Gender and sexuality are important as they mediate a form of resisting within the scene: towards tradition and neo-orientalism and that is why they have been incorporated differently in chapters 5 and 6. Since I tried to avoid the rigid image that is often presented about Palestinian gender and sexuality as romanticised and instrumental to other interests, and it is such an important question, I explore these questions in connection with others rather than in an isolated picture. Important mentions to female collectives and artists are included in chapter 5 as well as the importance of safer spaces for a freer sense of the body and sexuality, especially among females and LGTBQ people as a way of resisting. This is, as it will be seen, one of the main means for resistance within the scene, highlighting the importance of gender

and sexuality in this context. Finally, the relationship with the rest of society appears also as a gendered question. For instance, the clashes and tensions that are explained in chapter 3 and 5 when men attack the venues, the door policies that directly target 'single men' and the relationship with clothes and walking in public space of females respond to hegemonic notions of masculinity and femineity in Palestinian society, affecting in diverse ways to the scene. The relationship between religion and gender have been largely explored in the literature elsewhere (Schulman, 2011, 2012; Ashtan, 2020). This relationship is not the focus of this research, but it certainly resembles key importance in how the scene tries to develop as a safe space for minorities and how it is viewed by some people from the outside as degenerative or 'inadequate' due precisely to their expressions of gender and sexuality.

Having said that, I will move to summarising the dynamics that structure this chapter. First, music and sound dynamics are explored through seeing them as a social phenomenon, embedded in a cultural context, not without risking that decentring the music that participants complain about. Music is researched through the different genres (embodied listening/dancing) and alliances (collaborations) between participants. Seeing music 'not only as music' led to interrogate the affective practices coalescing around it.

The second theme, affect, has two meanings in this context. First, it refers to the capacity of affecting and being affected (Massoumi, 1987; Bille & Simonsen, 2021) which emphasises the musical and non-musical forces at play within the scene and a covering (contextual and individual) layer that traverses it all. Second, it also refers to the more literal meaning of the emotional atmosphere of the scene. Both dimensions are entangled since most of these 'affects' are propelled precisely by these intimacies, as will be seen next. Concretely, the production and enjoyment of electronic music in the assemblage revolves around networks of intimacy and familiarity.

Third, class relations and cultural capital are also central to understanding how the scene has come to exist, how it maintains itself and what effects it has in its relationship with the rest of society. Through the overview of Ramallah characteristics, it has been seen how class and cultural capital endorse particularities in this city, linked with the post-Oslo political and socioeconomic consequences, showing the disparity existent within Palestinian society. Class it is not an 'absolute' category involving all people equally in the scene, there is plurality within the overall privilege that participants hold, and there are people I interviewed that do

not form part of this cultural elite. This accommodated position is especially relevant for allowing travelling, studying abroad or receiving an artistic and musical education.

Finally, mobility and the question of space (in a material sense through 'venues' and 'DIY dancefloors' and through the notion of deterritorialisation) is the last dynamic to be developed. Mobility also relates to class and affect in many senses. It is usual for music scenes to connect beyond one place and their members' mobility, but I argue that some dynamics of decentralisation, instability, and collaboration outside Palestine are quite exceptional to this scene and the historical present. This points towards global and local circuits of mobility, music production and leisure consumption immersed in different structures of global post-capitalism, settler colonialism and internal politics that must be teased out. Moreover, it leads to interrogating what present and future paths for resisting and collective action could emerge from these dynamics, which will be discussed in the next chapter. How space is lived, the availability of venues and the (im)possibility of mobility (inside and outside) are key determining factors for progress or stagnation, leaving or staying, engaging or receding.

In this chapter I explore the relations between power and music/leisure, the material and the discursive, geography and virtuality that coalesce in this space, some of them seemingly contradictory, but operating in a *conviviality* (Puar, 2009). This has an affective dimension that permeates the scene's emotions and discourses: they are traversed by contradictions (and *convive* with them). This conviviality of contradictions generates a series of dynamics of power and resistances, as well as being an optic from which to understand the different layers that interplay. Making sense of meanings and practices, and how they are constructed, lived and negotiated by participants is what conviviality as a framework does. The following analysis builds up on the argument that leisure and music cannot be solely looked at through nationalistic or resistance perspectives, but also through small, unstable, alternative, messy practices that comprise to the realm of the political explained in the literature. It is in the tension between politics (different authorities and institutions), and the political[29] (the everyday and the dance floor) where this scene is immersed. It is a productive, affective and violent conviviality, encompassing moments of advancement for the scene and what they are trying to create and moments of recession, of slow down and repression from various structures of power. This framework generates new possibilities of thinking culture, resisting

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[29] This difference in conceptualisation between politics (institutions and regimes) and the political (the everyday) has been addressed in the literature.

and leisure in this context: as arenas for expression and change that both dispute and accommodate plural sensibilities, traditions and powers in a rhizomatic movement. Arenas of *conviviality*.

2. Findings: dynamics traversing and constituting the scene

This kind of approach —trying to determine 'what is important'— unravels the many forces that influence the scene, the difficulties of tracing its origins, the motivations of a person to go out or a musician to produce. Thus, I depart from acknowledging these limitations and the weight of my decision in choosing what I narrate. This section develops part of this thesis' findings and focuses on answering the first research question (what constitutes and traverses the Palestinian electronic music scene?).

Here, Samah's question emerges again: "why is it never about our music?"[30] I felt so compelled during my research to centre on the music and avoid using the 'scene' as a means to end up talking about other 'Palestinian' topics. Many participants criticised this trend coming from international people and academics. "Why is it never about our music, the quality, the sound?" Some others highlighted the importance of 'rightly' addressing the scene, and letting people understand 'all that has happened'. This tension shows how the contexts that we are embedded are very difficult to escape, and how particular contexts entail a sort of confinement that some approaches reproduce. These critiques help us to understand why, in this particular context, there is tiresome and reluctance because 'it is never only about our music' or 'things that interests us', as Samah said.

But music is never only about music. And there is an important difference between tokenising Palestinian reality and contextualising their music. The social forces that constitute and traverse music scenes are key to understanding how 'music' is created, felt, moved and enjoyed. This reflection will be further developed in the chapter on resistance (chapter 5) in relation to different ways of engaging with the term resistance. As previously stated, music is not autonomous, rather it is captured, entangled 'into the cultural webs of collective life' (Garcia, 2020:23), and these webs of collective life are next to be developed, starting from what is closer to the skin and bodies: affects, music and intimacies. First, through a focus on

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[30] I have also read a few interviews and scholarly works that also addressed this issue (see Burkhalter, 2013). Artists complaining about the lack of attention by some Western media to the music itself. This critique resonated intensively during the rise of attention to 'world music' (Bryne, 1999).

sound and sonic alliances, the affective frames this scene of collaborations and intimacies: how music revolves around social practices and articulates a small network of familiarities and unfamiliarities.

In a quest of 'centring music', after the first (micro)ethnographic anecdote about one night out in Amman, I will develop what sounds, genres and artists relate to the 'Palestinian sound' and the difficulties of defining it. There are links in each artist, compilation and record label to share their music and to develop the soundscape of this thesis, so I recommend listening to while reading (links in the following pages).

2.1. Music, sounds and alliances

Listening dance floors, interconnected people

> As I am slowly dancing and listening to Mayss set in Waffle house[31] (figure 4), I wonder when the last time was that I was dancing on a dancefloor, instead of simply listening and nodding my head to the beat of the music. Mayss[32], a female Jordanian DJ much loved in the scene, and currently living in Canada, has come to play a set. Used to sweaty and energetic dance floors with sets oriented to energetic dancing, this intimate listening vibe gets me by surprise.

That night, I listened to other people such as Toumba[33] from the Jordanian scene, based in UK now, whose career is rocketing. Toumba's sets are noisy, floaty, broken, and experimental, not designed for the typical energetic club dance. A similar experience will happen again, with some of the same artists and crowd, in the Exist Festival in Athens and Berlin 2022 (see figures 5 and 6). The experimental tone of the nights made the dance floor a space for eerie listening experiences. In Athens, only a couple of DJs played music oriented towards dancing (CCL and Arabian Panther).

These preliminary nights out in Jordan in September 2021, in Athens and in Berlin after, were so important to grasp the variety of sounds and ways of engaging with live music of Palestinians and artists like-minded outside of Palestine (more experimental, listening

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[31] A multipurpose venue that during the day is literally a waffle cafe in Amman (Jordan) in September 2021. See figure 4.
[32] Mayss' soundcloud of interviews and music sets (with artists like David Lynch, Mike Banks, Marie Davidson, DJ Marcelle or Regis): https://soundcloud.com/dreaming-live
[33] Listen to some Toumba's broken, percussive, folk-melodies (maqam modal system) bodily sub-bass music here: Istibtan (coming in Hessle audio) https://soundcloud.com/hessleaudio/toumba-istibtan

oriented). A few months later, while dancing my heart out in Ramallah, I think about these nights and how different they were. Definitely, Ramallah's parties right now are about dancing and having fun, with less experimental and ambient sounds, and less sound equipment in general with the capacity to generate this captivating atmosphere. Most of the artists that were linked to this kind of sound-experiences have left Ramallah, like, for example, Muqata'a or Falyakon.

Figure 4. 'Blurred bodies' in the Waffle House (Amman)

Moving between scenes, meeting some of these people in Berlin for a few nights out, or meeting friends of friends in Ramallah later, all before starting my fieldwork in Palestine, made me realise the extent of connectivity in these networks. As I will keep insisting, everyone knows each other. Everyone has collaborated somehow, through radio, parties, music production or just partying together. While this is also a characteristic of electronic music scenes, I would say, an *accelerationist* one (how reductive it comes to be in terms of being in a subcultural bubble of DJs, producers, designers, organisers, etc.); I never *felt* the kind of network, or connection between everyone that I observed in the Palestinian electronic music scene.

I use this anecdote about different atmospheres in dance floors (dancing/listening) and networks to develop three important ideas. First, the interconnectivity and familiarity between scenes and the people that *traverse* and *produce* the Palestinian scene beyond a single territory. I coin this relationship 'sounds of alliances', as Deleuze and Guattari (1987)

refer to these alliances, a relation of symbiosis and co-functioning. The experience of navigating different scenes have demonstrated how interconnected they are, and how the stagnant spatial limits (and the reduced number of people) intensify this network. Understanding these 'alliances' as collaborations and friendships is key to understand this functioning. People might not be close and intimate sometimes, but they surely know each other. These alliances are key in electronic music scenes, as they allow participants to move through different spaces as part of this network. Importantly, it also allows newcomers to integrate themselves in new music scenes through these alliances. This term appears in Garcia's research as 'vouching' (2011:330), a dynamic that enables 'people to have access to the intimate spheres of strangers through mutual friends' (Bispo, 2010 in Garcia, 2011:330) was very much part of my experience.

Second, these reflections about affective alliances and differences in dance floors open the door to help us think about music in terms of affect: how sounds are expression of these affective networks and how they spatially and contextually change. These modulations are grasped on the dance floor through how dancing, listening or both develop. What is generating the difference in dance floors is that first, the more experimental artists, with a deeper focus on sound and vanguard ('listening') have left to pursue their careers and second, the few possibilities of making parties in Palestine orient the dance floor towards having fun and losing it ('dancing'). Hence, in my experience, dancing has occurred more in Palestine while listening outside of Palestine, despite having bits of each in every dance floor. It feels that the 'affective atmosphere of sound' in parties Ramallah turns more towards dancing, escaping and having fun, rather than being 'concert' oriented. Affective forces, namely the friendship and inspiration between the artists, the crowd, the context of that day and the line-up, influence how dance floors are constructed and experienced.

Third, these experiences on different dance floors (Amman, Athens, Ramallah), all curated by Palestinians and Arabs, demonstrate the plurality of sounds and motivations that traverse artists and collectives when organising events and making music. They are influenced by diverse forces that make them lean towards more experimental or more mainstream music, more listening oriented parties (mainly outside Palestine) and more dancing oriented ones. Within these alliances there are multiple sounds and genres. In rather a small community of people, each DJ or producer chooses a different musical path, with notable differences between each other. It is difficult then to classify a 'Palestinian sound'.

Sounds of alliances

This plural sonic texture, similar to other SWANA producers in the region, ranges from experimental textures of noise, distortion (Asifeh[34], Muqata'a[35] or Bint Mbareh[36] are among the more representative in this sense), vibrancy, street sounds and voices, old recordings to more common music genres, such as drum and bass (Elnedj) or techno (Sama Abdulhadi and UNION collective DJs). As such, artists create their own musical repertoires from a plurality of sources and sounds, local and global, using different technologies, instruments and software. It is mainly self-produced in home studios and disseminated through small, local and regional record labels, or directly through their SoundCloud. Some of these Palestinian record labels are Bilna'es[37] بالناقص, Tawleef[38], and BLTNM [39]بلاتنم

The multiplicity of sound challenges the assumption of cultural 'difference' in music: being different just because where or by who it is produced, and not observing other forces at play that make music difficult to classify just by place or nationality. The 'Electrosteen'[40] compilation released in 2020 by Egyptian record label Moskatel, for instance, showcased the work of 11 prominent Palestinian artists, such as Muqata'a, Sarouna, Sama Abdulhadi, Bruno Cruz, Julmud or Walaa Sbait (47SOUL), encapsulating a wide range of influences, from traditional Arabic music and *dabke* to dub and reggae.

In much of this music, there is a certain experimental and ambient sound, leaning towards sound design rather than dance floor music that encapsulate some specificities from the region: from street sounds to recorded voices or conversations in Arabic. Also, as mentioned in chapter 3 when talking about the parties and events I went to, I engaged during my stay with participants who had been on the Nicolas Jaar music production course in Bayt Lahm. I met them many times and went to their end of course showcase (Unbuilding listenings). Many of the pieces encapsulated these sounds and textures: mixing political and emotional

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[34] Asife's new EP: https://soundcloud.com/stormtrap/sets/tasalul
[35] Muqata'as last album:
https://soundcloud.com/muqataa/sets/muqataa-kamil-manqus
[36] Bint Mbareh recent mixes:
https://soundcloud.com/radiofantasia/bint-mbareh
[37] Bilnaes is run by Muqata'a, Ruanne Abou-Rahme and Basel Abbas https://bilnaes.bandcamp.com/
[38] Tawleef is run by Sarouna https://tawleef.space/
[39] BLTNM is run by Shabmouri, Al Nather and Shabjdeed https://bltnm.com/
[40] Electronsteen album https://open.spotify.com/album/5GhSrYAXA6DCkCywQl6qRY

messages with distorted audios, broken rhythms, heavy bass and old recorded radio programmes.

Sound is also connected and influenced by global trends and music scenes beyond Palestine and the SWANA region, with artists that often collaborate in their compilations and events as Drew McDowall, Hiro Kone, or CCL. There is much influence of 'noise' and drone music to the productions of some artists, genres that focus more on distortion and altered samples that create evolving and hypnotic lengthy pieces. In addition, the scene encompasses both a specific local and regional unfolding that intertwines with a global familiarity: I could relate to many of the sounds whereas at the same time I learnt new genres and styles, especially in relation to more experimental, sonic textures that merge with Levantine-SWANA genres like rai[41] (Morocco) or shaabi[42] (Egypt) and recorded, distorted sounds.

Figure 5. Exist Festival Berlin, 2022   Figure 6. Exist Festival Athens, 2022

In the literature review, the importance of 'Arab' music and the subsequent Arabisation of Palestinian music was explored (Kanaaneh, 2013). This has a particular relevance due to the influence that SWANA music and producers have on Palestinian artists, being that other SWANA and Levant scenes are more developed than the Palestinian music in matter of the

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[41] References of rai music:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLMkUr_GIIc&list=RDQMmXt_Z1u4LBs&index=10
[42] References of shaabi music, Albosar DJ from Egypt: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4swwKvE5DpU

size of audiences and musicians, such as the Egyptian or the Lebanese. Julmud, producer and DJ from Ramallah claims that 'Arabic and regional music in general is mostly what I am influenced by and it's what shapes the many sounds I create, levantine, iraqi, khaliji, yemeni, maghrebi' (Fifteen Questions, 2022)[43].

The question of Levantine influences, instruments, samples and music scales emerges as a more complex matter than just hybridisation. Influences are used in a myriad way. Toumba recalls how subtle and engrained these influences might be, even going unnoticeable for the untrained ear in Arab music: 'a track might accidentally have something that's in the Arabic music that you wouldn't pick up on, and it goes far beyond the types of percussion or instruments and that's the feeling that's slightly missing in the stuff that the diaspora, or people that studied the music, might miss out on' (Dahdouh, 2023).

The network of collaborations and inspirations, despite the difficulties that Palestinians and Arabs experience when travelling to each other countries[44], is strong and fluent. It was shown in the literature how the general Palestinian public sometimes listens and dances to Arabic music from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, rather than from Palestine (Kanaaneh, 2013:6). In many conversations I had, there was a comparison between the Palestinian scene and the Egyptian and Lebanese one, all stating how much bigger it was and many emphasising how underdeveloped the Palestinian one was in many senses (less parties, less possibilities and infrastructure, less funding, smaller crowds). So, having their scene and artists recognised and collaborating with other scenes amidst this 'Arabisation', as Murd states, makes Arabs (and internationals) 'understand' more their situation and places them in a self-valued regional position.

> *when internationals come listen to us, not just the international, also the Arabs, outside of Palestine, when they listen to us, eh, they also relate, uh, they somehow understand the story (…) so for the, for the people that don't speak the Arabic language and don't understand the whole story about Palestine, Israel and stuff. Yes.*

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[43] Julmud's last EP Tuqoos, with every track explained by the author: https://www.theransomnote.com/music/featured-music/track-by-track-julmud-%D8%AC%D9%8F%D9%84%D9%92%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AF-tuqoos-%D8%B7%D9%8F%D9%82%D9%8F%D9%88%D8%B3/

[44] For instance, the Lebanese cannot go to Palestine due to the Lebanon-Israeli relationship (they have to undergo a difficult process of getting a Visa from Israel and PA). Palestinians need a special permit issued by the Lebanese General Security Department that is very hard to obtain. There are a lot of different specificities to this general rule, as travelling from another country or under different special permits or passports, but this is a general idea of how difficult is for Palestinians and Arabs to visit each other.

We… I think you would understand what we are talking about from the music itself (in person interview, May 2022).

Understanding the story, of course, is understanding life under occupation, and also understanding the role that Palestinian authorities have in society, the role that families and other structures play in youth's lives. Indeed, the literature review was intent on 'showing and understanding' the story beyond what is precisely related to the electronic music scene. Hence, music expresses a way of being in the world, living through a particular context (listening/dancing) and it is an everyday personal experience mediated by limited possibilities. This view disentangles the critique around 'music itself' and the context, showing how the context is within the music and music is within the context.

2.2. Affect

The findings show how artists and audiences are plural and changing, how dance floors encapsulate different experiences and how 'sounds' are influenced by many factors. These range from 'musical' (hip hop, electronic music genres and scenes, SWANA and Palestinian music) to 'non-musical' forces: the context, their relationship with society and family, ultimately, their daily experience and motivations, showing participants' 'capacity to be affected' in the most theoretical conception of the term. Affect is precisely a way of understanding how music is felt and produced.

This research situates how music comes to be in this context –as a social force that is produced, listened to and danced to– and how it interacts with other processes: affect, space and class. Music is 'in dynamic relation with social life, helping to invoke, stabilize and change the parameters of agency' (DeNora, 2000:20). In other words, being *affected* by something and also acting upon that affect. This affective dimension is endless, as it is entangled in being in the world, experiencing it and acting in it.

Considering this first meaning of affect, I relate affect in the scene to the intimate/familiar network of encounters between peoples during the events, but also, beyond them through other spaces such as the virtual and radio. The next section will expand on the question of affect through the intimate and familiar relationships, and how I encountered these as an outsider. There were many ways in which I was affected by this intimacy. In general, the atmosphere that surrounds the nights and the events is 'intense' and affective, nurtured by friendship between participants, entailing a lot of talking and conversations, with a display of

'who knows who' and emotional interactions (laughs, hugs, kisses), articulating a sense of belonging and also of 'tense safety' which will be explored next.

Intimacy, familiarity, and not speaking Arabic

This section opens with an ethnographic anecdote that grasps the intensity and emotional aspect of the scene and how it influenced the research. Using autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Adams et al., 2014) helps to grasp the intimacies and intensities that I felt between people, and also to problematise them using my positionality and experience as an example. I aim to show the intimacy that permeates the scene and how that can have particular effects on people's belonging, inclusion and exclusion.

> Today marks the second day of camping and partying together in the mountains in the north of '48 Palestine. You can see Lebanon from the distance (see figure 8). And I cannot avoid feeling disconnected, somehow excluded from the party. I carefully listen to conversations I don't understand, even though I took Arabic classes before coming here. I repeat to myself how lucky I am to be here and to be a part of this. There is only other international at the party. The expressive Arabic elapses in front of me relentlessly in this sunny, hot, and windy day in June. After three days in a row partying only with Palestinians (I partied on Thursday in Haifa before coming to the camping party), I just wish I could understand what they are saying. It is a strange feeling to sense so much intimacy and familiarity around you and not be able to be part of it. It requires temper and a constant reflectivity on the matter to not take things personally: it is just understandable to not be part of what is going on all the time, you are the one who does not speak the language here. You are 'new', and you carry a mix of burdens difficult to overcome. In contrast to the camping and the conversational atmosphere, the dance floor emerges as a space for escape. We all escape in a sense; we all dance our feelings and thoughts off. While dancing, we exchange touches, gazes, smiles. They escape in one way, I escape in another, I escape not belonging. Senses of belonging and not belonging have been exchanging during the day. However, the dance floor reshapes these feelings and makes me feel connected and part of everyone. When words cannot help, dancing bodies and music do their magic. Affect and intimacy work as a potent force on dance floors. They allow one to feel welcomed, recognised, included, as well as vulnerable.

This account is a recognition of warmness and belonging in a moment of vulnerability and estrangement, but it was not always like that. This account brings forward the intimate affect (or at least a performance-display of it) that constituted these relations: bodies would interact and be moved by this sense of familiarity and belonginess; and strange bodies (mostly from internationals) would be more hardly accommodated within these intimate networks, showing the politics of white presence (and language) in the scene.

Intimacy can mean many things. I frame intimacy on the dance floor as a double, sometimes divergent force (affect) that is embedded in two meanings. The first one refers to the spontaneous corporalities of dancing: touch, gazes, smiles and other non-verbal encounters alike following Berlant (2000) in linking the 'individual lives to the trajectories of the collective' (2000:3), and Sedgwick's otherness in these experiences of touch and intimacy (2003). These intimate spaces work similarly to 'intimate publics' (Berlant, 2008): scene's attachments to each other and common vulnerabilities amidst an outside that is often surveillant, dominant and violent.

The second meaning of intimacy is related to trust and community, following Forstie's (2017) understanding of intimacy's imbrication with wider social life. Hence, in this context, intimacy usually arises *with* familiarity. Intimacy was in many instances given by belonging and familiarity, allowing momentary spaces for spontaneous intimacy, touching, hugging, smiling and dancing together in which sometimes I was also part of (always through an othering feeling). The weight of being a white (every time less) 'stranger' on the dance floor inclined the balance towards sensing more the outsideness that the inclusion, the estrangement traversed by temporary connection and intimacy. Indeed, many of these intimate moments were sustained by a flirtatious or sexual intention.

Figure 7. Sunset at a mountain party (north of '48 Palestine).

Strangerhood here, differently to other narratives on queer dance floors (Garcia, 2011, 2023), is traversed by suspicion and untrust. Many Palestinians were tired of having people coming and leaving in short periods of time with what they saw as individualistic interests (research, humanitarian aid) or neutrality towards Israel (visiting or living in Israel for a while or having both Israeli and Palestinian friends) and this translated in a separation and untrust between foreigners (which are not many) and Palestinians. This dynamic makes the scene a space difficult to fully participate in for a short period of time, unless you know someone in it. Even though knowing people in the scene, senses of belonging through intimacy developed slowly and not always. Intimacy and belonging are built through several layers, and they are not given or always spontaneous. Not all Palestinians in the scene belonged in the same way, they had their own internal dynamics: who knows who, who collaborates with who, who is family and what you do with your life, all floating determinants that follow this intimacy through the second dynamic (trust and community).

As said at the beginning, controversies or disputes within the scene also occur. But the relationships that traversed my sense of belonging and those belonging to the scene were different. As a stranger in a small community, I was encountered with questions of trust and intentions (what I am doing there). For the rest of the participants, belonging or intimacy depends, apart from the affective spontaneity, on their general inclusion in the *wasta* dynamics ('who you know' - واسِطة), their belonging to certain groups of people and not others, and their mood/party general vibe and more generalised features in relation to belonging to a music scene.

The previous anecdote narrates the intense affective moments during the research that give sense to internal subtle dynamics. Indeed, all anecdotes encapsulate intense affective moments: the kitchen conversation with Samah and the discomfort experienced during the first encounter with Yara, and the dance floor eerie listening experience. In the camping party, this affective atmosphere comes from the familiarity and long-time relationships between most of the people. This generates an 'atmosphere' of collective intensity (Anderson, 2009): bodies that dance together, hug, talk, kiss, and interact endlessly.

It really struck me that at every event, literally everyone seemed to know each other. I could be sitting with a friend having a beer in Garage, and every single person that walked in would come and say 'hi' to the table, and chat for a bit. In was at the few parties I went to in Ramallah where I found this feeling of togetherness most, especially in the ones that were more intimate and curated by a group of friends, compared to the ones in Haifa, for instance. In spaces where intimacy is common, the ones that are not part of this are more likely to be (or feel) excluded, as I have explained. As such, this atmosphere is traversed by dynamics of cultural and *wasta* capital, who pertains to certain group and who does not. In other words, there is a rather 'normative intimacy' (needing trust and validation) that affects everyone, and especially white strangers and internationals. There is a more spontaneous intimacy between Palestinians, which is at the same time crossed by their own dynamics of belonging. As such, the dance floor is a space for intimacy and spontaneity, personally, a moment of true escape and fun, that, nevertheless, did not allow one to obliterate the dynamics that traversed us outside that temporal moment of collective dance.

Belonging and safety on the dance floor

Precisely due to these dynamics of intimacy and alliances, the dance floor constitutes a place of belonging, of feeling at the right place and escaping the outside temporarily. As participants recall, for many, it is more about spending time together and having fun than anything else, being somehow secondary the role of showcasing their music or purposely articulating something resistant*: "A lot of people really just wanna party. It's not that deep [...] it's just people that are hanging out, and people are depressed and they wanna release"* (online interview, June 2022) said Dania, a female participant from Ramallah when talking about what the scene meant for her.

However, this intensity was also generated by a series of tensions and bodily responses tied to the political context and personal experiences participants had to navigate each party. During the time I was there, and also before me, parties were shut down by police, neighbours or groups of men (as seen in chapter 3) that have also an impact in how resisting is generated. Then, there were the intense mixed feelings of safety and tension (danger) at the same time that, for many, could not be helped and which prevented/stopped them from attending parties.

This builds up the notion that affect and embodied feelings are far from being only 'positive' (Forstie, 2017). The familiarity and intimacy that have been narrated since the beginning of the chapter are also traversed by this, in a sense of togetherness that contrasts with a divergent outside. There is so much fun, joy and intimacy, but there is also tension, trauma, unsteadiness and boredom. This resembles the notion of 'ugly feelings' (Ngai, 2007) in which much of these emotions such as boredom help to understand the moments of suspension and blockade that these feelings entail. I argue, similar to the thesis of *Ugly Feelings* (2007), that what are considered minor emotions like boredom, anxiety or tension shape as well this structure of feeling where they interplay with more intense emotions like fear and anger. Not only does this show the layered composition of these affective events, but it also separates itself from the idea that music and dancing are held in a vacuum, as if they were affective autonomous responses, or are always joyful experiences. They are bound up with a context and participants' biographies and experiences. It was very common in conversations to reference tense or violent situations such as being thrown rocks by some young men while partying or having an event shut down. Many talks coalesced around issues of mental health such as being traumatised or depressed, as Dania's account reflects. There is a gendered experience in this, being mostly women the ones that referenced to these tensions. For instance, Jana, a singer and filmmaker that also goes out in Ramallah references various times during our interview the harassment they have experienced:

> *also one time they filmed us dancing and we caught them. And we took the phone, my friend like took the phone and we saw our videos and we're like, 'what the fuck?' So yeah, people can be really cruel, like with giving us our space* (in person interview, June 2022).

Even though these experiences pertain to the more intimate aspect of this research, and they will not be disclosed, for some people, participating in the scene came with a burden of risk and tension. As such, the affective intensity is generated by both belonging and risk.

Having explained this affective dimension of encounter between participants around music and partying, its creation and its enjoyment but also unsafety, I turn to discuss these 'other' dimensions that constitute the scene, its possibilities and restraints. I argue that if this affective atmosphere of intimacy is also attached to cultural and *wasta* capital, it does not operate in a vacuum of classless relationships. The fact that this familiarity is possible among many of the members comes from their shared backgrounds, interests and life experiences. I do not put all of them in the same 'class' strata, nor it is my interest to deeply analyse their socio-economical position, but you could tell –from them all insisting very openly on this idea– that their positions had an important role in developing the scene and, significantly, in the *disconnection* they embody from the rest of society in terms of class and what comes along with privilege.

2.3. Class and cultural capital

The question of class appears and reappears along this thesis. The possibility of producing music, accessing the equipment and the lifestyle is also linked to the class position that the participants hold. As said, the current context in Ramallah concerning the possibilities for alternative leisure and lifestyles are reflected in the scene.

I argue that the scene's participants, following Taraki (2008a, 2008b) and Abourahme (2009) are both a product and producers of the city's neoliberalisation. They are able to embrace patterns of consumption that are not hegemonic within Palestinian society: going regularly to bars, drinking alcohol, engaging in alternative cultural circuits, travelling, partying, etc, thus reproducing and reinforcing neoliberal 'successful' lifestyles to be able to do so. However, the neoliberal incursion is neither straightforward nor artists and music venues uncritically embrace this process. Although the scene embodies a layered relationship with neoliberalism, as mentioned in chapter 3 due to the DIY ethos also present in their parties, many artists and participants work in precarious jobs, some, many hours per week. My fieldwork has shown how most participants, as I explain below, have 9-5 regular jobs. Others are obliged to accept very poorly paid internships. The creative industries in Palestine, in which many work is precarious, scarce and dependent on external funds and support (Toukan, 2021).

The relatively solvent economic and cultural net that influences the scene's development is not closely linked to the exact job they have, but rather, the cultural capital and connections they have (Taraki, 2008a and 2008b; Abourahme, 2009). Class, in this context, is not only

related to a relatively stable economic position of income and access to resources. The relevance of class relations in the scene has two dimensions: the role of families, as established and socially known institutions embedded in a complex set of *wasta* relations, and their reputation. In the scene, many people are connected through their families, either being relatives, or their families knowing each other. Due to the privacy and sensitivity of the topic, I often avoided asking the participants about their families. The role of families, in general, is central in shaping people's possibilities, values and aspirations with many participants claiming their parents were central in shaping their cultural and political values.

The second meaning of class in this sense has to do with culture and education. Most of the participants received either private education in Palestine or had studied at some point outside of the country, both in SWANA countries and Europe. This gave them an exposure to other music scenes that influence their taste and values. Even though taste and access to other scenes can be done through many channels (online mainly), and indeed these are also very relevant here, the possibility of living abroad or travelling have intensified this relationship with creativity and subcultural capital. That said, not all wealthy families relate to this cultural dimension; many others, especially in other cities, do not follow this 'educational pattern' of international exchange. Moreover, a characteristic of the musicians here is that many have studied music in conservatories or music schools (Edward Said Conservatory which is typically present in many Palestinian cities). This has given them already a musical inclination, taste and knowledge that, although is not indispensable for engaging in musical practices, links them to traditional SWANA-Arab music. As such, an 'habitus', a socially bounded system of dispositions that orient 'thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions' (Bourdieu 1990:55) assembles the scene, connecting them all through a shared value structure. Many participants refer to this as a 'bubble', emphasising both its privilege and its fragility in that it might burst at any moment. As explained in chapter 3, the continuous possibility of violence, martyrdom, or loss paired with internal dynamics within the bubble generate this sense of fragility.

Within this bubble, cultural and social capital appear to be key elements that form part of the scene in a profound way. Coming back to the neoliberalisation of society, there is a very particular crossroad when entrepreneurial conceptions of the self (being 'successful' and

especially, being 'cool', as some 'Instagram capital' show[45]) meet with the weight of reputation and networking that exist in Arab societies. The idea of *wasta* networking is relevant here. Some research in the Beiruti electronic music scene explores how nightclubs are regarded as 'platforms for the performance of *wasta* capital*'* (Robinson, 2013). *Wasta,* already used, 'is an Arabic term to refer to one's ability to social networking and enactment, using one's connections, 'where everyone knows everyone else, if only by virtue of facial recognition in a vast and yet intimately interconnected social web' (Robinson, 2013, np). The fieldwork showed that the Palestinian participants also engage in *wasta* capital dynamics where social status and intimate networking are essential to belong to the scene. Zaynab, a female partygoer from Ramallah explained to me that music, for some, is not as important as getting together and socialising in a safe, relaxed and 'cool' environment. She critically emphasised this to make me understand how the scene might work differently from other scenes where music and taste are specifically centred around one genre. *"Here, many music styles are played, even the same night, and dancing is not always common"* (online interview, August 2019). As seen in the previous chapter, a regular night out does not necessarily entail dancing and partying, there would be some singing to some famous Arabic song, and people would drink and talk as main features of the night out through the bar culture.

Hence, there are class markers around access and resources (paying tickets, drinks and drugs which amount to an important quantity of money) and distinctiveness (*wasta* and subcultural capital). There is also a divergence between secular-alternative values on gender, LGTBQ identities and more conservative positions, as the following part shows. This dynamic is framed again under the metaphor of conviviality (Puar, 2009). As the map of Ramallah-Al Bireh (figure 3) showed, there is an apparent contradiction that also traverses scenes: they are deemed to be progressive and transformative, but they are also closed and elitist as not everyone can access them, even if it is because of the necessity of creating the safest environment possible. These dynamics reveal, again, more complex relations and the representations of Palestinian culture as being depicted by models of resistance or leisure as places of either one dimension (political, alternative, underground, DIY), or superficial, consumerist and neoliberal or conservative and religious.

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[45] It is important to note that what I term 'Instagram capital' works in a subtle and ephemeral way. They do not post many pictures of themselves or show off explicitly, but it is precisely in this way of creating content, as if they do not care, that this coolness lies.

Linking back to the previous dynamic of affect, music and intimacy, class informs and brings together the scene and its participants. Class, affect and music are bound together, and music and affect cannot be explained without class. This shapes a feeling of exclusivity and elitism that I have also experienced, and some participants referred to. Yasir, for instance, a musician and bar owner in Ramallah, emphasised quite a lot this class difference and the sense of disconnection he perceived in some people of the scene:

> *we put effort in the scene, like more than you fuckers, but like you have money, and you have relationships. Cause you came from these backgrounds, you know?* And later he adds *it's not easy from a person who's not, who's not coming from this, you know, uh, I can see it from far away* [referring to the difference between them and him and their privileges] (in person interview, June 2022).

As it happens with music scenes, there are always inner circles that rely on *wasta* and cultural capital, connections and reputation, coupled with familiarity and intimacy. The question of participants' disconnection came out many times in conversations, also with people from outside the scene. There is the general recognition from everyone that there is an important class and cultural difference among participants and other segments of Palestinian society which everyone, even the participants themselves, were aware of. However, this does not mean a total disconnection; they are also part of society in many senses, being politicised, conscious and angry, experiencing occupation and despair. As a unifying experience, occupation is also layered and affects Palestinians in different ways depending on class and geography (the area in which you live). This shows how 'being disconnected' entails a double nature: the unifying experience of occupation for being Palestinian and also, the different effects it has on Palestinians, which it is proved in having the possibility of being 'disconnected' from part of reality.

The third dynamic, the question of space and mobility are also deeply entangled with affect and class. The possibility of travelling, studying outside and coming back appears as a key marker of class and privilege. It also entails an affective and music dimension, being the vehicle which influences participants' music styles and through which collaborations have been built, and also as a means through which affect is embodied: leaving, the impossibility of leaving, returning and seeing your friends leave are all potent affects which are articulated due to mobility.

2.4. Mobility and space

The fourth social dynamic traversing the scene is the question of space and how it is used, perceived, restricted and controlled. In this part, I develop the idea of space and its relation to the scene in three senses. First, through the physicality of the venues and the dance floors, second, through an exploration of the participants' mobility and third, through the notion of deterritorialisation and the relationship between the different spaces (local, regional, global and virtual). This spatial distribution across distinct layers and densities does not follow a hierarchical relationship between the global and local as a sort of 'cosmopolitan or global' dancefloor, a spatial complexity which would make an interesting research project in the future. Finally, the lack of venues has a huge impact on any cultural practice with collective aims and on participants' engagement with the cities in which they live.

DIY dance floors, venues and the lack of them

Coming from the 'free party'[46] scene in Europe (mainly Spain and UK) and going out in Palestine resembled it to a certain degree. The uncertainty of the authorities or the neighbours' reaction to parties, the low-key promotion of any event to not gather people's attention, the open-air spaces where many of the parties were held, the organisers being at the same time the DJs, bartenders, and dancers. As has already been seen in chapter 3 through the archetypes of the parties and the nights out, dance floors (parties) are usually self-organised, familiar and basic in terms of equipment and sound system. This section links back to this discussion to focus on venues from the infrastructural aspect, what is: the existence of spaces to hang out and make parties and, crucially, the lack of it.

There is no need to have big or sophisticated spaces to create an electronic music scene, but it is important to have spaces for it. Any kind of building or infrastructure that can be used without much disturbance to play music and meet with fellow people. Evidence of this can be seen in Ramallah where there are three bars that are able to hold events of this kind: Garage, Radio and Shams, and parties hardly anymore. There is another bar in Bayt Lahm, Aljisser. The rest of the venues that are used in the city, like Bayt Lahm, are cultural centres (Khalil Sakakini in Ramallah, or The Citadel in Bayt Lahm) which means there are reduced timetables and restrictions in terms of alcohol. The owners of Radio, for instance, were tired

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[46] The term is also used to refer to the 'rave movement': self-organised horizontal parties open to everyone organised by sound systems without permits through squatting or occupying the land. It emerged during the late 1980s and 1990s in UK and extended to Europe and beyond during that decade.

of trying for many years to have their bar turned into a dancing space. In 2014-2015, they had been closed down by the municipality due to continuous problems and police raids (El Zein, 2016). As a result of not being able to open and run a venue with late opening hours, with problems with alcohol licensing and problems with authorities, participants from '67 increasingly look for party venues in other places, being Israel the closest one. The lack of venues, jointly with the lack of safe spaces and alternative cultural activities, influences the internal and external mobility of its participants, motivating people to try to move to other places and cities to develop their careers and party. In the previous chapter, the city of Haifa and the venue Kabareet were highlighted as important nodal points of nightlife for Palestinians, even the ones living in Ramallah and '67 Palestine. Going to Haifa entails crossing multiple checkpoints, road controls, closures and asking for permits depending on a person's ID. Through narrating two different journeys to Haifa, I will exemplify the complexities of this journey depending on who you are and what permit and passport you hold.

Mobility inside Palestine

Ramallah and Haifa are separated by approximately 130 km (80 miles). One can easily get to Haifa in about a 2 hours' drive. The first time I crossed to *dakhil* (literally meaning 'inside' to refer to Israel), was by car with some friends. Most of them, except one, held Jerusalem IDs and were able to cross the border. It was extremely fast and easy. No soldier one looked inside the car or asked for permits/passports when we passed through the checkpoint. We were lucky. We chose a relatively quiet checkpoint in the north/west of Ramallah and suddenly, just as if crossing a highway toll, we were in Israel. Somehow the calmness and the joyful mood of my companions while crossing influenced also my good mood. In less than two hours, we were in Haifa, ready to party.

However, the second time I went to Haifa, I had to go by public transport. To go to Haifa, you have to go from Ramallah through Al-Quds (Jerusalem). For this, you need to get to the Qalandiya checkpoint[47] in Ramallah, cross it by foot (sometimes with long queues), and take a bus to East Jerusalem (which takes around one hour). Every time I had to cross using the Qalandiya checkpoint I was nervous, uncomfortable and a bit worried, as if feeling a tiny drop of what Palestinians experience would make me feel less guilty of my privileges.

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[47] Qalandiya is the checkpoint between the West Bank and Jerusalem and is one of the most transited ones in Palestine.

Nevertheless, Qalandiya is still triggering and impressive. It is the closest I have been to feel in a prison. Once in East Jerusalem, you have to cross the city centre by bus to get to Central Station (in West Jerusalem), which takes around 30 minutes and then take another bus to Haifa (which takes two hours). Finally, you have to take a local bus from Haifa station to the city centre of Haifa. In total, the journey is more than five hours, more than double that of going by car, and that is without queuing in Qalandiya. Moreover, once you arrive in '48, the internet does not work because Jawal (a Palestinian phone company) does not operate there unless you pay a supplement (of which I did not). Another option to get to Haifa is by jumping the wall and risking detention or your life. Many young people with the impossibility (or the money) to obtain permits go for this option (Faber, 2018a). During my fieldwork, I had close friends that also used this third way. All this tedious process of taking buses is possible only you have a permit to enter. Without a permit, the person goes by car expecting not to be asked ID or smuggles into '48 by jumping the wall, which is a high risk. The requirement of permits for Palestinians of the West Bank to cross into '48 are difficult and laborious to obtain. There are numerous checkpoints and roadblocks that exist on the way, and it is uncomfortable (at least) for Palestinians to spend time in *dakhil*.

This has made that Haifa and Ramallah, with relatively flourishing cultural landscapes, were totally disconnected from each other for a long time due to precisely these difficulties in crossing. These restrictions do not happen to Palestinians born in '48 Palestine (despite the prohibition of Israeli citizens to enter Area A in Palestine), who are able to travel and have been able to visit '67 Palestine over the course of the years, unlike their neighbours on the other side since they hold Israeli passports.

This complexity is also reshaped and negotiated by (some) participants. If the scene is intersected by the possibility of creating and producing (music), travelling and consuming (partying), it is also framed through the possibility (and impossibility) of moving and leaving, inside and outside Palestine.

In recent years, some Palestinians living in both '67 and '48 Palestine have changed their place of residency to Haifa, neighbouring countries or to Europe. Space acts through many layers, being a structure that ties participants to a closed and limited territory. This anecdote of different ways of moving inside Palestine and Yasir's words settle an initial ground for understanding space and mobility for Palestinians:

traveling in this place, it's different than traveling in different places, because traveling in different places, all the time is like for granted, you know, you can… youth don't think like it's impossible that like I can, you know, like move, uh, not like even like inside [Israel], you know. The model of this place is not like any other model in the world. Yeah. To understand it like means a lot of effort, I think (in person interview, June 2022).

Again, similar to Murd saying that understanding (and feeling) their music means understanding their situation, understanding to the extent of how Palestinian mobility is restricted and different means understanding a lot of their situation. In this context, I focus on mobility as the physical event of moving from one place to another (Urry, 2007; Cresswell, 2010) as travelling in the short term (for a night in Haifa) or in the longer term (abroad) and to the experience and practice that comes with this change of place (Cresswell, 2010). In this sense, Urry's notion of 'motility' (2007) which he uses to distinguish it from mobility (movement across spaces) appears useful to understand the weight of desire and potentiality (ability) to move in this context, as important as movement itself. The 'potential' for mobility is complex, similarly to the assemblage in many senses, as it there are objects and ideas such as music that are able to travel and move, while others, as people, do not.

Hence, mobility is not plainly moving from one place to the other, but about what implies and what it means to be able to do it and in which conditions it is done. Peteet (2017) sees mobility in Palestine as relational to Israeli occupation, 'sedimented in a system of interdependencies, however asymmetrical' (Peteet, 2017:2). The asymmetric possibilities of movement (between Palestinians and between Palestinians and the world) sediment differences of class, geography and privilege, as Urry (2007) suggest, generating an uneven, mediated and controlled geography. Therefore, the distinction between mobility and motility is useful here to understand the conceptualisation of the term 'mobility' I develop in this context, since Palestinians in the scene experience both in the ways that have been described. I approach this relationality not only between Israel/Palestine, but also between Palestinians, which embody different levels of mobility and immobility depending on their ID, passport, or permit they are able to get, as the anecdote shows.

Let's start by saying that I can't even travel freely within my own country. As an artist, I cannot tour in Gaza, Jerusalem or 1948 Palestine. How about the fact that we're deprived from having our own airport? I love travelling, meeting new people

and exploring diverse cultures, but it always comes with humiliation, anxiety and a dose of trauma (Mustefa, 2021) says Makimakkuk in an interview when asked about restrictions of movement, summarising the reality of most Palestinians living inside West Bank and Gaza ('67 Palestine).

The whole restrictive system of movement prevents 'freedom of movement, family reunification, work, travel, local or international study, and building permits' (Haddad, 101:2016) and opens the door to a system of internal disparity between Palestinians. Regarding the coloured-Israeli ID system, which started after 1967, there are two IDs depending on your place of birth: green for Palestinians born in West Bank and Gaza and blue for those born in East Jerusalem and modern-day Israel. This means that these IDs (and permits) determine, among other elements, internal travel, going through checkpoints, being able to visit Jerusalem, going to Israel or travelling from Ben Gurion airport instead of Jordan (West Bank and Gaza residents cannot do all this unless they have a permit).

In relation to the scene, it means that every Palestinian with a blue ID or an Israeli passport *can* travel and visit '48 and '67, while the rest cannot. Nevertheless, this affirmation needs to be taken with caution, as it is supposed to be that Israeli passport holders cannot enter Area A in Palestine. This, as explained before, has ensured that the scenes are disconnected from each other. However, some of the participants I engaged with hold blue IDs (mainly from Jerusalem) or other passports such as an American one. What I narrated, crossing easily by car, being able to take these risks and succeeding, is the exception. Others do need them and get them relatively easily because of their *wasta* connections. Others do not get them and cannot leave. A few of them try to smuggle themselves in and jump the wall in an attempt to go to '48 Palestine. It will be necessary to have a deeper account of how many Palestinians involved in the scene have blue or green IDs, which absolutely determines the possibility of movement. I have also met people that have not been able to go to '48 because they do not get permits or do not want to risk anything. I recall being in the bus heading towards Haifa, impatiently looking at my phone waiting for a friend to text me to confirm that he had jumped the wall and that everything was ok. Luckily, we were reunited later in Haifa and partied together. Then, this inside (im)mobility can be divided in three ways: having the ID or the permit and being able to move; not having the ID and needing a permit, which many times translates to not being able to leave the West Bank; or not having the ID/permit and sneaking into '48 by jumping the wall.

The occupation not only determines the scene's development and mobility within Palestine, but also pushes the scene towards the outside. It means that the ones that will and are able to foster their careers and experience more freedom need to go to other countries where there is more infrastructure and facilities to do parties.

Mobility outside Palestine

The second aspect of mobility is related to the possibility of moving outside of historic Palestine, which means, outside of Palestine/Israel. The facility for this is subject to nationality, passport/ID –as I said, some of them have Israeli, Jordanian or American passports– and the economic capacity for travelling, studying or living outside. Palestinian blue ID holders can use Ben Gurion (Israel) airport, whereas Palestinians with green ID need to go through Jordan which is time consuming and costly.

The growing connectivity between scenes and Palestinians does not respond to an easy freedom of movement outside Palestine. Apart from Jordan, where Palestinians have 'open' access without needing a visa (although Jordanians cannot go to Palestine), the rest of the countries have visa requirements for Palestinian passport holders to enter. It is not easy for Palestinians to go to SWANA-Levant countries either, where they are also subjected to strict bureaucratic processes. Getting a visa, especially for Europe or USA is complicated and tedious, needing many documents, and many times they are not granted. This contrasts with the visa-free Schengen Area in Europe, influencing how European artists can travel and get booked easily without much disturbance. In the Palestinian case, often artists are not able to perform due to visa denegations[48], like ODDZ (Odai) who told me he had been denied entry to the UK multiple times without any apparent reason. This visa-system also unfortunately means that small or independent venues are not able to cover the costs of booking a Palestinian artist, since the process of getting out of the country (through Jordan) together with the visa application is relatively expensive. The significance of this system of borders, identification and nationality for Palestinians and in this case, for the development of a scene and artists careers, should not be dismissed. Even for more established and privileged Palestinians, it is a process they still need to go through, and sometimes unsuccessfully.

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[48] In this interview, Sama Abdulhadi and Sassouki Salma they discuss passport and visa issues for Palestinians https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OJ3wjgwlZY from 8:00 min.

If mobility and freedom of movement are practically impossible for many Palestinians within '67 Palestine, Covid-19 has also reshaped the map of mobility, making some participants reconsider their residency in Palestine. These decisions seem to have been precipitated by Covid and lockdown, together with the previous living conditions, the difficulties for developing a career, and the general political climate. These are all underlying motivations causing many to move out. Especially for artists, the conditions for creating, producing and organising parties within '67 Palestine are so restricting in many ways, that some have decided to live outside to be able to continue their careers in better conditions. Many from the 'first generation' no longer live in Ramallah since few years ago. Many others travel and move enough to reshape the feeling of living permanently in Ramallah. And the most relevant issue, almost all of them told me is that they plan to move out of the country eventually, at least for some period of time:

> *this is what we always say as Palestinians, I wanna leave and then you leave and then once you've left, I wanna come. Then you come back, like, what am I doing here? Yeah. I wanna leave again because it's a cycle of, yeah, being here, you see what's here and you try to improve it, but then you wanna go outside and try* (in person interview, June 2022) narrates Jana, who had studied abroad and then came back to Ramallah.

Living outside Palestine for Palestinians is usually outlined in reference to people who find themselves forced to migrate due to occupation. Exile, expulsion, displacement, estrangement, dislocation, and uprootedness are the sort of 'mobility' that the majority Palestinians have been forced to encounter (Loddo, 2017). In this case, it has a different nature and emphasises the heterogeneous, although not main, landscape of Palestinians that live outside Palestine. Mobility here is broadly understood as movement, as circulation that implies either the possibility of returning to the place of departure or to another destination. A sort of mobility that the majority of Palestinians are not able to pursue. Although deeply influenced by occupation and the material living conditions that it brings, the majority of Palestinians from the scene that have moved out or live (temporarily or permanently) outside the territories, have the possibility of coming back. There are as well a few exceptions of Palestinians from the scene unable to return for political reasons. But in general, the sort of mobility that is being looked at goes more in line with the movement of global elites that are able to choose where to live and then return to their place of origins to visit, for holidays or to

establish themselves again. Nevertheless, the movement I am presenting here is not one of 'free will' aspirational mobility untied of restrictions, pressures and difficulties. Many of the participants' mobility has been painful and arduous, with feelings of estrangement, outsideness and even betrayal to the ones that have stayed.

There are relevant power dynamics at work. Mobility is linked to social class, and more particularly, *wasta* connections and influence. The fact that many participants and artists had to move out because they could not continue their careers or lives as they wanted, shows how 'there is as much un-freedom in mobility as there is in fixity' (Gill, et al., 2013:304) meaning that being 'forced' to leave to pursue a career or a different type of living shows the paradox of mobility. Hence, to understand this concrete mobility, it is necessary to pay attention to the structures of privilege that facilitate (freedom) it as well as the ones that have pushed participants to migrate (fixity, restriction). In this case, the participants' internal and external mobility do not conform to the general experience and representation that surrounds them. If mobility in Palestine is lived (and reproduced) by restrictions and lack of freedom, their easier mobility partially reconfigures this image. Only partially because of the fact that some are pushed to leave due to the lack of opportunities or the violence. There is privilege but within powerful restrictions. As has been seen in this section, these difficulties in relation to producing music and being able to live off it derive from the lack of spaces in the city, the complexities of touring outside, to the restriction of movement and freedom to get together wherever in the territories (remember Areas A, B, C division).

Coming back to Cresswell (2010) and to the idea of the experience of mobility rather than only displacement in itself , although as it has been seen displacement entails big importance alone, the affective emerges. Mobility is embedded in the affective as it moves peoples and brings a series of emotional responses: missing friends, saying goodbye to people, feelings of betrayal or remorse because of not transforming their own local space as shown in some interviews. Jana says

> *A lot of times I wanted to leave, like since I came back in 2018, the whole, like for a whole year, I'm like, I'm leaving, I'm leaving. I'm gonna leave. I have to go. Yeah. Uh, but then, you know, I [00:15:00] wanted, uh, to stay and try, I try to make something here. Yeah. Even though the society's a bit restrictive suffocating, and it's not gonna change* (in person interview, June 2022).

Jana's thoughts encapsulate very well these feelings on leaving, or not being able to leave, belonging to constitute music scenes, and the particularities of the context make this movement even more relevant for the participants' affective lives.

All these dynamics of movement and migration need to be located in a wider context of dance floors and music production and economies of (unequal) distribution, influencing the shape and dynamics of electronic music scenes globally. These networks of mobility, creativity and collaboration are transforming ethnocentric perceptions of what a scene is, as something cohesive, stable, rooted in a specific place or coalescing around a few genres or styles. It also challenges notions of mobility, touring, exchange and collaboration between scenes without restrictions and borders.

Deterritorialisation and virtuality

One of the effects of this mobility is the progressive deterritorialisation that the scene is experiencing. Jointly with the ideas of affective assemblage, conviviality and generative resistance, deterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; DeLanda, 2016) is the notion that guides this thesis to understand the spatial processes that traverse the scene. DeLanda (2016) outlines deterritorialisation as a process of decreasing density, a dispersion of the population and the elimination of some rituals. The pervading restrictions of the occupation in the development and the deceleration of the last years (2020-2022) due to Covid-19, and internal tensions which were commented on previously, have accelerated this process. The Palestinian spatial scattering carries a deterritorial nature. Principally through a loss of territory in the most material sense due to the ongoing illegal occupation of Palestinian land, which does not affect Ramallah directly (Area A), but other areas of Palestine. Also, through a decimation of parties and peoples, as a result of the current tense environment and people moving out of the area. As such, I frame the scene's deterritorialisation by way of three main elements: (1) the scattering/mobility of people (forced and voluntary), (2) the loss of events and (3) the rise of virtuality. This notion emphasises the diffusion and the elimination of some rituals (parties and in person collaborations) due to the physical separation that exists between Palestinians, and due to the repression brought on over the last few years. Centring this dynamic helps to understand the unstable cohesivity of the scene in a material and territorial sense. This is precisely why the scene, and this project, are profoundly embedded in geographic spaces that are subject to constant change.

First, Ramallah, a supposedly initial hub, is witness of a constant movement of people that leave the city or directly the country, temporarily or permanently. Second, not only people's presence is unstable, but events and parties are realities influenced by the political context and suffocating structures of repression that do not allow it to develop steadily or freely. The suspension and closure of parties (mainly due to martyrdom and Israeli violence), and the lack of fixed venues do reinforce this movement of deterritorialisation where many artists and crowds need to be outside for their careers to develop or assist to what they see as more developed and safe electronic music scenes. There is a general feeling among participants of longing to leave, which contrasts to the discourse of 'stay on the land' characteristic of Palestinian *sumūd*. This longing, thus, is mediated by hesitation, senses of betrayal or commitment to stay.

This deterritorialisation is also unfolding 'online' (the internet, streaming platforms, radio shows and sets and music collaborations). The term virtuality refers to online radio, streaming platforms and other social media channels (such as Instagram) that make tangible the decentralised global nature of electronic music. This process infuses an important characteristic in how music is distributed and consumed. The reduced physicality of a 'scene's infrastructure', such as record shops or music studios push distribution to DIY spaces (home studios) and online. This side of music scenes is everywhere (many artists work in home studios and collaborate online), but this dynamic is exacerbated in this context due to the lack of such spaces and infrastructures. In the SWANA region, online platforms are a critical tool for connection and collaboration amidst travel restrictions and economic barriers.

In the Levant, there are multiple online radio stations, many of them have exploded in the last years (Radio Alhara, Radio Flouka, Noods Radio, Ma3azef, Cantina, Radio Nard, micro.radio). In Palestine, Radio Alhara and Radio Nard (the last non active right now) are the two main ones. They encompass a DIY ethos and a collaborative programme, curating online (usually previously recorded) shows with artists all over the region and also from outside SWANA countries. Importantly, the presence of Palestinian musicians and DJs is significant in other radio stations and shows such as 'Refugee worldwide', where ODDZ, Falyakon and Muqata'a often collaborate. It shows how these channels are central to the development of music scenes in this region, especially due to the difficulties to collaborate in person otherwise. To picture this, Farash, a DJ and radio curator from Jordan said to me:

Everyone started using it, in my opinion, because there is no consistent place where people can showcase their work, communicate with each other and have a platform to do everything they want without any obstacles. It is not only too hard, it is also very expensive. It isn't just like you can get onto a train or a plane and pay 100 euro and you're somewhere else. It is much more expensive. That's a huge obstacle for people to meet up. Radio world and online atmosphere allows so many people to collaborate with each other (online interview, February 2022).

If online radio stations are playing an essential role in the distribution and dissemination of the electronic music scene worldwide, especially during and after Covid-19, in this context, they are crucial platforms for artists and DJs that face stricter restrictions of movement and difficulties of getting VISAs to physically go to some countries. For instance, apart from online radio stations, music distribution takes the shape of collaborations through music compilations (published to buy on Bandcamp generally). During the last years, a rising range of compilations and collaborations with humanitarian and political focus have been released by various record labels from the region and beyond (such as Avon Terror Corps, Al Gharib 001 and 002), with many tracks talking directly about the situation in the region. They also share a commitment to engage in local and regional scenes and boost Palestinian presence globally. This is the goal of the Exist Festival, mentioned earlier, a Palestinian/Arab-lead initiative that hosts showcases and parties with Palestinian DJs and producers and international artists who have a strong commitment in uniting ties between people and territories. In a recent collaboration with Teheran artists in Berlin, Exist Festival shares their vision in an Instagram[49] post by saying:

Exist Festival aims to cultivate unity between Palestinian & global artists, performers, labels, visual artists and sound designers from various parts of the world. A factor that binds these artists is their desire to influence their environments through their fight for anti-colonialism within the Palestinian context […] The artists involved share the mutual ethical and humanitarian ethos of Exist, demonstrated through their distinctive approach to their mediums of expression, with a desire to contribute to the longevity and evolution of the regional sonic subculture (Posted on 22/10/2022).

Hence, there is a quest for collaboration and unity within this movement of deterritorialization, and probably, more vehemently, because of that.

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[49] Exist Festival post https://www.instagram.com/p/Cj_JptGM4bn/

To sum up my argument, this deterritorialising dynamic frames the scene as a movement traversing different spaces that entail risk, instability and fragility, focusing on all the cities and places where Palestinians live, travel and collaborate, not only in the 'occupied territories' nor physically. It includes all the people that have moved out in the last months or years, that were displaced by war, the *Intifadas* (انتفاضة) or the *Nakba* (النكبة), also includes the ones that remained inside '48 Palestine or the ones that have never been to Palestine. It is seeing the scene as a *deterritorial* global dialogue (Gilroy, 2000) that encapsulates deeply heterogenic daily realities.

As explained in the literature, I critically locate the idea of 'Palestinian diaspora'[50] as a framework to understand the scene pointing out the impossibility to homogenise. Some Palestinians living outside see themselves as diaspora, some of them not. Some of them have just moved out or have studied abroad for a few years and then returned. But when being outside, Palestinians from the diaspora and from the territories, interact and collaborate, making the later part of this community that has never actually lived in Palestine. It is a flexible terrain subjected very much to individual identifications. Even though the term diaspora helps in configuring an image of network, alliances and affect that share Palestinians living outside, regardless of whether they have lived all their lives outside as refugees or not, I am inclined to use *deterritorial* as the element to assemble together these dynamics, and to leave outside the potential homogenising effects of the term diaspora.

In conclusion, through the notion of deterritorialisation, it is possible to reflect on the relations within the scene that construct identities as a messy, contradictory and layered *spatial* experience, through a network of 'alliances' and dialogues. The functioning of this matrix is complemented with class and privilege dynamics that make possible in many ways, the existence of the scene and also its mobility.

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[50] As previously explained, there is no agreement as to whether the impossibility of return (Hall, 1995:206) or forced displacement (Schulz, 2003) are essential constitutive elements of the Palestinian diaspora. Therefore, I use the term deterritorial instead of diasporic. Nevertheless, diaspora also refers to the whole community living outside of Palestine for more reasons than the forced exile, and with an emphasis on belonging. Significantly, it implies an identifiable ethnicity and consciousness at departure and in exile (Peteet, 2007:629), which is our case. As Peteet argues, 'diaspora circulates simultaneously with a host of terms, such as migrants (voluntary and forced), internally displaced persons, refugees, exiles, guest workers, seasonal workers, overseas labor, expatriates, settlers, jet-setters, and tourists, to capture a broad range of mobilities' (2007:629). The notion of diaspora could be broadened to incorporate all the political ramifications related to living 'outside', even when they have the possibility of returning.

3. Assembling elements

The first research question: *how different social relations constitute and traverse the Palestinian electronic music scene?* is answered by exploring questions of music, affect, class and mobility. As said previously, the choice that I made to focus on these elements and the way I did it does not mean that there are no other dynamics that are also important. Perhaps I could have focused just on one to develop a deeper account. But as I have argued, these elements get articulated in relational ways and constitute each other, making it difficult to isolate them as independent categories as the idea of conviviality shows: the possibility of contraries 'existing' alongside each other (not neutrally or apolitically), whether it is in different city spaces next to each other, underground or neoliberal motivations within the scene, or intimate and strangerhood atmospheres happening at the same time. These make the scene an affective assemblage, and connect this lived practise with its wider context. Participants do not hold only resistant potential in them, but also power. The political and different power structures are also present, shaping possibilities and reproducing power such as inequality and exclusivity in their doings.

This chapter has tried to develop a nurtured and detailed account of these processes, moving beyond the traditional entanglement of music with occupation and identity. But occupation is still there, permeating these words and the participants' experience. In other words, this has been an exercise of assembling different elements together, connecting them and pushing them towards the direction of questioning how they are thought, lived and constructed. In the scene, this assemblage is messy and contradictory. It perhaps leaves many experiences and views behind, so it recognises its particularity and limitation in terms of voice (my own and the participants as well).

The next chapter will focus on the second research question: the relationship between resistance and the scene. The political and its articulation (resistance) have been influencing the narrative of all these chapters, having developed already some suggestions for the frameworks that have been used to explain Palestinian resistance. Now a closer look to resisting as a practice and discourse in the scene will help to assemble all these ideas together.

Chapter 5 - Resistance

'There is an optimism that consists in saying that things couldn't be better.
My optimism would consist in saying that so many things can be changed,
fragile as they are, more arbitrary than self-evident, more a matter of complex,
but temporary, historical circumstances than with inevitable anthropological constraints'.

(Foucault, 1988:156)

1. Introducing resistance

The walked path

The previous chapter explored the first research question regarding the scene. Music, affect, class and mobility intersect to constitute an affective assemblage that has shown how the particular character of the present deeply inhabits the scene. This chapter answers the second research question, the one that started this project and is embedded in its inception as a thesis: *how is resisting practised and constructed in the scene?* The verb 'practised' refers to the lived experience of the scene, the practices that emanate from it and the embodiment of those. The term 'constructed' tries to give room to think about the social and individual meanings and discourses given to resisting by its participants. This exploration aims to deepen the conceptualisations of the term to explain practices and discourses that escape traditional frameworks. These frameworks have been outlined and problematised in the literature, where we saw how youth culture has been traditionally framed as deviant and resistant by the subcultural school (Hebdige, 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 2006 and more), and how anchoring resistance can be a response to a structural position (such as class, age).

At the same time, this chapter aims to unravel the 'politics and discourses of resistance' in this context towards developing a critique that looks to internal but also external dynamics of romanticisation and neo-orientalism. Resistance in this context does not only come to be through the insider dynamics, but also from what is constructed and mediated in academic and media discourse, directly relating to how resistance is a contested and burdened concept within the scene. It differs, for instance, in how it is felt, how it is intimately discussed, how it is performed within a party, and how it is discussed with a foreign researcher. There are

differences between people and contexts, and the ways of *doing* and *discussing* resistance vary as well. This, from a researcher perspective, is important to incorporate.

The progressive shift that I have experienced towards the idea of resisting during this PhD resembles the general progression and critique that the notion has undergone within cultural studies in the last decades. My own positionality has informed this development too, as referred to in the methodology[51]. Like the work of the early CCCB and subcultural theory (f.e, Hebdige, 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 2006), I approached resistance in this context as something clearly graspable and observable, oppositional, derived from everyday practices and particularly, as an intentional response to the Israeli occupation. The notion of resistance, as any other catch-all term, is ambiguous, contradictory and traversed by many layers that often pull in different directions. As I advanced in my research, having analysed online sources and read extensively prior to my fieldwork, Foucauldian and Deleuzian perspectives were significant to give sense to the intergenerative relationship between power and resistance. Both operated in the context I was looking at, and the idea of resisting through electronic music, within the political context, turned more complex and contested. There are many messy and subtle ways of resisting that *generate* new spaces for sociality, but also for imagining and exploring in several (rhizomatic) directions. Foucauldian and post-Foucauldian theories (Foucault, 1978, 1980, 1982; Abu-Lughod, 1990; Butz & Ripmeester, 1999; Straw, 2001; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Lilja, 2008; Williams, 2009; Johansson & Lalander, 2012; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016; Lilja, 2018; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019) helped to assume that resisting subjects do not hold a single position in this relation, but multiple, being perfectly able to reproduce power structures while undermining some others at the same time.

Binarisms then have to fall down, if they were ever there, leaving space to think through hegemonic and counter/anti hegemonic moves, as colonising and recolonising flows. In an epistemological sense, there is something productive about tensions and conflicts. And about being uncomfortable in your own position. I am a product of a certain empathy or sensibility that is so afraid to inflict some pain on others, so afraid of reproducing power. The main change that I have endured along this path is the one that directly relates to my own

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[51] My own positionality towards the Palestinian struggle and resistance as a committed researcher informed by view on resistance as something necessary to be constructed collectively and not to be imposed by myself. The combination of being an outsider researcher and also a participant in dance scenes and committed with the Palestinian struggle, conveys several layers of privilege and proximity to the scene. At the same time, I deeply align with the idea that everything can be resistant (upon articulation) and everything is political.

positionality: embracing and embodying a critical standpoint towards romanticising, essentialising and objectifying drives that permeated the aims and rationale of this thesis. To try to figure out the practices and discourses of resistance within the scene as a starting point, although recognising how cultural resistance is more of a symbolic, every day and subtle process, was met with an assertive and articulated Palestinian critique. It was precisely these kinds of interests and approaches, coming for instance, from Western academia or media that are being seen with suspicion and frustration, at least from this segment of the population. As will be seen through this chapter, many Palestinians from the scene, and I would add other Arabs I met along the way, fervently rejected the attribution of 'resisting' (or more accurately, of a certain idea of resistance) to the scene while others did not. How to make sense of this then?

Some ways of linking resistance to any activity Palestinians and other people still living under (neo)colonial and imperialist regimes, have proved to reify monolithic conceptions about the 'other', and obscured internal dynamics of these realities. This is nothing new and as it has been seen in the literature, many scholars (f.i, Said, 1978, 1992; Spivak, 1988, 2010; Abu-Lughod 1990) in the field pointed to this decades ago. This does not mean, however, that resisting, in this case in the Palestinian context, is not profoundly linked with mere existence. Put simply, it is their 'being in the world' that is trying to be erased. Understanding everyday life as resistant (first discourse) does not invalidate the critique and possible reshape of traditional frameworks (second discourse) that have been used not only to study a reality, but also to construct a particular subjectivity. Moreover, if we seek to develop valuable and transformative approaches in our practice, it is necessary to open up and gather new sites of discussing and accommodating the plurality of resistances, practices and identities. Finally, this thesis unites power and resistance as entities that exist ensemble.

Power: from a monolithic oppression to an intersecting structure

In chapter 4, power relations are located at the same constitutive level as resistance: participants do engage in different power dynamics, but they are not located only as subjugated or oppressed individuals. They also generate and reproduce power and privilege. The inclusion and emphasis on power modulates the potential romanticisation of resisting: where there is resistance, there is power (Foucault, 1978). Resistance is not an all-encompassing activity. Power is oppression, dominance and hegemony, and it is not only experienced by participants, but also reproduced.

This means that power acts in a double way. In a structural sense, through the different institutions[52] (Israeli and Palestinian political regimes and authorities, family, religion, and academia) that operate in this context. In an individual sense, through the different power positions that individuals in the scene hold, as the social dynamics in chapter 4 have shown. Class, mobility, and gender in the scene work as markers of differentiation and reproduction of certain inequalities within society, as a result of the relative stable and safe position they embody ('the bubble'). The practices narrated below (section 2) are then presented as potential resistances and also power relations in a quest for locating power with the generative drive it has. In this sense, the entanglement with neo-orientalism and romanticisation is also part of this power critique that anchors the different structures that intervene in the context, not only internal from Palestine, but also external from international audiences and academia.

Apart from this Foucauldian imprint on power, the influence of Gramsci is also present in the analysis. First and foremost, because the creation of culture in Palestine has been a national enterprise since the establishment of the PA in 1993 (Tawil-Souri, 2011), in a quest for enclosing hegemonic power inside (against other factions), and outside of Palestine (against Israel). Second, Gramscian and neo-Gramscian readings (Shaw, 2001) in the literature review establish leisure and culture as sites of struggle and negotiation within society. The social practices emanating from the scene, which now are going to be analysed through a resistant lens, substantiate the Gramscian idea of culture as a space for transformation that directly or indirectly talks to power and the hegemonic consensus towards social practices, even unintentional, even (or precisely) when also pleasure, fun and escape are part of this. Importantly, leisure and fun are political, not because they compete with power to undermine it, but because of how they work in their own terms: how they transform realities, how they are of central importance in people's lives and ultimately, how, while doing this, they challenge the social order.

The plurality of resistances

A key argument linking chapter 4 (social relations constituting the scene) and this chapter is the plurality of experiences that traverse this context. What has come up with more strength,

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[52] The terms structure and institution (as they *structure* and *institute*) are used, as referred in the introduction, to the different systems of power that operate in this context: Israel regime, Palestinian regime (authorities, political parties and police), and other institutions such as 'the family' and 'religion' and international intervention/aid.

gaining a prominent reflective space in this thesis, are the discourses and meanings people give to this practice within Palestine and outside, rather than whether *they are actually resisting or not*. The difficulties that are found in ascribing a political potentiality in apparent 'apolitical' practices –such as some forms of leisure or popular culture in Palestine and elsewhere– are met with a divergent dynamic: a simplifying and objectifying reading that sets people in this context as unidirectional, flat subjects that only 'resist'. In my own fieldwork, I encountered both meanings of resistance as well. As previously stated, there are tensions and even attacks in Palestine on the scene because, among other reasons, it is not 'resistant' enough, it complies with the occupation because its people are 'forgetting' and 'enjoying' through these practices. That said, I also experienced what seems the opposite, a strong and quite often acritical narrative, usually coming from official, governmental, traditional or international channels, that find resisting as the only way to discursively construct 'Palestinianness'.

Finally, in this path of exploration and reflection, these two discourses are met with a third one already mentioned, the rejection of part of the Palestinians I met to link their scene's practices to resistance. The conjecture of the three is of central importance to make sense of why this idea is so contested in the context I was immersed in. At the end of the day, it felt that the critique to this attribution was not directed at the idea of resistance itself, but to the dynamics and motives behind this attribution, coming both from inside and outside. The way external but also internal sources have framed 'being Palestinian', and especially, the Western constructs on Arabs and Palestinians have affected this generation of young people that is simply tired of objectifying coverages, double standards and over-romanticisation of their doings (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Steward, 2013; Swedenburg, 2013; Theodossopoulos 2014; El Zein, 2016; Nooshin, 2017).

Hence, the dynamics already highlighted point towards various directions: the political nature of existence in Palestine that initially sets resistance in a clear and fixed framework, followed by a current climate of critique and refusal towards simplistic and traditional attributions of resistance (Tawil-Souri, 2011; Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014; El Zein, 2016), while at the same time, defending the existence of this resistance as an ontological frame. What does this mean for the study of resistance and culture in Palestine and beyond is a question of central importance. What this says about how research and representational systems work is also key in this chapter. More concretely, it is important to ask: is the framework of resistance still

important, and does it help us to understand some of the scene dynamics and motivations? Are there other ways of thinking of resistance within the Palestinian context and/or music scenes? What resisting are we talking about anyway? Who is involved? Who effects and gets affected by it? These questions will be problematised and analysed in this chapter and the next.

In the literature review, I developed a series of resistance frameworks and debates in relation to this context. The literature review intended to settle the base for understanding popular and everyday resistance (*sumūd*) in Palestine, the practice of music as resistance (with hip hop as the paramount) and the critique of romanticising these. El-Ghadban and Strohm (2013) develop three ways of framing culture in this context: as survival, as resistance, and as a site for humanitarian intervention and development. These discourses work as meta narratives, often infused by power *dispositifs*, that understand culture as a functionalist hub for resisting occupation and building national liberation. While not obliterating their entanglement with everyday resistance and Palestinian identity, the previous exploration within the literature now helps to locate the practices and discourses within the scene in relation (and questioning) to these 'resistant frameworks'. This reworking around the notion links back to the critique on resistant subcultures that I have already mentioned, as responses to larger dominant orders. Thus, the next section is a reconfiguration and broadening of the approaches explained, trying to open up new ways of thinking of resistance and music scenes.

The task of this chapter's first part is to develop the scene's political main practices/repertoires (section 2) and discourses (section 3). As I have been arguing, the scene is not a unitary resistant entity directed against a single subject/object. If any, it leans towards a generative network of practices that are diverse, practised, felt and narrated differently by these young Palestinians. Whether it is possible to think differently of resisting in Palestine or, as El Zein (2016) asks, if how Arab (and Palestinian) cultural production functions politically today can still be framed through resistant lenses are all areas that this chapter is exploring.

In the section on discourses (section 3), it will be seen that the 'resistance approach' is entangled in orientalism and neoliberal drives. Thus, the second part will focus more on these different narratives and perspectives embodied by participants and their response to Palestinian, international and scholarly readings on their actions. This thesis, as well as trying to develop a detailed account of the scene and dynamics such as resistance, is committed with

unfolding a critique of their own imbrication with privilege, neo-orientalism and coloniality that emerges and gets reproduced in this interest. As referred to in the methodology, this is not just as an acknowledgement or guilt free task, but rather as an epistemological reflection and tool of future research on its own.

2. Political and resisting dynamics through the scene

This section draws on fieldwork and conversations I had with Palestinians and my (micro)ethnographic experience in Ramallah (as well as Haifa, Bayt Lahm, and Amman). This development is entangled in theoretical frameworks that conceive resistance as a process that can be generative rather than oppositional, unorganised and rhizomatic, contingent and contradictory, and deeply entangled in power relations. It draws on the ongoing social construction of the term, the embodied practice, the experience through it and the process of meaning making that traverses the debate.

This section is going to discuss the 'practices' that are articulated through the scene. With practices I mean actions, exercises, materialisations of political dynamics through the parties and nights out. These practices were perceived and visible during fieldwork, but there could be many more. The ones developed here are the ones connecting with the main dynamics that I analyse in the first research question: (a) the question of music and sound, (b) the question of affect and intimacy and (c) the question of space, deterritorialisation and mobility which are all mediated by (d) class. Within these practices, the relationship between different agents involved (scene's participants, Palestinian authorities and society, Israel, international audiences, and academia), are also included because as I have been insisting, these resistances are intersectional with different powers and structures and not with a single power relation.

The dynamics of resistance, with the impossibility of affirming a clear one-way direction, present a layered structure which shows its moving nature: its conceptualisation and experience differ between participants, it is practised rather than asserted, it is a verb instead of a noun or an essence, an exercise that depends on its articulation with other elements to exist.

As argued in the previous chapter, the political elements comprising the scene (affect, class, mobility, music) depend on articulation to function and be read 'as resistance'. In the

following section, resistance is understood as (1) cultural creation, (2) community building despite Israeli and international oppressive borders, (3) boycott to Israel pinkwashing and calls for international solidarity, (4) the articulation of safer spaces for expressing sexualities, queerness and gender, and (5) escape, fun and pleasure as political embodied affects. These practices correspond to the articulation that the potentiality of resisting within the scene has; assuming the problematic that these attributions entail and ultimately asserting that each individual will relate to this assertion differently.

Contrary to the international narrative focusing on Israel and the occupation, Palestinian *sultah* restricting force plays a major role in shaping the potential resistance of the scene. The opposition of Palestinian authorities and people also push the boundaries towards the labelling of the scene as resistance. Hence, resistance is *relational*: it depends on who is framed within this relation as to whether it has some effects on others – for instance, it depends whether we are looking at Palestinian authorities, Israel, international audiences or their families. Each of these structures play a role in the development of resistant practices. This relationality comes from the Foucauldian relationship between power and resistance: the existence of a power that is being challenged gives meaning to such practise, which not necessarily exists to resist but does so. If power wants your culture erased and subjugated, then creating culture is a form of resisting; if power wants you obedient and normative in sexual, gender and moral terms, then expressing yourself freely is a form of resisting; if power wants you separated from each other by borders, then being together across territories is a form of resisting. For now, a development of the practices in itself aims to centre the practise before the theory. Following the inductive perspective signalled in the methodology, it will not be until the discussion part of this thesis that generative resistance is conceptualised.

2.1. Making music, making parties… Creating culture

The practice of 'creating culture' is linked to more traditional notions of resistance. General definitions of cultural resistance see activity as a means to an end, as 'the practice of using meanings and symbols, that is, culture, to contest and combat a dominant power, often constructing a different vision of the world in the process' (Duncombe, 2007). The functionalist idea of 'using' culture for the purpose of actively resisting ('music as resistance') is far from the scene's main dynamics.

In this context, I understand this relation as a creative one, not just relying on using cultural symbols, but generating them. The scene's 'creation' of culture is the most visible, general and relatable to other forms of cultural resistance in Palestine. First of all, following Swedenburg (1989) and Tawil Souri (2011) among many others: the act of creating culture in a context where this same culture is being persecuted, blocked, silenced and erased, is a form of resistance. Within the scene, what I term as 'creating culture' refers to two main processes: the music process, related to producing and creating music and the social-dance process, related to partying, dancing, listening to music and socialising.

Producing music (culture) is done individually or through collaborations and networks between people. It is pursued as a way of expressing oneself, one's feelings and experiences, exploring sounds and techniques, and having fun and escaping from everyday reality and boredom. In other words, it is not subjugated to power structures (doing music or parties because of being occupied or having neoliberal development) but entangled with it. Partying, listening and dancing refer to the social gatherings that articulate the scene as a collective and public movement that does not conflate only to the individual. Collective practices are a key part in music scenes that are assembled together through these. This is especially true in a context where dancing has specific connotations in terms of gender and sexuality for women, and partying in general, both entailing a moral and political dimension. These practices are embedded also in a context of different structures that do not align with or 'accept' (*haram*) this particular creation of culture, as will be seen later. It is this public aspect of the scene, manifestations of dancing and partying, that possess a more tense relationship with internal power structures.

Therefore, 'creating culture' and its political possibilities appear quite straightforward if conceived as a form of generation that challenges erasure, normativity or boredom. In this sense, Yara asserts that *"we are not partying to be free from the occupation, we party because we don't have anything else to do with our lives"* (online interview, September 2019).

In the literature, Tawil Souri (2011) argued that the problematic in this sense is the need for these manifestations to be directly resistant or openly political in Palestine. Here is where the idea of an 'imperative' resistance discourse and outlook in creating culture comes, as if the very act of creating in itself was not political enough. Even participants, such as Yara have a critical perspective of this:

the music is only something I am interested in. It is very far away from my identity. My identity is more related to local initiatives, to something that makes me feel I am part of this nation, part of this initiative. This is more what I am inclined to. This is more about how we are living day by day as Palestinians and trying to find our identity in the cities. But not just a party where you pay a ticket, you go and party and you leave. The other stuff makes me feel more connected (online interview, September 2019).

Finally, creating culture/music is also entangled in networks of power. Culture does not only generate resistance but also reproduces power and inequality. As already mentioned in the previous chapter when discussing class and cultural capital, the neoliberal cultural landscape is an active subject in this process. The possibility of producing and distributing music, also shows this privilege, even if it is in very limited and DIY conditions. Artists have enough resources to have some hardware and equipment, not without hardship and difficulties of bringing it from outside. Distribution networks are easier though, as having an internet connection is enough to be able to share their music online and collaborate with other artists. Within a generalised precarious and funding-dependant music sector in Palestine, the scene moves in between privilege and dependence, showing at the same time the inequality between the vast majority of Palestinian society and part of the young artistic/music elite from the *de facto* capital.

2.2. Challenging dispersion and scattering

In previous chapters, it has been seen how the existence of controls, restrictions, rigid borders and closures foster geographical dispersion and difficulties for Palestinians to freely move between '67 cities, enter Gaza, go to '48 or abroad. This, jointly with Covid-19 and the precarious situation for musicians, has exacerbated the scene's deterritorialisation. If the scene is deterritorial in many senses, the networks required to keep the scene that collaborates and forms communal participation needs to be fuelled and maintained. This endorses specific relevance if it is thought of in relation to the systemic scattering and splintering of the Palestinian population which has taken place for many decades (see Figure 8).
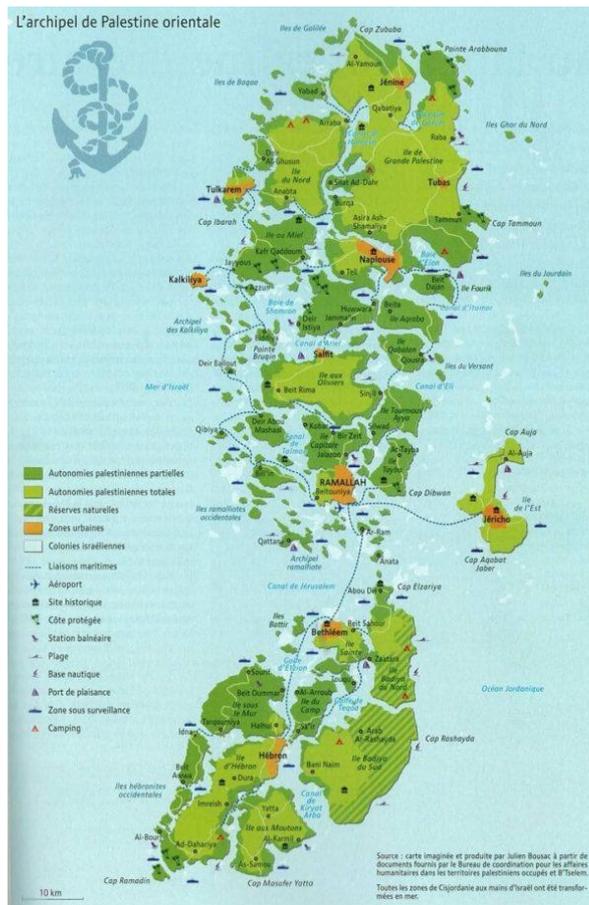
Figure 8. Palestinian map as an archipielago.

Deeply entangled in affective intimacies and friendships, the scene challenges the historically forced separation of Palestinians by getting together, bringing artists from '48 to '67 and from '67 to '48, and also by playing their music outside when they are able to and meeting with diaspora Palestinians. One rationale behind Palestinians forced separation into different territories is to weaken their sense of community and unity, therefore, the fact that there are encounters between Palestinians of different territories counterweights this dynamic. Again, the clear interpellation to the settler colonialist structure meets with privilege and mobility, as has been seen in chapter 4. The fact that some can (eventually) navigate these restrictions and move between border points towards the specificity of the scene's sociological composition, contrasts with the majority of Palestinians that have this restricted mobility, even though, as said, many Palestinians from the scene find it equally as difficult to move.

This diminished mobility helps to create a reduced but stable network of collaboration between both scenes that is helping the Ramallah scene to have alternative spaces to play (mainly Haifa), despite the blockades and impossibilities of daily life in '67 Palestine. It was

first in 2018 when Jazar Crew (Haifa) crossed to '67 Palestine to play in the Boiler Room marking a significant moment in the collaboration between both scenes. This generates a shared sense of purpose and brings closer the different lived experiences of Palestinians born in modern day Israel and in the West Bank, something that Israel has strongly tried to avoid through all the mobility restrictions. It is generating a resistance against this separation that does not emerge intentionally as a response to that scattering. It is simpler, they want, as any other scene, to get together, move around to visit different spaces and scenes to collaborate and showcase their work. Syam, a female DJ from Jordan with multiple connections with the Palestinian scene told me how the scene works for her,

> it is *just like people connecting with other people based on their interests, based on their values, creating community, alternate families, you know, it's like your second family that transcends all of the political and the walls and the borders and the apartheid* (online interview, June 2021).

This sense of sharing a common horizon and motivations to create music and parties has been reinforced through the online and virtual community, which is an essential aspect as has been seen in the previous chapter. These relatively new forms of collaboration are reshaping the notion of space and the impossibilities of getting together. Moreover, they have conveyed platforms for articulating solidarity and resistance in many ways, launching campaigns, calling for boycotting Israel, raising awareness and politicising in general the field of 'international' electronic music through doing residencies/shows on different radio programmes around the globe.

2.3. The politics of a (committed) dancefloor: solidarity and boycott

The politics of a (committed) dance floor references the discourses, practices and commitments participants elaborate on and exercise around ethical, social and political issues that directly affect how scenes operate and understand themselves. In the Palestinian context, the politics of the dance floor is entangled with positionalities in relation to Israeli occupation, boycott, and 'art-washing'[53]. Calls for cultural boycott against Israeli institutions, organisations and artists that have ties with Israel or Israeli embassies are an important tool for resisting and raising awareness in the matter, especially outside Palestine. The question of 'art-washing' and pinkwashing Israeli's image abroad is an ongoing issue that always brings

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[53] Using arts to 'clean up' one's own image (from big corporations to States such as Israel) to portray a friendly, caring and tolerant display towards the public opinion.

international campaigns from organisations such as The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) created in 2004 within BDS (Boycott, Disinvestment, Sanctions) or more localised initiatives against a party or event. The BDS campaign has been an important tool for sanctioning and isolating Israel from the rest of the world.

In relation to electronic music festivals and events, several organisations, DJs or organisers act through this committed ethos[54]. This sort of resistance connects with more direct ways of opposing and challenging Israel, refusing to normalise relationships with the settler colonial regime either in Israel or outside. As such, boycott movements defend the responsibility of artists to listen the request of Palestinians.

> It's particularly important for DJs to do this because Tel Aviv presents itself as a hub of dance music. Israel has a strategy it calls "Brand Israel", a way to show its "prettier face" through culture. Participating in Tel Aviv's propaganda image as a "party city" contributes to the whitewashing, or art-washing, of Israeli crimes against Palestinians' recalls Samir Eskanda, a Palestinian musician and BDS activist (Faber, 2018b:np).

In 2018, the #DJsForPalestine campaign was launched and joined by several DJs such as Ben UFO, Four Tet or collectives like Discwoman, and called for a cultural boycott on Israel over its continued human rights abuse against Palestinians.

In the last few years, there have been a series of Israeli attacks on Gaza and West Bank, with expanding settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing in Masafer Yatta, Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, among many examples. As a response, many online campaigns and collaborations have been launched to raise awareness, boycott and spread solidarity. One example of this is the 'Sonic Liberation Front', 'an initiative by a group of sound platforms and sound artists who came together to unify their sound for Palestine and protest against the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people' (Radio Alhara, 2021). They launched a campaign with t-shirts to raise funds alongside awareness of the situation during May 2021 and it continues to this day, doing radio shows on different online platforms.

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[54] Although out of the scope of this thesis, it is important to note the labelling of anti-Semitic for BDS supporters. It generates, especially in some cities like Berlin (with a presence of German Antideutsche movement), a confrontation within the club scene with some organisers and members of the public supporting this view of 'criticising and boycotting is anti-Semitic' such as the club ://about blank. It entails large stances of controversy, reducing the window for publicly speaking for Palestinians' rights.
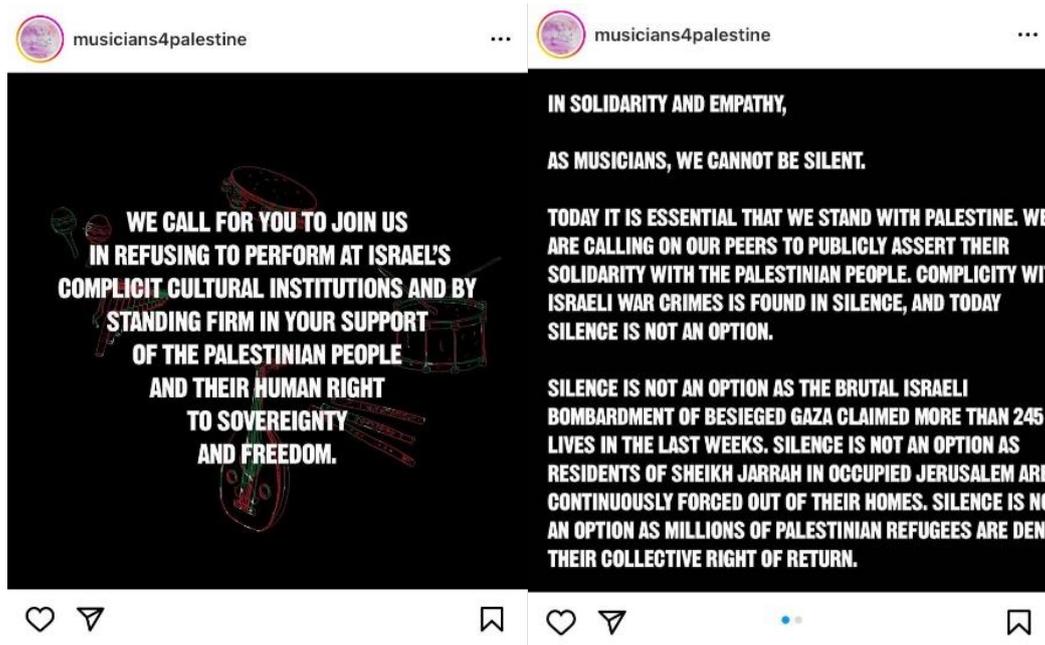
Figure 9. Musicians for Palestine campaign.

Similarly, "Musicians for Palestine" (see Figure 9) launched in May 2021 was launched as a response to Israeli violence and attacks. They created a letter calling for boycott and solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. In September 2021, they reached over 600 signatures from musicians all over the world[55].

The face of boycott and the politics of a committed dance floor inside Palestine have their own dynamics. Departing from the same stand: not collaborating in any way with Israeli institutions (in this case, venues, festivals, promoters and artists), the reality of the interconnection and inter-dependency between Israel and Palestine (Haddad, 2018) makes a clear-cut boycott complex for many. Israel co-opts the Palestinian economy and culture and makes it dependant to participating in their circuits, especially in terms of consumption (buying their products, energy, etc.) or work (Palestinians working for Israeli companies, from construction to tech). This issue has parallel dynamics in the scene, having to position themselves in terms of playing or partying in Israel and under what circumstances[56]. As seen in chapters 3 and 4, there are Palestinians that party and play in Haifa, where the Palestinian community is bigger than in Tel Aviv or Jaffa, and they run some venues, such as Kabareet or the Rabbit Hole. The difficulty of boycotting then appears when the venues or organisers

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[55] They are musicians from all around the world. More info here: https://musiciansforpalestine.com/our-letter
[56] This 'circumstances' mean who runs the venue (Palestinian or Israeli), what sort of DJs play there (mixed, mostly Israeli, international…), what audience it attracts (mostly Israeli, also Palestinian…)

are Israeli (such as The Block in Tel Aviv, which defends an inclusive and tolerant atmosphere), mixed (The Block has a Palestinian manager and Palestinian audience which is very rare) or have some Israelis attending the parties (Kabareet). Hence, the question of 'coexistence' provokes different responses and positions within Palestinians, also very different if they were born in '48 Palestine or '67, as this article shows (Faber, 2018b) (this is the only article I found which referenced to the internal aspect of boycott). Therefore, boycott is practised by Palestinians, exemplified by not playing or partying in Israeli venues (especially those from the West Bank) that generates an articulated sense and practice of resistance towards Israeli attempts of assimilation and normalisation. This takes us to the next element, the importance of having spaces in which to feel safe, welcomed and freer.

2.4. Building safer and freer spaces

Another element is the creation of safer and freer spaces for different non-hegemonic identities and aesthetics within the scene. In general terms, these coalesce around the LGTBQ community and non-normative, bohemian lifestyles and values. The chapter on the scene showed how creating a sense of belonging, community and safety was one of the central motivations for people to get involved in the 'nights out' and the scene. This preoccupation towards inclusivity, visibilisation and mutual support is fostered especially by female and queer people. The presence of women in the scene is not only visible, but protagonist. Both participants and artists have active roles in curating, promoting and DJing, examples of this being Sama Adbulhadi, Makimakkuk, Sarouna, Ya Hu, Falyakon and Bint Mbareh important DJs and producers in the region and outside. For instance, in 2018, Sarouna, a DJ and music producer from Ramallah, founded the label Tawleef, as a safe artistic space for women to work in electronic music (Hazboun, 2023) and the same with UNION, a collective (mix gender) leaded by Sama Abdulhadi, as seen in chapter 4.

Not having enough alternative and DIY spaces in the city to express themselves and behave freely has been already pointed out in chapters 3 and 4. In the parties, there is an articulation of 'sexual diversity, gender equality, individual liberties, secularity and a bohemian lifestyle' (Karkabi, 2013:310). The lack of regular spaces talks back to the wider process of space dispossession by Israel on the one hand, and the neoliberalisation and urban development (Taraki, 2008a, 2008b; Abufarha, 2009) on the other hand. However, the most important potential resistance is the creation of safer and freer temporal spaces out of the judgemental society's gaze on to the (gendered) body.

The body, especially the female and queer body, is a battle ground that directly connects with the context that surrounds it. In general, gender relations within the scene operate between patriarchal and feminist values. As said before, during my presence there, I felt a relative widespread sense of freedom and ease in relation to gender expression and sexuality during the nights out and parties. I could not distinguish relevant sexist dynamics in this sense, since many females are DJs and producers, and there were also equally present on the dance floor. I am sure there were more intimate dynamics at play that would perhaps counterbalance this view, but in general, gender and sexuality had a more troublesome relationship with the outside (family, society and young males) than within the scene.

The question of public space, of moving bodies between spaces (from home to the street towards the 'safety' of the venue), transitioning and walking through them, appeared in many conversations, shaping female participants relationship with their bodies, clothing and sense of safety in public, and building a safer feeling within the scene. Being visible or invisible is not a choice: you cannot disguise a body and you cannot hide it. This is especially striking while walking on the streets and you clash with others' gazes and interactions. Nadia reflects on this and her relationship to dressing and walking in public:

> *in the end, this is my space. Like, this is where I'm from. This is where I live. This is where I've been my whole life. I have the right to exist here, how I want to exist. And I do, I guess also do have the responsibility to kind of push the boundaries a little* (online interview, June 2022).

Bodies are there, facing society, being watched, judged, scrutinised, and just sometimes, very few, going unnoticed, until they enter a safer space, not always safe though. As Nadia says about the scene,

"I think it can be liberatory because you can be free in your body" (online interview, June 2022), especially in comparison to how some non-hegemonic aesthetics ('Western') are judged by the public, as she emphasises. Jana also makes a similar point:

> *we're our whole day being judged. We're working and we're walking in Ramallah streets with these eyes on us. So at least just at night, we wanna, you know, let loose, and forget about all of them* (in person interview, June 2022).

This opens up a sort of 'embodied resistance' (Shinko, 2016), about how bodies 'talk back' to power, in this case the body does not only challenge Israeli power for being and existing as a Palestinian (pleasurable and alive) body, it especially, as the accounts show, challenges the power of Palestinian society over bodies and alternative identities. The creation and support of these spaces and parties are a way of building a sense of comfortability and freedom, articulating a sense of belonging that comes back to the affective and intimate network explained in chapter 4. For many, this was a central aspect for going out, beyond the music: the sense of belonging and freedom with being oneself. Through generating these spaces, embodying different ways of looking, walking, dressing and dancing, they are opening up and challenging societal patriarchal norms that even though are performed within these 'safer' spaces, its effects fall beyond the dance floor by making participants feel belonging to a like-minded community.

2.5. Escaping, pleasure, having fun

Having fun, pleasure and escape are central driving forces within music and dance scenes, especially queer scenes or scenes that in are vulnerable positions with their 'outside' (Buckland, 2002; Muñoz, 2009; Khubchandani, 2020). For the purpose of this reflection, fun and pleasure are notions work very close to each other but there are some differences between them. In this context, I refer to a pleasure and fun as affective and emotional states that are experienced during nights out or parties. They are 'embodied "public feelings" generated in moments of convivial encounter' (Khalili, 2016:585). They are more spontaneous and dependant on external factors: the vibe, the quality of the party, the current political context, etc. Fun and pleasure are therefore mediated by the atmosphere, as well as 'external' events and tensions, and they are not always present or felt intensely during some parties.

Therefore, while fun and pleasure are mediated and sometimes precarious, escape is present as one of the goals in itself of partying. Hence, the idea that appears with more strength is escaping as a conscious practice which often appeared in conversations. Indeed, it is thought as a way of keeping oneself mentally healthy and balanced in this context. In literature that also analyses the scene, participants recall the necessity to escape from daily oppression and occupation through dancing and partying (Perl, 2021) which, risking being a simplification of motives for partying, encapsulates the centrality of escaping from the everyday. Some of these attributions can lead towards an intensification of 'what leisure is supposed to do' or as

parties as permanent places for escape and pleasure, when sometimes they do not, as I have been arguing. Ahmed, a male DJ from Palestine, raised in Amman and living now in Ramallah describes going out as *"switching off a lot of things that in your daily life you think of, but at the same time, they're resembled within you"* (in person interview, June 2022).

This escapism resembles to the notion of utopianism in queer nightlife (Muñoz, 2009). The author also explores leisure as a space where norms can be challenged and everyday reality escaped, advancing for some a radical imagination of an alternative world. In a similar way, the parties and encounters are used to imprint their political and social vision, escaping how resistance should be done within this context and articulating their own way of doing it. In the scene, however, the dialectical relationship between hope and disappointment that informs utopianism is rather inclined into disappointment and frustration, an 'often heartbreaking reality' (Muñoz, 2009:207) that are, at the same time, traversed by happiness and fun.

The questions of happiness and having fun are obviously not restricted to the scene but present through everyday life in the whole society (Khalili, 2016; Junka-Aikio, 2016). Jean-Klein (2001) and Kelly (2008) narrate different accounts on the first and second Intifadas in relation to everyday life, whereas in the first there was a 'suspension' towards nationalisation and resistance, in the second one, everyday activities continued and were embraced[57]. Many authors have explored the relationship between pleasure and occupation in this context, arguing that moments of pleasure are 'caesuras in the massive apparatus of power' (Khalili, 2016:583) 'that renders the very pursuit of happiness a manifestation of resilience and of resistance at the same time' (Taraki, 2008:17).

They are also shaped as tools for youth empowering and participation through non-normative channels (Riley et al., 2010; Giaever Lopez, 2022). Pleasure in this context entails a politics of the present moment that can generate fissures on the walls of power since escaping having fun, and feeling pleasure are processes of living the present-day life away from work, neoliberal constraints and political difficulty. Sama Abdulhadi insisted on this in numerous interviews:

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[57] As a clarification, it is important to know that these 'two ways' of engaging in the Intifadas are not all-encompassing experiences. It is rather a way of arguing that the Palestinian relationship with everyday life and the struggle has been shifting in the last few decades towards keeping and defending leisure and pleasure as part of their lives.That does not mean nonetheless that it was not present before or was inexistent during the Intifada.

I started dancing. Six hours later, the party ended and I was confused because I went into a different zone […] all of a sudden, hours [on the dancefloor] would pass and I wouldn't think about politics (Balram, 2023).

The debate about 'forgetting the struggle' and 'forgetting being Palestinian' gets complexed by the politics of pleasure and escape, especially if they are done through non-normative practices. Temporal moments of oblivion, ecstasy, collective effervescence and escape do not entail a negation of the context or situation, but a different and specific relation to it. According to participants, it rather helps to keep living in such a context and deal with their emotions:

> *anytime I step on the dance floor, I'm working through something without even knowing, you know, I'm working through some kind of emotion that I'm feeling, I'm releasing it while I'm dancing, letting it go, I'm dealing with it (...) Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but also you can't negate the outside environment and what effect that has on the dance floor either* (in person interview, June 2022) claims Ali, a male DJ from Ramallah.

For Islamism, Bayat argues that this polarisation with youth leisure practices encompasses bigger opposition when they are informed by western technologies of fun and are framed in terms of 'western cultural import' (2010:139) as in the Palestinian context: an opposition to these practices precisely because they are understood as either alienating fun and pleasure or normalisation through escaping. In this case, participants argue that Israelis do not directly oppose the scene's manifestations of fun or pleasure:

> *Israel doesn't give a fuck if we party and like rave but Palestinian authorities are more concerned in how this touches religious values and morality, the government are like, "what the fuck",* says Nadia (online interview, June 2022).

In addition, this growing opposition from segments of society have mitigated this fun as a unidimensional affect. As Ali says in relation to how parties are now lived:

> *this has really caused us to not even be able to have a good time at our parties anymore. It's not fun the whole time. You're kind of tense, yeah, way too. What's gonna happen now, you know?* (in person interview, June 2022).

As I mentioned earlier, there are people that have stopped going to these parties because of these risks. The scene's embodiment of 'escape' and enjoyment through electronic music, dancing and drinking, or more precisely, the meaning that is given to these practices, are often seen as *haram*: contrary and outside the core and normative values of Islam and Palestinian society. The framework of resistance –intertwined with religion as a structuring moral and cultural imaginary– sees it as normalising with occupation and disconnecting from the brutality of daily life (Kuttab, 2021). Hence, the overarching narratives in this case intertwin resistance and religion/morality, meaning that the way pleasure, fun and escape, are found in the scene (through dancing, exploring sexuality, drinking or taking drugs), especially if they are done in public, are incompatible with resisting, political commitment or religious observation.

When leisure entails a drive towards trying to 'do what you want to do' –although not completely possible to achieve–, it then subverts the models of dutiful resistant and religious behaviour, locating fun and pleasure in a more autonomous and embodied space. This means that fun and pleasure are driving forces in themselves, purposely looked for by participants and central constituents of the scene. The key point here to understand, as the exploration of different political and resistant outcomes of these practices have showed, is the conviviality of fun and anti-colonial struggle, and also, of fun and internal dissent. This can be seen through Murd's words on the political side of the scene:

> *the politics behind a party is just different. Uh, yaani, making a party is more different than producing a song. Yeah. Party is also political in a way that, uh, you don't. When I, uh, started making parties in Bethlehem, my motive was to make people dance, because they don't have a sea, although it's right there. There's no, sea, they can go to there's no…Yaani, the education is very, uh, strict, very under the yarn. You're not, you can't move around. You, your mind is so stuck in the educational system. Eh, also the community is not very flexible. Eh, so my reason was for people to dance and let go and gather and make connections and release, whatever is, uh, they haven't been inside. So yeah. This is also political. Uh, anyway, I need to, to gather and to release the stress out of the whole bullshit* (in person interview, May 2022)

These words encapsulate how escape is also an intersectional affect present in parties and motivations. Participants are entangled in understandings of 'escape', creating alternative temporal realities that help to negotiate everyday hardship and personal situations.

Importantly, this gets complicated further, as said in the previous chapter: they entail positive and negative *affects*, fun is sought but is feared as well, especially in relation to being the target of violence or detention.

Finally, this possibility shows how escape is also classed and relational to the context, the moment, the person and the party. It is linked to embodying a privileged position and material conditions that allow for this escape to occur. At the same time, assuming that only the privileged can 'escape' or engage in these practices denotes a paternalistic approach towards how escape can be experienced. In other words, escaping in this context entails a very different nature depending on who is doing it, but everyone 'escapes' in some way or another (see Jean-Klein, 2001; Kelly, 2008). This reconciles the opposition narrated before regarding Palestinians discourses that see some forms of leisure as normalising and betrayal, showing how there are different forms of leisure and thus, different forms of dealing with everyday life, mediated by class, geography and religion. Second, escape is relative and specific as it is never fully accomplished, as the accounts of Ali and Ahmed have shown *("they're resembled within you")*.

The aim of exploring these spaces for generative resistance has been to connect the previous elements of chapter 4 (music, affect, class and mobility) with its potentialities for resisting. These elements inform and determine how (a) culture, (b) collaboration, (c) boycott, (d) belonging, and (e) escape are articulated into new forms of relating to their individual lives, community and reality. The Palestinianness of these participants matters to the argument of understanding these practices as political and ultimately resistant in relation to this context, a context that it is constantly escaped, negotiated, rearticulated but that traverses everything they do. A context that pushes a series of mundane and everyday practices to be potentially resistant.

This section had the objective to develop a more comprehensive account of what are these 'practises' that have been mentioned throughout the thesis. This first part responds to the term 'practised' resistance as a process that is lived and experienced, not organised and thought. In this second part, I will explore the discursive reality of the notion, very linked to its embodied experience and historical genealogy.

3. Discourses and narratives on resisting

The separation between doing and saying sometimes is an artificial one: they both nurture the other, and discourses have a performativity that make them practices in themselves. Indeed, this project looks closely at the personal experiences of resistance, which are tied to narratives and discourses about it, showing the intimate nature and the embeddedness of the term into people's every day. Nevertheless, in the literature it has been seen how there are different interrelated discourses on resistance (nationalistic, popular, critic, subcultural), calling for a focus specifically on how they unfold in this context: what they represent, what they celebrate, what they produce. Secondly, whether the practices outlined speak for themselves through their action and materialisation, there are some discourses that problematise or criticise them, making it necessary to look closer at these discourses and how they relate to the practises of the scene. In other words, the meaning-making of this notion is layered, contradictory and rich.

3.1. Coming from within: Palestinian discourses of resistance

This second part of the chapter moves towards the discursive 'construction' of resistance, how it is thought of in the scene and how it relates to the wider context. In this section, mainly discursive and narrative analysis have been used to understand how participants navigate the question of the political and resistance. As stated in the introduction, resistance is constructed by both insider (Palestinian) and outsider (Western) influences. How it is felt, how it is intimately discussed, how it is performed within a party, and how it is discussed with a foreign researcher differs between participants. I am going to show how resistance is understood through three main discourses which I identified during my research:

a) *Existence is resistance* (generalised discourse from inside and outside the scene).

b) *The scene is "not" resistance* (coming from inside the scene).

c) *This type of leisure and music are not resistance* (coming from outside the scene)

Existence is resistance

The first discourse (a) relates to the general and historic discourse on resistance linked to Palestinian existence. In general, as explained in the literature, everyday life is equated with resistance and their existence as political due to the ongoing efforts of erasing and controlling Palestinians by Israel. This discourse is present and embodied by all Palestinians, differing

between the subjects that reproduce them (authorities, different people and classes), but sharing the same root: the Israeli occupation. This is a structural approach where context determines the outcome of whatever activity, as the literature has shown. Coming back to Kanaaneh, music under occupation is 'inevitably music of resistance, whether it is political or not, politicized or not' (2013:9). This discourse is shared in Palestinian studies (Tawil-Souri, 2011; Kanaaneh, 2013; McDonald, 2013) as well as in the early work of subcultural theory (Hebdige, 1979; Hall & Jefferson, 2006). The discourse within the scene can be resumed by this quote from Odai (ODDZ), one of the founding members of the scene in Ramallah, now living in Amman:

> I think it's important to remember, that it's impossible to find a Palestinian who doesn't resist in their own way, even if it's just by going to school or by living their normal daily life. When you're in Palestine, there are obstacles that make it hard for you to do anything. I am open to all shapes and forms of resistance. Personally, I decided to take my resistance in what you could call the most peaceful direction – music, art and spreading awareness through culture and discussion (Graef Lakin, 2022).

This discourse, which in a way or another all engage with, is linked to the practices analysed above (creating culture, safer spaces, boycott, etc.) and articulates the scene as part of the wider resistant Palestinian existence. As such, their practices are framed as resistant (both towards Israel and Palestinian authorities) even when non explicitly political because their existence already is political, and also because, as Odai claims: "music, art and spreading awareness" are also ways of resisting (Graef Lakin, 2022). Importantly, participants do openly and daily engage with resistant discourses, some of them shared directly on social media through the writing or sharing of posts. Linked to the scene, they engage in frequent wider manifestations of resistance for example by using political songs for DJing, remembering martyrs and political figures, going to protests, collaborating on political organisations and cultural collectives, defending *sumūd* and using those symbols.

It is important to understand that within the umbrella of 'existence as resistance' and *sumūd* exists critical voices that interrogate, not the idea in itself, but the uses and purposes of fostering this narrative. As has been seen, the PA articulates their own interests through this discourse to foster national identity and adherence. Hence, it is important to point out that even those that do not attribute resistance to the scene or are critical with this perspective, are

engaged with the political and the Palestinian struggle on other levels. This raises as a rejection of attribution, as a critique to romanticisation and even to self-romanticisation. As it will be later seen, these are mainly reproduced by the media and Western interests in the scene because 'it is resisting'. Hence, there are people that within this umbrella problematise the concrete attribution of resistance to the scene.

The scene is "not" resistance

The second discourse (b) relates to participants that are very critical with this attribution or directly do not see the scene as a resistant space in itself. They oppose these discursive constraints and scrutinisation towards their practices from both traditional accounts on resistance and outsider romanticisation, rather than because they see it as apolitical or disconnected, even though sometimes as well (as Yara's previous words about *"just a party where you pay a ticket, you go and party and you leave")*. Indeed, there is the conviviality of the first and the second discourse since everyone embodies this ontological framework of existence-resistance, but then negates the scene as a resistant space. This touches the 'generative' convivialities this thesis studies: how seemingly contradictory elements show there are different narratives coalescing in this matter. Also, the apparent divergence between the first and the second discourse highlights the difference between a meta narrative linked with belonging and identity (existence is resistance) and the reflectivity around a concrete activity (the scene) and how one might be more critical with the latter. This again points towards a plurality of discourses that are far from coalescing into a single narrative, but that inevitably due to the context generate a hierarchy between these different resistances.

The disillusionment of the post-Oslo youth towards the existing political system is extended towards the limitations that this regime imposes in the creation and dissemination of culture. Hence, to some extent, the hegemonic narrative of resistance in Palestine is inside this fixed atmosphere and linked to very concrete practices of resistance (*sumūd*, Intifadas, armed resistance) which these participants are not against or alien to, but which are not engrained within the scene's cultural practices.

More concretely, their rejection is directed towards the attribution of being resistant *against* Israel, embodying a self-critique of the possibilities and effects of their doings. As seen developing through these chapters, most of these critiques coalesce around the equation of the

scene's practices to direct resistance towards the occupation and conflating their motives to a response to it. Nadia reflects on this when I ask about this attribution:

> *I think that it's disrespectful to real forms of resistance to try and say that partying with some rich kids in Ramallah is doing anything, you know?* (online interview, June 2022).

She shows how participants also share this framework of what resistance is and what it is not, self-reducing their practices to pure classed hedonism to make her point. However, the practices described above were seen as political by participants for various reasons. In our conversations, the idea of the scene being 'political' was generally agreed, whereas when I changed to explore 'resistance', participants more often negated or criticised this attribution. When I asked Jana if she sees the scene as resistant, she reflects:

> *mm, not necessarily. In a way, I feel like when we do these kinds of events, it just means that we're here. That we're, we don't wanna just stay at home and, uh, sit on a chair and say, oh, we're occupied. No, like we wanna do something about it that we wanna go, uh, out to these places, let's say partying* (in person interview, June 2022).

This idea links to the notion of *sumūd* ("we're here") and the first discourse on resistance. Jana separates this from being resistant, showing that 'partying' as such might not be viewed as resistance, or not completely, rather as doing something with their reality. Indeed, I argue that it is precisely this doing something with reality, generating something, that articulates resistance within the scene. With a similar discourse, linking the questioned political aspect of it to respect and cultural-religious observation, Lami, a bartender and partygoer from Ramallah states the following:

> *I don't want to say it's political because I was like, I don't know if we can save that use this genre of music can be political (...) as sometimes it's, it can be disrespectful to use like poetry or Arabic words and stuff like that in the scene* (in person interview, May 2022).

This discourse demonstrates the 'separation' that is made between certain forms of culture that do not fit in traditional or hegemonic artifacts and politics, or that is not seen as respectful or correct, also by participants themselves.

The critical responses that I encountered when discussing the political and resistant connotations of the scene challenge Taraki's argument that the Palestinian elite 'need to ennoble its pursuit of happiness by casting it as a form of resistance' (Taraki, 2008a:17) and points towards a more internal (and probably generational) critique of their social position and practices. In an interview to Fana collective for the Lebanese journal 'Al Safar', a cultural group based in Ramallah and formed by people that pertain to the scene as well, they articulate a critique towards hegemonic nationalist symbols that romanticise their reality:

> Honestly, the Palestinian cause is not central to our work, but it does seep into all of our productions because it is our daily, lived experience. This also applies to the entire region. We believe that, as young Arabs, we should all abandon our romanticised views of our reality because they are the product of viewpoints that have been imposed on us for political, economic, and other reasons. We work on processes that might allow us to unmake systems of symbols and identities that are sold to us, whether as flags, stars, crescents, or whatnot. These symbols are now devoid of meaning because they are the legacy of a 'State' that we oppose, as Fana', because what even is a 'State'? says member Ahmad Alaqra (Watson, 2022).

There can be two differentiated discourses that integrate this view. The first one is, as Ahmad says, not having the Palestinian struggle or occupation as a centred reason to do things, while recognising its transversality to their everyday life. As said, not developing a subcultural response against occupation *per se*. The second one goes more in line with comparing their doings with Palestinian symbols as deeply entangled with authorities and therefore, separated from them.

Hence, the critical discourses within the scene around them and practices linked to their every day (artistic practices and partying) take different directions. A third discourse of some sees it as a matter of hierarchy between resistant movements: the scene's practices cannot be equated to *real* Palestinian resistance, which often entails risking lives for it (Nadia and Yana's words). Adding to this, there are those that see that fun, partying and pleasure are not 'serious' ways of resisting. Whilst others direct their critique more externally towards the romanticisation and over-use of nationalism and the occupation, as the main reasons for doing art or music.

These discourses need to be understood in the wider context they are immersed: though years of hardship and difficulties for Palestine and for the scene, with martyrdom and violence traversing the everyday, and Covid-19 too as a recent phenomenon, the enthusiasm and motivation are significantly reduced. I am sure that if this research had been conducted five years ago, the responses would have been different (less self-critical).

Authenticity, tradition and disconnection

The third discourse (c) 'this type of leisure and music is not resistance' is directed towards the scene and electronic music from outside of it, even though it shares some views with participants that do not see the scene as resistant. This is found in wider segments of society and authorities, which link back to the first discourse (existence is resistance) but have fixed frames about a practise being *truly* Palestinian, that is, following Palestinian identity, tradition and authenticity. In the literature, we have seen (see Tawil-Souri, 2011; Salih & Richter-Devore, 2014; Toukan, 2021) how there is a rejection of 'seemingly "normal(ized)", "apolitical", or "a-nationalist" art which does not thrive on pre-established tropes of resistance against Israeli occupation, siege, and settler colonialism' (Salih & Richter-Devroe, 2014:20). This is a common view amongst nationalist discourses or movements (Tawil-Souri, 2011:472), but not reduced to it, as the second discourse shows. It seems that fissures in the hegemonic institutional narrative, that might come to life in various forms –I am just analysing one of them: electronic music and alternative leisure– are seen and felt as a normalising attitude towards settler colonialism and a danger towards their own system of values and beliefs. As Ali, the DJ from Ramallah maintains when I ask about culture in Palestine and the opposition that happens towards the scene, he says:

> *They're [Israel] constantly trying to erase everything that we are. So you become more protective, so become more protective of those symbols when you become more protective and not just as an individual, but as a society, anything that deviates slightly, especially something that looks a lot, like what they see in Tel Aviv and shit, you know, even though it's not that, but to some extent it is, mm-hmm, they immediately like, just actively fight against it. This is not allowed. This is not here. This is not us. Yeah. You know, this is not who we are. Yeah. It's like, dude, it's not who you are, but it's who I am* (in person interview, June 2022).

As such, there is a discursive correspondence between the struggle against occupation, tradition and identity, which complicates further the relationship of non-hegemonic practices with these: if keeping tradition and a unified identity is to fight against occupation, developing non-traditional or endogenous forms of culture is renouncing to defend such identity. Whether other contexts have also a complicated relationship between, for instance, alternative leisure and authorities, the structure of occupation hardens the possibilities of moving away from traditional and 'authentic' forms of culture. The relationship between culture and the political (as two relational entities rather than in opposition or subordination of one another) and the debate around what is the function of culture and music coalesce here. As Tawil-Souri reflects,

> countless cultural forms have been deemed as emblematic of 'true' Palestinian culture: the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, the literature of Ghassan Kanafani, the cartoons of Naji Al-Ali, folksongs like 'We'hn 'A Ram'Allah', the dabke dance, styles of embroidery (tatrizz), the kuffiyah, particular forms of stone architecture. Many of these have been co-opted by nationalist discourses or movements (2011:472).

It reinforces an 'authenticity' (linked to respectability) debate that is profound and ingrained in the heart of Palestinian and 'Arab' cultural studies (Sabry, 2010). What is deemed as authentic *(turah)* Palestinian culture is an open debate and not the task of this thesis or a single person/institution to deliberate on this. Coming back to Gilroy (2003), cultures are a movement of people and influences (in this case, diasporas and occupations by different powers) that emerge as an intercultural mixture. Having said that, Gilroy's argument appears insufficient for the Palestinian context due to the outsider relationship on culture (electronic music) which discussed here has a Palestinian identity. Hence, again, here is another contradiction (conviviality) between these discourses: if everything is resistance within this context, why is it not the same for a scene created by Palestinians?

The type of electronic music that is played and especially, the practices associated with it (dancing together, open sexuality, taking drugs) are quite distinct to traditional forms of music and leisure in Palestine. The fact that it has outsider influence (sounds such as techno), non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality, and aesthetics means that it is seen as Westernised and against religion (Kuttab, 2021). Some analysts argue that there are voices that see these events worse than the occupation (Abu Ghosh on Facebook, 18 June 2022).

There have been a series of recent events during my fieldwork that have materialised this discourse. For instance, the ignited national discussion following the detention of DJ Sama Abdulhadi after the Nabi Musa streaming around the role of electronic music within Palestinian society as something 'alien' to their culture (Kingsley, 2021); or the cancellation of the Palestinian Music Expo in Ramallah in September 2022 as a result of growing tensions. Censorship, attacks on concerts and cultural events and cancellations during the last year's show the delicate moment the alternative artistic scene is navigating, as previously shown in the section on suspensions in chapter 3. The forced cancellation of Bashar Murad's concert in Ramallah (a queer Palestinian singer) by a group of Palestinian young men in June 2022, while I was there, also depicts this tension and the hegemonic masculinist responses to these expressions. In a Facebook post, one of the leaders of the storm and son of a prominent Hamas leader, which caused physical damage to the venue, said:

> While the young men of Jenin are sacrificing their lives for the beloved homeland, a suspicious group tried to hold a gay party in Ramallah. A group of young men who care about their religion and homeland went to the place of the concert and informed the suspicious party's organisers of the need to evacuate the place and respect the blood of the martyrs (Yaman Jarrar in Abu Toameh, June 2022).

In a quest of regripping cultural hegemony over a steady loss of land, sovereignty and hope in Palestine, these discourses are gaining prominence, or at least, are becoming more actively oppositional against dissensive, non-normative sensibilities and practices such as the scene. Finally, this discourse redirects the possibilities of resistance towards narrow paths of action that do not accommodate the plurality of realities in the ground. Jana says in this sense:

> *As Palestinians living in, uh, in Ramallah, I feel like the government is suffocating us. It's stopping us from just being ourselves, especially with idea the LGBT community, uh, which is okay, it's fine. I'm trying to understand where they're coming from because they, they weren't exposed to this while growing up or in their environment. Uh, so I am taking it more openly. Yeah, but I cannot take it openly if they cross the line (...) I feel like they think they're doing their job. Yeah, but really it is just making things worse. I always wish there's a different system here. Yeah. That can be, you know, at least more like Haifa. Like come on. We're occupied, at least make it easier for us to, yeah, to just live and be ourselves or be like open* (in person interview, June 2022).

This opposition from the 'government' and part of society shows how these practices are seen not only as apolitical, but also as normalising occupation and disconnecting from the struggle. This is a huge and delicate debate that does not pertain here, especially to a non-Palestinian. The point is to understand certain rejection and opposition from society towards the scene and the underlying dynamics of it. As such, this internal tension shows how resistance is entangled in a practical, and also discourse way towards society and authorities, coming from both sides, the scene and the public.

The inside and the outside discourses relate because they can reify conceptions that do not take into account the plurality of experiences and motivations, even if they are a small percentage of the population. The romanticisation or essentialisation of resistance does not contemplate (at least openly) the possibility of Palestinians stepping outside this narrative, of embodying a different relationship with the practice of resistance and with their national symbols in general.

After much reflection on the matter of authenticity and tradition, and how fieldwork showed a constant engagement with many traditional practices but was distant with others, it became clear that this discussion is not close to being solved and that the interactions between what is seen as 'modern' and 'traditional' are abundant and messy, existing alongside each other in multiple forms. People are made and embedded in such encounters (Sabry, 2010). Even what is seen as tradition and what is seen as modernity have blurred, confusing limits. People engage in ancient rites, folklore, tales, and also re-signify them, perform them differently and challenge them. The scene is very much also about these re-significations and giving new meanings to old practices of music, dance and leisure. These encounters link with our identities and senses of self. And of course, they are sites of contestation and tension when they are erased, as Palestinian history and tradition.

This internal context has its international counterpart that deploys a mixture of discourses that range from a generalised Islamophobic and pro-Israel discourse –which is not the focus on this thesis because it is not found within the tandem resistance-scene, but traverses in many ways international views of Palestine– to the more concrete (1) romanticising discourses and (2) solidarity discourses, which are interrelated in many points.

3.2. Coming from outside: international gazes and speaking up

Exploring how these discourses are constructed through media, Palestinian scholarship, and the diverse (electronic music) audiences that I encountered through social media, helps to finally answer the second research question. The progressive international exposure of the scene raises important questions regarding representation and recognition dynamics, neo-orientalist narratives and attitudes, and the role of both artists and people involved in the scene in this relationship. In general, the scene has been received in Western circuits with deep interest and admiration, fostering appraisals of 'a Palestinian cultural scene resisting against all odds', chairing talks about Palestinian resistance (Fusion 2019, Berlin), panel discussions[58] and a few documentaries (Boiler Room 2018, BBC Raving in Palestine 2019, many of them featuring the DJ Sama Adbulhadi[59]). It is safe to assert that not many electronic music scenes are receiving that coverage in international media right now, Kiev, Tblisi with Bassiani or Kazakhstan with ZVUK (MacDonald, 2019) sparked also interest a few years ago, with many editorials and short documentaries emerging, but they did not reach this volume. In this sense, participants emphasise that what they received with gratitude and pride, it slowly turned into another form of othering and romanticisation. In the literature, it has been seen how there are many critiques around the overgeneralisation, overuse and romanticisation of the term resistance in this context and beyond (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Steward, 2013; Theodossopoulos, 2014; El Zein, 2016; Nooshin, 2017).

Romanticisation here works as the process by which certain practices and images are ascribed to the scene, mainly focusing on a unifying and essentialising representation that praises exceptionalism, participants' tolerance and bravery, making the inevitability of their context not only their defining and inherent characteristics (being occupied), but also the motive by which they become interested in their music and arts. As seen already, this contemporary understanding of the role of music in the conflict, does not necessarily reflect the different ways in which Palestinian resistance was locally conceived and practiced during specific historical episodes (Belkind, 2021) and indeed, formulates for some a 'neoliberal orientalism' (El Zein, 2016) or 'political orientalism' (Steward, 2013) that does not leave enough space for critique and advancing radical practices.

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[58] Primavera Pro with Sama Panel talk (2022): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OJ3wjgwlZY&t=530s
Point Blank London Sama talk (2023): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duZS4gJGJDg
[59] Boiler Room documentary (2018): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-R8S7QwO1g&t=130s
BBC documentary (2019): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SF3vE4Bunt0
Boiler Room and Cameltown 'Sama' documentary (2022): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHd9h5LRBRM
RA Sama documentary (2023): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEyCro5Uois&t=146s

Neo-orientalism and romanticisation

Orientalist discourses reproduced a narrative about the other based on the celebration of difference, the fascination with their culture and their 'abnormal' existence and joy amidst violence and suffering. In a neo-orientalist guise, different from classical orientalist discourses that tend to generate a duality between the self (West) and the other (East) based on moral/cultural/political superiority of the West, the term operates through different layers that essentialise and romanticise, express solidarity and genuine interest on culture. This discourse and otherisation operate in a different historic time than Orientalism, but it shares many similarities.

Neo-orientalism as a discourse moves between postcolonial and colonial forces that differ from the imperialist world of the Orientalist nineteenth and twentieth century, but that largely inherits this legacy through a celebratory discourse on difference and diversity. Hence, this neo-oriental reading combines exoticism and essentialisation as Orientalism does (Said, 1978), embedded in asymmetrical power relations, but also shares solidarity, collaboration and works through social media and other platforms (festivals, talks, conferences) instead of literary and academic texts.

This orientalism is reworked to incorporate both neoliberal and politicising moves within this concept. Neoliberal orientalism works through a series of representations that exploit the profitable and exotic capital of the scene (and SWANA people in general) through parties, interviews and the above-mentioned documentaries. In El Zein word's, this neoliberalisation depoliticises the experiences of Arab and Black peoples (2016:37) and I would add, strips them of the agency to be themselves reproducers of these dynamics (whether neoliberal patters of consumption or political articulations). However, at the same time, orientalisation is generated precisely through politicising. That is, through representations and discourses that emphasise the resistant nature of the scene and participants as their 'main' essential feature (see figure 10). Hence, this neo-orientalisation works twofold: first, by using the labelling of resistance without further interrogation of such practices or engagement with resistance as an anticolonial movement widely and second, by exploiting this labelling for individual and profitable purposes both by international audiences and by Palestinians through engaging in these circuits. As discussed in the literature and in this chapter, this discursive analysis does not obliterate the relationship between existence and resistance, it rather interrogates what international discourses *do* and *reproduce* in this realm.
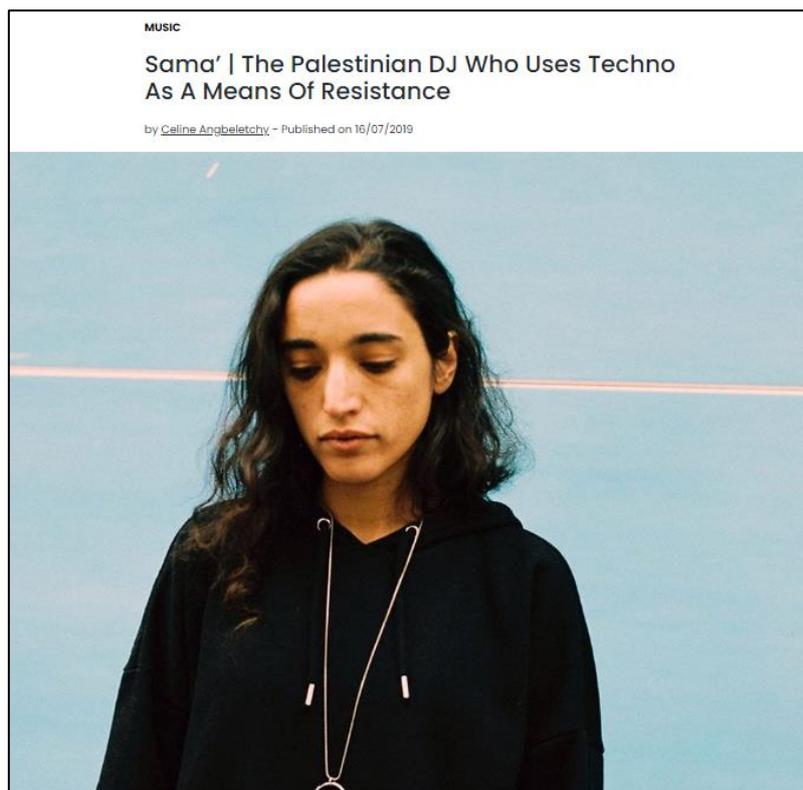
Figure 10. Article about DJ Sama Abdulhadi

One of the quotes that summarises this rejection towards certain international orientalising, as shown in the title of the article above, came from an interview with Shabid, a DJ, producer and record label manager from Ramallah. When I asked about the relationship between their music and resistance, he gave an articulated critique of how 'alternative Palestine' is viewed, studied and represented:

> *if you want to categorise it as something in an anthropological sense of someone that's looking at Palestine through a microscopic view in a department that's researching Middle Eastern studies, yes. But for us, no. For us it's not an institutional art project. This is not about like sitting and writing down a concept of how we want to symbolise Palestinian resistance in a song. You know, we just talked about our daily life, and this was just our escapism. (...) The same way a kid, uh, buys a video game, that's more. So we never thought about the resistance or anything. This was our drug. We escaped into this house so that we run away, you know. So it's more of a running away from our problems, escape, rather than, uh, "resistance", "represent*

Palestine". Then everyone connected with it, which made it like a symbol of modern Palestinian resistance, but that's not for us to define (in person interview, June 2022).

Romanticisation in this context refers to the discourses that construct a simplified, uncritical, naive and exotic view of the scene that renders participants practices to a question of superficial interest at most of the times. This romanticisation is sometimes joint to the marketisation and tokenisation (using identities and oppression to being labelled as inclusive and tolerant) of Palestinian identity. In this sense, both orientalising discourses (neoliberal and political) coalesce in this amalgam of representations mixing admiration, interest and fetishization. As Shabmouri (from Palestinian trap label BLTNM) expresses in an interview: 'our Palestinian identity is ours to preserve and understand, it is not for westerners to consume and analyse in order to fill a fetishising void of theirs' (Tapponi, 2019).

Much of these discourses are volatile, discussed online or experienced on the temporality of the dance floors. As many participants recall, these discourses emerge many times in their encounters with internationals, especially outside, and the conversations they have with regards to their reality. In terms of media discourses, in the English language there are many features that use the term 'resistance' in their title: 'Music as a form of resistance in Palestine' (Sayegh, 2018), 'Music scene in Palestinian territories echoes resistance to occupation (Sayegh, 2018), 'The Palestinian DJ Who Uses Techno As A Means Of Resistance' (Angbeletchy, 2019), 'Soundscapes: two disruptive forces, trap music and Palestinian resistance' (Al Yahya, 2020). In the literature, 'rave' and 'raving' are used to signify partying in different places in Palestine (Withers, 2021). Acknowledging that the term rave is used as a synonym of a party in Anglophone contexts, it nevertheless entails a universalising tone that might build up in this romanticisation, as many participants critiqued the use of the term applied to their context.

The key question then is not to determine what the intentions of these are, or whether some are romanticising or some are truthful accounts. It is to understand that, despite meaningful intentions and the centrality of resisting within daily existence, resistance in many senses is understood as an over-stretched and burdened concept that, especially if coming from outside, produces tiresome and weariness more than anything else.

This neo-oriental and romantic representations simplify their reality and their scene to one related *only* to Israel occupation. It celebrates difference and resistance but usually within

liberal universalist frameworks that do not engage with Palestinian anti-colonial struggle and what this entails (armed resistance, for instance). It fosters commodification and tokenisation, in which also artists themselves participate in through playing at festivals, giving interviews or appearing in documentaries. As said, it risks removing agency of representing or speaking for themselves, especially in relation to power and dynamics that, as has been seen, do not locate them as unilaterally oppressed peoples, but also generating and reproducing power dynamics.

But still speaking up: international solidarity

Parallel to this rise in attention and potential commodification, discourses have hardened and become more critical. The sense of loosening grasp of their narrative and it being misused and oversimplified by media or academia, have shifted their openness to collaborate and also, crucially, framing their music as direct resistance. This part has explored the delicate balance between having to emphasise their existence as an act of resistance to defend it, and the co-optation that their narrative is having. Hence, this critical standpoint on international solidarity does not prevent Palestinians to relentlessly call for commitment, awareness and justice from Western audiences and their complicit governments and at the same time,

> to use your platforms to speak about Palestine. If you think music connects people and carries cultural knowledge, please, my culture is being wiped out, remove your horse blinders. This is not a matter that you can be neutral about claims Ramallah rapper and producer Makimakkuk in an interview (Mustefa, 2021).

In this sense, there is relentless sharing on social media (Instagram mainly) calling for solidarity, daily updates on Israeli attacks and martyrs, educational posts and asking for people to get involved in the defence of anti-colonialism (see Figure 11), as has been seen in the previous sections.

Figure 11. Support the Palestinian struggle when it's "not sexy".

This demonstrates the compatibility (*conviviality*) of discourses and the different directions they take: calls for solidarity and taking sides and asking to decolonise these same practices of solidarity and involvement. Amidst critique, there is still a generalised discourse on supporting Palestinian resistance from the outside.

All these discourses confirm the layered reality of resisting as a discourse and as a practice. Some of these discourses are seemingly contradictory to one another: seeing Palestinian existence as resistance while at the same time rejecting the attribution of resistance to the scene or contesting the role of the West and their romanticisation while actively participating in their circuits. This apparent separation shows how the ontology of resistance within the scene does not equate to uncritically embracing the way it is represented and narrated by others. Participants then engage with and reproduce multiple discourses that form the discursive plurality that is being analysed. This shows, rather than a rejection of resistance in itself and practices linked to it, a change of perspective in the way of engaging with representational politics and the way their reality is depicted. In this last section, a development of the layered experiences of resisting and the symbolic meanings of resistance on the dance floor will be analysed through an anecdote. This will lead to a reflection on the relationship between the scene and society through notions and practices of resistance, something that has been permeating these chapters.

4. Dance floors, protests and resistances

The pool party is coming to an end, but the dancing bodies to an energetic last DJ set, do not seem to corroborate this. A Palestinian flag is waved while a Palestinian political song, cursing Israel, is mixed with sharp and elegant UK drum and bass[60]. A well-known DJ in the local scene is at the decks. Everyone is engaged in the moment, visibly drunk, and happy. A mix of discourses and symbols succeed each other in a restless swirl of dance. Palestinian resistance music mixed with hectic drum and bass, swimsuits and cocktails (delicious 'smashed basil'), incursions to the toilet, the odd random kiss between dancers and the old Christian manager of the venue observing everything at the back.

All of these conflate in the same space, showing the multiplicities that interact at the same time in this scene, the encounters of different symbols and meanings. Someone could read this moment as an act of symbolic resistance through partying, but it feels way more mundane than that. Or is it that we always read symbols as something spectacular? It feels somehow normal, even expected. The first year PhD student, would have been excited with the symbolism of the action. But my present self has learnt to normalise and not overromanticise these temporal moments of intersecting discourses. I came to understand that resisting or politics are always there, and manifestations of it take multiple forms, from the mundane to the spectacular, from the critique to the re-appropriation, reproducing some stereotypes and other times challenging them. When one assumes this, the spectacularity of how everyday life can be perceived by a foreign lens is modulated. Still, these moments are especial, and dance floors and parties –especially this one, the first one in a long time in Ramallah (June 2022)– are heated with expectation and energy. In this context, dance floors open different ways of experiencing and dealing with reality. They are especial at the end. Partying takes us out of our everyday, allow us to escape, to play with different symbols and to rework our constraints or sufferings.

Instead of reading this as a mere symbolic exercise, I point towards the meanings and affects that this moment has encapsulated. Belonging, familiarity and fun are the main driving forces in this sense. This experience creates a temporal space of intensity that surpasses the

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[60] I have tried to find the song. With some help, we think this is the song that was being played that night:
https://soundcloud.com/baklau/al-wad-phizix-zalzel-elnedj-riyadiyat-live-bootleg

organized and representational world of Palestinian politics, subjects and objects: the 'flag' and the political song on the one hand (linked to traditional forms of resistance), and drum and bass music on the other. We have here a genre created in the UK and typically 'British' in sound, the former colonisers, and a country were many have cultural and affective connections. This could be read as a moment of 'hybridity', meaning that two different 'essences' (modern and traditional) get mixed and produce a hybrid result: modernity and tradition, the two Palestines appearing together.

However, 'cultural production is not like mixing cocktails' (Gilroy, 1994:46) and relying on binarsisms does not grasp the rhizomatic drive of the party. Rather it shows *conviviality* in action, an agonistic moment of meanings that are seen as separated. It grasps the possibilities of elements that are seen as binaries working and existing together. Also, it represents the dynamics that constitute that participants are their experiences in affective, non-verbal ways. This is how affect helps to give sense to a scene that is embodied and felt intensely, ambiguously and contradictory. This moment created an affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009) where the political and the everyday circulated together creating a temporary vibe that brought the crowd together in 'synchrony and solidarity' (Garcia, 2020:22). This atmosphere encapsulated the mundane nature, its political dimension and the materiality of bodies and the enclosing DIY dance space (the swimming pool). Probably in another place and moment, this song would have never been played due to the 'hegemonic nationalism' it is meant to infuse. And yet, it provoked similar feelings of belonging and communality in the audience. Again, this demonstrates how the relationship with tradition, political songs, the Palestinian flag or other symbols are far from problematic or disconnected. It is affective: provoked by the intensities of the moment, without an intentional or an articulated explanation behind creating that song or dancing to it and reacting to it.

The scene –and this moment of *agonistic* significations (Mouffe, 2005)– links to the wider *impossibilities* of living in Ramallah and ultimately, in Palestine. This party was surrounded by some concern as to whether it would be shut down. The dance floor is also limited, fragile and sometimes traumatising. Representations of resistance (the song) and politics (the possibility of the police arriving, the role of a Christian owner for booking the space) are there, sometimes trying to be escaped, sometimes looked for, connecting dance floors to the wider context in a very material way. Hence, this anecdote, instead of focusing on the

resistant manifestation of the dance floor, points out the interconnected affects and politics that are experienced in these spaces.

There are politics and affects occurring on the dance floor: symbols of resistance, the presence of the police or authorities, the daily events that shape the context, and are discussed and danced off, etc; and there is also a connection between partying and politics that does not occur on the dance floor itself, but how participants interact with politics that surround them outside the party. Nadia's reflection on protests against both the Palestinian government and Israeli violence and partying at the same time reflects quite well this amalgam:

> *Last May I felt that gave us a different sort of energy. A different kind of release and a different kind of unity. Which, okay, I don't wanna say music as resistance, but like you kind of get a lot of similar feelings out of protesting than you do from raving mm-hmm, and both have a threat to life for some reason. It felt like we got picked up and revived by that [...] And then in the summer there was the protest also against the Palestinian government. It'd be a really intense protest, the Palestinian government fucking tear gassing us and like pushing people into buildings. Next video on my phone is like a party that someone is doing in the centre of Ramallah which is like, you know, five minutes away from where that shit was happening yesterday* (online interview, June 2022).

This account exposes the points of contact between partying and protesting, modulating and complexing the idea of disconnection. Even though this is an anecdote that does not account for the general dynamic between partying and participating in politics, as they were very particular of the situation at that point (May 2021). Going to bars for a drink at night and expressing solidarity for a martyr on social media or discussing it at home are quite mundane ('regular') events that happen in everyday life. However, these forms of what I call 'intense participation' (partying and actively protesting against the government) are rather unique events that happen from time to time. It is important to move away from reifying images of 'spectacular mundanity' as if they are the norm, as if people are partying all the time in Palestine and these practices are, therefore, for granted. Protests like the ones Nadia refers to do not happen so often, where everyone unites and goes down to Qalandiya checkpoint, or where they protest directly against the government, risking repression for it. Therefore, it is fair with this reality to also contextualise when these 'intense participation' happens. This will be examined when discussing the notion of scene and the limitations some participants

have found with the concept. One of the reasons is precisely this discontinuity in the parties and events that make it difficult for them to see it as a scene.

From the past 3 chapters, it derives that context and articulation are required to have political and resistant effects. What is clear is that the scene's effects fall beyond the confined limitations of dance spaces and enclosed temporalities: the participants' entanglement with politics, protests, social movements, and also family, work or neighbours also influence the experience on the dance floor, as Nadia's account and the development of the idea of escape demonstrate.

5. Final remarks: resistances being generated

This chapter has tried to answer the research question: *'how is resisting practised and constructed in the scene?'* and reveal what I experienced during my fieldwork. It exposes the practices and discourses that are linked to it, exploring how this is still a potential framework for understanding reality and yet, criticised and rejected by some.

Resistance is found in a way of living in the world, as much as building a different one. In the next chapter, which is the Discussion chapter, a deeper conceptualisation of the term will be developed. There have been many 'hints', ideas and arguments throughout this chapter about 'generative resistance' and what it does and who for. I have been reluctant to conceptualise generative resistance as a sort of closed category. It feels that it neglects the commitment to reflect rather than assert, and to centrally locate the problems of the term and the labellisation of Palestinians as always resistant. Rather than proclaiming that all these practices lead to 'resisting', in the final section of the next chapter, I focus on conceptualising in more detail the term, on what it does, what are the main points and potentialities that this concept opens up, and how it is constructed by its participants.

Now, the discussion will focus on putting all these findings together and discussing the results. To do that, conceptualisations on generative resistance and scene (affective assemblage) and an affective epistemological critique will be developed.

Chapter 6 - Discussion

1. Theoretical contributions

This final chapter aims to outline and discuss three theoretical contributions that have been developing through the thesis: (1) the concept of 'scene', (2) the concept of 'generative resistance' and (3) an epistemological critique that deepens research dynamics and knowledge production. Since the articulation of the research questions and the methodology, these ideas have accompanied this thesis. I have been reluctant to develop them in a more theoretical way because my aim was to let the ethnographic voices and reflections flow rather than to fix a compartment on these ideas too soon. Leaving them till the end also mirrors how I also work and function with theory, letting the thesis develop first through a freer inductive exploration. In the first research question, the notion of scene was implied and given, but not questioned or developed until now. In the second research question, the notion of resistance is also there to be now conceptualised. In the introduction, a sense of discomfort and self-questioning was outlined to make it clear that the epistemological framework of this thesis was going to be an essential discussion.

Through the thesis, the notion of scene has been specified as an 'affective assemblage'. The concept is contained in the research question itself, and letting it unfold during the thesis without a specific section for it, has been a conscious choice to allow the reader to enter into the idea by analysing its deterritorial, affective, musical and socioeconomic nature. Now, the notion will be developed in a more detailed and analytical way, adding participants' voices to the debate of 'what constitutes a scene', problematising some universalist definitions on scenes, as well as seeing their potential applicability in this context (Thornton, 1995; Bennett, 2004; Peterson & Bennett, 2004; Hesmondhalgh 2005; Driver & Bennett, 2015; Bennett & Guerra, 2019). Discussing the notion of scene at this stage is important because during the thesis a subtle but firm discursive difference has been materialising: the emphasis on it being distinct in many senses. Hence, this development contributes to the literature and imaginaries of music scenes, in a quest of decentring Eurocentric notions, including the slow downs, the tensions, the hardships that also traverse them. This means that for understanding the context, it is not only necessary to develop the social relations that traverse and constitute a scene, but also develop a concept that assembles and theorises these.

The second notion is 'generative resistance'. After all the discussion on discourses on resistance, the literature review dedicated almost exclusively to this concept, and the still ongoing debate within political science and cultural studies about 'what constitutes resistance', I address more profoundly my contribution to this discussion. In chapter 5, I aimed to build up a plural understanding of how resistance is felt, practised and discursively constructed in this context. In this chapter, through its conceptualisation and concretisation, I aim to focus on how it can be translated into other contexts and dance floors. Even though with the particularities of the Palestinian context, the way resistance is developed provides a general scheme of 'resistance elements' that can be reworked and applied to other music and cultural spaces.

1.1. Conceptualising the 'scene': an affective assemblage

The idea of 'scene' that I have been assembling through these chapters, despite the more general and graspable characteristics (in terms of music, values, or aesthetics) aims to capture the instability, the contradictions and the layered structures that accompany it. The crossroads of electronic music are many. It has global and local unfoldings, usually in connection with a rich virtual world that not only follows literature on the matter (Kruse, 1993, 2010; Kibby, 2000; Bennett, 2002; Bennett & Peterson, 2004), but manifests the geopolitical particularity of the region in terms of (im)mobility, borders and travelling (Urry, 2007). Through the relevance that community and intimacy have revealed during fieldwork, the scene is conceptualised as an 'affective assemblage'. The idea of assemblage, having a Deleuzian-Guattarian (1987), and Puar (2007) influence, grasps the movement, fluid and unstable, of a network of people (alliances) that gives space to disparity between the components; that is, of people living in different places, with different motivations and life possibilities.

Therefore, the rationale for this concept to be forefront in this thesis is 1) to follow the critique shared by many participants towards the term scene. Another concept had to be articulated to put into words this sense that the term did not reflect their movement completely; and 2) to centre affect, instability, movement as key components of the scene. This does not break with the notion of the scene, but it re-centres some of its meanings in a particular direction. The participatory ethos of the thesis called to introduce another concept that, apart from picking up the critiques before mentioned, linked back to how resistance and affect worked within the community. The term scene is flexible enough. As Hesmondhalgh argues, 'the term has been used for too long in too many different and imprecise ways for

those involved in popular music studies to be sure that it can register the ambivalences (2005:30)'. It is precisely because the notion of scene can mean many things and work in many different ways that 'affective assemblage' works as a more precise and contextual notion.

In this section I am coming back to the first research question and discussing: what is a scene anyway? I give account of the critiques that have emerged from my conversations with participants and how some of them felt uncomfortable with the term. To do so, first there is the conceptualisation of the assemblage through the affective and the alliances. Second, there is the questioning of some of the term's meanings and an exploration of how participants make sense of it. Nevertheless, as it will be seen, there are further conceptualisations and critiques of the term scene that resemble with the affective assemblage. Following the assemblage path, an emphasis is given to the community and the movement (stable and unstable) as well as the DIY aspects (Bennett & Guerra, 2019). With this, it will be seen how there is a critique traversing this discussion: the universalist homogenisation of the idea of scene. As Muqata'a says: "what if ours doesn't have to be about that?" (Hudson, 2021).

Affective alliances

Concluding from these chapters, the Palestinian electronic music 'assemblage' can be understood as a local, deterritorial, virtual and intimate community, intertwined with artistic and music scenes (visual arts, film, hip hop), and influenced by a series of political structures that make a complex scenario for its development and accessibility. It entails a form of collective association and belonging that coalesces around different music practices, from producing music, to listening to it *live* or online, to dancing and going to bars in the evening. These practices are also heterogeneous between them, sometimes fragile and easily 'suspended', as has been seen. The assemblage is always in a non-linear movement, between virtual, local, regional and global spaces which are at the same time traversed by its own particularities and contexts. In this sense, similarly to the critique of the universalist imprint of the term scene, the notion of the assemblage has to take into account the different experiences that are engrained for Palestinians living in the diaspora or living in the region, as well as living in '67 or '48. All these spaces, interlockings of temporalities (Mbembe, 2003) produce different scenes: Ramallah, Haifa, Amman or Berlin, for instance. Belonging to the assemblage does not equate to a uniformed experience, and place really matters for the possibilities it allows.

The assemblage's non-linearity means that growth and expansion are not intrinsic outcomes of the scene, nor is stability. As recounted by Murd in chapter 3, politics (and Covid) makes the energy *"go back down".* Also, as mobility has shown, people coming and going, the spatial deterritorialisation and virtuality shapes this 'non-linearity'. It does not follow a concrete direction and the future is uncertain. The assemblage often implies –and this thesis argues that this is very central for some– a multiple and fluid attachment to spaces that transcend Palestinian localities and subjectivities: going and living in different places, endorsing a layered identity that is in negotiation with the hegemonic Palestinian identity and challenging it in some respects. A space produced by leaving as much as returning, determined by the conviviality of seemingly contradictory realities: transnational mobility and restriction of movement, resistance and power, privilege and dissent. Puar (2007) states the following about the assemblage and its non-binary nature:

> [it] moves away from excavation work, deprivileges a binary opposition […] underscores contingency and complicity with dominant formations. This foregrounding of assemblage enables attention to ontology in tandem with epistemology, affect in conjunction with representational economies, within which bodies interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects and effects to each other (2007:205).

The notion of assemblage also appears in Tomkins seminal work (1962). However, his idea of assemblage, for instance, offers a more linear definition of what I am trying to do here: affect as an assemblage of biological, environmental and cultural elements, the union of different elements that combine to create complex relationships. It moves away from the emphasis on movement, instability and rhizome. The assemblage is characterised by the multiple layers and relations that co-function in conviviality, all influencing each other in many ways. In the assemblage, the elements that constitute it are distinct between each other, in nature and origin, and they are actively linked together through relationships (doings) between them. As explained in chapter 4, these elements are musical and non-musical forces, putting together in relevance questions of space, sound, family or police as shaping the assemblage. This assemblage puts together the elements explored before through the first research question: participants, music (sound, production and distribution and dancing), affect (intimacy, discomfort, familiarity, tension and trauma), space (mobility, geography,

venues, virtuality, online platforms and social media), and class (cultural capital, privileges, clothing and equipment) all interconnected by the 'affective'.

Affect is a thread and a driving force that pulls together, but also *complicates* things: it moves emotions and intense experiences, bringing together intimacies, exclusions, familiarities and sufferings that happen on the dance floor and outside of it. Affect fosters the pursuit of cultural expression, not as a determination from occupation, but as a way of expressing one-self and dealing with the surroundings. Affect is found in the embodied responses of dancing, touching and observing in the parties and nights out, especially when these are often of such a familiar atmosphere. A familiar atmosphere that is traversed by the interruptions, the odd strangers, the tensions and the suspensions of the last few years, which also bring an affective load that intensifies the scene. In any way, the notion of affect also helps to incorporate all those non-musical or nonverbal processes, many of them unintelligible, unnoticed, unknown, that create this scene and music experience in general. These components, when articulated together in a heterogeneous assemblage, embody properties, generate new dynamics that the elements by themselves do not have. For instance, the way intimacy and estrangement are articulated through trust and familiarity, the relationship between music production and accessibility, living abroad and missing home, or having fun and being tense at the same time. These all generate the assemblage in unique ways. This articulation is also responsible for the potential *generation* resistance. Deleuze and Guattari recall the possibility of the contraries transformed into one another, or in this case, of 'being' one and another, of being power and resistant at the same time. The concept of assemblage puts emphasis on the relation itself, accommodating its cyclic nature, the tensions, peaks and slowdowns as shown in chapter 3:

> *we're a bit over it. I think I still wanna party and I still wanna do all the shit, but I'm not like, as excited as I once was due to things like police and stuff, like, that has happened that has made the experience a bit less, you know, freeing* (Nadia, online interview, June 2022).

Therefore, it is of central importance to incorporate this tension and the slowdown as a way of de-romanticising the assemblage.

The scene's 'unity', as in the conceptual machinery of Deleuze and Guattari is 'that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'. It is never filiations which are important, but

alliances' [my emphasis] (1983:42). This thesis is about these sound and affective alliances (chapter 4) and how they work together in various ways: organising events, parties, labels and music productions or simply meeting in Garage bar. The Exist Festival in Europe or UNION collective in Ramallah are examples of these 'sound collaborations' as seen in chapter 4. The assemblage is dispersed (deterritorialised) in different territories (in Palestine and beyond) as the question of mobility has shown, but mutually implicated. These alliances are against over-scrutinisation, coherence and legibility, as Murd encapsulated at the beginning of chapter 4, *"I think you would understand what we are talking about from the music itself. You would know what we are talking about without knowing what it is"* or Shabid's *"it's not an institutional art project"*. It is rather the conviviality of these supposed contradictory and heterogeneous elements in a mobile assemblage –the possibility of existing along with each other which makes the scene revealing and generative. Linking back to all these 'binarisms' that have appeared in the thesis: resistance and power, DIY underground and commodification, privilege and restrictions, conservatism and modernisation, pleasure-fun and occupation. Nadia encapsulates these 'convivial spaces' very well when she states:

> *you can really exist and move in and out of these places, something I say about Palestine specifically, which I don't know if this is like why our brains are fucked or why we're maybe smarter or why, whatever. I think something different that we're exposed to that shapes us is the, um, understanding of like very different contradictory realities at once. Um, and you can talk about this in, I mean, in being Palestinian, just the fact that, you know, you can be in even Ramallah, like, I'm not even saying anywhere else, you can be in fucking Ramallah and then drive an hour in Tel Aviv, which is literally right now the most expensive city in the world, which is crazy to me. Yeah. Um, and your always knows that my friend was saying his mom was in the hospital before I left. And he was like, she's fine. The hospital she's in is fine, but it kills me to know that half an hour away* [in Tel Aviv]*, there's a really nice fucking hospital.*

> *It's the same thing with raving and with partying, you're aware that you're in your space, but then go onto the street and you might be fucked, like completely, even when we'd protest last year, we'd protest and then we'd go to Anisa* [Beit Aneesh/Radio] *afterwards. And we we'd be like under such high tension from the police and then we get to Anisa and fuck Anisa, but we'd be like, ugh, okay, you know, kind of safe,*

comfortable, I can drink, but yeah. I don't know if that's something interesting for you to talk about, but there's like a million different realities going on at once and it's crazy (online interview, June 2022).

Thus, the assemblage tries to give a sense of these relationships and co-functioning, of the different forces that come into play and that feel messy and contradictory for participants as much as normal and mundane. As Nadia say, about escaping in Anisa, being comfortable and kind of safe, being with others in a somehow unintended belonging and resistance.

Problematising the notion of 'scene': community and movement

In the literature, the discussion about the meanings of culture have highlighted that this project understands culture as a loose and wide term that includes multiple practices that happen in the everyday (Williams, 1958; Tripp, 2021). Culture is intertwined with the popular and the political that includes anything in relation to leisure, social relations and music. Departing from this view, the classic notion of scene works similarly: as something that can mean many things due to its flexible nature (Bennett, 2004; Peterson & Bennett, 2004; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Driver & Bennett, 2015; Bennett & Guerra, 2019). But despite the malleability of the term, there is critique and questioning of some of the meanings or even felt impositions between participants. Even though many authors have pointed towards the flexibility and amplitude of the concept 'scene', for participants, the term has a shade of universalism that they have come to question.

First, as referred before, other authors have questioned the notion of scene due to its anglophone 'modernist' and 'universalist' ideal (Queiroz, 2019). In this problematisation then, there are two sides that get connected: the impossibility of being an (underground) scene, according to its participants, due to the lack of certain infrastructure or the rejection of the term for the connotations it has, related to Westernised urban developed and stable music hubs. As such, scenes traversed by coloniality and a series of power structures here discussed are imbricated in limitations and repressions that usually *other* (Western) scenes do not have to deal with[61]. While the scene does not emerge and develop as a resistant subcultural

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[61] This is a complex that would require further development. This argument tries to outline how different limitations and restrictions operate in different contexts. While the West in itself is a blurred notion that does not entail a clear-cut separation, it emphasizes the difference with 'other' scenes from the so-called Global North that, at the same time, undergo their own problematics. It will be enriching to further explore these lines, to see where does coloniality start and finish, if does so, and how scenes (in both global North and South) get entangled in it.

response to being occupied, it is influenced by a series of structures that limit a universalist applicability. As said at the beginning of this section: lack of spaces, opportunities, restrictions and violence upbring a different possibility. A possibility that exists, nevertheless. In this sense, this thesis develops a delicate equilibrium: it tries to de-essentialise and de-romanticise the idea of Palestinians as being only related to occupation and therefore, with bare existing nightlife or leisure, and also to not normalise the context by universalising the scene.

In this regard, the Palestinian electronic music scene shares much of this conceptual and symbolic global language of underground music scenes, showing many similarities with a practise, the one of electronic music and dance floors. Nevertheless, the term arouses controversy among artists. Muqata'a reflects on this idea when he is asked about it in an interview. He says that:

> for years we've been calling it a 'scene' and waiting for it to become a 'scene', for lack of a better word. But I think at one point we realised that, whatever a scene is, ours doesn't have to be about that. It's more about what we're doing with our music, what we're doing together with this very diverse community that we have (Hudson, 2021).

This thought talks to the very idea of the scene as something more or less stable that unifies a community into a common ground of shared practices. Muqata'a reflection also links back to a critique of Western ideas of 'scene' that do not necessarily apply to their context, giving a more fluid and temporal sense as well as community (small and familiar) meaning.

This lack of coherence, stability or uniformity is also commented on by others. Burkhalter uses a similar argumentation to refer to the Lebanese 'avant-garde' musicians:

> theirs is not a singular scene, a coherent body of interconnected performers. Rather, the sheer breadth of vanguardism in the Arab world and its diasporas—as well as the experimental work from elsewhere that is in its debt—spans history and geography too expansively to warrant any such classification (Burkhalter, 2013:1).

This reveals how it might be a troublesome concept for some Palestinians, since 'scene' denotes certain stability, uniformity and access to resources. In this sense, some features of electronic music scenes are not characteristic of the Palestinian 'scene', such as multiple

regular venues dedicated to events (clubs), long-opening hours (at least until late at night), touring DJs with international guests, and a relative agreement with authorities and society that allow parties to happen (although there are many scenes with complicated relationships with authorities). As Cohen (1991) points out, scenes form an 'informal economy' composed by a diverse range of relationships in circulation, from instruments to gossip, from technical support to record shops and studios. It is true that many of the Western social hubs are not present in '67 Palestine (such as electronic music record shops or a wide availability of venues), but there are others: the bars function as an important meeting point, and radio stations and home studios as another.

This uniformity is often linked to music genres and a geographically determined space. Muqata'a's quote refers to a classic definition of scene, one that coalesces 'around specific coalitions of musical style' (Straw, 1991:379), 'different relationships to a specific genre of music produced in a particular space' (Driver & Bennett, 2015:100) that 'map the territory of the *city'* (Straw, 2004:412). Nevertheless, the notion of 'place' within the music scenes literature has been largely problematised. A fixed location or a unique city is no longer needed as such to conform to the original notion of a scene. Putting the focus more in the embodied connection (Driver & Bennett, 2014), the intimate 'vibe' (Garcia, 2020) or the fluctuating net of actors (Tironi, 2012), show the importance of community and networks of peoples and what is experienced at the dancefloor rather than the bounding of a 'place' or a 'music style/genre'. As it has been discussed in chapters 3 & 4, there are multiple music genres coalescing in the scene, even outside electronic 'dance' music as such (like hip hop).

The Palestinian's scene relationship to space appears mobile, unstable and layered, as like other electronic music scenes, with an increasing deterritorial and virtual importance. This view echoes recent music scene's literature, for instance, St John (2009, 2017), Kruse (2010), Guerra and Bennet (2019) and Garcia (2020, 2023). As will be explored, place matters, albeit not in the same terms as the original literature on scenes which focused on scenes as spatially dependent. Because of the lack of infrastructure and spaces, challenges with internal and external mobility, and the suffocating restrictions on participants, the spatial 'map' is a complex one that proves that geography matters in the scene, but in a complex and unique way.

The term in this sense works more as a movement than a photograph or 'a place', since its disperse, deterritorial and virtual nature are central components of it. It is a similar process

with music genres and styles not being only one or a few genres characteristic of the Palestinian sound, but many. Some other conceptions of the term also pick up some of these meanings when claiming that it 'mobilizes local energies and moves these energies in different directions' (Straw, 2004:412) in a very 'assemblic' sense.

Some of the body of literature on electronic music scenes focuses on the 'overproductive signifying' aspect (Shank, 1994:122), the vigorosity, the energetic field of creation and belonging that scenes articulate: how they work, thrive, relate to other scenes, etc. These views leave somehow behind the decelerating, deterritorialising and precarious moments of suspension, of impossibility of continuing beyond individual and scattered events from time to time, or having to go outside as DJs to have a career. Coming back to the notion of assemblage, deterritorialisation and affect are entangled, because the process of moving out and not being able to stay is traversed by mixed feelings of betrayal, estrangement and also excitement and freedom.

Hence, this conceptualisation argues for including the non-so thriving moments that the scene undergoes as constitutive parts of these, as affective loads that are linked to impossibilities, suspensions and power structures. It also looks at other ways of relation that have a layered relationship with space in two senses: a lack of space and a movement of people that come and go.

Therefore, material and spatial limitations, the instability and non-uniformity of people and sounds create music scenes too. These characteristics are traversed by a last element: the question of the underground. There is certain rejection to the term underground that goes hand in hand with the suspicion of the term scene, which many participants highlighted. In Perl's (2021) research on the Ramallah scene, interviewees argue that their scene is not underground due to the material possibilities (privileges) of its participants, the entry fees and the lack of outrightly 'fighting against political and policing structures' (2021:17). This is supported by Nadia who said:

> *please, you can't act like you're saving the world. Like it's irresponsible to, to behave like this. That's one of the big reasons I don't like the idea of underground blablabla like, you're not dealing with the judges of society, you're really not"* and then later continues *"you can say 'the music scene', you can say lots of things, but not underground music scene* (online interview, June 2022).

When I asked what she meant by that, she referred to the relationships that some people participating in the scene had with authorities, privilege and power, mitigating the possible political connotation of an underground scene as transgressive. For Nadia, the idea of underground is linked to politisation and a certain impact that requires, perhaps, class distance from the elites that some participants do not have. This contrasts with some views on the underground that emphasise more their low-key and DIY status (Guerra & Moreira, 2015) rather than the political commitment of their members. This critique of the underground presents certain resemblance to the critique of resistance: participants argue for the need to be politically committed and transformative to be underground or resistant. This understanding frames the way participants understand resistance: on a first discursive layer as something constitutive of their existence, whereas in a second layer, it is something that requires a strong commitment or is free from privilege. When reporting on the Iranian rock music scene, Robertson explains to Nooshin about the use of the term underground:

> it was really important to the musicians to have it called unofficial rather than underground, because they were very well aware of the tendency for the media, etc. to sensationalise and over politicise their music, when for them it was about the music, not about the politics (Robertson in Nooshin, 2017:181).

This discourse, very present in the Palestinian scene as well, points towards a 'non-classification' that tries to centre the practices and the music, showing again the dismissal of categorisations, especially when some of the terms entail certain romanticisation or fetishisation such as the term 'underground'. Therefore, in this problematisation there is also a rejection of exoticisation by its participants. Irwin's (1973) theorisation of the Californian surf scene suggests the non-instrumentality of it in a similar way where resistance is conceptualised:

> though participants may join into collective goal-oriented enterprises, the scene members can and do interact together in an orderly fashion because they share a set of meanings, and understandings, interests, and not because they have to cooperate to attain some goal. The source of cohesion, then, is the shared meaning world or shared patterns of the scene and not goal attainment and other attendant social system problem (1973:133).

In summary, the lack of uniformity and infrastructure in terms of music genres, peoples or venues, the concrete rejection of the underground due to the exoticisation/privilege attached to the scene, and the incorporation of slowdowns and deterritoriality as affective forces, is what *differentiates* the notion of scene in this context. In this problematisation, it has been seen how electronic music scenes are not –they never were– something only relatable to Eurocentric ideals, having their concrete manifestations and characteristics, as well as resemblances. These particular unfoldings differ from universal definitions and that is what has been problematised here.

Perhaps, more than being a matter of the term scene in itself, it is a matter of the content, the meanings that are ascribed to it and what we come to imagine when we talk about 'scenes'. In other words, this conceptualisation is very much about how we understand relations and meanings: what we came to understand as characteristic of a scene. Therefore, these relationships are always changing. The term scene appears as flexible and fluid enough to be lived in different ways, but it is easy to understand the reluctancy towards it. The mutual influence of scenes, music and artists make it almost impossible to separate scenes in terms of West/non-West influences or demarcate spatial limits. The matter of the political and the underground is what causes a major critique and rejection among participants, in a similar way of how resistance is understood and practised, calling again for explicit and overt manifestations to be considered as such.

Political and resistant affect

> *I'm never gonna say that we're doing something so important, you know, and like we're liberating anything. We're not doing a lot. Um, but I think it still matters* (online interview, June 2022) says Nadia when talking about the significance of the scene and its political aspect.

This de-romanticisation of the scene, paralleled with the importance it has for participants, is a keyway of understanding how the scene matters and how the term, despite the critiques, crystallises a set of common understandings and practices. Having a scene is especially relevant when you are not given the freedom to develop and enjoy it as you want. This meaningfulness for participants is the central affective articulation of the scene, and it helps to understand the processes of trauma, frustration and sadness they undergo when it is suspended, cancelled, or misinterpreted and also how they refer to it in an articulated critical

way. It is within these practices of coming together, of producing music, of escaping where the importance lies for them and therefore, its political effect. This last section comes back to affect to draw on the political potentialities of the scene as an articulating force for collective and individual action, working as a linking section towards the concept of generative resistance.

The articulation of the political and ultimately the resistance in the scene is seen as a combination of generative and disruptive movements: crucially, it constructs new spaces, subjectivities and ways of being in the world, and while doing so, it embodies disruption, challenges hegemonic and traditional discourses and doings. These 'ways of being in the world' locate a search for expression and escape at the centre of these spaces. Some accounts cited in chapter 5 emphasise the role of 'escape', of feeling 'free' and being surrounded by a sense of familiarity during the parties, as main motives for participating. The potentialities of escape and enjoyment appear not as merely disconnecting and class marker factors, but as ways of coping with life and making existence meaningful in an ocean of ambiguity and impossibility. Escape joins an articulated sense of the self and its surroundings, with political views, projects and actions that foster generative resistance, as is going to be seen in the next section. Within this affective assemblage, the conviviality of different elements underpins and also questions power and privilege. As has been seen, these experiences of escape and belonging entail also class differences and neoliberal patterns. In other words, participants move between two structures that promote the particularity of the context: the structure of the occupation and the structure of socioeconomic privilege.

Summing up, the notion of affective assemblage has tried to grasp a better sense of what the scene does and how it relates to itself, putting participants' critiques at the centre and problematising the universalist and fetishising connotations that some find in the term. The notion of affect encapsulates the energy, contradictory and political nature of the scene. The ways participants are affected by them and the context. It then unfolds in the direction of the Spinozean affectus: to affect and be affected (Massumi, 1987) and the more emotional/intimate aspect of the scene that I have explained.

The notion of affective assemblage tries to touch upon broader ideas of culture and leisure. These have to be thought of as main domains for the affective assemblage, and for youth in general, that provide a relative degree of freedom and a sense of autonomy, especially if compared to other areas of their lives such as work, or to the general context. Making music,

organising a party or getting drunk are social practices that generate a more affective and intimate leisure, which inform a different way of understanding culture in the Palestinian context: as more dissensive, flexible, exploratory, exclusive and 'global'.

In many aspects, it questions and broadens discourses on post and/or anti colonial youth as always-radically subversive or openly resistant (Bayat, 2010), and tries to move towards another direction of articulating the political and resistance. They move in between different understandings of resistance. In this region, music and these practices are catalysts for the political and the affective, they reflect and create this emotional context. Resisting emanates from this moving network of peoples that is far from monolithic or stable. Resistance is generated in the affective assemblage, which is the next concept that will be developed.

1.2. Conceptualising generative resistance

The idea that resistance can be generative rather than reactive is the key contribution of this thesis. Alongside these chapters, starting with the literature review, I have referred to a literature gap (in both Palestinian studies and resistance studies) that have left certain practices vacant of resistant significance or articulation. The notion of resistance has been traditionally framed through a political approach that defines it with relatively clear goals and elements, and within which the example of Palestinian resistance is included. As explained in the literature, an oppositional resistance directs a series of actions towards a target or targets. In this context, Palestinian resistance entails a varied set of tactics, strategies and more generally, resistance through everyday life and steadfastness (*sumud*), aimed towards ending Israel settler colonialism and building a free Palestinian State. For instance, political leader of the Islamic Jihad in 2015, Shallah, defined it in terms of 'struggle for national liberation' (Shallah, 2015:40) which can be armed (Giacaman, 2013) and non-violent. Qumsiyeh focuses on popular resistance 'in Palestine as movement of direct action (…) for self-determination' (2011:30). It includes strikes, demonstrations, committees and political movements (Qumsiyeh, 2011).

First, it is important to note that even the more traditional ways of Palestinian resistance are a plural movement composed by diverse perspectives, factions, strategies, means and even ends. However, all these notions of resistance entail a main target (Israel) and a series of strategies and tactics to challenge the occupation and accomplish national liberation (armed

struggle, popular struggle, diplomacy…). Through a traditional perspective, resistance is, therefore, a nationalistic, organised, intentional and oppositional strategy. This oppositional perspective, both in local and State forms, views Palestinian culture as 'opposing' Israel by virtue of its occupied nature.

This section aims to fill this gap by contributing with the development of a concept that has been developing along these chapters: generative resistance, aiming for it to be used and applied to other contexts as well. A definition of generative resistance sees it as an unorganised and unintentional exercise and action of different practices that in their articulation generate culture, new spaces and subjectivities which challenge and disrupt different power structures.

Much of the recent developments and critiques coming from this perspective are precisely directed towards emptying from meaning and concreteness the idea of 'resistance', in a process of romanticising and generalising its applicability. I understand the argument that the 'resistance lens' might fail to provide a complete picture of how certain Arab young subcultures work nowadays (El Zein, 2016). The question therefore is, why are scholars not putting more effort into reframing understandings and meanings of this concept?

The importance of focusing on this notion does not revolve around whether it is ultimately resistant or not, but why resistance is still an important framework for understanding cultural practices, its relationship to wider processes and why it might fail to grasp or give an account of many other aspects of Palestinian everyday life, and in this case, of the scene. At the same time, exploring this contested notion within the scene is very telling of the changes the scene is embodying. There are already enough accounts pointing out the necessity of pluralising the lenses through which we study SWANA and Palestinian music and leisure (see Stein & Swedenburg, 2005; Tawil-Souri, 2011; Burkhalter, 2013; El Zein, 2016). Then, this concept is important, and should not just be answered through a research question, exploring its nature and its content. It is relevant in this context as it talks much more about different social processes and how we read resistance the way we read it and why.

Hence, it has opened up an important question: do we dismiss resistance as a framework and a material activity due to its narrow and burdened meaning? Or do we re-articulate and re-conceptualise its meaning to continue its applicability, and importantly, to centre its importance within the context of dance floor?

Having arrived at this point, I believe that is useful to rethink and adapt the concept to current times and possibilities, rather than discarding it due to the risk of misinterpreting the phenomenon. It is, crucially, a thermometer on the potentialities and possibilities we have for collective transformation in our everyday life. The insistence on studying Palestinian resistance and fascination with the scene shows our own frustrations and political failures. It shows how exploring other scenes in search of inspiration talks back to the constraints dance floors live in many senses of our societies: the oddities and juggling of affirming that we are resisting while partying. In general, this concept shows the historical 'withdrawal' moment in global politics which Palestine is immersed in, with increasing difficulties to imagine and practice transformative action. It also demonstrates the moment Palestinians are living, with a growing suffocating occupation and internal political regime.

This thesis acknowledges that the reality on the ground is far from embracing this broadening and vague concept, as the most urgent and widespread practice of resistance is still the one clearly directed towards Israel. However, this generative resistance directly points towards anti-hegemonic practices within Palestine. It is necessary to address internal politics and movements because it is not only fairer with the reality and what is happening, but also because again, it de-romanticises and de-essentialises the narrative of 'Palestine' as a monolithic entity and identity.

Elements of generative resistance

Having outlined the practices linked to resisting in the previous chapter and introducing why this notion is still important to understand dynamics, certainly in a need of re-articulation, the following section will detail what elements constitute generative resistance. These elements are, are going to be developed next in the following order: process, temporality, contradiction, power, plurality, (non)intentionality, (non)oppositionality, (non)reactive.

Process. First, the concept emphasises resisting as a process that becomes through the course of its articulation[62] rather than a pre-intentional activity. It only becomes and exists in movement and in relation to the different practices mentioned before (and to different powers). It is by people's doings, the articulations of different practices, that resistance is *generated.* As happens with cultural resistances of this kind, resistance is not a precondition

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[62] This term refers to the process of contingent elements coming together to generate a different/new political reality or process (Hall, 1996; Mouffe, 2005). These elements might be 'disconnected' and entail disparate political effects, but while coming together they generate new spaces and possibilities, in this case, resistance.

for culture, but rather its consequence. It is lived and thought about in different ways, endorsing both a collective and individual aspect. The emphasis is put on both aspects, generating resistances as a 'scene' or assemblage and also as individuals. Instead of being a response, a strategy, and a tactic for survival, it first and foremost generates/creates alternatives, and it is this process, these doings, that later disrupt and challenge power structures. Generative resistance constructs new or different alternatives from the social order, as Foucauldian counter-conducts (2007) that resist 'the processes implemented for conducting others' (2007:210), the constraints imposed by the context and the authorities. Similarly to the practice of (active) *sumūd* in its connection with everyday life (doing activities that generate results, culture, products), this idea emphasises its productive sphere. Therefore, it is a practical, applied, active process of generation: of culture, of music, and of alternatives to the hegemonic and the imposed.

The element of process reconciles the complex ascription to resistance that single and concrete practices have in a context such as an electronic music scene, with loose networks and scattered activities that are not organised under a specific umbrella of action. The action is found dancing, enjoying, producing music, socialising. The practices matter when they are performed, when they are generated: when dancing occurs, when the boycott happens, when the people are able to get together despite the restrictions.

Temporality. As a process, even the parties are circumscribed to a certain time-space, their effects are often felt in the long-term rather than just in the particularity of party. Indeed, it shows how parties in themselves (the night) are markers and moments of resistance, but that what matters is what unravels from them: the creation of culture, the boycott, the safer spaces and the defying of borders. These unravellings last in time: the end of the party does not erase what has happened but shows the different temporalities that traverse resisting and cultural practices in general. The temporality of the party, the instant of a song, the hug or the conversation can have lasting effects on the individual and generate unmeasurable cleavages in the social order.

Contradictory and disputed meaning. All in all, resistance is a messy, burdened and contradictory idea. Much of what has been discussed and insisted on during the thesis is about the messiness and contradictions that come from the hegemonic narratives and the different individual takes on the practice. However, even what is understood as 'traditional' or hegemonic resistance has also shifted over time in the popular arena, from armed struggle

to more nonviolent forms, for instance. This means that it can be lived and theorised in a different way. Hence, there is this tension between a context that reifies meanings and practices that open these meanings up. Within these dynamics of meaning-making, the idea of resistance, deeply attached to Palestinian history, appears as a *empty* signifier (Laclau & Mouffe 1985; Laclau 2005). It embodies a disputed significance and a discursive category that changes over time through agonistic, not necessarily opposed but divergent and tense, processes. This directly talks to the current political and social context in Palestine, showing the tensions and pluralities that *convive* in the same arena, moving in between contradictions and agonistic pluralities (Mouffe, 2005).

Entangled with power. Power and its productive-pervasive nature appears as a constitutive element of resistance (Foucault, 1982). Power has been present in this research in various ways: part of the scene in terms of privilege, in terms of the context as a power network of 'structures' (Palestinian and Israeli regimes) and finally, in the relationship between these powers and resistances as a relational-productive entity. Hence, generative resistance is as much about resistance as it is about power, existing in the same relations that can generate resistance, showing, again, the contradictory and messy nature of the process. As it has been seen in chapter 5, another key importance of this entanglement is the pluralisation of structures of power: there is no a single power (Israel) operating in this context, but many (the Palestinian regime and different authorities). Therefore, the scene is caught in different structures that affect it differently.

The question of power, apart from its theoretical importance (resistance cannot be analysed without exploring power as well), brings a complexity that is one of the biggest contributions for thinking (and de-romanticising) music scenes. That is, the recognition that subjects are involved in plural networks that also entail the production and reproduction of power, even when living in structurally oppressed regions as Palestine. This helps to de-essentialise and de-romanticise pain, hardship and struggle and to understand these as experiences that can be perfectly intertwined with individual power and privilege. It is especially rampant in the context of the scene and the elitism it entails in many senses, as has been seen. Hence, resistance here incorporates the contradictions and critiques that appear alongside its practice. It does not pretend to be a closed category or a fixed tool for analysis, but rather a flexible concept that re-configures both depoliticising and romanticising discourses directed towards the scene.

Plurality. There are various 'resistances' in this context, not a single one. Such an approach towards resistance means that there can be different structures that are affected to diverse intensities, different practices linked to it and different understandings of the action. As just mentioned, there are several powers affected as there are several resistances operating, and they do not exist solely as a response to Israel's settler colonialism. This thesis proves that resistance can go into multiple directions at the same time, and this one specifically very much interpellates internal powers (Palestinian authorities). Foucault argues that the 'points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead, there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case' (Foucault, 1978:95).

Hence, resisting is plural in three senses: in a general way in relation to the context, showing that 'Palestinian resistance' is a plural movement; second, that there is a plurality of engagements and understandings of resistance within the scene as well and third, in relation to the very idea of generative resistance. There are a plurality of practices linked to it that vary in form (creation of music, socialisation, boycott, dancing), in space (in Ramallah, in '67, in '48, in Europe), in outcome (disrupting the internal regime, the external, the international narrative), in intention (seeing the scene as resistant or not) and in number of people (individuals or the scene as a collective).

Intentionality. The fact that these creations and practices are done with other aims and motives than actively opposing something, or at least, not as a main purpose of existence, reshapes the way resistance is traditionally thought of in terms of 'intentions' and 'responses to'. Even if there is not a general theory on what is required to be considered resistance, usually, a certain level of consciousness, intention, organisation and opposition against a subject/structure are among the basic elements (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2016). Indeed, scholars disagree about whether resistance must be intentional and/or recognised to qualify as such (Johansson 2008; Williams, 2009).

It is not only that some of these elements are absent or ambiguous in the conceptualisation that I present, but also, the very idea of *intentionally* resisting is contested by some of its very own participants. This presents a dilemma of legibility in which the researcher (observer) ascribes certain practices to participants that reproduce the idea that they do not 'know' they are resisting or there is a different interpretation (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). 'Deciding' whether an act is resistance places a weight of rational intentionality on the body that is

resisting and of legibility on the observer (researcher). As such, it is important to come back to assert how resistance is a socially constructed idea that is articulated by its participants, targets and observers alike (Gordon, 1993; Hollander, 2002). Indeed, Johansson and Vinthagen (2015) argue about the possibility of understanding *sumūd* 'as an attempt to conduct resistance without necessarily being understood as doing resistance' (2015:116). Then, even within political theory, there is ambiguity about the role of intention in resisting. As has been seen, this intention does not equate to a lack of consciousness about the impact of the participants practices or the meanings that are being ascribed to resisting. It is rather an *intentional* assertion of agency: regaining back the capacity of building their own narrative. It does not matter whether they are intentionally building this as a way of resisting or having fun, the importance resides on the action itself, on the fact that they are creating something. Hence, it shows how it is not necessary to have a clear intention of resisting to do so.

Oppositionality and reaction. One of the most important contributions of this concept is theoretically liberating leisure and music as a *response* to Israeli occupation, which is linked to the element of intention and reaction to/against 'something'. The idea of response (causality) has been reshaped by participants since the beginning of the thesis. 'Long gone are the days where music must be explicitly political to be considered as such – sights and sounds now evoke, constitute, and shape political practice' (Ashraf, 2021), or needed to be standing in opposition to a structural domination or parents' culture in subcultural theory to exist as resistance. As Anani, a scholar and art curator from Ramallah argues:

> resistance is not restricted to a binary mode of "action" and "reaction" against colonial perpetrations and mechanisms of control. It is concerned with things that we forget in our daily struggle for liberation. It is the necessity of maintaining an alert and free mind that is interested in its own surroundings beyond the history of conflict and colonialism (Anani & Toukan, 2014:212).

Importantly, this change in the relevance of the opposition towards a certain power does not mean that this power is not being disrupted, challenged or questioned, neither that participants hold an agonistic relationship with such structures of power. They have an important role to keep at both a personal and collective level. In this case, this is the same as the element of 'opposition' that comes as a consequence rather than as a cause or a motive. This reshape of intentionality with resistance's oppositional nature sees: 'resistance as a struggle *for*, and not as a struggle against' (Butz & Ripmeester, 1999).

De-romanticisation. The last element to incorporate is the de-romanticisation that this concept brings. The inclusion of power and the emphasis on ambiguity and contradictions within this process builds on a de-essentialised concept, that is far from heroism or grand accomplishments. It also serves as answering one of the questions that the literature raised in relation to coloniality, in seeing this scene as not just mere colonised/oppressed subjects, but positioned in a myriad of powers. Distancing themselves from what international media has focused more on 'as resistance against occupation', they emphasise the problematics and limitations they face on a daily basis in relation to repression, censorship and lack of tolerance with Palestinian authorities. This prevents us from approaching this sort of contexts and ways of resistance as abnormal and radical dance floors and centres the tensions, limitations, and suspensions that traverse it. In other words, the concept tries to give hope to look in other places for resistances in the networks of power. The concept does not magnify these resistances out of the ordinary and the possibilities given by the context.

Resistance, as in the 'affective assemblage', also involves privilege, contradiction, slowdowns and stagnation. The generative aspect of the scene, through creating music, parties, belonging and spaces is what fills resistance with meaning: its practice, its exercise, its action. A practice that does not strive for complete liberation, but neither recognises complete domination, and moves in between the two. Both concepts, the affective assemblage and generative resistance share this emphasis on practice and action. Moving away from static or totalising attributions, it is all about what people do and the social relations that emanate from it. The idea of 'generating' resistance emphasises the process itself. Moving away from these ideas of persistence and refusal, the weight is put on the activity, the 'doing' and becoming rather than the result, the intention or the goal.

Relationship with power: The scene as an anti-hegemonic movement

The scene appears as a disruptive space within the hegemonic Palestinian order[63]. Through the practices narrated in the past few chapters, the scene reframes the world of common and shared experience towards different ways of understanding reality and participating in it. Reading the scene and its practices through Gramscian lenses would locate it within the realm

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[63] This thesis is not a Gramscian or Foucauldian tractate on culture and power. As the reader might have inferred by now, it employs and explores these frameworks and some of their ideas to better grasp some dynamics, and importantly, to make them translatable to other contexts when possible.

of culture as an arena of struggle for hegemonic power, filling it with political meaning. Moving away from the reduction of culture to class struggle, Gramsci's approach to culture locates questions of power and contestation within the cultural realm. However, the scene is not a 'force' that disputes or wants the hegemonic power. A counter-hegemonic power, which has been seen in the literature, would be Hamas who wants Fatah's power and stands in opposition to it, aspiring to build a newer hegemony (consensus). Electronic music scenes, in general, are far from being a counter-hegemonic movement in that sense. They might generate resistance and dissent in the hegemonic order, but not as a result of a pre-organised counter hegemonic drive that aims to obtain power. Moreover, as said, the scene is entangled in two networks of power: the Israeli regime and the Palestinian. As such, it encompasses an 'anti-hegemonic' movement which operates through a multiplicity of political subjectivities that do not aspire to construct a general shared common consensus within society. Through hegemonic theory, the scene can be mistakenly portrayed as a 'political project' aspiring to transform its political order. Hence, an 'hegemony framework' is useful to think about the actors that shape the context where the scene exists: Palestinian and Israeli regimes and how they hold/reproduce power in order to maintain it. This is especially relevant in the case of the Palestinian authorities, which directly confront the scene and part of society that tries to control it.

Following Foucault, this framework also helps to accommodate all the different subjectivities that make up the affective assemblage. It focusses more on the individualised and particular drives of people within resistant or power discourses, as this thesis does. I try to grasp and demonstrate the different views that compose the scene, and the different resistances that emanate individually, as well as collectively. This framing points towards a Foucauldian and a de Certeuan (1984) perspective on everyday life[64]. This poststructuralist approach encapsulates a more spontaneous, practical, contradictory process that is not new at all.

The epistemological contribution of this thesis starts here, in settling an understanding and a research practice that centres subjects, affect and experience, coming from participants, but also myself, who is translating and narrating these experiences. As such, this second part reflects on the production of knowledge and research as a process that needs to be interrogated and challenged.

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[64] De Certeau was explored to later be discarded for this thesis. His development of resistance through everyday life does not resemble the practices outlined, here because in this case I do not see resistance as 'micro-acts' of passive resistance as he theorised.

2. Epistemological critique: an affective anti-research thesis

War, conflict and colonialism, are structures that pervade the everyday life of those who experience it. They have the power, not only to ordain the material possibilities of existence, but to constitute subjects as relational entities of such: existing only in relation to domination, suffering and oppression. It may feel obvious for some that there is much more than war or occupation in this context, that these frameworks of relationality do not reduce existence to them. But for many people I encountered along the way, it was not that obvious. It has always been an issue which preoccupies liberatory movements: how to claim and exercise your agency while at the same time dealing with the power regimes that traverse it materially. Even for myself, many times it was difficult to escape the sense of guilt for two reasons: the superficiality of exploring nightlife amidst the suffering and the difficulties and the discomfort of being an outsider in such a hard, exoticised and over-researched context. I do not think that nightlife is 'superficial' or that being an outsider in such a context disavows the legitimacy to do research, but these are questions that arise, and regardless of your positionality, impact the process and the outcome.

This section discusses epistemological and ethical questions that have been identified along the thesis. Due to the nature of those, it is not possible to close them as a finished debate. However, developing a reflective and purposeful critique relocates the importance of transforming power dynamics within research as equally important, if not more, than the theoretical contributions of this thesis. If there have been some concepts developed in the previous chapters (neo-orientalism, over-research, othering and romanticisation, for example), in this discussion, I now turn to develop the concrete effects of these into my production and contribution.

The next section starts by exploring questions of identity and representation. This is followed by a critique of the potential reproductions and otherings this project entails. Importantly, as reflected in the methodology, this critique cannot land in a vacuum that leads to immobilisation. But it calls to do research from another place, or not to do research at all, evolving with participation, affect and consciousness to transform the dynamics of power that pervade academia and knowledge. As I stated at the beginning of this thesis, feminist scholarship has widely reflected on this matter (see Lobb, 2022, for instance, which I follow closely), but very few have defended the necessity of ceasing and leaving as a coherent move (Ahmed, 2006).

2.1. Identity and representation

Questions of identity and representation have been present during the research: how participants make meaning of themselves and their practices, how they relate to 'others' (to Palestinian society, to Israel and to international people), and particularly due to the nature of the thesis, how resistance is represented and thought of.

In this quest for resisting and meanings, identity processes and negotiations, with participants and myself have emerged. Belonging, exclusion, obedience and dissent are important burdens and lines of negotiation, some of them very fixed and difficult to cross (as the tensions with society have shown or as my own research positionality has explored). The politics around identity shape their relationship with the other (in this concrete case, the researcher) and considering: who are you? What do you want? How do you relate to their reality and the occupation? These questions stand as markers of the research relationship. 'The construction of identity (...) involves the construction of opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their difference from 'us'' (Said, 1995:332). As a result of the scrutinisation and constant verification of Palestinian identity, there is a subversion towards those structures that participate in centring it so much. At the same time, these representations are also self-reproduced and fostered by those who try subverting those same representations. It is impossible to keep your identity subverted or in deconstruction constantly, and hence there are also self-centring dynamics at play in the dynamics of identity. The representational system of the Palestinian identity reproduces, according to Khalidi (2010):

> an essential Palestinian identity going well back in time, rather than the complex, contingent and relatively recent reality of Palestinian identity, and to stress factors of unity at the expense of those tending toward fragmentation or diversity in Palestinian society and politics (2010:34).

In this sense, the politics of identity (defending and nurturing Palestinian identity) conflate with dynamics of representation (loosing agency), a burden for those on the so-called margins where speaking, performing, dancing or playing music are in observation: how they are narrated and narrate themselves become politically charged decisions. Obviously, scene's representations are often subtle, and media is not constantly bombarding the public with reports on romanticising or essentialising it. These representations need to be placed and understood in the context of a larger body of work that sustains dominant discourses

(Nooshin, 2017:182) on others, 'distant' peoples and cultures, geopolitics and power. It is this sense of 'over-representation', of losing their narrative and serving other interests, coming from inside and outside Palestine, often unnoticed but always affecting, that has been criticised by some during my research. Participants have proved to be very aware of how these discourses and representations have proliferated and how there is a trend on Arab alternative circuits[65]. Indeed, part of the value of escape and pleasure within the scene comes from this momentaneous liberation from representational politics, as the discussion on escape has highlighted.

A quest of de-essentialisation and de-romanticisation

This thesis shares the path of building new understandings and directions of Palestinian culture and resistance, following Palestinian voices on the ground, and also scholars that have been discussing these areas for decades already (see Swedenburg, 2005; Tawil-Souri, 2011; Salih & Ritcher Devroe, 2014; Karkabi, 2013, 2017; El Zein, 2016; Whiters 2016, 2021; Toukan, 2021). This approach (1) pluralises the production of knowledge in relation to Palestine, demonstrating different realities and (2) locates the political at the centre of the discussion.

De-essentialising and de-romanticising Palestinian experiences have derived from this plural and political analysis. This research has worked towards framing a perspective that first, incorporates voices from the ground and second, challenges overarching narratives on the Palestinian subject. This project argues that identities and realities are not fixed essences, despite contexts that push this reification even more. Within a unifying experience such as colonialism and occupation, there are plural ways of being and becoming. This thesis centres on becoming, rather than being, the processes, the changes and the messiness rather than the unique picture, the static, the broad. Hence, it includes a sea of possibilities of experiencing, claiming for a sense of mundanity and the everyday within the exceptional and hardship. Indeed, it has included the development of scenes as also being traumatic, unfruitful, or suspended, entangled in structures that control their development beyond their will. The voices of participants, through de-romanticising and normalising their doings, emphasise the existence of multiple lives within violence. It is important to understand how nightlife, music

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[65] See 'FOLD Talks' where DJs and promoters from the SWANA region based in the UK discuss these questions of orientalism, tokenisation and trends within music scenes with 'the Arab': https://youtu.be/VGxGCCipMuY

and culture in general, apart from being central to people's lives, are spaces of contestation, negotiation and resistance. This thesis, as well as the concept of generative resistance, is embedded in these two perspectives: the value of culture, fun, and community in themselves and how these are deeply political, no matter the context and precisely in this context, due to the relations that traverse, the questions that they force to ask and the lives they transform.

This thesis breaks with binary oppositions through re-conceptualising these, as much as anti-colonial and post-colonial critique has done before (Horswell, 2003; Quijano, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Puar, 2007). It draws on these convivial oppositions and claims that divisions such as centre/periphery, modernity/tradition, self/other or coloniser/colonised are constantly being encountered, blurred and mobile, entangled in power and resistance and are drives that intersect with both. They work as relational acts that constitute subjects in specific ways: modernity and tradition are encountered in dancing, in a song, as well as, for instance, resistance and power are produced by the same person. As previously stated, individuals and social relations are traversed by a series of contradictions read as convivialities (possibilities of existing alongside each other in agonistic tensions and moves). Shohat notes that these are the 'most varied discourses', far from binary codes 'that produce evolving, multi-valanced relationships, constituting the subject [...] as the site of competing discourses and voices' (1995:169). As such, in this thesis a subject and a movement emerges that exist crossing between dualities, engraining them, living them as contradictions, but showing that their existence cannot be confined to a reduced matter of binarity.

Another 'Arab' youth resistant subculture? Reproducing dynamics of othering and privilege

Saying that the content of this thesis de-essentialises is not proof of de-essentialisation in itself. But it is difficult to really know whether the social meanings here developed do articulate just another account of 'Arab' resistant subcultures.

This music's social meanings have been largely discussed. One clear side of this view has been challenging the essentialist conception of music as resistance. But there is another instrumentalisation at risk that needs to be highlighted, and that this thesis recognises, even though it has tried to avoid it and that is that it sees this type of music and practices as resisting which can 'arguably promote a singular and very particular model of "liberation" based on Euro-American neo-liberal norms, which becomes privileged over others' (Nooshin, 2017:178). This is a tension that can be produced in a particular regime of representation that

praises some types of resistance (cultural, peaceful) among others (armed/violent ones), or it is used to emphasise that a cultural resistance is being held in Palestine against Israel and against Palestinian conservative authorities due to its participants' being committed to universal freedom and tolerance.

As said, this thesis does reproduce certain dynamics that come together with ethnographic research on colonised realities. First, it is related to what has been analysed in the methodology chapter as the 'anthropological rise on Palestine' (Ashtan, 2021) and 'the ethnographic arrival of Palestine' (Furani and Rabinowitz, 2010). This thesis is part of this scholarly and underground interest and has been discussed with participants as such[66].

The progressive commodification and international exposure of the scene, especially of the DJ Sama Abdulhadi, raises important questions with regards to representation and recognition dynamics, neo-orientalist narratives and attitudes, and the role of both artists and people involved in the scene as agents of 'the Palestinian struggle'. The Boiler Room party, streaming and documentary (2018) catapulted the scene to the scrutiny and admiration of international audiences. The documentary has 288.000 visits as in February 2023, but Sama's set has 11 million visits. Some comments left regarding Sama's set uploaded onto YoutTube recognise that *"this is a side of Palestine I never knew existed, but I'm glad to be witnessing it now. Much love to all these beautiful people"* (An Infinite Mind of Music and Dreams, 2021) or *"shoutout to this beautiful display of Palestinian joy and fun. I hate that Palestine is only ever shown suffering. Beautiful and vibrant country"* (John Carolina, 2022) among the 13,800 comments.

Similar to events held by Boiler Room in unknown scenes from the so-called global South, these parties fuel the global electronic music circuit (and its online presence), capitalising the need of visibility and promotion in a climate of over-crowded DJs/performers and precarious ways of living. Boiler Room does not only put DJs on the map, it also makes cities join the global network of 'established scenes'. There are many stories of DJs that were almost unknown before going to play at the Boiler Room (Iqbal, 2019). In this sense, featuring Palestinian artists in a mainstream platform entailed an important move towards *literally* mapping Palestine (they showed a Palestinian map with an explanation of their borders and Israeli occupation at the beginning, see Figure 12) and making it visible and real to global

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[66] I have already explained in other chapters (chapter 3 - Methodology, mainly) the process of access and the general tiredness of Palestinians about being researched or looked at through the same lenses.

audiences. In this sense, the potential reproduction of another case study of 'Arab resistant subcultures' is reinforced by a series of recently new artifacts (streaming platforms, online magazines) that allow for a visibility never seen before.
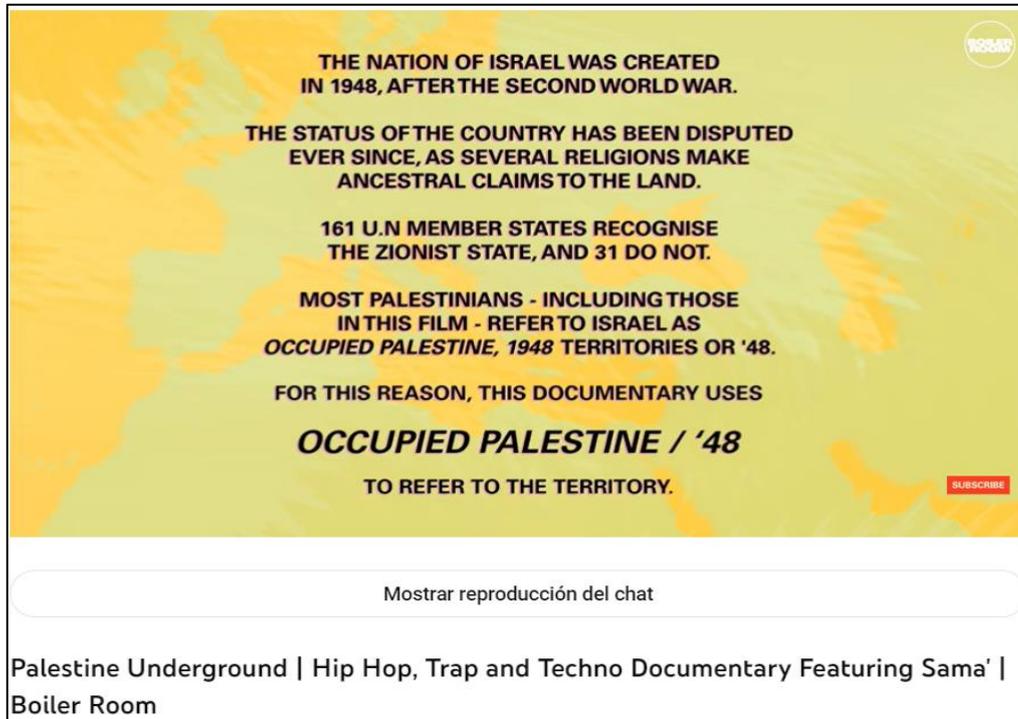
Figure 12. Boiler Room Documentary.

Recognising the other for advancing justice?

The question here, some participants argue, is if such recognition is necessary and especially, if it does make any *real* change for them. Particularly, when one does not own or control the outcome of these representations. In my case, watching the Boiler Room documentary was one of the things that made me realise that there was a scene going on in Palestine. The example of the Boiler Room is an accurate one as it encapsulates the different dynamics crossing these platforms: visibilisation, recognition, also within their own societies which might not be desirable, as well as perhaps commodification and simplification of these realities.

The success of the stream and the documentary cannot be separated from neo-oriental readings by Western audiences (being progressive and cool in the eyes of the West, showing that they also party and have a 'relatable' form of leisure as an ignition for solidarity). This also links to the politics of representation and recognition already mentioned. Those who are

excluded from the structures of political representation negotiate and fight for access to circuits of recognition which, sometimes, equates to having material access to human rights. But it does also become a problem when the excluded can only access these by assuming certain positions, which are, in turn, often static and essentialist: the tolerant and peaceful post-colonial subject, the modern and anti-conservatism youth, the suffering peasant or farmer, etc. These representations risk reifying the Palestinian political struggle and the scene's role in it towards a matter of visibility and recognition that certainly reshapes our imaginaries of the different aspects of the country but does not advance the liberation of their land or freedom to fully develop the scene. Hence, many of the political impacts that DJs and artists have on the international arena is related to 'representing Palestine', a question that is often asked to Sama Albulhadi. "'It's a lot of pressure because I want to represent Palestine perfectly" (Sama in Balram, 2023). Nevertheless, the general participants emphasise that the scene developed with the motivation of building something for themselves and the region, not for recognition outside. Some participants have recalled the idea that they are finally 'recognised' by the other are problematic because it presumes that they need other's recognition to exist or be successful, a recognition Palestinians have not got by the international community.

As Butler brilliantly poses in an interview, 'through what operations of power are the schemes that regulate and distribute recognizability working, and how might we critically evaluate those forms of inequality and regulated 'non-being' that are its effects?' (Butler in Willig, 2012:140). Although here Butler is talking about legal rights, protections and vulnerability, it is the sort of question I want to raise in regard to the Boiler Room sets and other representations and how they distribute, regulate and give voice (or not) to artists. Moreover, the dynamics of representation and recognition go hand in hand with a loss of narrative and power over oneself that are intrinsically linked to it, playing a role of exoticising while at the same time bringing insight and awareness. Hence, the study (and streaming) of Palestine is found in a paradoxical position. On the one hand, the necessity to raise awareness, counteracting Zionist accounts, providing Palestinians of tools for empowerment (Ashtan, 2021:4) and platforms to share their art, music and politics and on the other hand, a critical opposition of some Palestinians on (certain) research and international attention, since they do not bring substantial change or benefit to the communities studied (Schnarch, 2004; Sharp & Murdoch, 2006; Clark, 2008; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2012).

The contradictions and limitations of representing and studying others derive from a location where much of the research conducted from academic spaces or Western platforms feels insufficient and extractive, the case of many Indigenous music contexts in contact with settler colonial projects, as reflected in the methodology through Robinson's listening positionality (2020). The next section tries to deepen this problem and propose an epistemology that takes this into account and works with difference and discomfort, following Ahmed (2006) in her critique of performing' anticoloniality (in this case) as not enough to be transformative.

2.2. Disentangling the critique: an affective epistemology

The emotional and epistemological frameworks of this thesis are negotiated between an anti-coloniality standpoint, the discomfort of privilege and my transformative commitment, these views, questioning the utility of this topic beyond academic contribution. Although research on Palestine and by Palestinians is important, the production of this thesis has leaned towards a sort of 'anti-research' conclusion. I defend the need to recognise that participative and transformative research does not rely only on our own will, and that these transformations that we seek perhaps are not to be found in research. Hence, as Sukarieh and Tannock emphasise, 'it is imperative to recognise that sometimes conducting no new research at all is the most appropriate response to community concerns of over-research' (2012:507). In this sense, it can be more necessary and beneficial to stop and reflect, to truly change research directions by not fuelling the tireless productive dynamic of academia, and to engage in it with a radical praxis from other places where we might be more needed or wanted.

This critical epistemology argues about the importance of addressing the reproduction of research that is self-centred and with doubtful relevance for those involved. It also recognises the possibility of not having addressed this consequently. This does not intend to fail into a utilitarianism defending that all research requires a specific impact or outcome that is clearly beneficial. It is rather claiming the necessity to rethink and change our relationships with participants and research, to reflect on why we are doing this, for who is it important and what dynamics it is reproducing, especially when the people involved are captured in a whole context of othering and outsider representation. However, this othering proves to be non-pervasive and absolute: the autonomy and agency that traverses participants' lives and how they narrate themselves moves off from this idea of 'victims of research'. Nothing of this is new. Feminist and decolonial scholars started reflecting on these issues decades ago (see

Mohanty, 1984; Nast, 1994; Katz, 1994; Hill Collins, 2000; Ahmed, 2004, 2006; Sultana, 2007). This critique also implies knowing that the effects of our research have very limited consequences on their everyday. People exist beyond the frameworks and the romanticisation that we impose on them, and that is what matters. This reflection is imbricated in a mix of not wanting to objectify and to observe the limitations of my own objectification. In other words, the discursive limits of coloniality and objectification, the strong sense I got during fieldwork that participants will, obviously, go on with their lives regardless of what we 'say' or study about them.

Among these lines, a strong affective epistemology can be read and sensed. An affective epistemology is one that takes care of its surroundings and its effects, doing research when is wanted and needed, deriving from collective participation. It is also affective when not only recognising and visibilising whiteness but problematising it. As Hunter and van der Westhuizen point out what if we

> begin to speak, act, write, edit *through* whiteness rather than about it? Where 'speaking through' is not an endorsement, but an acceptance of the lived experience of the struggle to become more fully humanly connected to the world, and a rejection of the anti-relational divided self of global colonial whiteness (2022:19).

It is this speaking *through* instead of about, speaking *alongside* instead on behalf of that this thesis claims and defends.

The experiences narrated along these chapters move me and affect me in what Lobb frames as affective dissonance: 'an embodied sense of not being at home in one's white body' (2022:95) and what Hunter and van der Westhuizen call 'unsuturing': 'to remaining open to threat and pain that potentially produces change' (2022:20). And it is through affect that I disentangle my positionality and this critique. Accepting the moving, emotionally loaded and sensitive context I chose to study and participate in, centring those voices that have discussed with me all these issues and exposing myself to the contradiction, working through it and with it.

> In my first night out in Ramallah, I had a conversation that encapsulates very well this feeling. I met Mira, a female artist from Ramallah who lived in Berlin, and we started a passionate discussion about internationals and politics. She asked me what I was going to do and if I would be just an 'observer' or I was going to implicate myself. Obviously, I tried to find the best words to truly express how I did not want to be just

an observer, but when words came from my mouth it all sounded quite empty. Anyway, we continued talking and it was a fun night. At the end, when we said goodbye, she said "I kind of like you, but I still don't trust you".

An affective epistemology still requires involvement and action, it does not rest on immobilizing oneself to not being hurt. Nast (1994) argues that 'we can never *not* work with 'others' who are separate and different from ourselves; difference is an essential aspect of all social interactions that requires that we are always everywhere in between or negotiating the worlds of me and not-me' (1994:57). Rather than defending the possibility to overcome these problematics or privileges, I encourage others to step back when necessary and to raise their energy and voices where they are needed or asked for. An affective feminist decolonial epistemology includes discomfort, dissonance, difference and power between different relations. It pushes one to act consequently, to work *through* these relationships and to implicate ourselves in the disentanglement of power structures.

3. Final remarks

This chapter closes the analysis of this project. It has collected many of the arguments, debates and theorisations around the scene and resistance that have emerged along the thesis. The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a detailed and theoretical account of such reflections, leaving them until the end to let the reader evolve and reflect through them. In this sense, the key theoretical and epistemological contributions are captured in this chapter: the re-working of the concept of scene into an affective assemblage, the development of the concept of resistance as a generative movement and the epistemological critique that balances an anti-academic position with the affective potentiality of discomfort and solidarity. As I have shown, they can be re-worked, re-articulated and changed to keep collectively thinking on electronic music scenes, dancefloor dynamics and their relationship with the outside world, and resistance through these spaces.

Thesis Conclusions

Affective assemblic dance floors

In a still imperialist and colonial world, some dance floors are living spaces of resistant temporalities. A lot of the experiences on the dance floor, from participants and myself, talk about momentary spaces of escape, belonging and joy that are inevitably traversed by the crudity of the context. In Palestine, there is an impossibility of disconnection with coloniality and yet, spaces for resistance are continuously generated. In a context where reality is continuously anchoring the impossibilities of existence, reshaping it through generating culture, having fun, opening new spaces, making music or dancing, are potential acts for resisting such attachments and impossibilities.

This thesis has been about resistance, power and privilege as much as intimacy, affect and music. It has looked at the affective intensities of socialising and partying together with the structural dynamics of the Palestinian context. The tiresome, the frustration, the eye-rolling when the same questions are asked: "why is never about our music?". This thesis also talks about urban change and the deterritoriality of its inhabitants, the drive towards other spaces to continue with life, the reconfiguration of *sumūd*: leaving, staying on the land, or doing something different in it (a party), to *live* (rather than protect) your existence.

I do not follow any theory or author exclusively, but this thesis contains many bits from many places, as an assemblage itself. It draws on Foucault to explain certain things, it uses Gramsci to understand others yet, it is very far from being a typical Foucauldian or Gramscian (even post-) thesis. The same with postcolonial theory, used as a critical framework to de-essentialise subjects and practices, it is not merely a tractate on coloniality and postcoloniality, but it is traversed by these multiple temporalities and imaginaries. These frameworks get pinned down by the use, on the other hand, of affect and feminist theory to centre and explore questions of intimacy, movement, dancing bodies, friendship and tensions, to grasp the hardships and the pleasures traversing subjectivities, and to approach power and music from non-binary, agonistic, intersectional and non-identitarian perspectives. It is, then, a collage of different aspirations and concepts that try to reflect the richness and complexity of the present reality.

This thesis falls beyond the papers where it is written, keeping a connection with the materiality of the bodies with whom it interacted and the moments it experienced. It points towards broader current historical moments of dance floors and struggles for freedom and how these intersect. This thesis has been about critically highlighting the celebrations of difference and fetishisations in a postcapitalist world that very much still depends on 'othering' for keeping our senses of identity safe and untouched. There are rising waves of solidarity and awareness that get mingled with neoliberal orientations and co-optations. This thesis, as emphasised, is a product of the fascination that exotic scenes produce in the West and of our well-intentioned but futile attempts to contribute to change.

As this thesis argues, dance floors are many things at the same time, and the rising Arabisation of electronic music scenes conflates with a post-9/11 world that is deeply embedded in Islamophobia, imperialism and structural racism. What does this tell us? The lack of alternatives or the advancement of radical politics in Western societies make us desperately look for it outside our confinement, to learn, to encounter, to dream. At least that for now, there are glimpses of hope. Many dance floors, especially after the global pandemic, are experiencing a period of awareness and politisation, dragged by minorities and non-normative voices that are putting in the centre questions of care, safety, pleasure, decolonisation and economic redistribution. The Palestinian electronic music scene intersects deeply with many of these spheres, putting the question of power, privilege and domination jointly with pleasure, fun and escape. They move in between mundane and exception, joy and mourning, showing the *convivial* dialectic that exists in society between the reality that it is and what we fight for it to be. Indeed, the study of resistance and other practices through this thesis have shown how these debates fall beyond these ideas themselves: they are also about possibilities, the materialisations, the mundane and spectacular every day.

Research questions and aims

This thesis had three aims that were crystallised in two research questions. First, it closely explored the Palestinian electronic music and dance scene, understanding it as a deterritorial and affective assemblage, unfolding and retracting in different cities, territories and spaces. Second, it developed an understanding of generative and non-traditional ways of resisting through the scene's practices and discourses. Third, it applied a participatory feminist methodology and epistemology engaged with transformation and decolonisation. The theoretical and the ethical, the ontological and the epistemological have been paralleled and

equated to each other, showing that the ways of doing research are as important as the outcome and the theory.

The first research question looked at the different social relations that traversed and constituted the scene. This question, introduced in chapter 3 (attuning to Ramallah), was answered in chapter 4. This chapter explored the 'social' underpinnings, dynamics and processes present in the scene that produced it the way it is and how participants relate to these. A series of elements emerged: the question of class, space (mobility), affect and obviously, music. These relations can be read as constituting and traversing the Palestinian electronic music scene and they can be found in most music scenes. The way these are ingrained together is what has been articulated as a particular 'affective assemblage of sound alliances' that I developed to give an account of the embodied particularities of this context. As signalled before, there are many ways to approach these social processes, meaning that there could be other angles applied or other relations emphasised.

The first social relation to be explored was music, even though it was not a main focus at the beginning, but interactions similar to the one in the kitchen made it prominent and necessary. Music is understood as a social phenomenon that does not rest only in a musical aspect, but also in its emotional and social drive. Music has been defined mainly as a way of expression, moving between affective networks, creativity and a means for escape, leaving aside the resistant intentionality that is given to music in this context. However, embracing this social perspective on music, very typical of sociological accounts, has also raised a quite common problematic around the study of music seen by its participants: the lack of focus on sound and quality and the instrumentalisation of music scenes to explore other interests. This has been incorporated as a relevant part to understand the scene's dynamics whilst recognising the way music is produced, danced, listened to, and travel is never only about 'music itself'. Music and affect are intimately related in these plural dance floors that the anecdotes in different cities have shown.

Secondly, affect was not conceived at the beginning neither, but has helped to assemble everything: it gave sense to how these relations worked and were felt by participants, as a set of intensities and energies that varied between people and moments, from a thriving beginning to a scattered present. Affect is the bodily materialisation of class and the subcultural familiarity that comes with it, the possibilities of moving, staying and leaving, the

atmosphere that is created during the parties and effects on the context: violence, martyrdom, family or work.

Through exploring the scene, I found out that class and privilege were relevant constitutive forces that explain much of the development and its relationship to the rest of society as a relatively separated sphere. Ramallah is the paradigmatic space for the articulation of this 'bubble', where the scene mostly unfolds locally. Class and its consequences in dance scenes are often subtle and invisibilised, but they are central in shaping the participants' possibilities and opportunities. In this research, the role of economic and cultural capital was not only seen as a central social relation by me, but was also spoke openly about and recognised by participants in a very articulated sense. Class, more than income, related to *wasta* dynamics, social positioning and cultural capital: who knows who, who goes with go, also intensifying the affective network that connects participants with each other.

The fourth constituting social relation in the scene was the question of space and more concretely, mobility. It was known before starting the thesis that space and geography were key elements in shaping Palestinian life due to the occupation, but they have revealed even a more complex dynamic. Mobility in the scene is traversed by the limitations and impositions of the context, generating one of the more stagnant particularities of the Palestinian context: the difficulty of moving freely and building a scene of Palestinians from different territories inside and outside '67 Palestine. But it has also shown how despite it, participants travel, move between cities and live outside Palestine, fostering a process of deterritorialisation, initiated by the nature of occupation and accelerated by Covid-19 in the last years. As such, the scene's spatial unfoldings are layered, moving between different spaces that are not enclosed in a single geographical unit. This helps to advance the argument that electronic music scenes are often connected to different spaces at a time, almost by nature: the local, the regional, the global and the virtual. With these social relations in place, at the end of chapter 4, there was already a structured narrative about the scene and its participants, opening up to explore its political and resistant effects.

The second research question tackled how resistance is practised and constructed in the scene. I suggested a re-thinking and re-appropriation of the concept rather than discarding it. It now has drawn a formulation of the concept of resistance from a cultural perspective that puts weight on the generative and active process of the term. Chapter 5 explored a series of practices and discourses in order to answer such a question, revealing a rich set of dynamics

that were present in the scene and beyond. It also developed the debates around the framework of resistance and what this tells us about the current state of dance floors as political spaces, and the current Palestinian context in relation to resistance.

Through this empirical work, resistance has been built on an action, a movement, a verb, only generated when it is practised and exercised, to the creation of spaces that speak to power regardless of its intentionality and regardless of its outcome. This perspective has freed the idea of resistance in this context as something needing to be politically oppositional, organised or intentional that exists as a response to a concrete situation, in this case, the Israeli occupation. Instead of a reactive process, it is a generative one. Instead of affecting only one power, it disrupts many, including their own internal social order. As such, this perspective pluralises the ways resistance can be thought of and practised, as an action that has meaning and effects when the practises are articulated: when dancing occurs against all odds, when safer spaces are built, when people come together despite restrictions, when boycott is organised, or sexuality freely expressed. This conceptualisation of a generative resistance does not deny the role of popular and armed resistance in decolonial processes, it rather amplifies the paths in which different people engage in resistances. This has become an interrogation not only about resistance in itself, but also about how its meaning and articulation is deeply influenced by the restricting internal gazes and by the orientalising international ones.

This theorisation on resistance politicises and reproduces the centrality the scene and leisure in general has for this community: the safety of spaces, the familiarity, the freedom of expression, escaping, and how these are understood as non-instrumental means for resisting. By giving these practices an autonomy and agency to exist and be pursued, resisting appears as a result of articulation.

This notion has also the novelty of openly and critically incorporating the dynamics of power that are found in processes of resistance: how participants relate to them and also how international gazes and orientalisations play a role in constructing perceptions about resisting and the scene. Finally, the importance of focusing on this notion does not revolve around a clear determination as to whether it is ultimately resistant or not, but why resistance is still an important framework for understanding cultural practices, how it can be rearticulated and reconceptualised towards a de-romanticisation and de-essentialisation.

By answering these questions, I encountered other dynamics that have given richness and a sense of complexity to this thesis. The idea of challenging binarism thinking was there since the beginning, but fieldwork gave this position a new significance. Starting with power and resistance, debates on tradition and modernity, collectivity and individuality, the West and non-West, politicisation or commodification, coalesced in convivialities where subjects occupied multiple positions at the same time. As such, these debates were not possible to 'resolve' by leaning on one or another, by saying this is resistance and this is power, or this is tradition, and this is modernity. It is not possible, and it is theoretically simplifying. As such, this thesis contributes to the poststructuralist perspective that does not see social dynamics as enclosed categories, often leaving the contradictory formations behind.

Thinking through conviviality and discomfort have been travelling companions. The impetus with which these affects emerged at the beginning has not recessed towards the end. These contradictions are indeed productive and meaningful, moving forces that make this research unfinished, as there will always be ways to rethink how we do research and what knowledge we produce.

The epistemological and ethical critique plays a central role in the contribution of this thesis. Chapter 6, has been the chapter where all the openings and reflections that were not directly research questions but that came from them, have been addressed. It has been a chapter that tackled the necessary theorisations on the concepts that were central in the thesis. It conceptualised the idea of scene and the idea of resistance and also reflected on the epistemological questions that were equally important to this project. The inclusion of Western gazes and academia in the whole process of research and its representation, the role it has had in shaping Palestinians' critique and rejection of resistance to these practices precisely because of the international attention they arose.

Yet, this thesis has had many limitations. Starting with practical questions, the outbreak of Covid-19 and the multiple cancellations of my trip to Palestine provoked less availability of time to conduct research. This has had consequences, probably less in the quality and quantity of the data obtained as I was able to interview and participate in the scene, but in my ethical positionality regarding how a researcher should traverse the community under research, especially in a region such as Palestine: with time and commitment. Obviously,

there are always more fieldwork, more readings, more theories, more authors and perspectives to apply. I feel I could continue adding and reading endlessly, as the reality on the ground is richer and more complex than we are ever able to grasp. But this thesis is part of the conjecture that has enabled it to be how it is and that is how it should be embraced and read.

In relation to this, there is always the risk of being too general when trying to give an account of different topics in the same thesis. Each of the themes that have been discussed could have been a whole thesis by themselves. Therefore, future research could look deeper into these issues, enlarging the discussion on affect, on the relationship with the rest of the region, on gender relations or on borders and touring, to name a few.

One final question that has emerged amidst the anecdotes and the critique in this thesis is the question of centring my voice and my experience to the detriment of the participants. I will never understand the idea of not talking about 'us' when doing research. You cannot detach yourself from your writings, you can pretend you are, you can obliterate your voice, focus on the peoples and their experiences, but it is always mediated by your persona, and not recognising this also fails in honesty. There is so much about how we relate to the world and how we understand human relationships in doing research. Thus, my psychological being with its insecurities and reasons is imprinted in this. It is precisely because of my involvement with dance floors, a world that has given me so much love, joy and freedom, and my political bounding that I care so much about the outcome of my practice. Caring so much implied struggling a fair bit. Perhaps someone else would have experienced this as a path of success: being able to study a topic you love, experiencing other scenes, getting to know artists and DJs, making friends, dancing with strangers and reflecting on these in a project that is already giving you some professional and personal credit. However, I do not see any 'success' in this path. I do not see failure either. I see the messiness and contradictions, the joys and solitudes that it has brought to myself during the past four years. I guess that this is the lesson I am learning and my way of contributing: to always defend to affectively implicate ourselves in what we do.

In mid-March 2023, a non-publicised prohibition of loud and public music for three days of mourning in '67 Palestine was issued by the authorities due to the killing of 3 Palestinians in Nablus the day before. Again, Palestinians lives are taken by this bloody settler colonial enterprise. Again, violence and martyrdom suspend everyday life. Again, music is intervened,

managed and controlled by politics. Music is never only about music, but about emotion, mourning, escape, respect and expression. Music is shared meanings and imposition, resistance and power. Grasping the pains that this violence provokes, I want to conclude this thesis by expressing my deepest solidarity for this occupation to finish and Palestinians to live free in their own land. *Insha'Allah.*

Bristol, 29th March 2023

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Appendix

1. Example of a 'general' interview

- When you think about the electronic music scene here, what feelings/thoughts arise?

- In which terms can we think of the 'Palestinian electronic music scene'? Is there a scene? (Local, regional, global, diasporic, virtual?)

- What does Ramallah mean to you?

- What are the main sounds/genres in this context (Palestine/Arab)? What is yours and what motivates it?

- How important do you think it is to distinguish between 'music as production/creativity' and 'music as partying/social interaction'? How do they relate to each other here?

- How does the scene interact with the rest of society?

- Where would you say is the Palestinian electronic music scene located in relation to the rest of the Arab world? In terms of sound, innovation, presence, collaboration…

- What narratives do you think dominate Western media and audiences about Palestinian electronic music?

- If you could point out or highlight some of the key debates right now in the scene, what are they?

2. Example of an interview (for a specific participant)

- What does it mean going out for you?

- Do you ever consider leaving Ramallah? Why? How is the scene linked to mobility and travelling? Do you think a lot of artists are able to do so?

- Can resistance mean and entail something different in your context?

- Have these tensions always existed, I mean, 2018, 2017 where from the outside everything seemed thriving, Sama saying in interviews there was agreement with police... Was it really like that?

- How would you like your scene or music or art practise to be seen? In other words, how could a project of Palestinian electronic music could be interesting for Palestinians?

- Do you think you also participate in processes of self-orientalisation?

- Has your own discourse about your music changed over the years, or the 'scene discourse' around resistance, become more critical?

- Do you think your practices reinforce the idea of the 'good Muslim' (tolerant, liberal) in comparison to the 'bad Muslim' (conservative, radical) in eyes of the West?

3. Example of an interview for Ma3azef (never done)

- The magazine was created in 2012. How has it changed over these 10 years? Has there been any change of perspective in what you do? Radio came…

- What makes a 'scene'? When does it move from an interconnected body of performers, or a bunch of friends, into a scene?

- What do you think about the relationship between audiences and artists here? I felt that in the conversation very often there are different views, one, especially defended by artists here, about not 'playing or creating for the audience' but more for themselves. Another view has been more about artists really caring about the audiences, and audiences really interested on the music.

- Where would you say is the Palestinian electronic music scene located in relation to the rest of the Arab world? In terms of sound, innovation, presence…

- I'm interested in maps and spaces and how sound relates to them. For instance, can the 'Arab region' be thought of only in those countries or do you think the idea of Arab produced music encompasses other territories? I mean, is sound always attached to a territory? Or to the artist that produces it?

- Hybridity in sound: when is self-exotisation and when is expression, can they be separated? often reproduced old music stereotypes, mixed with drum 'n' bass beats for instance, and thus celebrated as an essentialist multicultural hybridity. Often, in these projects, the beat serves as the "modern" downbeat (and basis), while the singing—or some Arab instruments—becomes no more than "pseudotraditional" ornamentation.

- What narratives do you think operate in Western media and audiences about Palestinian electronic music? Are we still repeating the same orientalist pattern? How can research that does not have a direct impact on the community be useful?

- Funding system and dynamics. How it affects the development of the scene and artists production?