

Centre for Peace Studies

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

## **Breaking The Occupation Of The Mind**

- *The Freedom Theatre and Palestinian Youth Empowerment*

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*In memory of Percy Oware*

## Abstract

This study seeks to bring focus to the youth's of The Freedom Theatre and their perspectives on theatre, in particular The Freedom Theatre, vis – a – vis cultural resistance and its impacts on their life. In order to do so, this thesis draws on reflection given by previous students who work at the Theatre. In this way, by tapping into the previous students' reflections who now work at the theatre, this study hopes to create better and fuller understanding of the phenomenon of non violent (cultural) resistance in relation to the theatre and The Freedom Theatre's impact on the previous students' identity and sense of self. The study's position is that, in order to understand The Freedom Theatre's impact on its youth members and its relation to cultural resistance, it is necessary to elucidate the issue at the level of individual. The research seeks to achieve this by getting first-hand knowledge from the students' themselves.

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*“ My dream is that The Freedom Theatre will be the major force, cooperating with others, in generating a cultural resistance, carrying on its shoulders universal values of freedom and justice”*

-Juliano Mer Khamis (TheFreedomTheatre)

## Introduction

This thesis seeks to explore the interrelation between The Freedom Theatre's (TFT) work with youth empowerment and resistance. The Freedom Theatre is a Palestinian theatre located in Jenin Refugee Camp in the West Bank, Palestine. Being a Palestinian theatre, it is at one point always linked to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. Even though this study will not focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it needs to provide a short introduction to the conflict to contextualise the circumstances of TFT. The Palestinian- Israeli conflict is one of the most widely debated conflicts in the Middle-East. Plenty of books have been written and several attempts of peace efforts have been conducted in order to alleviate the conflict. Thus, it is with great humility that this Chapter will only provide two paragraphs describing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when trying to contextualise the circumstances of TFT. Acknowledging that the conflict has two sides means that there is at least two ways<sup>1</sup> to present the conflict. In other words, the different sides of the conflict do not have a coherent description of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. As an example, while the Palestinians call the 1948 War for Al-Nakba (the catastrophe) the Israeli name it The Independence War (Dhøle, 2014, p. 102). These different labels of the same conflict carry different perception and experience of the same conflict, that has become central to the two national narratives. Even though the purpose of this thesis is not to discuss in depth any historical event in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it will provide a Palestinian perspective of the Israeli Occupation.

## Background of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict

The territory of Palestine was put under British mandate after the collapse of the Ottoman rule in 1917 (Rigby, 2015, p.2). However, after the Second World War Great Britain had become weaker and officially gave the responsibility of Palestine and the question of an Israeli state to the UN on 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1947 (Lysestøl, 2016, p 65). While The Zionist migration to Palestine began slowly in the latter decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it increased more than 3.5 times between the years of 1930 to 1946 (Rigby, 2015, p.1, Lysestøl,2016, p. 61). Palestinians

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<sup>1</sup> There is even different ways of perciving the conflict wtihin both Palestine and Israel.

started to revolt during the late 1930's due to increased unemployment and Palestinians peasants threatened livelihood by Zionist land acquisitions (Rigby, 2015, pp. 1-10, Lysestøl, 2016, pp. 50-51, 57)). This revolt started as demonstrations and strikes which developed to military clashes and violence primarily directed against Britain – the political power at that time. In 1948, Israel declares itself as an independent state. Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq becomes military losers, when trying to prevent the Israeli government formation. The Al- Nakba War in 1948-49 forced 750 000 Palestinians into exile. Jordan gets control over the West Bank and East- Jerusalem, while Egypt controls Gaza. In 1967, Israeli army attacked Arab forces in Egypt, Syria and Jordan. This resulted in the current situation of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank (Dhøle, 2014, p.102).

The first 'intifada' (Palestinian revolt against the Israeli occupation) started in Gaza in 1987, with Palestinian youth mostly throwing stones toward Israeli tanks. In short, the first intifada resulted in increased international sympathy for Palestinians situation as a suppressed people. Further, the intifada also strengthened the Palestinian identity (Dhøle,2014, p. 102). However, the second intifada<sup>2</sup>, which was characterised by suicide bombs, weakened the sympathy Palestinians gained during the first intifada. Even though the second intifada was not all about violence, the non- violent resistance has often got less media and international attention. The project of establishing a separation barrier between Palestinian territories and Israel started during the second intifada, in 2002. The wall was built in the name of Israel to reduce numbers of Palestinian terror attacks in Israel (Nordby, 2009, p. 21). While the separation barrier segregates Palestinians and Israelis further, it also separates Palestinian farmers and families from their fields (Nordby, 2009, p. 21-26). For over six decades, Palestinians have been systematically deprived of lands, water sources and freedom of movement, as well as restricted freedom of expression (Amnesty International, 2016, Dhøle, 2015, p.105). So far, this thesis has given a short introduction to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it will now move forward to give a background of TFT itself and its current legacy.

### Background of The Freedom Theatre

TFT was built on the inspiration and legacy of Arna Mer Khamis and her project of Care and Learning. The project “used theatre and art to address the chronic fear, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by children in Jenin Refugee Camp”

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<sup>2</sup> From 2000- 2005

(TheFreedomTheatre (c)). The Care and Learning project was started by Arna during the first intifada and she later won the right livelihood award in 1993 for her “passionate commitment to the defence and education of the children of Palestine” (TheFreedomTheatre.(c)). With the award money she decided to build The Stone Theatre, which later was destroyed under the Israeli invention of Jenin Refugee Camp in 2002, during the second intifada.

TFT itself was established in 2006 by Arna`s son, Juliano Mer Khamis, Zakaria Zubeidi, former commander of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Jenin Refugee Camp and a nursing student of Israeli descent (Bakken, 2011, p.14-15). The founders wanted to improve the situation for the youth and children in the camp who did not have access to activities or places to express themselves freely. Nevertheless, not everyone perceived the theatre`s intentions as good, since the Theatre not only question the Israeli occupation, but also the role of girls and women in the camp as well as the Palestinian authorities. Until 2011, Juliano was the General Director of TFT, when he “was brutally assassinated by an unknown enemy of culture and freedom” (TheFreedomTheatre (c)). Despite the loss of Juliano, the board members managed to continue the work of TFT. Julino is still an important figure of TFT and his memory is still alive within the theatre; not one day passes by without his name being mentioned. While the theatre was built on the legacy of Arna, today TFT says it will continue to build its future work on the legacy of Juliano – to advocate free expression and art as a means of non- violent resistance in Jenin (The FreedomTheatre. (c)).

Today, TFT is a cultural centre in the heart of Jenin Refugee Camp. The Theatre offers theatre workshops and multimedia workshops for youth and children from Jenin, as well as a three-year professional theatre school. According to gender ratio, there is more males than females who participate in TFT workshops or starts at the professional theatre school. The three-year theatre school have a small amount of students, this year a number of six people, which two are female students. This thesis will refer to participants of the youth workshops as well as the actors of the professional theatre school will be referred to as the collective term, youth participants or students, unless otherwise specified.

The theatre is a three floor house with a roof terrace. This terrace is mostly used for cleaning clothes and drying rather than hanging out. Standing there, it is possible to see Israel from distance, being constantly reminded of a land they cannot enter or return to. On the first floor there is a cinema, kitchen and a recreation room. The second floor contains offices and a

residence for male students. The theatre also offer residence for girls on the third floor, but these residents are strictly segregated and male students are not allowed to go into the residents of the girls and vice versa. Inside the theatre area in a separate building is the stage and the black box, which is a room with black walls used for theatre exercises. Further, the theatre produces productions that comment on social and political structures in contemporary Palestine and the Israeli occupation. These productions are staged both in Jenin and outside of Palestine, often touring in Europe. At TFT webpage they state that “we do not take a neutral position on the issue of Israeli apartheid, colonization, occupation and military rule. Nor do we turn a blind eye to the internal violation of human rights, in particular the rights of women and children” (The Freedom Theatre (d)). Besides this, TFT also runs the project of The Freedom Bus. This project engages artists and activists from all over the world to come together in the West Bank for a duration of two weeks once a year. Participants of The Freedom Bus uses interactive theatre and cultural activism to raise awareness and build alliances throughout Palestine and beyond.

#### [The context of the theatre and its youths' and members' everyday life.](#)

Jenin Refugee Camp was established in 1953, within the municipal boundaries of Jenin (UNRWA. Camp profiles.). Unlike Jenin Refugee Camp that is managed by United Nations relief and work agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees in the near east, the city of Jenin governed by the Jenin municipality(UNRWA. Camp profiles). According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the population of Jenin municipality consists of more or less 39,000 people. However, when it comes to the inhabitants of Jenin refugee camp the numbers of inhabitants differs from sources to sources. According to UNRWA is the population size of Jenin Refugee camp beyond 16,000 on an area of 0,42 square kilometres, while the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates approximately 10,000 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics; UNRWA. Camp profiles). Considering that the UNRWA is responsible for the camp, this paper assumes the population of Jenin Camp to be closer to 16,000 than 10,000. According to UNRWA`s profile of the camp, sixty percent of the population are youth under the age of 24, while a little less than forty percent is under the age of 14. In fact, one of the major problems in the camp is that the schools are overcrowded (UNRWA. Camp profiles.). TFT, being located in the heart of the camp, is surrounded by a youth dominated population.

The students' immediate social context is further characterized by the effects of the Israeli occupation, resulting in a high poverty rate and unemployment (Bakken, 2011, p.8; UNRWA. Camp profiles.). For over six decades, as mentioned, Palestinians have been systematically deprived of lands, water sources and freedom of movement (Dhøle, 2014, p.105; Norman & Hallward, 2011; Nordby,2009). The social context is also marked by being a society of long-term conflict. Every youth born before the year 2000 and having been grown up in Jenin has experienced direct acts of war. According to Rebecca Horn, a characteristic of conflict is that it often disrupts the social ecology of a community, fostering attitudes of distrust and hostility. This includes disrupting “social relations within families, peer groups, and religious and cultural institutions, as well as links with civic and political authorities” (Horn, 2013, p.5). Staff and board members of TFT confirm that this is very much the case of Jenin and Palestine in general – that societal distrusts caused by the occupation disrupts social relations within their community and impact peoples well-being. Further stated, a growing concern is a sense of apathy and a sense of hopelessness among youth who grow up in Jenin, a society that experience direct acts of war, high poverty rate, unemployment and restrictions of movement.

### Theatre as Non-Violent Resistance

Several scholars, such as Julia Norman, Andrew Rigby and Mary Elisabeth King, have devoted focus to the non-violent resistance within the context of Palestine (Al-Labadi, 2008; Norman & Hallward, 2011; Rigby, 2015). Among others, this non-violent methods of resistance includes planting trees on the soil threatened to be seized by Israeli military forces, protesting with banners, demonstrations, civil disobedience, strikes and resigning jobs managed by Israeli power. However, the research has mostly centred around the first and second intifada. Nevertheless, the scholars have shed light to both organised and sporadic acts of non-violent resistance, which has often fell into the shadowed of violence while looking at the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. Their research contributes to depict a more complex and whole picture of Palestinian resistance towards the Israeli occupation, not only a picture of suicide bombers and youths who throw stones.

Previous research on theatre and resistance, or theatre and politics, is mostly limited to the study of political theatre within ancient times, particularly that of Greece and Rome (Hackman, 2013, p. 7; Morgan, 2013, p. 5). In ancient times, theatre was understood as civic education in democracies and a way to promote and reflect on ancient virtues, as well as purge emotions through performances. Morgan (2013, p. 5), claims that previous research on

theatre and politics has to do with the ancient understanding of theatre and politics to be inseparable, compared to recent times where politics is perceived as politics separated from art which is perceived as art. Morgan contributes to the research of theatre and politics through analysing the work of four playwrights in the contemporary world, arguing that theatre has a role to play in politics, even today. He claims that it can “serve as a weapon, a means of resistance, a tool of escape or the voice of conscience (...) it has the potential for strengthening the imagination and inspiring communication”(Morgan, 2013, pp. 165-166). However, this and also other research of theatre in relation to politics and/or resistance is mostly focused on either the performance itself; the dialog with the audience or the manuscript of the play. The research of theatre in relation to politics and resistance is not so much focused on the actors and participants of the theatre itself. Little attention has been given to the question: can the individual sense of empowerment from performing theatre also be seen as a form of political action / resistance. In other words, in the case of TFT, if empowerment of youth in itself can be understood as a political action, as resistance of the Israeli occupation or internal violation of human rights.

Previous studies of TFT is mostly limited to the documentary *Arnas children* besides from other dissertations and essays from undergrad students. The documentary *Arna's children* explore the project of Arna, Care and Learning, and the subsequent destiny of her projects pupils, who most of them died during the second intifada. Emine Fisek(2012) has used the documentary to investigate how restorative drama and drama-therapy also can be counterproductive while used as methods of acting out violence. Further, Julia Hackman (2013) has written an essay about TFT exploring what the political actions of the theatre consists of, while Camilla Bakken (2011) has in her thesis focused more on the theatre as a cultural institution, and what kind of impact this has on the local society.

### Problem statement

From ancient times until today has art reflected upon societies in times of both war and peace. However, can we really say that art is peaceful? On one hand, TFT practice resistance through the means of art. On the other contrary, TFT and its performances often strew words that imply violent resistance- (freedom) fighter, fight, resist, liberate, struggle. Within times of non-war one could claim that these words refer to non-violence, but as Thompson argues, when expressed in times of war, they immediately refer to the taking up of arms (2014). As a cultural institution in Jenin, TFT a society subject to long-term conflict. Youth who grow up

in Jenin have a high risk of experience acts of war and death at a young age, post-traumatic stress disorder and traumas. They constantly suffer from effects of the Israeli occupation and their own political leadership. Youths grow up in a society exposed of violence both outside and inside the community. Many grow up with a feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness due to their circumstances. Thus, TFT aims to empower youth from the camp through the theatre. Nevertheless, their work to resist internal violation of human rights, in particular the rights of women and children, as well as the “Israeli apartheid, colonization, occupation and military rule”, is not perceived as empowering by everyone (The Freedom Theatre (d)). Being a cultural institution in an area of tension, creates reactions not only from outside, but also from within the community of Jenin. The theatre and its individual participants have on several occasions received threats.

In the broader sense this thesis fits into the debate of creative approaches of transforming conflict(s) and a down-top approach to peacebuilding. Further, within the studies of art, this thesis also fits into the debate of art as social work. In this regard, the question could be asked, if TFT and its artist genuinely produce a socially engaged artwork to help people, or is this yet another career-climbing manoeuvre?

In light of this, this thesis will try to explore the interrelation between the TFT `s youth participants sense of empowerment and resistance.

### Research question:

Does TFT contribute to youth participants’ sense of empowerment?

Can such empowerment be understood as a form of non-violent resistance?

### Thesis structure

This Chapter has until now outlined a short background of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict as well as the background and context of TFT`s work and also further pointed out this thesis problem statement and research question. Thus, it is now time to give a further insight to the rest of this thesis structure. This thesis is divided into five Chapters. While this chapter have been a short introduction to the thesis topic and background, Chapter 2, will discuss and reflect on the methodological framework of this study. The main focus in regards to methodology will be on data collection strategy and field reflections of safety and security

concerns, both to the researcher and the informants. Chapter 3 presents the conceptual framework of this thesis. In order to answer the research question, there will be given special attention to the concept of empowerment with its three defining elements; agency, critical consciousness and identity. Further, Chapter three will also build on the concepts of social capital and resistance. Chapter 4 focuses on the data presentation and analysis, being divided into two sections; empowerment and resistance. The first section looks at the informants' sense of empowerment and analysis this in regard to the following three defining elements; identity, critical consciousness and agency. The second section of Chapter 4 focus on resistance, and in particular if TFT's youth sense of empowerment could be understood as a form of resistance. Finally, a summary and concluding remarks will be offered in Chapter 5.

The work of peacebuilding and social change needs to move beyond analytical techniques and tap into people's more artistic selves.

J. P Lederach

## Chapter 2, Methodological Framework

This chapter focuses on the methodological issues concerning my master thesis and is divided into two sections. The first part looks specifically at the choice of study area, informant size and selection. Further, this chapter elaborates on the data collection strategy by highlighting the methods of observation and semi structured interview which I have used for my thesis. The second section focuses on field reflections. It begins by reflecting upon the safety and security issues concerning both the informants and myself as a researcher. With regard to the safety and security concerns, considering the sensitivity and conflict affected surroundings of my study area, there will be an emphasis on the inherent risks of physical and emotional danger that I experienced as well as research ethics regarding my informants.

### Study Area

Before going to my primary study area in Jenin, a refugee camp in the West Bank, I travelled to London and Amsterdam. In these two cities I collected background information about my study area and the people with whom I were to study. I attended different workshops, exhibitions, performances, and open discussions with graduated Freedom Theatre actors and their audience. One of the performances I saw was *The Siege*, which will be discussed more in depth in the analysis Chapter. Even though I collected some of my background data in London and Amsterdam, I chose TFT in Jenin Refugee Camp to be my primary study area. The fieldwork at the Theatre in Jenin lasted approximately two weeks.

Jenin refugee camp was established by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in 1953 with most of its refugees coming from the Carmel region of Haifa. The camp is located in the north of the West Bank with over 16,000 registered refugees on an area of 0,42 square kilometres (UNRWA, camp profile). Unlike the camp which is ruled by UNRWA, the city of Jenin is governed by Jenin municipality. During the second intifada Jenin was a stronghold of resistance fighting the Israeli army (Hackman, 2013, p.12, Avi Issacharoff, 2015, Tabar, 2007, p. 7). In April 2002, during which the 10 days fighting took place inside the camp, the Israeli army enforced a “round-the-clock-curfew” preventing ambulances, medical service and humanitarian aid to access the camp (UNRWA, camp profile). When the Israeli army withdrew from Jenin 4000 residents were rendered homeless

(Tabar,2007, p. 13). Since the mid- 1990s Jenin has been under Palestinian Authority<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, the Israeli army defences interrupts the camp every now and then with night raids, arresting suspected Palestinians resisters to the Israeli occupation, firing gun shots or driving through in silence.

Considering the active role Jenin`s freedom fighters played during the second intifada with their longstanding resistance and the characteristic of a current conflict ravaged society, Jenin provides a highly relevant context for the study, exploring the interrelation between the TFT youth participants sense of empowerment and resistance. First of all, the reputation of Jenin is dominated by a violent resistance, thus it is of great interest to understand and give attention to non-violent forms of resistance within this society. Further, it is of similar interest to gain an understanding of how TFT operates as a form of non-violent resistance and their perception of it. When it comes to TFT`s role in strengthening and empowering youths` identity in a conflict raged society, Jenin, being an area of intractable conflict, offers a highly relevant context for such a study.

Choosing a study area is also about choosing a perspective. Although this thesis will not focus on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in itself, it is essential to make the reader aware that I have initially chosen the perspective of Palestinians looking at the greater picture. Thus, this thesis will point to a Palestinian perspective and perception of life. Nevertheless, this is a clear simplification and a Palestinian perspective exists with contradictions, diverse political opinions and several individual perceptions of life. Palestine can, in this sense, be understood to exist as a plurality of realities. With realities I hereby mean ways of perceiving the world. Even within the municipality of Jenin there is a plurality of realities. For example, there is a distinction which exists between the refugee camp and the city. This distinction is not easily spotted by foreigners, whilst the locals draw the line easily. First of all, it is illustrated physically by the dense housing; a gap between buildings is almost non-existent inside the refugee camp compared to outside of it. Secondly, it is illustrated socially. Despite traditional customs being of great significance in the city of Jenin , peoples` lives are even more dominated by conventional, traditional values and social control in the camp (Hackman, 2013, p. 12). Even within TFT there are individual people with different experiences, backgrounds,

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<sup>3</sup> After the Oslo Accords, The West Bank was divided into area A, B and C. A being controlen by the Palestinian Authorty, Area B is controlled by both and area C by the Israel

interests and dreams. In other words, this thesis will be focused on one of several perspectives and perceptions of being a youth in Palestine, namely, one from previous TFT students who is currently employed by TFT.

TFT is one of several realities in the Palestinian society which offers a non-violent way of resistance. The theatre is influenced by western support, but nevertheless expresses a “desire to be seen as a part of the local community” and thus maintaining local practises (Hackman, 2013, p. 27). After all, TFT is an international hub with several of their staff, volunteers and visitors being foreigners, in a rather traditional customised society (TheFreedom Theatre, annual report, 2014, pp. 10-12). However, it is not only the international environment that makes the theatre different from the rest of the camp. It is also the space they provide their employees and students for critical thinking and expression. On the other hand, by exploring other arenas and perspectives, this study could have gained different and perhaps richer insights into life in Jenin. By studying TFT, including their staff and actors, I will, however, gain an insight into how the theatre plays a role in non-violent resistance and how this impacts upon the identity of Palestinian youth who participate in TFT.

## Informants

### Informant selection

In qualitative research, such as mine, the selection of informants is often done through a purposive sampling which is the opposite of random sampling,” whereby the inclusion of a unit of a population occurs entirely by chance”, Bryman, 2012, p. 715). This means that the selection of informants is purposively based on their direct reference to the research questions and goals in mind (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). Since the purpose of my study is to understand how TFT can empower Palestinian youths and act as a form of resistance, the selection of informants is related to TFT. The informants should, according to Rubin & Rubin, “be experienced and knowledgeable in the [research] area” and on the research issues (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, pp. 64-65). Thus, all my informants were selected through their direct involvement at TFT; either as staff members, previous students and actors or theatre instructors. Due to some unforeseen circumstances, I had to lean on convenience sampling arriving to the field. In other words, simply lean on the informants “available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility” (Bryman, 2012, pp. 201, 418). When arriving at the theatre, the theatre school was about one to two weeks away from opening, thus no students were back

for classes. However, a workshop for kids aged 4-16 was running at the time, hence, the theatre's staff were present and available as informants for this research.

Before arriving, I planned to focus on the students of the professional theatre school, so my gatekeeper<sup>4</sup> introduced me to previous students who were now working for the theatre. It should be noted that these students are regarded as *successful* students in that sense that they have achieved work after their studies. Thus, the fact that my informants have achieved work after their studies, and are currently working at TFT, may result in a more positive perspective towards the research question than would have been given if unemployed graduate student were also included. In fact, some of the informants at TFT was concerned about the fact that TFT changed peoples' way of thinking and perception of life – giving students a space for critical thinking and expression – before throwing them back to a society no longer familiar to themselves, where they might feel even more unfamiliar than before, without an ability to do something about it. If this is the case, then TFT's activities might not feel so empowering after all.

With regards to informant selection, I did, in fact, meet previous students who had either lost or quit their job at TFT and were still unemployed. However, I did not get the chance to interview them due to two main points. First of all, the precautions of being a female researcher in a male dominated society restricted my movement and accessibility outside the theatre. Secondly, the initial limited time which I had was further shortened because of increased security concerns in the field. These points will be further elaborated upon under the paragraph safety and security. Nevertheless, when the purpose of my study is to understand how theatre is strengthening youth identity and is a form of non-violent resistance, the unit of people working at TFT will still give relevant insight into how the theatre has strengthened them.

### Sample size

According to Bryman it is problematic to give an exact number of suitable sample size (2012, p. 426). However, I entered the field hoping to get eight informants; three employees of the theatre and five students. However, the plan did not turn out the way I hoped as a result of the circumstances mentioned above. Nevertheless, I got the chance to interview current

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<sup>4</sup> A gatekeeper is a person who helps facilitate access to potential informants or locals.

employees whom most of them have been previous professional actor students of The Theatre and participated in the TFT's activities as youth. All in all I got to interview five informants, having several intervjuews with some of them<sup>5</sup>. The informants ages varied from approximately 15- 22 when they first started the Theatre. The legitimacy of traveling all the way from Tromsø to Jenin and only interviewing five informants may be taken into question. However, according to Hutter and Bailey “due to the in-depth nature of qualitative research, few study participants are needed, as the purpose is to achieve depth of information (rather than breadth)” (2011, p. 17).

My ambitions of this research is focused on attaining a deeper understanding of how youth at TFT reflect upon the meaning of theatre in relation to their own social world as well as their beliefs and desires, using the youths own words and frames of reference to convey this. Bryman emphasizes the importance of context and seeing through the eyes of the participants in qualitative studies (2012, pp. 400-401, 427). Thus, travelling to Jenin gave me both the contextual insight of TFT, which I would not have gained without being present, but also who the members of the theatre are besides the actors and artists. Further, face- to -face interaction gives the best opportunity and most complete conditions to view and understand the perspectives of another person (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p. 16 in Bryman,2012, p. 399). Thus, traveling to Jenin gave me the possibility to have face-to- face interaction and build a confidence between myself and informants, enriching the quality of this study.

### Data Collection Techniques

My thesis is motivated by an eagerness to understand the motivation members of TFT have to work with art, despite the inherent risks that may follow. Such risks may include loss of life, such as the incident in which Juliano Mer Khamis was brutally assassinated outside the theatre in 2011, recalled in the first chapter of this thesis. Further, my thesis is focusing on “*why*” and “*how*” questioning, together with “developing an initial understanding, to identify and explain behaviour, beliefs and action” (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011, p. 16); thus the qualitative method is the most promising (Bryman, 2012, p. 399). However, I acknowledge that the qualitative- quantitative distinction is not entirely clear cut and a mixed research strategy is also possible (Bryman, 2012, p. 37). The aim of this study is to emphasize how

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<sup>5</sup> Detailed information of the informants is excluded to make it more difficult to trace each and every informant. This is done based on personal guidelines by the NDS (Norsk data for sikkerhet).

youth at TFT understand and explain cultural resistance and how they, as social agents, experience and reflect upon being part of the theatre. In regard to the focus of my thesis, which is at an individual level focusing on individual experiences and perceptions, the thesis will be characterized by a qualitative research strategy with primary data from interviews and observations. Further, due to the obstacles<sup>6</sup> and short period within which I conducted my research, my thesis will take the advantage of secondary data such as visual materials and webpages as a supplement to the attained primary data.

### Fieldwork

Due to this research's lack of a longitudinal fieldwork, it lacks the characteristics of an ethnographic fieldwork (Borchgrevink, 2003:98, Bryman, 2012, p. 431). My fieldwork took place over approximately one week in Europe and two weeks in Palestine. Thus, this research will not, to its fullest capacity, gain the deepest knowledge anthropologists are recognised for. "The task of the fieldworker is to enter into the matrix of meanings of the researched, to participate in their system of organized activities, and to feel subject to their code of moral regulation" (Wax, 1980, p. 272-273). I was only able to participate in TFT's system of organized activities to a certain degree. The reason for this was because of my short period of time in Jenin, during which TFT's theatre school was still closed.

Nevertheless, approaching the ethnographic methods of observation and participant observation have been fruitful for the quality of my data. According to both Hackman (2013, p.9) and Plastow (1998, p.4), there is now a general acknowledgment within the studies of theatre that the main impact of theatre lies in the live performances. Thus, an ideal choice of method is one that gives access to the performances, rehearsals and the people. Hence, a mix of observation of the theatre and its performances combined with interviews of the youth participating in the theatre's activities became an ideal choice for this thesis. Being in the field has given me first hand insight into the environment my informants are facing. "Observation can also be used to identify silent norms and values in a particular cultural setting" (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p. 171). This insight into silent norms and values has been fruitful in trying to understand how theatre strengthens individuals. Small details, such as these, were only gained due to my presence in the field.

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<sup>6</sup> The obstacles will be discussed under the section of "Field reflections".

## Observation

Observation is a method in qualitative research often used within ethnographic fieldwork. The method “enables the researchers to systematically observe and record people’s behaviour, actions and interactions” (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.170). In short, observation is to watch and record *what* people *say* and *do*. According to Bryman observation is probably the best way to “see through others’ eyes” (2012, p.493) since “the participant observer is in much closer contact with people for a longer period of time” (2013, p. 493). The method of observation within ethnographic fieldwork comes in several variations from complete participant observation to non-participant observation (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.178). This depends to which degree the researcher is an active observer or not (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, pp. 178-179, 182,185), as well as how much the researcher relies on observation as the main source of data (Bryman, 2012, p. 441-444).

I chose to supplement my interviews with observations, first of all, to provide “an introduction to (my) study context<sup>7</sup>” being new to the social environment (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.171). I conducted my first observation in London that I travelled to prior to Palestine, where I attended a workshop organized by TFT. Here, I took part in what could be called a participant observation<sup>8</sup> Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.179). The room was divided into two sections with an elevated stage area where we all gathered. The participants of the workshop came in all ages between 20 and 60 years old, mostly having occupations within the arts or journalism. Since other participants took notes during the workshop, I was participating in the activities whilst also taking observation notes myself by unobtrusively observing. The workshop was lead by three people; one working both as an instructor and actor of TFT as well as two directors, one a European and one a Palestinian citizen. The workshop was a mix of theatre activities combined with information of TFT’s objectives, background, current work and visual audio recording from Jenin. This one-day workshop also focused on what it means to use art as a form of resistance and create productions under occupation. The following day I watched one of TFT’s performances. Whilst in Amsterdam I conducting observational data, I attended a performance which included a questions and answers session at the end. On this occasion I was presented with the opportunity to mingle with the actors and attend some rehearsals with previous students of TFT.

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<sup>7</sup> I exchanged the original text (your) with (my), eg. “providing an introduction to your study context”.

<sup>8</sup> Although, I do acknowledge that participant observation requires researchers to “spend a great deal of time in a study context” (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011:184) which I did not in this case, considering the time for the workshop being five and a half hours.

The observation conducted in Jenin was a mix of participant observation and passive participation (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p. 182), which Bryman may call partially participating observation (2012, p.443). During my stay in Jenin I was a partially participating observer, since observation was not the main data source<sup>9</sup> (Bryman,2012, p. 443). Being in the field, I alternated between being a passive participator and an active participator. The distinction may be hard to acutely define and perhaps fluctuates between the two. When I was an active participator (201, p.182) I confirmed my participant observation with one of the leaders in charge of the children’s workshop, and then wrote my notes immediately after. I attended these workshops on three occasions, each lasting a duration of two hours. Two of them were practiced in the black box while the third was in the performance room/ Aula. A black box is essentially a large square room with black walls, typically used as a space for theatre activities and performances. In the workshops I actively followed the same instructions as the kids during the warm up exercises, although, there was one exception were I only observed from the audience seating in the Aula. To make the youth and children follow the instructor’s instructions, I was asked to help out and give special attention to the group exercise whilst observing them. Hence, my observations were made naturally in the situated environment.

Living at the theatre, I was able to participate in some way at all times. As is with participant observation, I was “taking part in the activities and daily life of the community under study” (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p.183). However, I did not systematically collect data during free times which were spent together. Nevertheless, I collected notes from interesting and notable discussions and wrote summaries of the day’s events at the conclusion of each day<sup>10</sup>. The topics of conversations came about in different ways. In some instances, I raised questions, in others, people started a discussion with me who may have already been present or just entering the conversation. These random conversations and discussions have helped to establish the context and broaden my understanding of cultural resistance and how the theatre has given them strength, especially from their point of view. Even though these do not form a body of primary data, systematically collected and analysed, they will be fruitful to occasionally draw upon.

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<sup>9</sup> e.g my interviews are as significant source of data.

<sup>10</sup> This will be discussed under field reflections.

### (Semi Structured) Interviews

Within qualitative research, interviews operate along a scale from semi-structured to unstructured (Bryman, 2012, pp. 212-213, 470-472). The semi-structured interview is often implemented with an interview guide, that is, a list of questions or pre-defined topics to be covered. The main focus being the view of the interviewee and gaining an understanding of “events, patterns and forms of behaviour” (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). Further, there is a great deal of freedom in how to respond in a semi-structured interview. The flexibility allows the interviewer to pick up on what the interviewee perceives as important. In comparison to quantitative interviews, the interview guide in semi-structured interviews does not necessarily have to be strictly followed. The researcher may, at times, formulate the questions differently and ask questions that are not included in the guide (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). Nevertheless, it is important to prepare questions and topics, as well as being familiar with the interviewees setting in which they work and live (Bryman, 2012, p. 473). According to Bryman, interviews are “probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research” (2012, p. 469). A likely reason for this is their convenient way of collecting qualitative data. Compared to a long-term ethnographic work, qualitative interviews are more flexible and less time-consuming in the field. Nevertheless, the transcriptions of interviews and the analysis of it is still time-consuming (Bryman, 2012, p. 469). Since this study is interested in the individuals’ perspective and interpretations - of theatre, cultural resistance and Palestinian youth identity – the semi-structured interview is suitable for my study, due to its flexibility and practicality with regards to time management in the field.

With regards to preparing an interview guide for my interviews, I made myself familiar with the theatre and its settings through social media, newspapers and the workshop in London. Further, during the actual interview, I covered the interview guide to a great extent, but altered the order of questions and disregarded some if I considered them already answered, while adding follow-up questions (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 136) when I felt it was appropriate. My six interviews were conducted with five different informants at TFT’s building. However, these interviews were conducted in several places at the theatre, such as, the office, meeting room, computer room and the cinema. The participants themselves decided the location of the interviews. These interviews were conducted between late August and early September in 2015. The average duration of the interviews was forty minutes; the shortest being a little less than half an hour and the longest being one hour and a quarter.

According to Bryman (2012), tape-recording can help the researcher to be a good listener and focus on the interviewee, rather than losing focus due to the necessity of writing it all down. Thus, I recording all my interviews to allow me to be fully present and attentive, ask relevant follow up questions and hold a fruitful and beneficial dialogue.

### Secondary sources of data

My thesis will also rely on secondary interviews undertaken by different journalists with members of TFT. Further, it will also use visual materials, such as TFT's own promotion videos, visual interviews with the founder of TFT, Juliano Mer Khamis, and last but not least the film of *Arnas Children*. These sources of data will mainly be used to research the background and objectives of TFT, but also give context to the circumstances that my informants have faced and still are facing. For instance, my informants have referred to particular scenes in some of the aforementioned videos to help explain an event or a situation they are describing to me. Different people on different occasions have recommended that I watch these films, in particularly *Arna's children*, to gain a greater understanding of how the Theatre came about, what it is and who the people are (Khamis, 2003). Thus, I perceive the use of these visual materials as a secondary data source of high value and relevance to my research.

### Field reflections

With an academic background in social anthropology, I perhaps had some unrealistic expectations of how the research I planned to undertake would “come along as I walked the path”, which it clearly did, however, not in the slightly naive way I imagined. Social anthropologists have the advantage of being in the field for an extended period of time, which allow them to use a general research question, then narrow their research question down after some time in the field (Bryman,2012, p. 450). However, I also, to some extent, narrowed my research “after some time in the field”- by traveling to both the European cities; to meet the people and get a feeling of who and what TFT is all about.

My plan of travelling to a London was primarily to observe TFT's performance and participate at one of their workshops, although I also hoped to get in further contact with the actors, which proved unsuccessful. Such unsuccessful episodes might just as much be a result of bad skill in technique and judgment as bad luck (Sarsby, 1984, p. 96 in Bryman, 2012, p.431). A further contact was not established due to a combination of their tight schedule, my

low confidence in interrupting and my intention to maintain a positive first impression of myself, considering our further contact in Jenin. I wanted to respect their time and not jeopardise their politeness and welcoming nature towards me. Even though I planned the fieldwork in Jenin in advance, the plan was reversed back and forward. This was due to a combination of holidays at TFT (Ramadan), the master program`s time schedule and safety issues in the field.

#### Gatekeeper, trust building and ongoing access

According to Van Maanen and Kolb (1985, p.11) “gaining access to most organizations is not a matter to be taken lightly but one that involves some combination of strategic planning, hard work and dumb luck” (in Bryman 2012, p.435). This is an apt description of how I got access to TFT. Being part of the performance art environment in Tromsø, I participated in a workshop arranged by TFT during the spring of 2014. Further, I got involved in a performance called *Voices of Palestine*, which later eventuated in me obtaining the contacts I needed to access the field. However, this all happened before I started my master program. Nevertheless, I took strategic advantage of this by trying to get in contact with TFT. According to Bryman, one`s own contacts and networks may be essential in getting access to a particular group of interest, especially to marginalised or vulnerable people and closed communities (2012, p. 435). In my case, it turned out to be necessary to use my own network to gain contact with TFT. A producer of *Voices of Palestine* was able to connect me with one of the top management/ administrators at TFT. This person was to become my gatekeeper, giving me access to the field and having a continuous dialogue about the necessities of my arrival. Being a foreign female and with a similar background herself, she gave me advice about appropriate behaviour and customs in different settings. A gatekeeper is someone who gives you either official permission or informal access to a research site. However, this approval is not a guarantee of full cooperation by the informants to participate in the research (Wanat, 2008, p. 1-3). Sometimes, the gatekeeper can even withhold access to information and cooperation from the informants. However, this was not an issue of this research.

Considering the amount of time I would take from my informants during their working hours, my gatekeeper asked if I could do some administration work in exchange. I replied that I would be more than happy to do so. Bryman (2012, p. 235-236) states that these types of negotiations are often a way to get access. Nevertheless, I also interpreted this as a type of trust building. According to Norman (2009, p.72), Lewis and Weigert (1985, p.970), trust is

not something static, but is rather something that develops over time and in different dimensions, such as emotional, rational and behavioural dimensions. The trust dimension between my gatekeeper and I was mostly of rational character. This type of trust is established through written statements (about my project and objectives) and signatures confirming a valid agreement (Norman, 2009, p. 72).

Even though my gatekeeper gained me access to the group, this did not imply further access to the people I were to study (Bryman, 2012, p. 439, Norman, 2009, p.77). Building trust in a short period of time is hard, especially in a conflict zone where “agreements, laws, and rules have been violated or abused” (Norman, 2009, p.72). The difference in gaining trust between my gatekeeper and my informants was probably due to the different ways trust relationships are established. First of all, my gatekeeper has grown up in a non-conflict zone area, which means that establishing rational, cognitive trust was easier due to her familiarity with citizens being consistent with the laws and agreements of society. Thus, she took our communication via email as well as my research intentions seriously. On the other hand, my informants have grown up in a society with lack of trust. Something I heard several times while in Jenin was that you can’t actually trust anyone; there is always a person leaking confidential information. Thus, a signed written statement of my research and intentions was more or less worthless in this context. However, I tried an approach driven by gaining a “more personal and emotional trust” with my informants, based on personal relations (Norman, 2009:72-73). According to Norman (2009, p.73), this type of trust may be fostered through “spending time in the community, talking with participants in both formal and informal settings”, which I did.

It is unlikely that research conducted within conflict zones is viewed by the local community as something that is neutral or altruistic (Norman, 2009, p. 77). Thus, I was prepared to meet potential informants who would be suspicious about my stay and research (Bryman, 2012, p. 439-440). In fact, during an informal conversation in one of my first evenings in Jenin, I was questioned by several potential informants about who I was, why I wanted to come to Palestine, and what I was going to with this research in the future. One of my informants asked me “are you one of those who thinks you can come and save Palestine?” I interpreted this question as slightly scornful due to his tone of voice and phrasing as it was clearly delivered with a sarcastic undertone. We were gathered on a rooftop with four or five other people late in the evening. Everyone was silent, waiting for my answer, which I was hesitant to respond with, knowing that what I said could be critical for gaining their respect and

henceforth further access to information. I took a chance and answered as honestly as I could. I stated that I did not think I could save Palestine or make any difference at all, despite wishing that I could. I told them that I even felt a bit ambivalent and a degree of guilt considering that I, or maybe not me in particular but western countries as a whole, become rich on their misery. I expressed guilt that it was possible for me to access their land with relative ease and make a career on their suffering, whilst the opposite is not possible. However, I ended by saying that I wanted to visit TFT because I have a passion for theatre. He replied “good, at least you are honest, I appreciate that”. I had gained trust by offering something about myself and my beliefs. I was giving them an answer that expressed insight into my positionality. “One’s own position in the field is situated within a social hierarchy vis- a vis other groups and individuals with regard to class, ethnicity, and race, each of which potentially limits or broadens one’s understanding of others” (Milgram, 2012, p. 178-179). I reflected openly on the status I had within a social hierarchy and the advantages I gained by being Norwegian. Access often depends on the identity and identifiers of the researcher, such as gender, race, profession and age. Nevertheless, access also depends on “how the researcher may make use of them” (Martin-Ortega & Herman, 2009, p. 238).

As a strategy to gain access beyond my gatekeeper and to my potential informants, I drew on my interests and identity that I thought was relevant and similar to my informants. Despite this, I was conscious of keeping in mind that my informants are individual people with different personalities and therefore similarities would differ on occasion from person to person. I also referred to performances I had seen them play in to implicitly show that I had invested my time into their work and cause. Further, I made reference to places they had been and people we mutually knew to make myself less of a stranger. For instance, my fieldwork in Europe, in particular, the time used to socialise with the actors of TFT, clearly gave me an advantage of being familiar to them upon arriving in Jenin. Research participants are often “more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is (..) and what he or she has to offer as a friend” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, p. 65). By drawing on particular parts of my identity that I thought were relevant and similar to my informants, for example, a shared passion in theatre, acting and performances, as well as nuances, such as, knowledge of codes and language used within theatre settings, I hoped to gain “insider status rather than simply being seen as a Western woman analysing the Arab Other” (Radsch, 2009, p. 97). As Jaquie Aston put it “ a certain amount of disclosure is essential. It facilitates a sense of trust and mutuality and it increases the comfort level of the narrator” (Aton, 2001, p. 147 in Rubin and

Rubin 2005, p. 83). Accordingly, it was this trust, mutuality and comfort that I attempted to attain with my informants. “Fieldwork is a complex interaction between researcher and hosts and is constructed in a process of give-and-take” (Wax, 1980, p. 273).

### Reflections of the applied methods

Researching a marginalised group may result in bias. Therefore, to avoid this, it is essential to be aware that a story is mostly told with an underlying purpose in mind (Bryman, 2012, p.582). Further, the interviewee may construct its narrative according to an imagined or possible future audience (Elliot, 2005, p. 11). The importance of this awareness is also applicable to my visual secondary data. The fact that my informants are living in an intractable conflict may exaggerate the bias behind any given answers during the interviews. The interviewees could harbour a belief that I may be able, in one way or another, to help or improve their current situation and may doctor their responses in the hope of facilitating this. Nevertheless, this may be exactly what the theatre does; give (real or imagined) hope for improvement through the international attention which it derives.

Combining interviews with partial participant observation strengthens my data in several ways. First of all, it allows me to cross check what my informants said in the arranged semi structured interviews with our random conversations. Secondly, being in the field and combining observation and interviews made me able to sample, in terms of different context (Bryman, 2012, p.427). That means to conduct research in different times and places, making sure that what has been said and done is not only attached to the specific circumstances, for example, being at work representing TFT in a professional sense.

Further, by never leaving the field (in Jenin) while conducting interviews, I had the chance to interact in daily conversations among peers and gain insight into my informants’ daily routines. These conversations pinpointed central points in my interviews. The information conducted through my interviews was also central in some of the regular conversations, thus confirming that the answers given were honest and not rehearsed. Despite the informants being used to answer questions from media and promote the theatre, their views and stories in my interviews were confirmed through casual conversations among each other and sometimes including myself. This combination of factors increased the reliability of my data.

However, it could be argued that the people from TFT knew what I was looking for and perhaps spoke about a particular topic that they thought I wanted to hear, to please me. Nevertheless, considering my very first informal encountering with my informants and their peers` and the discussion we had about cultural resistance, not everyone knew who I was or what I was doing there. Thus, I am confident they did not raise the topic to please me, nor did I lead the conversation in any direction; I was rather an observer of the whole discussion. It is at times not practical, or even possible, to make everyone aware of your position as a researcher in the field. According to Bryman (2012), telling each and everyone you interact with or happen to meet that you are a researcher will destroy the nature of their daily life.

Conversely, the use of language, which was mostly in English, was a signal that my informants from TFT wanted me to hear their arguments and were aware they had an “audience” while having conversations and discussions with each other. From time to time, even in the middle of the conversation, they would change their language from English to Arabic and vice versa. This point is crucial in being aware that the informants always had some sort of impression management over what kind of information they wanted to share and release. However, taking into consideration that English is their second language, the sporadic changing of language may also occur unconsciously. Whilst participants got more eagerly involved into the conversation, they often changed back and forth from English to Arabic, probably due to language barrier, a lack of fulfilling words of expression<sup>11</sup> and topics that they naturally discussed in their own mother thong, such as, domestic politics. English was not only used for the presence of myself, but also because of the international environment of TFT. English was spoken whenever other international volunteers or friends were present, which made it easier for me to interact in the conversation. Thus, speaking in English was not only (if at all) a consideration taken for my presence.

### Safety and security

#### *Physical and emotional danger*

Going to Jenin was no *piece of cake* and was almost made impossible due to the unstable security situation in the West Bank. During dialogue with my supervisor, and the desperation of possibly having to change my direction of research, I had to find a quick alternative to Jenin. Thus, the day after this dialogue I saw<sup>1</sup> an advertisement of previous students at TFT were to perform the upcoming day in Amsterdam. I went in good faith hoping to meet up with

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<sup>11</sup> As they also mentioned.

a couple of previous students of the theatre. I had some “dumb luck” (Bryman 2012, p.435) getting in contact with one of the volunteer instructors of TFT. After a discussion about the security situation with her and subsequently my supervisor, I reverted back to my initial plan; to conduct fieldwork in Jenin. However, following instructions from my supervisor, the duration was shortened to two weeks due to security concerns.

In hindsight, whilst looking at my preparation for the fieldwork, there were an emphasis on the risk of *physical danger* the researcher may be subject to and ethical stress arising from studying a vulnerable group. The compulsory project seminar nor the methodology course gave attention to risk of emotional danger which I, as a researcher, could have been vulnerable to during the research process. There is also no consideration of emotional danger in my own *field security analysis*<sup>12</sup>. I would argue that the emphasis of security preparation has been stuck in the traditional way of understanding danger for the social researcher, “as immediate physical threat” (Lee- Treweek and Linkogle, 2000, p. 8). On the other hand, Lee- Treweek and Linkogle highlight the importance of including other aspects of risk of dangers to the social researcher, such as emotional danger (2000, p. 13). Lee- Treweek and Linkogle defines emotional danger as “the experience of severe threat due to negative ‘feeling states’ induced by the research process”, meaning real distress that “affects the researchers sense of self and (...) quality of their research” (2000, p.13). During my research process in Jenin, I was subject to this type of emotional danger.

The emotional distress was caused by an anxiety of getting unintentionally involved in a dangerous physical situation. Thus, the risk to researchers conducting social research is interconnected (Lee- Treweek and Linkogle, 2000, p.8). Whilst in Jenin, I was exposed to the reality of my informants’ life. At first I had trouble sleeping due to the sound of random gunfire. After a while, I began to understand that this was “normal” and mostly youth having fun. I was told that they would even fire guns at weddings; in their environment, shooting does not necessary need to be a dangerous thing. Clearly, as Wolfe argues, my “embodied subjectivity and positioned knowledge determines how comprehensively researchers can understand local phenomena (Wolfe 1996, p. 13-14 in Milgram 2012, p. 178-179). Because of my positioned knowledge and background, I interpreted the sound of gunfire was a sign of danger. Thus, it took time to adjust to the local understanding of the phenomena of gun

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<sup>12</sup> A scheme MPCT( master in peace and conflict transformation) students were obligated to fill out before the fieldwork. See attached documents.

activity. However, during my eighth night in Jenin, the sound of gunfire raised to an entirely new level that soon resulted in emotional distress that affected my quality of research. It was the Israeli armed forces (IDF) invading Jenin with forty military vehicles and a couple of bulldozers (Yassin, 2015; Zion, 2015). I could, almost continuously, hear sounds of gunfire, sirens, people shouting and bulldozers until the early morning. As the hours went, I was increasingly scared of getting physical injured. Thus, I utilised social media and spoke to locals to keep myself up to date on the situation, whilst staying inside my room, away from windows. Even though I knew that the IDF were not after me, I was anxious of being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

At noon on the day following the Israeli invasion, the Norwegian embassy advised me to leave Jenin. I was, however, too confused and exhausted to leave immediately. In fact, I felt safer being with people I had begun to get to know and trust, rather than leaving and travelling alone, at night, to different and unfamiliar place. Therefore, I stayed for a couple of days longer and continued dialogue with my embassy and university. I immediately stopped writing field notes the morning after the Israeli invasion due to my emotional distress. Even a small sound from the refrigerator was enough to startle me. I was more concerned about being a fellow human than a researcher. Although the emotional distress obviously affected my research quality, evident by the lack of field notes, the cause of the emotional distress gave me insight to my informants' daily life and what they consider as threats and dangers as well as how they handled it. In accordance with Lee- Treweek and Linkogle, I would argue that “when we share dangerous experiences with participants it not only bonds us with them but allows us to see more clearly how social groups think about and mobilise against threat” (2000, p. 203).

### *Being a female researcher*

Considering Jenin's conservative societal expectations with regards to the way men and women behave with each other<sup>13</sup>, I had prepared my self in advance with guidelines and a dress code. While in Jenin, I would always wear loose, long clothes, covering my legs, arms, shoulders and chest. When it comes to being a female researcher in such an environment, the

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<sup>13</sup> Examples of this is that a girl cannot sit on the back of a bicycle a male is cycling. It is frowned upon for men and women who are not married to even be seen in public together. Further, if someone in the society have a suspicion of an unmarried male and female being alone (being foreign or not) engaging in an intimate relation or an unmarried woman suspected to be alone with an unmarried male, may be subject to severe social retribution and in extreme cases even death. At least, this is what I was told.

risks of physical danger need to be taken into consideration. Being a woman, I am more vulnerable to sexual assaults and harassments than I am physical assault (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000, p. 12). In fact, whilst being in the field, I was subjected to a small, perhaps innocent, but nevertheless an uncomfortable harassment that influenced and constrained my freedom of movement within the theatre. At least, it resulted in me preferring to be accompanied with someone when moving from the theatre to the town or elsewhere. This may have affected the result of my research due to the access to informants being limited to within the theatre. Thus, I did not get the chance to interview previous students of the theatre and their view of cultural resistance and the effects of theatre upon their lives.

The incident was late in the afternoon when I was alone and grasping some air. A young teenage boy approached me and I politely smiled back. We briefly exchanged small-talk while passing by each other, but as I departed, he placed his hand on my backside. I reacted in a spontaneous way, swiping at his hand and expressing assertively with my body language that I did not accept his behaviour. I felt quite uncomfortable and needed to collect my thoughts and remind myself that I was in unfamiliar territory, far away from home in Norway. I did not scream, because my prejudices told me that a woman's voice would not be heard. I did not want to attract negative or potentially dangerous attention, putting myself in an even worse situation. I quickly and quietly removed myself from the area.

Once safely back in the apartment of TFT where I was staying, I reflected on the incidence. Perhaps I sent the wrong signals with my smile and politeness, inviting the young man to behave in the way he did. When it came to my own informants, I did not find any unpleasant issues with mix-gender interviewing. It was neither complicated to access male interviewees nor to socialise with males from the theatre. This is most likely due to the theatre's objectives and vision to empower women (The Freedom Theatre) and my informants' familiarity with foreigners made the mix-gender interviewing go smoothly.

#### *Ethical issues regarding consent*

In regard to social research, ethical issues of consent brings in professional associations (Bryman, 2012, p.130), such as the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD) used as an guideline for this thesis("Krav til samtykke,"). According to NSD, the matter of informed consent from the informants is of importance("Krav til samtykke,"). Thus, I made sure to get informed consent to record the interviews, including consent to observe and photograph my

informants. I obtained consent for doing so from all, except one, who agreed to the interview and the tape recording, but not to photography or observation. Thus, I respected that. During my fieldwork I observed three workshops with youth and children at TFT. According to NSD I should have gained consent to observe the workshop by the kids and youth's parents ("Krav til samtykke,") . This proved to be difficult. It was hard to reach out to their parents in such a short notice considering the short period of fieldwork. However, this was not the main obstacle. NSD is essentially developed for Norwegian society, and in a society such as Jenin, there is no culture of supervising children nor child protection in that same sense in which it exists in Norway. According to Bryman (2012, p. 139) it is not even practical to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to confirmed consent, especially in an ethnographic research. As stated above, a piece of paper with my signature and a written statement of my research and intention is more or less worthless in this context where "agreements, laws, and rules have been violated or abused" (Norman, 2009, p.72). According to Wax, the conventional consent form is irrelevant to ethnographic fieldworkers as the consent is a continual process rather than a one-time event. He further argues that a piece of paper is more or less useless in most societies being studied (Wax, 1980.p. 275). The uselessness of a piece of paper like this was confirmed by one of the consultant of the youth workshop project. On the other hand, I got permission from the supervisor and consultant of the project to attend the workshops. During the workshop they also informed the youth about my presence and asked if it was ok. Considering the main focus to be at the instructors of the workshop and the activities itself, I went along conducting observation. The main purpose of my observation was after all to participate in my informant's daily life (the instructors of the workshop) and to get a deeper insight of the theatres activities to further understand and relate to my informants' description and reflections of theatre in their life.

In regards to NSD, in order to get this research approved, I had to make my informants anonym. The requirements of Privacy Policy and public transparency came into issue (Vike,2001, p. 78). I aknowlegde that it may be possible, at least to have an idea of who the informants are. However, it would be difficult to be sure of it. Due to NSD's strong concern that this research would affect the informants life situation in a negative way if their anonymity would be violated, this reaserch had to take some precautions. In fact, NSD personally contacted both the research supervicor and myself to make sure the informants anonymity was put above everything else. The precaustions this research took was to not write the informants name in any field notes, further to leave out personal information and life

history background. Thus, an outcome of this is that the empiri may have bit a bit vanished and lack a thick description (Vike, 2001, p.78).

Further, when it comes to my secondary data sources, an informed consent has not been possible. Bryman argues that secondary data analysis of qualitative data may be problematic because the person interviewed or observed may not have given consent for this material to be analysed by other researchers (Bryman, 2012, p. 586-587). However, in the case of my study I would argue that there are no ethical consent issues with that concern. This is due to the fact that those (visual) interviews and films I use are all publically published without “stated site policy prohibit(ing) the use of the material”<sup>14</sup> (Livingstone, 2005:39 in Bryman, 2012:149). Further, the films were recommended by staff of TFT as fruitful for my research.

### Summary

This chapter has focused on the methodological issues of the study. Data collection was carried out both in Europe and Jenin, with the primary area being TFT in Jenin – a city carrying a reputation of stronghold resistance. In order to highlight the individual level of experiences and perceptions of theatre and resistance, I chose to deploy qualitative semi-structured interviewing and observation as my primary data collection method. Altogether, to supplement my five in- depth semi-structured interviews, random daily conversations with my informants and observation of the theatre workshops was gathered. Fieldwork is a complex interaction constructed in a process of give-and-take between the researcher and her informants. Thus, if I, the researcher, were someone else, or made use of my positionality in another way, the informants may have chosen a different way to talk about themselves, their experiences with TFT and their views. Nevertheless, my impression was that the way I made use of my identity, acting honestly and being willing to disclose information about myself, was of an advantage in gaining trust and access to information.

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<sup>14</sup> Original text being ; stated site policy prohibit(ing) the use of the material (Bryman, 2012:586-587)

*I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.*

Thornton Wilder (Thornton Wilder, Jackson R Bryer, 1992:72)

## Chapter 3, Conceptual Framework

This chapter will present a conceptual framework of the study of theatre and non-violent resistance among Palestinian youth to answer if The Freedom Theatre (TFT) contributes to their youths' sense of self, and if so, can this sense of empowerment be understood as a form of non-violent resistance? It specifically addresses the concepts of empowerment, social capital and resistance. In order to highlight the informants' views and explain how TFT and its activities strengthen Palestinian youth's sense of self, particularly those involved in the Theatre, the concepts of empowerment and social capital are discussed. Further, the chapter also builds on Gene Sharp's (1973) and James Scott's (1985) definition of resistance and non-violence to analyse TFT as a form of non-violent resistance. Social network building and the process of empowerment can, in this regard, be perceived as a type of resistance, with TFT as a case study. Resistance, according to Scott (1985), is defined by the intentions behind the action. Sharp adds that the non-violent action should intentionally also be tactical (1973). The paper starts with a review of the concept of empowerment and its three dimensions; identity, agency and critical consciousness. It further discusses the concepts of social capital and resistance vis-a-vis theatre and youth identity, and sense of worth and confidence.

### Empowerment

Empowerment has become a familiar and well used term, especially within feminism and development studies (Kabeer 1999, Kabeer, 2005, Carr, 2003). Nevertheless, the term empowerment can be criticised for lacking an adequate and comprehensive definition (Mahmud, Shah, Becker, 2011). It is often understood as a process of change and more precisely the process from being disempowered to being empowered (Carr 2003, p.13; Kabeer 2005, p. 13-14). To be empowered means that, in the first place, a person has been less empowered (Kaber, 2005, p. 14). Hence, empowerment is understood as a process. Thus, one challenge with the term is that empowerment is a "latent phenomenon", which means that it is not directly observable and, therefore, difficult to examine (Mahmud, Shah, Becker, 2011). The process of empowerment is used within several disciplines for different purposes, ranging

from activists and people working in the field of pedagogy, medicine, development and science as well as lobby groups (Askheim and Starrin, 2007, p. 14-15). Thus, the term empowerment is used within several distinct disciplines and contains a large spectre of content. This makes it difficult to examine the internal dynamics of the empowerment processes (Mahmud, Shah, Becker, 2011). Carr (2003, p.12) has, however, identified three elements of the concept of empowerment which I find very relevant for my thesis project. These defining elements are agency, critical consciousness and identity.

Before going into the three defining elements, it is necessary to further clarify what empowerment constitutes. A very central issue within *empowerment* is *power*. To have power is often understood as having the capacity to make someone do something or behave in a way she or he would not necessarily have done. Implicit in this understanding lies the perception that the subject does not have many other options or choices of behaving. Thus, one way of thinking of power is as Kabeer does, “in terms of the ability to make choices” (2005, p.13). To be powerless here, means to be denied the ability to make choices and more specifically to make strategic life choices (Kabeer, 2005, p. 13-14, Kabeer, 1999, p. 436). The relevance of power in relation to choices must be understood as implying “the possibility of alternatives” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). The inability to make choices suggests that a person has little power over his or her own life. We will see through the dimension of critical consciousness that power also lies within the *kind* of choices we make. These types of choices that people make are influenced by traditions, customs and beliefs, which are taken for granted to the extent that they have become naturalised. This is what Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1970, in Kabeer, 1999: 441) has referred to as *Doxa*. These *doxa*'s is again related to who we are, how we see our self and is perceived by others. It influences if and how we see a choice accessible to us.

### Agency

Agency refers to “the ability to define one’s goal and act upon them” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438). The ability to define one’s goals means that the individual or group is making purposeful choices and is able “to transform these choices into desired actions” (Petesch, Smilovitz, and Walton 2005, p. 40). Hence, agency is a very significant part of empowerment in this context; the ability to make choices means expanding the capacity to act as an agent and, to a greater extent, govern one’s own life by acting upon those choices. It is about “attaining the capability to live the life one wishes to live” (Mahmud, Shah, Becker, 2011, p. 611). To be clear, people who exercise a great deal of choices in their lives may be very powerful, but in

the context of empowerment, people must have been subject to denial of choices in the first place.

Further, in order to have a real choice it is necessary that there are alternatives. Hence, implicit in making choices is the idea that a person has the resources available to do so. These resources are not only in a material economic sense, but also in a social human resource sense, which will be further discussed (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). Real choices need alternatives and these “alternatives must not only exist, they must also be *seen* to exist” (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14). Institutional bias, cultural or ideological norms may function as obstacles to conceive the existing alternatives for people to make strategic life choices. Cultural and ideological norms may reject that inequalities of power exist or that it is unjust with such inequalities (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14). When such cultural and ideological norms exist, exertion of power can become ‘naturalised’ in the sense that it is taken for granted and perceived as normal within the culture, so that it is not questioned and this not perceived as an exertion of power. For power relation to be most effective, they should be naturalised in the sense that they are taken for granted and perceived as normal so no one question them and thus not be perceived as power relation. When exertion of power becomes naturalised and exists within a culture without question, the way of doing and being is perceived as the only way of doing and being which maintains the status quo and is an obstacle for suppressed people to see other alternatives. It means that, for example, youth in Jenin either have to keep silent or resist with violence, but, none of these alternatives offer any real opportunity in life. This could be perceived as Palestinian youth having a choice to either accept the situation they find themselves in and collude with their own in society, or, fight violently against their suppression.

However, in the view of Kabeer, the example above involves the denial of choices to Palestinian youth (2005). In other words, the denial of choices means that there are no other alternatives or alternatives to be *seen*. It is important to emphasise the difference between existing alternatives and that these existing alternatives are perceived as alternatives. In fact, the alternative might be there, but still obscured and denied through institutions and cultural traditional. When alternatives are not seen, they cannot be considered an alternative. When the choices you have are a mere reflection of cultural and structural expectations within the society, such as, being derived from family, school, work and/or governmental institutions, a person’s ability to shape and control his/her own life is unavailable and, accordingly, not empowering ( Friere 1974, p. 7 ; Narayan- Parker 2005, p. 4)

The concept of agency is very much linked to the understanding of autonomy and the metaphor of “living one`s life from the inside” (Kymlicka 1989b, p. 883-905, in Weinstock 2005, p.228). To exercise agency implies individual autonomy which means that the choices made are truly an individual`s own and not given. “The meaning, motivation, and purpose that individuals bring to their actions; that is, their sense of agency” (Kabeer 2005, p.14). In the context of my study and in relation to empowerment, the exercise of agency constitutes a challenge to existing power relations through actively making choices. However, it is important to emphasise that exercising agency does not mean that the individual needs to pick an alternative choice of action in order to exercise agency. To exercise agency could, for example, be either a reproduction of social structures or a transformation. This leads to the next defining characteristic of empowerment; critical consciousness.

### Critical consciousness

Inspired by Freire (1970), Carr (2005, p. 15) suggests that critical consciousness is a significant element in realizing empowerment. To understand critical consciousness in the context of empowerment, it is necessary to analyse it through the presence of oppression or powerlessness. Being in this state and then being aware of and reflecting upon oneself in relation to the society is engaging in critical consciousness, or, what Friere(1970) refers to as conscientization (in Carr 2005, p. 8-9, 15-15). In the case of my study, the actors of TFT explain that theatre has helped them to be critical of their own society in the way that they are now questioning the existing of the social order. This includes questioning why women and men are educated in separate schools; questioning why girls cannot do “this” and “that” because girls don`t do “that”. “Consciousness-raising is a process of discovery in which one begins to see one`s position and move toward other positions” (Carr 2005, p. 15). In other words, critical consciousness makes people aware that the choices they make are rarely made “under circumstances chosen by themselves” (Barth 1981, p. 89, in Jenkins 2008, p. 125) and this circumstances further impact what *kind* of choices people make.

Critical consciousness, the reflection of oneself in relation to the society, is a necessary precursor for engaging in social change (Carr 2015, p. 8-9). In this regard, agency and critical consciousness becomes interrelated, since to engage in social change one has to be aware of one self in relation to the society and be able to reflect upon that. Thus, become aware of the

Doxa, which has been previously mentioned. In other words, to engage in social change one must also start to see other alternatives and be able to act upon them. As suggested previously, for a choice to be considered as a real choice it must involve alternatives. According to Kabeer (1999), critical consciousness is dependent on the availability of competing alternatives. Therefore, critical consciousness emerges when it is possible to imagine other alternatives. Kabeer writes further that:

(..) a more critical consciousness, only becomes possible when competing ways of being and doing become available as material and cultural possibilities, so that <<common sense>> propositions of culture begin to lose their <<naturalized>> character, revealing the underlying arbitrariness of the given social order. (Kabeer, 1999, p. 441)

As Kabeer, further indicates above, that critical consciousness is dependent on the availability of competing alternatives, but these alternatives are only made possible through critical consciousness. In this sense, the defining element of critical consciousness provides empowerment with the characteristic of being a cyclic process rather than a step by step process.

For my purposes, critical consciousness as an element of empowerment, highlights the informants' perception of what TFT provides for them. This involves a space where they can *think freely*, develop their talents and dream. TFT has not only opened up a new way of being both a freedom fighter and a resister to the Israeli occupation, but also made the youth participating at theatre critically aware of their immediate social world. This space to exercise critical consciousness is not only provided through material equipment such as a scene, stage lights, costumes, audio, cameras etc., but also through new social networks and ways of being a 'freedom fighter', or, a Palestinian youth. To *be* a freedom fighter or/and a *Palestinian* youth is ultimately about "who's who" and "what's what" (Jenkins, p.2008). This brings me to the last element of defining empowerment, which is identity.

### Identity

In this chapter, identity is the last defining element of empowerment. The concept of identity is a very elusive term that can risk the pitfall of containing everything and therefore describing nothing at the same time (Jenkins, 2008, p 13-15). It is a well used term both in academia and in everyday life. The term can also be over- simplified and taken for granted when used and talked about. Identity relates to how a person (or a group) perceives him or

herself and also how he or she is viewed by others. Identity is socially constructed and describes who a person is. Identity building is not possible in isolation, it is rather a never ending process of intercommunication between oneself and others. It is thus a relational term that builds on similarities and differences between oneself and others. Although an identity has a continuity, it is never static (Jenkins 2008, p.17).

Identity is a collective as well as it is an individual. Being Palestinian, for example, is a combination of both collective and individual identity. Being Palestinian, is a collective identity; it is shared with many people who have the same history, heritage, traditions and way of being. Within this collective identity there is several others identities. These identities may be characteristics of group identities- artist, or individual identities. Being Palestinian is also an individual experience with different meanings for different people. The combination of these identities such as Palestinian, artist, brother, sister and prisoner makes up an individual identity. Again, it all boils down to “who`s who” and “what`s what” (Jenkins, 2010). In my study, being Palestinian and what that means is something that concerns the informants and influence their everyday life. Through the use of art, the informants try to challenge what is associated with being a Palestinian in three dimensions; the view of themselves, their society and the outside world. The understanding and knowledge of Palestinians is often reduced by the media to them being either victims or perpetrators. However, TFT is an inspiration that brings the humanity of Palestinians to the table. The theatre brings hope to the people and develops talents within theatre, film, writing and photography.

Further, a well-used word among TFT`s employees is the term *self*. According to Jenkins (2008, p. 50), the self is an important aspect of individual identification. It is not a thing; it is an aspect of human condition embodied in the individual. Selfhood is the “individual`s reflexive sense of her own particular identity, constituted *vis- à - vis* others in terms of similarity and difference” (Jenkins, 2008, pp. 72-73). Hence, the self is part of the internal-external dialectic of the ongoing identification process. The self<sup>15</sup> is by the informants referred to as themselves as a person, something authentic of who they are. Thus, when they

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<sup>15</sup> This research will take the position that there exists an inner self, at least in the case of the informants of this study. Nevertheless, there is a disagreement among scholars, especially within social anthropology, if the self is a modern, western way of thinking, that is not universal, rather socially constructed. However, if this is the case, then it still exists for the students and members of TFT.

talk about “myself” they speak about their own individual opinions, thoughts, feelings, perspectives, perceptions, dreams and visions.

In fact, it can be argued that identity is the core of empowerment. Kabeer (2005, p. 15) particularly claims that “empowerment is rooted in how people see themselves- their sense of self-worth”. First, to be able to make *strategic* life choices, a person needs to be able to know who he or she is and know what he or she wants. Since the ability to make strategic life choices is the essence of agency, identity is at the very core of empowerment. Identity is also highly related to critical consciousness since it (critical consciousness) opens up for people to see both themselves and the world differently (Carr 2003, p.15).

### Social Capital

“It is not what you know, it is who you know.” This aphorism is a common conventional wisdom about social capital (Woolcock and Naryan 2006, p. 31). Social capital can be found in anything from friendships, neighbourhoods, schools, sport clubs or bars to institutions and higher political networks. The concept of social capital derives from the notion that some social relations and networks give the people involved a type of value or capital. These networks benefit a person; through being part of a particular network, a person may achieve things she or he would otherwise have difficulties in achieving (Solheim, 2007, p. 107). From this definition, networks and trust become central aspects of social capital. The social network and relations are a resource not only for those people directly involved in these relations, but also for the society as a whole (Putnam, 2006 in Solheim, 2007, p.107).

However, social capital does not necessarily need to have a positive outcome for individuals since it can reproduce structures of oppression discrimination (Woolcock and Naryan 2006, p. 34-37,41). This is especially with minority groups who are not part of the network that can empower them. When networks function in the way that those with “friends in high places” are most likely to succeed in competition for jobs and contracts, this can be an obstacle for those people who don’t have “people in high places.” (Woolcock and Naryan 2006, p. 34). Lack of social ties can deny people access to resources. These resources, as stated earlier in this paper (below agency), provide the ability for a person to make choices. Sometimes people are even actively excluded from certain networks and institutions which could have provided them with good jobs and other opportunities. This is often legitimised through laws, customs

and cultures. Another blight is the tendency to ‘get caught up in the wrong crowd’ as a result of becoming ostracised from networks. This can happen when influenced by destructive habits, such as, drug addiction, criminal activity or even extended periods of. These social ties can be destructive not only for the individuals but also for the society as a whole.

All social ties and networks are not alike, as some are stronger than others. Communities can have access to a greater or smaller number of social networks and the communities can have different dimensions of social capital. Recent literature refers to two dimensions of social capital; bonding networks and bridging networks (Putnam 2006 in Solheim, 2007, p. 107,109; Woolcock and Naryan 2006, p.37). Simply described, bonding networks connect in-group people, who are people connected by social ties such as sharing the same background and social identity, for example, close friends and family. On the other hand, bridging networks sustain connection between out-groups, people of different background and social identity.

In my study, Jenin has a high rate of unemployment, around 21% and possibly up to 41% in the refugee camp (Issacharoff, 2015). Exclusion from the labour market leads to loss of social capital (Øvrelid 2007, p. 57). This loss can be found in a lack of either one or both bonding and bridging networks. Living in marginalised or conflict ravaged societies does not mean that there is an absence of bonding networks. Poor people, for instance, may have strong bonding capital that they leverage to “get by” (Woodlock and Narayan, 2006, p. 33). This just means that one is socialising mostly or exclusively with people of same social position. When only socialising with likeminded people, the possibility to “get ahead” is less likely (Woodlock and Narayan 2006, p. 33, 40; Solheim, 2007, p. 109). However, for a social network to be functional, reciprocal trust is a necessary prerequisite (Øvrelid 2007, p. 56). In conflict-affected societies, hostile attitudes and distrust are often fostered through the disrupts of “the social ecology; including social relations within families, peer groups, and religious and cultural institutions, as well as link with civic and political authorities” (Horn, 2013, p. 5). This means that conflict-affected societies face the risk of lacking social networks.

In the case of Jenin, distrust is very high because there is “always someone among them that leaks information to the occupation forces” as one of my informants stated. As a result, the theatre provides a platform where the youth can slowly, step by step, rebuild trust towards each other. This is done through drama exercises and performances. A performance can only be successful through discipline and cooperation. This is learned through respect to

guidelines, where students need to attend at a specific time, be quiet when others speak, learn their own lines, work and perform together. By staging a play, TFT's staff gives the confidence to their students that they have what it takes to stage a show. This process of discipline and cooperation fosters trust among the youth themselves. The processes from producing a play to a final product entails a development of reciprocal trust, not only among the students, but with the staff as well. When the student and staff show each other that they accomplish their responsibilities towards each other, they build and maintain a bonding network. TFT does also provide the opportunity for youth and aspiring performing actors to increase their bridging network. The theatre is internationally recognised and has toured with troupes around Europe, New York and India. It has also had guest teachers from around the world. Through the commitment of art and performance, TFT is able to help participants to trust each other, work together and coordinate efforts. In doing so, it is my argument that TFT has become a trust building institution.

## Resistance

The last concept that will be described in this thesis is Resistance. To resist means simply to work against something and or try to show that one does not accept being a subject of injustice. It is an action with intention to change an unbearable condition. When it comes to the definition of resistance, Scott argues (1985, p. 290-293) that its action should not be defined through its consequences. This is because not all resistance accomplishes, in the first place, its intentionally desired outcomes. On the other hand, it is difficult to *show* intention, or at least to be sure that the intention was a type of resistance rather than simply self-indulgence. That said, resistance can be self-indulgent for people who, at the same time, resist. Scott (1985, p. 292- 295) criticises Eugene Genovese and Gerald Mullin's who take real resistance to be;

(a) organized, systematic, and cooperative, (b) principle or selfless, (c) has revolutionary consequences, and/or (d) embodies ideas or intentions that negate the basis of domination itself. Token, incidental, or epiphenomenal activities, by contrast, are (a) unorganized, unsystematic, and individual, (b) opportunistic and self-indulgent, (c) have no revolutionary consequences, and/or (d) imply, in their intention or meaning, an accommodation with the system of domination (Scott, 1985:292).

Scott's critique simply means that self-indulgent individuals who display unorganised, unsystematic actions with non-revolutionary consequences can also be *real* resistance. In his words, "where there is strong evidence for the intention behind the act, the case for resistance is correspondingly strengthened" (Scott 1985, p. 290). Because the outcomes of action are not

necessarily in compliance with peoples' intentions and predictions. Scott further argues that it is better to define resistance through the motivation, meaning and intention of the particular action. The intention is not always apparent from the action, it is rather apparent in the actors' explanation of their actions (Scott 1985, p. 290). The actors of TFT say that being in existence as a Palestinian is itself resistance. This involves remaining in the refugee camp despite the lack of employment, poor housing and other life opportunities. This Palestinian explanation of resistance is supported by Nina Gren's findings in another refugee camp in the West Bank, where people consider the mere flow of everyday life as a sign of resistance against the Israeli occupation (Green, N. 2009, p. 181 and Bakken, 2011, p. 36).

In my study, TFT is organised, systematic and cooperative with others in resistance of the Israeli occupation. The intention is to fight occupation with art and to be a major force in cultural resistance for freedom and justice. Gene Sharp's (1973) term of non-violent action can hereby be perceived as a form of resistance. According to Sharp, tactical non-violence is grounded on the idea that "the exercise of power depends on the consent of the ruled who, by withdrawing that consent, can control and even destroy the power of their opponent" (Norman & Hallward, 2011, p. 3). I, therefore, build on Sharp and Scott's definition of resistance and non-violence to understand TFT as a form of non-violent resistance.

### Summary

This chapter has argued why empowerment and social capital are relevant in answering my defining research questions. This link becomes clearer when supplemented with the concept of resistance. First, social capital is interrelated with empowerment, especially agency<sup>16</sup>. It has been argued that choices are not merely choices but that they also reflect the resources that are accessible to a person (Kabeer 1999, p. 443). Resources are understood as something of value- capital (Solheim, 2007, p. 107). A person's resources influences the alternative choices available to him or her. The access or lack of access to resources may depend on local norms, customs, traditions, manifestations in values and beliefs and formal laws. Further, in my study, I have applied Sharp's and Scott's definition of resistance and non-violence to highlight TFT as a form of non-violent resistance. Taken together, the concepts of resistance, empowerment and social capital help to explain the interplay between theatre and non-violent action against Israeli occupation by Palestinian youth in Jenin, West Bank.

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<sup>16</sup> Recall that agency constitute the ability to make choices- means expanding the capacity to act as an agent and to a greater extent govern one's own life by acting upon those choices.



*“To be free is to be able to criticize. To be free is to be able to express yourself freely. To be free is to be free first of all [from] chains of tradition, religion, nationalism (in a dark way I mean). Then you can start to free yourself from others”.*

Juliano Mer Khamis, (Mee, 2011, p. 10)

## Chapter 4, Data presentation and analysis

This Chapter is divided into two main sections; empowerment and resistance. First section will focus on TFT’s participants sense of empowerment. Recall that this thesis bases its concept of empowerment on three defining elements, identity, critical consciousness and agency, that can examine the internal dynamics of empowerment processes (Carr, 2003). Identity can be argued to be the core of empowerment, since “empowerment is rooted in how people see themselves- their sense of self- worth”(Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). Further, it is due to the relation identity has to both of the other two aspects of empowerment. Critical consciousness and identity is interrelated in the way that critical consciousness opens up for people to see both themselves and the world differently (Carr, 2003, p. 15). Further, identity and agency is related in the way that a person needs to be able to know who (s)he is and what (s)he wants to do in order to make strategic life choices, which lies at the core of agency. These elements need to be understood in relation to each other, on the basis that they influence each other. The choices you make influences who you are and vice versa. Thus, Since identity can be seen as the core of empowerment this Chapter will start to look at how TFT explore identity, and how its members<sup>17</sup> represent narratives of selfhood, culture and community on stage. Then, this Chapter will further look at how the informants has developed a sense of self and how they get to know who they are and what they want, before elaborating on how TFT engages its members in critical consciousness and agency.

Section two of this Chapter will focuses on resistance. Recall that this thesis builds on Scott’s understanding of resistance, which focus on the intention of changing an unbearable condition. Hence, to be able to see if TFT’s youths sense of empowerment could be understood as a form of resistance, it is necessary to understand their intentions of participating in TFT’s activities. To be clear, the second section of this Chapter will first start to look at what TFT wants to resist to better comprehend how the informants understand an action of resistance. Then, the Chapter will analyse if those who participate in TFT’s activities

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<sup>17</sup> Actor students, actors, youth and children who participate in TFT’s drama and theatre workshop, staff members who direct or instruct an production

and performances are doing so with an intention to resist. This will only become clear through the informants' explanations of their action.

### Empowerment

Since identity can be understood as the core of empowerment, this section of the Chapter will start to look at how TFT explore identity, and how its members represent narratives of selfhood, culture and community on stage. Then, it will further look at how the informants have developed a sense of self and how they get to know who they are and what they want through attending TFT's activities. before elaborating on how TFT engages its members in critical consciousness.

### Identity

According to Nicholson (2005, p. 63), theatre-making is "a good place to explore and represent narratives of selfhood, culture and community". Through TFT's work on stage, TFT enables its actors not only to explore their selfhood, culture and community, but also to exercise what Goffman calls "impression management" by presenting narratives (Jenkins, 2008, p. 42). The individuals are able to construct an image of him or herself in a way that (s)he wants to be perceived by others. Representations of such narratives is a way to create and display an identity. In this way, theatre- making is a way of constructing an identity. Through its performances, TFT reflects on the society and challenge social and cultural structures that restrict the life of their students. In this way, the audience is not only viewing a representation of an alternative life/story, but they are also at the same time exploring their own selfhood, culture and community through reflecting on their own life in relation to the controversial or unifying narratives being staged. The same goes for the actors<sup>18</sup>, by devoting time and energy working with the performances they explore their selfhood through analysing and reflecting on their culture and community and their position in relation to their surroundings.

*Alice in Wonderland* is among other controversial performance in terms of cultural norms and gender staged by TFT in the conservative society of Jenin. The performance is based on the story by Lewis Carroll, but in a Palestinian context with a Palestinian Alice. The Palestinian

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<sup>18</sup> "The actors" refers in this sentence to both acting school students and actors hired for a particular show by TFT. It also refers to the youth and children who partake in TFT's activities both while they are creating a show/performance but also while the creation of a narrative is only to be an exercise within the workshop and not for an audience.

Alice is forced in to an arranged marriage, but at her engagement party she meets a rabbit who takes her to Wonderland. Juliano Mer Khamis<sup>19</sup>, the director of the play, wished to confront traditional life in the camp as well as give an overt critique of the Israeli occupation, with his play(s) (Al-Saber, 2011). TFT's (TheFreedomTheatre. (a)) own official description of Alice is;

“In The Freedom Theatre’s version, Alice escapes a reality of poverty, oppression and conservatism where she is constrained to doing chores in the home. In Wonderland Alice meets magical creatures that mirror her personal life and experiences, forcing her to reflect on her identity. She struggles with who she is and what is “right” or “wrong”, “normal” or “abnormal”. Wonderland is such a strange, dangerous world – yet Alice realizes that the other world, which purports to be the real one, is the one where she is robbed of her freedom. As she journeys through Wonderland, she grows and learns how to make her own choices”.

According to this description, the performance evokes an understanding of the identification of a girl /women to encapsulate more than this identity have been limited to by the internal community. The gender roles in Jenin are described in the interviews to be conservative. Being a girl indicates certain expectation, such as housework, get married, then have children. As one of the informant said, girls might get educated, but that is mostly to raise the value of the bride price, rather than for her to be an independent woman. In *Alice in wonderland*<sup>20</sup> girls can have their own individual opinion and make choices of things they want to do. The identification is a constant negotiation between self-image and public image, meaning that we are not the only one identifying ourselves, but others identify us as well and vice versa (Jenkins, 2008, p. 42). To be clear, according to Jenkins, identification only comes into being within interaction (Jenkins, 2008, pp. 38,40 ). While identifications can change and the content of a label may also change, attributed identities, such as ethnicity and gender, are often dominate in how other perceive us. Although, who we are is very much a dialectic between a self-definition and external definition by others, the informants attributed identities are dominating how other see them and are hard for them to get rid of. Even though this dialectic between the self-definition and the external definition is an ongoing process in daily life, the theatre stage becomes a platform where identification can explicitly be negotiated more directly. Identification is a matter of who’s definition counts, meaning who’s in power, and those definitions have major consequences for allocation and daily life (Jenkins, 2008, pp.

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<sup>19</sup> Recall that Juliano was one of the founders of TFT, violently killed by an unknown assailant. In fact, it was after this production that Juliano was killed, 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2011. Today TFT builds on his legacy.

<sup>20</sup> From now and onwards referred to as TFT’s version

43, 198-199). Where power-structures are asymmetric in regards to adverse consequences of identification, the stage gives an ability to the one who is subject of identifications holding negative connotations by others, or identifications that limits a person to do what (she) wants, to make self-ownership of that label and slightly change the content of it. Since the theatre is designed as a one-way dialog between the actor(messenger) and audience(receiver), the actor has on stage the power to have the definition who counts. Meaning that the stage can give an opportunity for the voices who have not been counted, to count.

In the context of Jenin, as a patriarchal and conservative society, one could argue that a girl is less likely to be the one defining her own identity. What you can and cannot do is much related to gender roles externally defined by the society, rather than by the individual girl herself. Arguably, the stage can empower a girl by letting her actively engage in the dialectic of her identification. With *Alice*, TFT creates a platform where traditional societal gender identities can be challenged, negotiated and resisted. This is done both through the imaginary world of the theatre, but also in reality, by women and girls physically standing on the stage together with men. Thus, challenging the community's expectation of what girl's identity do consist. At stage TFT becomes a place for its actors to confront the external definition of which one has been identified. Enabling the suppressed to emphasis the internal definition, that has had limited room of expression. This enables the one who is categorised to be the one who define, produce and reproduce an identity. Arguably, as will be further discussed, TFT enables their actors to exercise agency through consciously taking part in the dialectic of their own identity.

While *Alice in Wonderland* tackles traditional gender identifications, *The Siege* is one among several Freedom Theatre performances dealing with the Palestinian Identity. *The Siege* is based on the accounts of men who took refuge in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem during the heights of the second intifada. The production was built from current interviews with these fighters who now is in exile around Europe and in Gaza. The performance was performed with a juxtaposition of visual news records from the actual event, interviews with the fighters in exile as well as theatrical acting. *The Siege* is breaking the category-Palestinians into individual beings, with individual experiences and stories. This is a way to change the emphasise of differences between groups and categories to individual similarities among the actor and an audience. These two performances, *Alice in Wonderland* and *The*

*Siege*, have in common that they both confront an attributed identity<sup>21</sup> that has major consequences for daily life. The performances confront the identities by showing an alternative to the dominant perception of how these identities are behaving. Alice is an alternative story to how most women are expected to act within the conservative community of Jenin. The *Siege* on the other hand, tells a story from a Palestinian perspective to the outside world<sup>22</sup> of how Palestinians experienced the siege in Bethlehem under the second intifada, which has often been “ignored by international media and politicians in the competing narratives of international politics” (Gardner, 2015).

By adding another perspective to the one dominated by the international media, *The Siege* opens the potential for understanding that narratives can be changed. At least *The Siege* opens up for a possible change in public image of the Palestinian, by Palestinian themselves taking charge of the construction of their collective identity. It is this, to change the dominant story, that many practitioners in applied drama, TFT included, have a particular commitment to ensure (Nicholson, 2005, p. 63). Accordingly, central to TFT’s work is to turn “the pyramid of authority and power upside down” (The Freedom Theatre, 2011, p. 13). They are doing so by challenging the dominant story that is defined by the one with power. The way they are challenging the authority is to claim ownership to their history and own identity through their performances. Thus, TFT’s work on stage becomes a place where their self- definition confronts the external definition of which one has been identified. The platform of the stage contributes in this way to the actors sense of empowerment, since it is a place that opens the possibility to rebalance the power dynamics of the dialectic.

Until now this chapter has focused on TFT’s work on stage in regard to identity and identification. It has focused on the performativity of identity, meaning the impression management strategy interwoven in TFT’s performances on stage. Through its performances, TFT challenge dominant social narratives –the content of identification labels– explicitly engaging in the dialectic between self and public image of identity. While the stage is a platform for producing and reproducing narratives with different versions of identifications, the awareness of what that narratives and identifications implies lies very much in the process

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<sup>21</sup> An attributed identity is an identity you are born with, such as gender and ethnicity, in contrast to acquired identity that one can get and lose throughout a lifetime, such as being an actor, employee, student etc.

<sup>22</sup> Outside world is here referred to every single audience TFT managed to reach through touring the *Siege* in the UK. This was not only the audience physical able to watch the performances, but also those who read the newspapers debating their tour and play. For further information about the debate visit :

done off stage. Thus, further, this section will focus on TFT's work off-stage in respect of getting to know who one is- their identity.

Revealed from the workshop in the UK and confirmed in the research interviews, is the perception that The Theatre has provided a space where they<sup>23</sup> have discovered and further can discover who they are, who they are in relation to each other, the society and the rest of the world. Informant#2 and #1 describes it as such;

“The theatre school is not just to be an actor; it is to understand yourself, or start to see where you exist, or where you work better, or where it is supposedly better for you. After experiences with theatre schools(...) everybody should have schools of theatre or class of theatre.”

Informant #2

In theatre in general all the actors in the world like you to understand and think everything individually. From exercises and from the theatre games in school. So first thing we do, and they(TFT) do to me is that you have to understand yourself and then to do other characters. So in this way you understand yourself just because you want to learn art, and then you understand that lets keep doing that. I want to understand who am I? I am here, I am a Palestinian. If I am a Palestinian what should I do for Palestine?

Informant#1

According to Nicholson, “Drama is a good vehicle through which participants might experiment with different identities and test out new ways of being” (Nicholson, 2005, p. 82). On the basis of informant#1 and #2 together with Nicholson's statement, one could further argue; that practising theatre enables to understand oneself through the exercises of role play, improvisations and character-building were the actors explore different identities. In other words, to have a platform where one could try and play out new ways of being, one might get the chance to not only act, but to discover an interest in something unknown and unfamiliar that will give a temptation to what one likes to do and further who one wants to be. Being in the theatre, youth gets a place to see themselves in a new way by questioning the way things are and asking what they want, which will be later discussed.

One of the instructors leading the workshop in the UK said, “not everyone become an actor, here people discover who they are and what they want”. He further stated that some participants, for example, might find out that they want to be a doctor, a lawyer, teacher or a

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<sup>23</sup> students of the theatre, both the acting school and youth who participate in workshops

restaurant keeper among other professions. This statement was later confirmed in a random meeting with a current acting school student who wanted to become a lawyer after graduating. Nevertheless, he intends to continue at TFT since it makes him more confident and able to communicate with people; abilities which he can take advantage of working as a lawyer. TFT's aim is not for everyone to be an actor, but to liberate the mind of people so they can decide and make decisions for themselves<sup>24</sup>. While asking if theatre has changed you, the informants were coherent stating that it enabled them to get to know themselves;

“Yeah, a lot. I have started to have a different image about myself, first myself and then about my society around me, about my country, about the political ways, I start to see things different more and more and more.”

Informant #3

When informant #3 says that theatre has changed his image of himself this needs further contextualization. The image has changed in two ways. Using informant #3's own words, “I have not become like any classical guy, rather a more creative person”. Classical guy meaning, to reproduce the life of elder generations and continue to do as everybody else. He has started to think in a different way because of theatre and follows his own dream, being an actor, rather what his father wants him to be. He first of all sees himself as an actor. Secondly, he now sees himself as an ambassador for Palestine while performing in Europe. This image, according to informant #3 comes with some responsibilities. Such as, passing a message about what is going on in Palestine and at the same time show the outside world who a Palestinian is like, since the self-image is not always coherent with the public-image, which may differ from public to public. Different mass media and (pro-) Israeli government(s), have labelled Palestinians as terrorists and extremists, true or not, these identifications have consequences for how Palestinians see themselves and others sees them (Craven, 2015; McMahon, 2015; "Wave of terror 2015/16," 2016). By performing and interact with the audience, the actors take active part in the constitution of their collective identity as Palestinians, which again impact how they perceive themselves as individuals.

These individual dreams, thoughts and perspectives can be argued to become visible in the creative space of the theatre. The space of theatre is supposed to symbolise an empty space where actor and audience is insulated from historical restriction, stripped of the obvious signs

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<sup>24</sup> This will be discussed in more dept under the headline of critical consciousness as well as under the headline "occupation of the mind" in section two of this chapter.

of social interactions and materiality of everyday life(Nicholson, 2005, pp. 125-126). However, this is a simplification that ignores the social context where drama takes place. Nevertheless, Nicholson (2005, p. 126) argues, that an alternative way to look at it, that includes the social context and cultural inscriptions is to understand theatre as a space “ ‘betwixt and between’<sup>25</sup> the normal regulatory of social life”, as a liminal space. A liminal space is a period of time “when a person is ‘betwixt and between’ social categories or identities” (Schechner,2013, p. 66). The liminal space can be understood as a free zone, characterized by openness and ambiguity, in contrast to customs, laws and conventions that is followed in everyday life. “Normal life may be temporary suspended, but the playfulness of liminality masks, rather than obliterates, other forms of convention and customs”(Nicholson, 2005, p. 126). According to Turner, it was particularly fascinating because he recognized a possibility to make new situations, identities and social realities (Schechner, 2013, p.66).

Looking at TFT as a liminal space, opens up for the understanding that the informants get to discover individual dreams, desires and opinions regardless of customs, conventions and norms in everyday life, at least temporary. Not to say that without TFT, they would lack a sense of self., This thesis not capable to indicate to which degree people who not attain TFT get to discover individual dreams, desires and opinions, hence a sense of self, since the data of this research does not go beyond the people involved in the theatre. However, what it can say something about is the sense of self that the informants have developed through TFT. The space that TFT creates to consciously be aware of once identity have made them more aware of their internal self. What have been indicated is that TFT through its performances on stage and activities of stage enables its students to reflect on themselves. Recall informant #3 stating that he started to see things in a different way. First himself, then the society, the politicians, the country and so on, due to his participation in TFT. This brings us to the next section that focuses on TFT way of engaging its in critical consciousness.

### Critical Consciousness

Recall from chapter 3, that the core principle of engaging in critical consciousness as part of empowerment is to be aware and reflect on oneself in relation to the society (Carr, 2003, pp. 8-9, 15). Although my informants do not use the term critical consciousness themselves, they are all unanimously stating in the interviews that the theatre have made them question their immediate surroundings, the way they live and do things. In other words, and what can be

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<sup>25</sup> From the essay of Victor Turner, referred to in Nicholson (2005).

seen in the excerpt below, is that TFT enables its students to not take for granted the status quo - whatever that might be- by providing a space to ask questions. Further, this space that TFT provides, gives the students and participants at the theatre the ability to reflect upon themselves in relation to the society. Thus, the theatre engages its students and participants in critical consciousness through their practice of questioning everything around them.

During an informal semi- structured interview, where Informant#1 had stated that TFT makes youth and kids think, there was a need for a follow-up question of how it makes them do so. Informant#1 is one of the previous student actors who currently works for TFT and has participated in TFTs activities since he was a teenager. As well as the answer reflects the interviewee`s retrospect of youth experience with the theatre activities, it should at the same time be considered through his current experience as an instructor and actor of TFT. This is said to remind the reader that informant#1 may have given another reflection and reasoning if asked the same questions as a youth. Since the informants understand their past through who they are today and their current knowledge and perception of life. Nevertheless, Informant#1`s reflection of how TFT have impacted both him personally and youth participating in TFT`s activities in general. These reflections are consistent with the other informants` reflection upon how the theatre has impacted them.

“First I learned from Juliano to question everything, and to search, why is this? For example our parent thought us this is haram; you can’t do this, you can’t do that. They say, alcohol is bad for you, maybe it is, but I haven’t experienced it. I don’t learn what is alcohol. This was just an example. Now, if you put that in the biggest. Now we are resisting the occupation. In the child mind from the parents, when you talk about the occupation they<sup>26</sup> talk about Jews. They know nothing about Zionism, and when the Zionism start and the Zionism plan. For them they are fighting Jews, like Jews came and occupied the country. But this is wrong, right? And for me I understood when I was 18 years old, that my problem is not with Jews. There is something called Zionism. Now I have start think that even in Israel I have to fight for people in my age. Because in both sides<sup>27</sup> they don’t want us to live together. People here and children do not understand because they take from the parents. So by give them<sup>28</sup> a space to think freely is not to think and tell them more how to think, because maybe I’m wrong. But teach to just question what they learn. To teach themselves. To search. To think bigger. Like.. Don’t think of the occupation that as they stole the land. The occupation is bigger. Bigger, bigger than that”.

Informant #1

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<sup>26</sup> The parents

<sup>27</sup> Palestine and Israel

<sup>28</sup> youth and children, people in Jenin

This interview excerpt above reveals some reflections of the effects of TFT's drama and theatre activities. The effects of partaking TFT- activities is that it allows and encourage its students and participants to be critical towards sources of knowledge, hence being critical towards what has been accepted as truth. This is very much in accordance with Helen Nicholson argument that "drama provides a powerful opportunity to ask questions about whose stories have been customarily told, whose have been accepted as truth, and to redress the balance by telling alternative stories or stories from different perspectives"(Nicholson, 2005, p. 63). Hence, one could argue that TFT provides a space for people to challenge the way they perceive the world as they know it. As exemplified by Informant#1, from learning to have a negative view of Jews and that Jews in themselves are the reason for all horror, s(he) now have a problem with the Israel state rather than all Jews worldwide.

According to the informants, access to diverse sources of information is rare in Jenin. They describes the information to stem from the same angled perspective of *truth*<sup>29</sup>. Nothing is ever questioned and thus nothing is actively changed. Through learning to always question what they learn, even being critical towards oneself, their horizon of information is broadening. As Informant#5 puts it comparing the life in Jenin/Palestine to the life in Europe;

“(..) here it is a different way. The information from your family, from the street, from the school and it is all in the same way, all of it is in one way. And we accept the information. Accept the situation. We accept our life. The theatre on the other side gives new information.

Informant#5

One way TFT gives 'new information' to people in Jenin is through their performances, as discussed above, that they challenge cultural and traditional customs by their sometimes controversial characters and stories showing new ways of life. The performances also enable the actor to travel abroad, which increase their horizon of knowledge and their perspective of the world. As Informant#1 pointed out "I started to see our self as very little, tiny country and problem from all this world". Another way TFT gives 'new information' is through the key of questioning, a point also made by Informant#1 in the interview excerpt above. TFT is trying to challenge cultural and structural expectations in the society, such as derived from family, school and governmental institutions by teaching its student to question what they learn.

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<sup>29</sup> what is right and wrong, of how things is supposed to be and done

“So the first thing I learned was that you don’t stop learning. I deleted all my previous knowledge I had been taught by my parents, uncle, teachers and society. We learned to think not differently, but to just think about everything and question everything”.

Informant#4

From these interview excerpt with Informant #1, #5 and #4 we can reason that the way we think is highly influenced by our social environment and the people whom we learn and access information from. Accordingly, if we accept that we are all influenced by our environment, this means that also TFT influences their members in how to think and make choices. The ability for a person to act as an agent – to shape and control her/his life – is unavailable when the choices one make merely reflects cultural and structural expectations in the society (Narayan-Parker, 2005, p. 4). Thus, when choices made are merely reflecting others expectation it is mostly not empowering. However, it is worth to mention that the importance lies in the ability to choose, even if the alternative one ends up with reflects others expectations. Recall from chapter 3, to exercise agency is to actively make choices that are truly ones own. However, the difficulty lies in the assurance that a choice is truly once own rather than a reflection of others expectations and cultural doctrine. Correspondingly, it might be worth questioning if TFT influences their members in how to think and make choices in such a way that it prevents agency.

Thus, it is important to acknowledge that TFT itself is also based on some set of “purely Western concepts<sup>30</sup>”, with instructors and volunteers who possess a western education (Hackman, 2013, p. 27; The Freedom Theatre, 2011, TheFreedomTheatre,2014). However, it is not the purpose of this thesis to answer or even judge if western influence is right or wrong. Only to make the reader aware that the critical consciousness TFT engages its students in, is also impacted by its environment, power structures and surrounded network. In accordance, it seems that the informant also is well aware of this side effect, by giving a humble statement that “maybe I’m wrong” (Informant#1). Hence, interview excerpt from Informant#1, on page 50, is showing that TFT – while engaging its students in critical consciousness – is not trying to impose a one and only truth, but only to teach its students<sup>31</sup> to be critical towards what they learn.

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<sup>30</sup> individual freedom and human rights

<sup>31</sup> Both its student actors and everyone else participating at their activities

Nevertheless, since TFT is an (cultural) institution, it is no guarantee that it is without institutional biases or ideological norms that may function as obstacles for its employees and students to conceive existing alternatives to make strategic life choices. However, this would be ironic, since TFT aims to make people aware of such norms so people can start to see other alternatives of living. As argued above, there are a consistency with the informants that TFT is not teaching people what to think, only to question what they already learned, and will learn, including being critical towards itself. This is not to argue that TFT not influence their students, staff, youth and children that partake in their activities. Only to indicate that TFT, while influencing its members<sup>32</sup>, still enable critical consciousness and aims to provide opportunities to its members so they to a greater extent can exercise agency. This is done through activate critical consciousness, and as will be further discussed in the following section, through developing their imagination and provide for resources.

### Agency

Recall from chapter 3 that to act as an agent implies that one is able to make strategic life choices. Implicitly this implies that one has the resources available to do so, both in terms of a material economic sense and a social human resource sense (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). When it comes to Palestine, and Jenin in particular, the unemployment rate is high, and even higher within the refugee camp. Accordingly, the possibility to choose among different options within the working marked is limited and especially when it comes to artistic work.

Possessing an education from TFT's acting school and later being offered a job at the theatre is in itself a privilege when unemployment is a major concern in Palestine. However, TFT is not able to provide a job for all their acting school students. Thus, a concern for their students' future was raised several times during the fieldwork in Jenin. Even some of the employees interviewed gave a concern of their own future if they were to leave TFT, predicting that "there will be nothing" (Informant#3). If this is the case one could argue that working at TFT, according to Kabeer, may seem no longer a real choice since there is a lack of other alternatives (Kabeer, 2005). When there is a lack of (positive) existing alternatives, or alternatives to be *seen* the way of living becomes no longer a choice, but the only option.

“If we leave The Freedom Theatre, would it be the same or not<sup>33</sup>, that's what I am not sure. There are not many jobs. But you see, it is very difficult in Palestine. What is the future if you cannot work in The Freedom Theatre? That is very difficult. If you

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<sup>32</sup> Everyone that is active in TFT's activities- both students, participants and employees

<sup>33</sup> The possibilities to earn an income, to express oneself, to be an actor, to travel and see the world. To live the life that informant#3 wishes to live.

cannot work you don't have money, then you don't have a house and so on. It is crazy. As a theatre, you cannot work without NGO's. I need to write application to Norway to the foundation of French to EU. That's the problem with whole Palestine. What the fuck!?! They are not Palestine. I want to write to Palestine".

Informant#5

Looking at what informant #5 states and consider it in regard to agency Informant#5 indicates that Palestinians lack the ability to exercise agency. To attain "the capability to live the life one wishes to live" (Mahmud, Shah, Becker, 2012: 611). The Israeli occupation have made the Palestinian people subject to a denial of choices. The *Operation Defensive Shield*<sup>34</sup> had as its "ultimate goal, the dissolution of the Palestinian people's existence as a legitimate social, political and economical entity" (Kimberland 3-4 in Tabar, 2007, p.13). Thus, putting Palestinian to a state of disempowerment, currently dependent on NGO's for economic surviving. However, the lack of agency that TFT faces due to their dependency on others is not to say that TFT don't contribute to their participants' sense of empowerment. The dependency upon NGO's and lack of employment is a structural consequence of the occupation, rather than an outcome of TFT's work. Within the limitation of living under the occupation TFT is at its best offering employment, even though this possibility is not for everyone. Further, being an institution that challenges existing cultural and structural expectations with art, they are at once offering an alternative to existing way of living once life, at least through imagination<sup>35</sup>. Thus, offering a new way to perceive what is going on around them. For youth and children, they also offer organised activity and something to do in their spare time.

In a conflict affected society such as Jenin, social ties are disrupted due to a genuine distrust within families, peer groups, civic and political authorities caused by the occupation (Horn, 2013, p. 5). TFT is in this consideration trying to rebuild trust, through drama exercises and strengthen their participants bonding networks<sup>36</sup>. Recall from Chapter 3 that the concept of social capital derives from the notion that some social relations and networks give the people involved a type of value or capital. Through being part of a particular network, a person achieves things she or he would otherwise have difficulties in achieving (Solheim, 2007, p.

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<sup>34</sup> The Operation "Defensive Shield" was a large-scale military operation undertaken by the Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank, in 2002 during the Second Intifada. It was the largest operation since the Six-Day War with a goal to stop terrorist attacks from Palestinians.

<sup>35</sup> Later discussed

<sup>36</sup> Recall from Chapter 3 that bonding networks refers to in-groups, while bridging network refers to ties between out-groups.

107). According to Putnam(2006), the social network and relations are a resource not only for those people directly involved in these relations, but also for the society as a whole (in Solheim, 2007, p. 107). Such as, if the Theatre makes people trust each other more, this may have side effects towards their families and friends. Further, for those who work or study at TFT– e.g. being part of TFT`s social network – give access to do things one would never be able to do without this networks. TFT`s acting students, employees and actors are able to travel and stage a play far beyond Palestine. They get a chance to see the world and discover other ways of living. In a society subject to social, political and economical disruption, TFT becomes a bridge “between Palestine and the outside world”(Hackman, 2013, p. 27). As a cultural institution in Jenin TFT has through its staff and volunteers, private donors and financial support from NGO`s, created an international bridging network, as discussed in chapter 3. Consequently, TFT gives their students access to this bridging network, which means contacts that enable them to improve their life`s. The international bridging network of TFT acquire skills and knowledge to those who actively engage in their activities which they otherwise would have difficulties achieving. Thus, even within the limits of options caused by their own political fragmentation, cultural customs and from the Israeli occupation, it became clear throughout conversations<sup>37</sup> and interviews, that students and staff of TFT feel that being part of the theatre gives them more opportunities;

“I have more opportunities to tell what I feel, to do what I want to do and say what I want to say. It isn`t just one thing to say. So yes, I am different now. I have more options, I have more equipment to tell and to do what I want to do in simple ways that people understand.”

Informant #5

Thus, the statement by informant#5 “to do what I want to do” suggests that TFT enables informant#5 to exercise agency. As agency refers to “the ability to define one`s goal and act upon them” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 438), the statement above implies that infomrnat#5 has already made up his goals and that TFT providing the resources for him to act upon those goals. Informant#5 refers specifically to equipment and opportunities that the theatre provides for them personally and the youth who participate to make choices of what they want to do and say. The equipment is here meant both in physical forms such as, light, stage and costumes, as well as non-material such as acting tools and technics of how to move your body and use your voice in accordance to convey a message. Further, the informants reflect at themselves in

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<sup>37</sup> shared with staff members and previous students of the theatre

retrospect to their own time as youth and acting students in TFT and concludes that these resources gave them and still gives children and youth participating at TFT more opportunities to express themselves and do things they want to do. “It(TFT) is a free zone where there are no rules of right and wrong” (Informant#4).

The opportunities TFT provides is not only the material resources and the bridging network that enables their actress students and employees to travel and discover places outside of Palestine. Maybe most importantly is the atmosphere and space to imagine; the opportunity to create and say things that they feel restricted to say or do outside the theatre<sup>38</sup>. This applies not only to the employees and actor student, but also to the youth and children who participate in their activities. For example, the ocean is a two hours’ drive from Jenin, but in reality, the Israeli occupation restricts Palestinians freedom of movement. Hence, my informants have not been able to access the coastline of neither the Mediterranean Ocean two hours’ drive from their home nor the Dead Sea. Even though they are not able to physically swim in the ocean, “here it is a dream.. it is not only about the sea; it is about the idea” they are able to imagine it. Since theatre activities exercise imagination, they are able to imagine other alternatives even though they do not exist as material and cultural possibilities at the moment.

Accordingly, an essential part of TFT that is crucial when it comes to empowerment and the element of critical consciousness and agency is in this regard their imagination. Recall from Chapter 3 that for a person needs to know his or hers position in relation to others in the society and be able to reflect upon that to engage in social change (Carr, 2003, pp. 8-9). Further, to engage in social change “ a more critical consciousness, only becomes possible when competing ways of being and doing become available”(Kabeer, 1999, p. 441). By developing its students and participants’ imagination TFT gives them a tool to create competing ways of being and doing. Even though these alternatives may not be physical and cultural accessible “you can dream, you can see, you can play, you can watch a show, then you know; I want this” (Informant#5). This holds as much for swimming in the ocean as for being the Palestinian Alice in Wonderland.

“When they saw Alice, they saw a revolutionary girl. She fights everything, she fights her parents, the though religious people, and she fight everything. And she goes and

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<sup>38</sup>This is due to either cultural and structural norms, either from the conservative society that they live in or the Israeli occupation.

her choices, and she choose to do one two three four. And it was not easy, but she chose to”.

Informant#1

Even though, at the end of the day, the opportunities are not existing opportunities, through at least knowing what they want they are exercising agency by choosing the imagined alternative that has been created. They are choosing to not accept their situation. For example, a girl who sees *Alice in Wonderland*, or perform in it, can choose Alice. In fact, at one of the walls at TFT someone has tagged *Alice is still Alive*, symbolising the importance and vitality of this play. To rephrase informant #5 “(..) and you know why I said theatre is revolutionary, is because you know this (the life under occupation) is not your life” (Informant #5). They become aware that there are other ways of living.

Argued so far is that TFT raises their participant’s consciousness through constantly making them ask questions about everything around them. Through TFT’s work of “consciousness-raising” the youth is made aware that the choices they make are rarely “made under circumstances chosen by themselves”(Carr, 2003, p. 15; Jenkins, 2008, p. 125). Recall that empowerment is understood as a process of change, as a cyclic process, rather than a linear step-by-step process <sup>39</sup>(Carr, 2003, p. 13; Kabeer, 2005, pp. 13-14, Kabeer, 1999:441). Further, according to Kabeer, a way of understanding power is “in terms of the ability to make choices”, especially strategic life choices (Kabeer, 2005, p. 13). For a person to make strategic life choices, the person needs to be able to know who (s)he is, know what (s)he wants to make strategic choices. TFT’s work in doing so is to engage its youth in critical consciousness, so they open themselves up to see themselves and the world differently. When they play theatre and create imaginary alternative way of living they understand that the way they live their life is not the only way to live. It is a process from knowing that “this is not your life” (informant#5) to choose ‘the dream’, ‘the imaginary world’, that TFT creates in its productions and then to start acting upon that choice. In this way, TFT is contributing to the youth participants sense of empowerment. As stated by the informants, despite living under an occupation TFT has provided them with opportunities to express themselves and to be who they are. Further, this thesis will now move forward to the second section of this Chapter, that revolves around the informants understanding and relation to resistance.

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<sup>39</sup> The conceptual framework of empowerment is in this thesis based on Carr and Kabeer. For further elaboration go to chapter 3, or to Carr (2003) and Kabeer(2005).

## Resistance

Recall from Chapter 3 that this thesis builds on Scott's (1985) understanding of resistance, which focus the *intention* behind an action to change an unbearable condition, rather than the *results* of that action. However, compared to the outcome of an action, the intention behind is not easily visible. Further, as Scott argues, an outcome of an action is not always in compliance with peoples' intentions and predictions (Scott, 1985, p. 190). Hence, desired outcome(s) are not always coherent with the consequences derived from the action. Since the intention is not always apparent from the action, Scott argues, that it is rather apparent in the actors<sup>40</sup> explanation of their action (Scott, 1985, p. 190). Thus, the explanation of what the informants' motivation, meaning and intention to partake TFT's performances, workshops and other activities becomes the core to define if this participation is a way to resist or not. Before looking at the informants' intentions, it is significant to look at what they want to resist to comprehend how they understand an action of resistance. Further, to see if the way the informants describes their sense of empowerment also can be perceived as a form of non-violent resistance, it is, if using Scott's approach to resistance, necessary to first grasp the informants' intentions of their participation in TFT activities. Recall from Chapter 3 that according to Sharp(1973), tactical non-violence is grounded on the idea that "the exercise of power depends on the consent of the ruled who, by withdrawing that consent, can control and even destroy the power of their opponent" (Norman & Hallward, 2011, p. 3).

Juliano Mer-Khamis<sup>41</sup> stated in an video made by Friends of TFT NYC that "the Israeli succeeded to destroy our identity, our social structure; the political and the economical one" (Jen Marowe, 2010). Hence, the Israeli occupation is not only an occupation of territory and restriction of physical movement. The occupation is not only visible in the checkpoints, the wall and the prisons. According to the informants, the occupation goes deeper into peoples' minds and way of thinking. Into the daily interactions and dreams of people. Nevertheless, as Juliano states in an interview with Hasan Nevash (MBN-TV, 2005);

"We must not take out the responsibility of the Palestinians. We are responsible also for the destruction of Palestine. We played. We were the partners of this destruction. The corrupted Arabic leadership is responsible(..) The mister Arafat during 8 years of Oslo were busy with selling the Oslo agreement with colour TV's and DVD' players instead of creating cultural youth centres, putting people into perspectives, teaching

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<sup>40</sup> Actor is here not understood as a performative actor, as in the context of performance art and theatre. The term is used in a broader sense; as a person who enacts an action.

<sup>41</sup> Recall that he was one of the founders of TFT, the son of Arna

ideologies, tactics. (...) 8 years of Oslo people were busy with “selling agreements” so they can ride nice, beautiful, fancy cars and make money. While giving this opium technology to its people.(...) now a Palestinian sell his brother<sup>42</sup> for a sim card”.

Juliano statement in the interview is in accordance with what Lysestøl (2016, p. 147) argues in his recent book *Israel*, that not all Palestinians suffer from the occupation, someone is actually gaining big money. Even though this has not been emphasised, TFT do also resist their internal corrupted leadership, which has been done through their performance such as *Animal Farm*<sup>43</sup>. On TFT`s webpage they publically express they “(...) do not take a neutral position on the issue of Israeli apartheid, colonization, occupation and military rule. Nor do we turn a blind eye to the internal violation of human rights, in particular the rights of women and children” (The Freedom Theatre (d)). In other words, they do not only resist the Israeli Occupation, but also their own society, their community and their own self. As Informant #5 puts it;

“We have several occupations: *internal occupation* that is our custom, traditions, close minded preservative society; *external occupation* that is the Israeli occupation and *ourselves occupation*<sup>44</sup> that means we are not free inside, in our mind”.

Through participating at the UK workshop, an arranged lecture at TFT<sup>45</sup> and further interviews, it became clear that they understand these so called occupations as interlinked, in the way that one is maintaining the other. In the workshop in UK, one of TFT instructor said “the new style of the occupation is to be suspicious about everything and everyone”. This suspicion which is fostered in their minds could be understood as a direct consequence of the Israeli occupation, that has destroyed the trust among people<sup>46</sup>. They believe that to end the Israeli occupation they have to start with themselves, with the individual and most importantly with the young generations. They emphasis the individual, since they believe if they continue to think in the same way, following the same pattern as generations before them, there will be no change. Although they believe that the occupation(s) needs to be handled on all levels, they want to teach their participant that the circumstances that they live

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<sup>42</sup> Interpreted as to squel on your brother/ comrade to the Israeli intelligence- a way of destroying the Palestinian social structure.

<sup>43</sup> To read more about the play animal farm go to <http://www.thefreedomtheatre.org/animal-farm/>

<sup>44</sup> Others have referred to this as the occupation of the mind

<sup>45</sup> A presentation developed for a group of foreign visitors, arrived by a guided bus tour through the West Bank

<sup>46</sup> see footnote 27.

in are not absolute and can be changed. Further, that they are part of maintaining the occupation as long as they not withdraw their consent (Sharp, 1973, p. 11-13).

Occupation is here meant as something that obstacles their ability to live a life where they can make strategic life choices and enable them to feel free. Freedom is another word that is not self-explanatory since its connotations is different to different people. A coherent mix<sup>47</sup> of the individual informants understanding of freedom was described as such; freedom of movement, equal rights to all people (the Israeli and the Palestinian, women and men), to play, to stand on stage, to have fun, to enjoy life, to think freely, most of all to have fun and to not think of the Israeli Occupation at all. They have an understanding of freedom as both collective and individual. Collective in the sense of equal rights for everyone and individual in the sense of individual feelings of enjoyment and act of agency. In other words, with this in mind, their motivation to resists would be to achieve this kind of freedom. Before further going into if the informants do resist, and if so how this resistance is enacted, it would be of significant to describe how Palestinian resistance is understood and how it is understood by them.

Characteristics of the Palestinian resistance has for a long time been described as uncontrolled violence, which is unorganised, unstructured and often preformed on an individual level, and perceived to be “irrational, abnormal, and antithetical to participation in a modern world “ (Norman & Hallward, 2011, p. 24). When basic needs<sup>48</sup> are denied the perpetrator often dehumanize the one that is denied those needs to justify their action (Melf, 2012, pp. 23-24; Molho, 2012, pp. 78-85). It becomes easy to dehumanize the Palestinian people, whose behaviour is perceived as irrational by the modern world<sup>49</sup>, and label them as terrorists. This label that is often identified with Palestinians, becomes one of several things TFT resist, and became particular salient in their recent production, *The Siege*.

For the informants' themselves resistance encapsulate much more than actions of (un)organised violence. Informant #1 describes (cultural) resistance accordingly;

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<sup>47</sup> Repeating phrases and word that the informants, each at a time, used to describe what freedom is for them.

<sup>48</sup> Basic physical needs are such as shelter, water, food and rest for humans survival, according to Rosenberg, it also includes trust, love, emotional safety, support, meaning in life and being able to play, having fun and laugh to live a fulfilling life(Melf, 2012, p. 21; Molho, 2012, p. 80)

<sup>49</sup> such as USA and Western European countries

And cultural resistance is not just doing art. People in the camp resist everyday. They work, they wake up, they go to work, they buy watermelon, they eat it they enjoy it, they watch series, they watch football and this is resistance. To busy yourself how to live and not to think every time that you are under occupation. They always find funny things to do. For example, a group of young men in the camp they go with speed cars, they are always searching for something to busy their life. And this is cultural resistance. And they<sup>50</sup> know how to fight the occupation face to face. As a Romanian style, With guns. This is my gun, this is your gun. We face tanks with rocks. We are very simple, but we fight. We don't stop. (...)The theatre should also be part of cultural resistance, as giving people space to see a new story.

Informant#1 grasp this wide spectre of actions that characterise the Palestinians own understanding of resistance (Bakken, 2011; Teeffelen, 2014). Informant#1 can be argued to describe even very trivial actions of everyday life that Palestinian calls *Sumud*<sup>51</sup> meaning "to exist is to resist" (Informant#3). "It is a form of resistance against the politics of erasure exercised by Israel, even though it would perhaps traditionally be classified as compliance or survival" (Teeffelen, 2014, pp. 91-92). Further, Sumud, includes both a steadfastness toward remaining on the Palestinian soil, but also perseverance towards the Palestinian identity. Although these everyday actions may also be unconscious<sup>52</sup>, Informant#1 describes it as resistance and understand them as a strategy of non-violent actions. Actions that imply a refusal to die, not only in a physical sense but also mental. The continuation of everyday actions can be understood as a way of fulfilling some of humans basic needs, such as finding meaning in life, play, have fun and laugh (Melf, 2012, p. 21). As a way to take back their life and reclaim that they are human beings (Teeffelen, 2014, p. 91).

### Resisting the internal and external occupation

Beside of this concept of sumud, TFT members' way of resisting is very much done through the tools of art; poetry, theatre, music, film and documentary. Nevertheless, it is not to argue that they disregard fighting the occupation with violence. It becomes more like a personal choice in matter to survive and how they want to resist the occupation. During an informal conversation in Jenin a previous student who still works with theatre stated that "If I fight with gun, I'll die. If I tell a story on stage, I might die to, but the story will live a hundred years". Thus, believing in the art as a method to resist. However, Informant#1 stated that (s)he doesn't believe in cultural resistance, arguing that performing in front of the wall or the

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<sup>50</sup> The Palestinian people

<sup>51</sup> Translated as steadfastness, Being samida or samid requires that one does not allow oneself as a Palestinian to be written out of history. For further discussion on the concept see Teeffelen, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> thus also non-strategically

settlements will neither break the wall nor remove the settlements. Nevertheless, this same person stated further in the same interview that TFT's work is vital in regard to resisting the occupation of the mind, since the person will be critical toward information and not accept the status quo. As well as liberating the youth participants mind, this can in the long run be argued to be part of ending the Israeli occupation. Thus, informant #1 believes in a form of cultural resistance after all. Therefore, one could argue, that for the informant to take part in an act and calling it resistance depends on what kind of intention one has, what one wants to achieve, and how one wants to achieve it.

In accordance with Informant#1, most of the informants doubt immediate consequences of TFT's cultural resistance, at least when it comes to the Israeli occupation. Nevertheless, as mentioned on page 64, they believe that the occupation needs to be tackled on several dimensions; external, internal and the mind in order to be liberated. For instance, an example of how TFT tackles the external dimension –the Israeli occupation – is with their performances and Q&A<sup>53</sup> performed outside of Palestine. As already discussed in the beginning of this chapter, *The Siege*, tackles the Palestinian identity with a purpose to change the negative perception of Palestinians in the 'outside world'<sup>54</sup>. Accordingly, Informant#4 believe that the performances done at an international stage<sup>55</sup> teach people outside “that we are not terrorists, we are freedom fighters” Informant#4. This includes themselves as actors and it includes fighter with guns and stones, in general everyone who resist the Israeli occupation.

“(..)it was very easy for Israel to show Palestinian as crazy, they bombing themselves, they don't want peace, they want to kill Jews and they draw the picture in the way they want it for the outside people and then they(the Israeli) get the right to do what they do”.

Informant#3.

Being identified as a freedom fighter or a terrorist, creates very different images and perceptions. As freedom is closely linked to human rights<sup>56</sup> and is a well-used term in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, fighting for freedom would most likely contain positive connotations by others (UnitedNation). Thus, gaining sympathy and support from

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<sup>53</sup> Q&A: questions and answers after the performance

<sup>54</sup> This has been discussed in more depth in the first section of this chapter, under the headline of Identity

<sup>55</sup> outside of Europe

<sup>56</sup> Article 2,13,18,19,20,26,28 and 29 are all using the word **freedom**

people outside Palestine, if they are perceived as freedom fighters. As Informant#3 said “you see that people think that you are really a good guy. Just by theatre”. On the other hand, a terrorist is associated with someone who causes harm on innocent people. Hence, TFT and its actors’ intention could be understood (at least partly) to resist the label of Palestinians as terrorist and transform their identification to freedom fighters. Thus, not as a resistance with immediate direct consequences towards the Israeli occupation, but as a resistance that could generate a snowball effect. Meaning that hopefully the performances will give information about the Israeli occupation and further influence and change people’s understanding of the conflict, and that this again will generate pressure on local governments to not support the state of Israel. However, a critical point in this matter is that most likely the people who come to TFT’s shows are already pro- Palestine. Even though that might be the case, their UK-tour got massive attention in the press, debating if the UK supported a pro-terrorist- theatre or not. However, this thesis does not provide the data to give an answer to this matter – if their resistance through art is successful or not. This will be the task of further research to decide. Nevertheless, what the data can say anything about is how they take agency in the dialectic process of their own identity, and how this is closely interwoven to their way of resistance. In other words, their sense of empowerment in regard to identity, could be understood as a form of resistance.

Coherent with many other practitioners in applied drama, TFT are particular committed to ensure “that dominant social narratives are disrupted”(Nicholson, 2005, p. 63). As TFT themselves states in a yearly report, that central to their work is “to turn the pyramid of authority and power upside down” (TheFreedomTheatre, 2011, p. 13). Juliano said “our duty as artist is to rebuild, or reconstruct this<sup>57</sup> destruction, who we are, why we are, who we want to be” (Jen Marowe, 2010). Through the use of theatre TFT speaks the language and etiquettes of the modern world<sup>58</sup>; not irrational, uncontrolled violence, which as mentioned, is often the characteristic of a Palestinian resistance. As informant#3 puts it;

It is very important to know how you present yourself, how you save yourself somehow. Not like save, but you know like present yourself, to present your case, your problems, the two sides. You convince people to accept what is going on with you.

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<sup>57</sup> Their identity and social structure, both the political and the economical one.

<sup>58</sup> Such as states with power like USA, UK, France, Germany and so on.

In this way, by being conscious about how to present themselves they rebuild and reconstruct their identity. Thus, by non-violent verbal communication, standing on stage with confidence, communicating who they are, they are consciously and strategically trying to change the picture that categorise Palestinians as terrorist. Actually, what can be argued is that the participants of TFT withdraw their consent to be labelled as terrorist when they performed *The Siege*.

Besides from *The Siege* another performance that is reconstructing an identity is *Alice in wonderland*<sup>59</sup>. While *The Siege* resist the external occupation, *Alice in Wonderland* resist as well what TFT call the internal occupation. Both performances could in one way or the other be argued to resist what the one in power has put into the categories identifying who one is, either as a Palestinian or as a female. Nevertheless, the one in power is not only to be understood as a person or an authority, it can as well be a structural, such as patriarchy. Nevertheless, such structures are maintained by people. With the performances TFT opens a dialog between the audience and those who are subject of negative labels, where the subjects<sup>60</sup> are able to reconstruct their identifications on stage. Thus, rebalance the power-dynamics in the dialectic of their identity<sup>61</sup>, in the way that the weaker part is now the one who is in charge of telling the story. The stage gives the weaker part a chance to challenge the dominant story and put the pyramid of authority up-side down. As well as TFT`s performances are a way of resisting the internal and external occupation, it is at the same time contributing to the participants` sense of empowerment since it gives the actors self-ownership to their own identity. Further, what will be discussed in the next paragraph is the way that TFT resist the occupation of the mind.

### The occupation of the mind

To resist the occupation of the mind is directly linked to the analysis of critical consciousness in the first section of this Chapters. Recall that, engaging in critical consciousness is to be aware and reflect on oneself in relation to the society, which TFT provide a space to do. Through further interviews and conversations with the informants, it became clear that the occupation of the mind is understood as the restrictions and limitations that one has upon oneself that prevents him/her to act as a free person. Hence, limitations to make strategic life

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<sup>59</sup> Also discussed under the headline of Identity in the first section of this chapter.

<sup>60</sup> Or those who represents the weaker part

<sup>61</sup> This has been discussed in section one under the headline, identity.

choices and act upon them. However, the limitations and restrictions is not made up by the person itself, it is rather maintained by oneself. In other words, the occupation of the mind derives from the expectations that an individual and other people have for that person to obey cultural and traditional norms, as well as limitations caused by the Israeli occupation that affects Palestinians way of thinking. Hence, the occupation of the mind obscures other alternative way of thinking, doing and living. In the following interview excerpt, Informant#2 explains how TFT works with the occupation of the mind.

We are trying to discover by theatre, by drama exercises or drawing a place where he can dream without borders. With this he tastes that there are no rules limit his choices to draw which colour he wants. (He) creates the character, their names, the situation. Maybe not now, but in the future it will affect him. I know by myself, that it is affecting me until now(..)That is what we want to do, to affect them<sup>62</sup> without them knowing. To taste the world. How different it can be. We are trying to make a place where they can taste different life or choices between this place and home, the camp, and the street where they come from. We are trying to create a place where they can feel free, a place where they can think and say things. At home there is always the rule of the father and the big brother, there is the rules of the home, there is the rule of the neighbourhood, the old people, there is the rule of the street, in these places there is already in the limited system that is rules of how to talk and think.

Informant#2

It becomes clear by Informant#2's statement that, as previously mentioned, the occupation is not only about the Israeli army, checkpoints and settlements, it is also about internal issues, which get manifested in the way people think as habitus, making them themselves maintain the oppressive status quo. In contrast to the society that the informants live in, Informant#2 describes TFT, as a place that is, as far as possible, without restriction. As a place where children and youth don't have to follow the rules of authorities in the way they are used to<sup>63</sup>. A place where youth can get to know themselves, ask question, and be aware and reflect on themselves in relation to the society.

In fact, this is at the core of how TFT resist the occupation(s); by developing a sense of critical consciousness among their youth and those who participate in their activities.

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<sup>62</sup> The youth and children at the workshops

<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, this is not to say that TFT is without authorities, the children and youth is following instructions from their instructors and they are learned to keep silent when other speaks, to attend classes on time, follow the exercise that is given etc.

Accordingly, to Carr (2003, p. 8-9) critical consciousness is a necessary precursor for engaging in social change. With Carr's statement in mind, one could argue that TFT do develop a precursor for engaging in social change. Although TFT believe that all three levels of occupation should be resisted to achieve freedom<sup>64</sup>, the informants are unanimously in that it is necessary to start with yourself and your way of thinking, in order to be liberated from any other external occupation. Through several conversations at the fieldwork in Jenin, this belief became salient. That it is only when people get aware that those rules that prevents one from being free, is only socially constructed and not an objective truth of how one is supposed to live and behave, that one is able to actually resist such a *rule* and engage in social change. This could be understood through Sharp's non-violent action, that the informants withdraw their consent to be ruled. That their obedience of the rule "will no longer be habitual; the decision to obey or not to obey will be made consciously", which can even destroy the power of the opponent (Sharp, 1973, p.13). However, this destruction, or social change, is not something that TFT thinks will happen over the night, it is rather a long-term process.

An example of how TFT describe their work of resisting, in regard to the occupation of the mind, is that they start to learn children and youth to question, to question everything around them and everything they learn and have learned. Further, that this in the long run can lead to social change. However, in light of resistance, it is worth noting that Informant#2's description, at page 22 in this Chapter, of how TFT work with the occupation of the mind, should be seen from an instructor's point of view, as well as Informant#2 retrospective of his teenage years in TFT. Taking a closer look, Informant#2 says that TFT's exercises "maybe not now, but in the future it will affect him(..)it is affecting me until now". Meaning, that in regard to resistance, while TFT's intention is to resist the occupation of the mind, the youth themselves might not have the same intention when they start attending TFT activities. Therefore, without the intention to resist, the youth themselves are not resisting (Scott, 1985, p. 190). However, at a later point, they may realise that these exercises have made them develop a more critical stand to their society, which was the intention of their instructors in the first place. As an example is TFT's work with the girls' current position in the society. Informant#4 says, even though there are less girls in the theatre, they can work with the minds of the boys. As Informant#4 says;

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<sup>64</sup> see page; 61 for their understanding of freedom

“if they<sup>65</sup> can be open and understand they will one day become big brothers, fathers for the girl So yesterday for women will in the future maybe change. So in the future, maybe it will gonna change because this guy if he gonna be married or become a father and have children then girls maybe will have a better chance”.

Thus, because of this long-term process to achieve social change, TFT emphasise the importance of youth and children. Since eventually, the youth and children will become grownups and leaders of the future. Although the youth do not join the theatre with an intention to resist the occupation of the mind – since they might not even be aware of this occupation – TFT’s resistance of the occupation of the mind<sup>66</sup> do impact the youth’s sense of empowerment. Informant#3 sums up this sense quite well, pointing to all three elements of empowerment;

So the first thing I learned from The Freedom Theatre was that you don’t stop learning. Don’t *put your head or mind in a limited way*. First I deleted everything that my parents, my uncle’s and my teachers learned me. I said ‘control+shift+delete’. I said, I want to teach myself from zero. How I think, even about my religion and my daily life. What I want to study more. TFT gave me the space to understand who am I, what I want to do in my life, what I want to achieve in the end”.

In the interview excerpt above, the element of critical consciousness can be seen in the first six sentences, as being a result of TFT’s resistance of the occupation of the mind. Further, the next sentence, “TFT gave me the space to understand who am I” could be directly linked to the element of identity, while “what I want to achieve in the end” could be understood as making strategic life choices, hence the element of agency. This sense of empowerment, with all three elements, can be understood as a way of resisting the occupation of the mind and vice versa. While resisting the occupation of the mind opens up for critical consciousness, agency and a way to get to know oneself, more critical consciousness on the other hand helps to not “put your head or mind in a limited way” (Informant#3).

## Summary

This Chapter have been divided into two main sections; empowerment and resistance. The first section has focused on presenting and analysing the informants’ reflections on how TFT contributes to youths’ sense of empowerment. Their reflections have particularly revolved around their own experiences with TFT in their youth, while at the same time drawing on

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<sup>65</sup> the boys at TFT’s activities

<sup>66</sup> See informant#2 describing how TFT work with the occupation of the mind, this includes actually all activities at TFT

their current observations as instructors in their theatre-workshops with youth and children. Nevertheless, their reflections have also revolved around their experiences of how performing, both inside- and outside of Palestine, have impacted their self-worth. The second section of this Chapter have revolved around the informants' point of view in regards to resistance and the work of TFT. The Chapter started to argue that TFT is a good place for youth to explore their selfhood, culture and community. Further, it has been argued that through TFTs work, both off-stage and on-stage, the informants have gained self-ownership to their identity, consciously taking part in the dialectical process of identification. This has not only been argued to impact the informants sense of empowerment, but also their way to resist those in power to define who's who and what's what.

Another analytical point that has been given is that the space that TFT provides, both in a physical form within the Theatre and an abstract form through their work, make possible for their participants to engage in critical consciousness. Hence, this space that TFT offers, has been essential for the informants to see themselves and the world differently. The effects of partaking in TFTs activities allow and encourage the participants to be critical toward sources of information, consequently towards what have been accepted as truth. This critical stance can be reflected in TFT's performances, which have been argued to resist the dominant story, or the accepted truth. Further, in this regard it has been argued that TFT's work of "consciousness- raising" make the youth aware that the choices they make are rarely "made under circumstances chosen by themselves" (Carr, 2003, p. 15; Jenkins, 2008, p. 125). It is first when one is aware of these circumstances that one is also able to change them, if wanted to. In the second part of this Chapter, it has been argued that TFT's effort with critical consciousness is directly linked to resisting the occupation of the mind. Recall that the occupation of the mind obscures other alternative way of thinking, doing and living, which is exactly what TFT tries to make visible, by constantly make their participants to question everything around them and what they learn.

It has been argued that TFT provides a space where these alternative way of thinking, doing and living is made visible. In other words, TFT make their students see more opportunities, through raising their critical consciousness. Further, they provide the resources for their students to act upon those choices. These resources are not only understood in a material, economic sense, it is also understood in a human capital sense as a social capital. TFT provides for material- and non- material equipment's such as light, stage, costumes as well as

acting tools and techniques. These equipment's gives the informants more opportunities to express themselves and to do and say what they want. TFT's social network is also increasing the opportunities for TFT's students and employees to achieve and do things they would never been able to do without the Theatre. For example, they get to travel and discover the world, touring around with a performance around the world. However, even though the opportunities might not always be physical and cultural accessible, TFT give their students but also their audience the opportunity to at least choose the imaginary world.

Through creative ways, TFT have an intention to contribute in the struggle of liberation, starting with themselves and youth in particular. While at first hand, the youth don't intentionally resist the occupation of the mind, the informants and the theatre as an institution does. As argued, the informants did not intentionally resist the occupation of the mind while starting at the theatre, however they are all intentionally doing so in their current work today. In particular, to resist the occupation of the mind is understood as significant in order to end the Israeli occupation and the internal occupation, since it will make the youth to be critical towards sources of information and not take what is as absolute truth. While the occupation of the mind is not resisted by those who actually perform the exercises, is the internal and external occupation intentionally resisted by the student actors, the Informants and staff<sup>67</sup>, through TFT's performances. Further, what have been argued is that this resistance, through performing and engaging its students in critical consciousness, increase the informants sense of empowerment, due to self-ownership to their identity and act of agency. While on the one hand, TFTs performances contribute to the informants' sense of empowerment, on the other hand, through these performances TFT and their participants resist what they call the internal and external occupation. Hence, the informants sense of empowerment and their way of resisting is closely interwoven in each other.

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<sup>67</sup> Everyone working with a particular performance, including actors



*We have the right to be equal whenever difference diminishes us; we have the right to be different whenever equality decharacterizes us.*

Boaventura de Souza Santos (Coleman, 2014 p.303)

## Chapter 5. Summary and concluding remarks

### Introduction

This thesis has explored the interrelation between The Freedom Theatre's (TFT) youth participants sense of empowerment and resistance. It has tried to do so by answering the following research questions; does TFT contribute to youth participants' sense of empowerment, and if so, can such empowerment be understood as a form of non-violent resistance? With regards to explore TFT youth participants sense of empowerment, this thesis has drawn on the explanations of previous Freedom Theatre actor students who is currently employed by TFT as either actors or and instructors of the youth and children workshops. To explore TFT's youth sense of empowerment, this thesis has as well drawn on the informants' reflections of their own youth experiences in The Freedom Theatre. Further, when it comes to the question of youth participants sense of empowerment can be understood as a form of non-violent resistance, it has in accordance with Scott (1985), first looked at what the informant/TFT want to resist, then on their intentions for attending the activities of TFT in the first place. This study has primarily been based on interviews with previous students of TFT who now works at TFT. It is also based on observation mainly conducted in Jenin, but also from workshops, performances with Q&A<sup>68</sup> in London and Amsterdam. The term empowerment, including the supplementary categories of identity, critical consciousness and agency, has been chosen as a theoretical lens to further illuminate the interviewees' explanations of their own experience with TFT. To explain the interrelation between TFT youth participants sense of empowerment and resistance, this thesis has in particular drawn on the conceptual framework of empowerment and resistance. As this thesis is based on Scott's (1985, p. 190), the explanation of what the informants' motivation, meaning and intention to partake TFT's performances, workshops and other activities became the core to define if this participation is a way to resist or not.

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<sup>68</sup> Questions and Answers between the audience and the actors and directors of the performance.

## Findings

The analysis of the field narratives has demonstrated that TFT has contributed to the informants' sense of empowerment and that this sense of empowerment can be understood as a form of non-violent resistance. The sense of empowerment that the informants hold have been developed through theatre exercises, practices and performances that they have attained since they started in TFT to the present date. Even though this thesis were not able to interview current youths of TFT, the informants indicate from their own observations conducted as instructors that TFT's youth participants, actor students and children who attend TFT activities, increase their sense of empowerment<sup>69</sup> attaining TFT's classes and workshops. One further finding in this thesis is; through the same way that TFT contributes to the youths' sense of empowerment, by theatre exercises and performances, they also resist the internal and external occupation<sup>70</sup> as well as the occupation of the mind<sup>71</sup>. Even though, in regard to the occupation of the mind, the youths themselves do not intentionally resist it, TFT strategically does. Especially noteworthy is TFT's facilitation of critical consciousness, which play a major part in both TFT's youths' sense of empowerment and TFT's resistance of the occupation of the mind. Further, what have been indicated from the data analysis is that this resistance becomes part of their resistance of the internal repressive customs and the Israeli occupation. Since the informants believe that to end the Israeli occupation, they also have to fight customs, traditions and corruption within their community and the rest of Palestine, as well to unite the Palestinian people. To do so TFT further believes that it is essential to start with oneself, to remove the restriction from your own mind and think in a new creative way, then they can start with the community, society, country and so on, to enable social change. However, they do not believe that it is a step-by-step project, they rather believe that they have to work on all levels.

Recall that a more critical consciousness only becomes possible when other alternatives of being and doing becomes available, while on the other hand, those alternatives becomes available through critical consciousness. Looking at TFT, as a cultural institution in Jenin Refugee Camp, it can be understood as such an alternative, that make more critical consciousness possible. This thesis has argued that TFT raises the consciousness of their

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<sup>69</sup> This was also confirmed in an informal conversation with a previous student of TFT

<sup>70</sup> The Israeli Occupation

<sup>71</sup> the restrictions and limitations that one has upon oneself that prevents him/her to act as a free person, for further explanation see;

members<sup>72</sup>, where they “begins to see one`s position and move toward other positions” (Carr 2005, p. 15). Further, what have been indicated in the previous Chapter, through participating in TFT`s activities over time, the youth eventually get to know themselves and their surroundings. The interviewees voiced a strong emphasize that the most important work TFT does is that it changes people. The way they do so is through their facilitation of critical consciousness that enables their participants to get to know who they are as individuals, hence their identity. In this regard, the interviewees stressed the importance that TFT teaches their students to always question what they learn and never stop searching. In the Theatre they experience that they are their own person with individual wishes, desires and dreams. These desires and dreams are not always coherent with the society`s expectations of a person`s behaviour, which is identified as such and such and these identifications carries some obligations that may restrict that person to act upon those dreams and desires. Accordingly, TFT`s performances and work on stage becomes a place where identifications can be negotiated and resisted. Further, TFT becomes a place where their participants exert agency. Through the performances and creative imagination, create an alternative and act upon that alternative, at least chose the imaginary world. Recall that *Alice is still alive*, is tagged on one of TFT`s wall. Even though the alternatives are not seen as cultural and material existing, TFT work to make them visible. In other words, this thesis analytical findings indicates that TFT contributes to TFT`s participants` sense of empowerment.

## Limitations

Through the process of writing this thesis, two limitations have become salient. The first point is that this thesis in regards to resistance is limited to the focus of intentions. Thus, to witch extent TFT is successful in resisting the Israeli occupation is not achievable from the thesis data. Hence, the data collected is not able to provide any indications to which degree their performances contribute to a better situation for Palestinian people in general. To be able to indicate if TFT resistance of the Israeli occupation is successful or not – impact their audience to make action or change perception, is for further research to decide.

The second limitation is in regards to empowerment, which could either nuance or strengthen this research, is to include non-employed previous students of TFT in the informant sample.

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<sup>72</sup>In particular TFT`s actor student and the youth and children at their workshop, nevertheless , since consciousness- raising is a cyclic process, it also includes their instructors and artistic directors

This research has been limited to interviewees with current employees of TFT. Considering the background information given by the interviewees of Jenin, it turns out to be quite a conservative society that stick to its traditions. Being a person who have started to think in a different way and become more open minded may face difficulties turning back to the society. During the time in the Theatre, the student has financially been supported by TFT, living in what the informants calls a “free zone” to do what (s)he want to do and most likely had the opportunity to travel abroad. After three years in TFT acting school, the graduated student is back in a society of high unemployment, poverty and conservative rules. Even though, still living at TFT, the students are part of the society, they feel more free. Thus, it would be interesting to see if the un-employed graduated student shares the same sense of empowerment that the interviewees has. Further how they perceive TFT’s work in relation to resistance.

## Contribution

First of all, this research contributes to depict a more complex and whole picture of Palestinian resistance towards the Israeli occupation, not only a picture of suicide bombers and youths who throw stones. In the broader sense this thesis fits into the debate of creative approaches of transforming conflict(s) and a down-top approach to peacebuilding. Even though TFT do not engage its students in any inter-group cooperation or contact between Palestinians and Israelis, TFT do change attitudes and prejudice<sup>73</sup> of the “other side” (Salomon,2006, p. 37). Recall, Informant#1 said, through participating in TFT “(..)I understood (..) that my problem was not with Jews(..)Now I have start to think that even in Israel I have to fight for people in my age, because on both side they don’t want us to live together<sup>74</sup>”. Accordingly, to Harris (2004, p.16) peace educators promote dispositions such as “kindness, critical thinking and cooperation” that will lead to peaceful behaviour. Secondly, this thesis could fit into ongoing debates within the studies of art. this thesis also fits into the debate of art as social work. In this regard, the question could be asked, if TFT and its artist genuinely produce a socially engaged artwork to help people, or is this a pretence for yet another career-climbing manoeuvre? In official documents, interviews and their own webpage, TFT state that their aim is to engage in social change through the means of art, to inform people about what is going on in Palestine and tell a Palestinian story, as well as

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<sup>73</sup> Through facilitation critical consciousness

<sup>74</sup> See page 51.

improve the life of children and youth in Jenin Refugee Camp. However, it is rather difficult to say if the employees of TFT are working for TFT to engage in social change, or if this is only a camouflage for self-indulgent acts as a career-climbing manoeuvre. Nevertheless, it seems that there is, at least to some extent, a genuine wish and intention among the informants to resist the Israeli occupation and internal violation of human rights with the means of art. Accordingly, there is not necessary a clear distinction between their intention to work for TFT. While their intentions may be to engage in social change, this can at the same time be benefitting their career and vice versa. However, this is up for further research to decide.

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