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Psychosocial Coping in Prolonged Conflict

An Ethnography of Palestinian People in the midst of Ongoing Volatility

UNIVERSITY OF
EASTERN FINLAND

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"On the horizon, a small ray of light is already visible. In the future, there will be a bigger light. The most important thing is hope."
Anonymous Palestinian refugee, Field Interview 1/2013

ABSTRACT

Everyday life in the occupied Palestinian territories is deeply influenced by decades of prolonged conflict. This instability repeatedly exposes Palestinian people to a range of violent and traumatic experiences. Collective exposure to violations of human rights has been associated with negative mental health consequences in the Palestinian population. Knowledge about psychosocial coping under these circumstances is limited. The main objective of this study is to understand the suffering and coping strategies of Palestinians living in the midst of prolonged conflict. The specific aims are to answer the following questions: 1) What kinds of suffering has the prolonged conflict caused for the Palestinians who live in the Middle East conflict area? 2) What are the different strategies that Palestinians living in the Middle East conflict area use in order to cope with the prolonged conflict?

Mixed qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this ethnographic study. Data collection was conducted in 2012 and 2013 in the occupied Palestinian territories as well as Jordan and Egypt. The core material of this study is interviews and observational material which are supplemented by questionnaires. The interview materials include forty-nine individual and ten group interviews collected using a snowball method. Questionnaires (n = 198) were collected from three different institutes of higher education in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The results that were received about suffering in a prolonged conflict emphasize the experiences of imprisonment, the limitations on movement and incidents at checkpoints, restrictive bureaucracy, the suffering caused by settlers, the bombing of the Gaza Strip and internal tensions in the occupied Palestinian territories. The results that were received about psychosocial coping include ten themes: volunteering, humour, putting things to perspective, the idea of Palestine, family and community, spirituality, hope, reviving places, the power of routines and smoking and the use of other substances.

Numerous studies describe a high number of Palestinians suffering from psychopathological disorders caused by political and military violence. In this study, the main focus has been on the psychosocial coping strategies in the midst of a prolonged conflict. Ten main themes of coping have been discovered. The conclusion is that the Palestinian people living in a volatile environment are capable of constructing psychosocial ways of coping. The results of this study can be used in planning of psychosocial support for populations affected by prolonged conflict.

Subject headings: Palestine; Middle East; War; Coping Behavior; Daily Activities; Suffering; Family; Communities; Hope; Humor; Spirituality; Tobacco Smoking; Drug Usage; Volunteers;

TIIVISTELMÄ

Vuosikymmeniä jatkunut konflikti vaikuttaa syvästi arkielämään miehitetyillä palestiinalaisalueilla. Epävakaus altistaa alueella asuvat palestiinalaiset erilaisille väkivaltaisille ja traumaattisille kokemuksille. Kollektiivinen altistuminen ihmisoikeusloukkauksille on yhteydessä kielteisiin mielenterveysvaikutuksiin palestiinalaisessa väestössä. Tähänastinen tieto psykososiaalisesta selviytymisestä näissä olosuhteissa on rajallista. Tämän tutkimuksen päätavoite on konfliktin keskellä elävien palestiinalaisten kärsimyksen ja selviytymisen ymmärtäminen. Tarkennettuna tavoitteena on vastata seuraaviin kysymyksiin: 1) Millaista kärsimystä pitkittynyt konflikti on aiheuttanut Lähi-idän konfliktialueella eläville palestiinalaisille? 2) Millaisia strategioita Lähi-idän konfliktialueella elävät palestiinalaiset käyttävät selviytyäkseen pitkittyneen konfliktin keskellä?

Tässä etnografisessa tutkimuksessa on käytetty sekä kvantitatiivisia että kvalitatiivisia tutkimusmetodeja. Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin vuosina 2012 ja 2013 miehitetyiltä palestiinalaisalueilta, Jordaniasta ja Egyptistä. Aineiston pääosa muodostuu haastatteluista ja havainnoinnista, täydentävä aineisto on koottu kyselylomakkeilla. Haastatteluaineisto sisältää 49 yksilöhaastattelua ja 10 ryhmähaastattelua, jotka on kerätty käyttäen lumipallometodia. Kyselylomakeaineisto (n = 198) on kerätty kolmesta eri korkea-asteen oppilaitoksesta miehitetyllä palestiinalaisalueella.

Kärsimyksen kokemusta kuvaavat tulokset korostavat vankeuskokemuksia, liikkumisrajoituksia ja tilanteita tarkastuspisteillä, rajoittavaa byrokratiaa, siirtokuntalaisten aiheuttamaa kärsimystä, pommituksia Gazan kaistaleella ja miehitetyn palestiinalaisalueen sisäisiä jännitteitä. Psykososiaalista selviytymistä kuvaavat tulokset sisältävät kymmenen teemaa: vapaaehtoistyö, huumori, asioiden suhteuttaminen, idea Palestiinasta, perhe ja yhteisö, henkisyys ja hengellisyys, toivo, elvyttävät ympäristöt, rutiinien voima sekä tupakointi ja muiden päihteiden käyttö.

Lukuisat tutkimukset kuvaavat suuren määrän palestiinalaisia kärsivän psyykkisistä häiriöistä johtuen poliittisesta ja sotilaallisesta väkivallasta. Tässä tutkimuksessa päähuomio on psykososiaalisissa selviytymiskeinoissa pitkittyneen konfliktin keskellä. Tutkimus toi esille kymmenen selviytymiseen liittyvää pääteemaa. Voidaan todeta, että epävakaissa olosuhteissa elävät palestiinalaiset ovat kykeneviä rakentamaan omaa psykososiaalista selviytymistään. Tämän tutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan hyödyntää suunniteltaessa psykososiaalista tukea pitkittyneen konfliktin keskellä eläville ihmisille.

Yleinen Suomalainen asiasanasto: Palestiina; palestiinalaiset; Lähi-itä; konfliktit; sota; selviytyminen; arkielämä; rutiinit; vapaaehtoistyö; perhe; yhteisöllisyys; huumori; hengellisyys; toivo; päihteet; tupakointi; kärsimys; etnografia

x

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My journey with this research has taken me geographically from small Palestinian villages in the West Bank to a large refugee camp in Jordan, from the Sinai desert and to a bombed Gaza Strip. The mental journey has been even more extreme; from joyous Palestinian weddings to the atmosphere of horror and grief that war in its brutality causes. Throughout all the stages of this journey, the most important thing has been the people that I have encountered and who have helped me along the way.

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Iso Hietasaari , Lake Koitere,　　　　11 October 2014

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REFERENCES

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Abbreviations

CEPR	Council of European Palestinian Relations
DSM-5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th edition
ID	Identity Document, Identity Card
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IPS	Israel Prison Service
LPHA	Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance
MD	Major Depression
MDE	Major Depressive Episode
OCHAoPt	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory
oPt	Occupied Palestinian territory
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WHO	World Health Organization

1 Introduction

The psychosocial impacts of armed conflicts and natural disasters have increasingly risen into the focus of discussion during the past decade. Research evidence, which has been limited, is growing and the understanding of the psychosocial impacts at the individual, family, community and social level is strengthening (e.g. Bei 2013, Gibbs 2013, Klandermans 2013, Osborne 2013, Tol 2013, Dimitry 2012, Laugharne 2011, Canetti 2010, Wessells 2009, Ursano 2008).

However, there is not enough research on the impacts of conflicts and disasters to understand the phenomenon in its entirety. Also, more research about the strategies that people find and construct in order to cope is needed. This study aims to contribute to the pursuit for better understanding by providing knowledge on suffering and psychosocial coping in midst of prolonged conflict. In this study, the people of interest are the Palestinians and the main research environment is the occupied Palestinian territories. The study is based on three months ethnographic fieldwork in the region.

The research that has been done so far has revealed diverse impacts of the prolonged conflict on Palestinians' psychosocial wellbeing. Thabet, Tawahina et al. (2008) studied exposure to war trauma among parents and children in the Gaza Strip. The research revealed that exposure to war trauma had serious impacts on both the parents' and children's mental health; it was significantly associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety. Dubow, Boxer et al. (2012) examined the cumulative and prospective effects of exposure to conflict and violence in Palestinian and Israeli youth. They found that ongoing exposure to ethnic and political violence in different contexts puts youth at risk of developing negative mental health consequences.

Along with the negative impacts of conflict, coping and resilience in the conflict environment have also been studied. Punamäki, Salo et al. (2008) studied Palestinians who were former political prisoners and found that a high level of active and constructive, and low level of emotion-focused coping was associated with low levels of psychiatric symptoms and psychological distress. However, none of the coping styles or strategies were effective in protecting mental health in general.

With regard to resilience, the findings of different studies are ambiguous; even if the resilience in conflict area is present, it is difficult to determine the exact factors associated with it. In general, men and younger individuals appear to be in a better position than women and older individuals. It is evident that social support is an important source for resilience, while heavy exposure to political violence and scarce material resources are associated with less resilience. (Hobfoll 2012, Hobfoll 2011, Punamäki 2011, Hobfoll 2009.)

Life in the occupied Palestinian territories has recently been studied also from the perspective of optimism and life satisfaction. In particular, among children and youth optimism is a characteristic feature. It is assumed that life satisfaction and optimism reinforce resilience and positive adjustment to traumatic events. The findings are encouraging and have caused researchers in the field to continue efforts to clarify factors related to positive functioning and coping in a conflict environment. (Veronese 2012.) Research has revealed protective factors that buffer the impact of a violent environment. Among the key protective factors are social support, education and religiosity. (Sousa 2013, Hobfoll 2012.)

Previous research on phenomena related to psychosocial coping in the occupied Palestinian territories is predominantly quantitative, ethnographic research is rare. An ethnographic ap-

proach is justified when taking into account the significance that the cultural dimension has in psychosocial coping. The overall objective of ethnographic research is to give voice to people and to convey something essential about their experience to the readers (Van Maanen 2011,13-35, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007,1-5). Such an approach enriches the understanding of the complex subject of living in the midst of conflict; this is the underlying purpose of the present study.

This study analyses the suffering and psychosocial coping strategies of Palestinian people, mostly young adults, in the midst of prolonged conflict. It aims to understand the processes of psychosocial coping in everyday life as perceived by Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Jordan. Life in the conflict area is characterized by qualities such as vulnerability, uncertainty and constant threat. What are the things that help people to cope under these difficult circumstances? The motivation for the present study originates from the need to understand psychosocial coping strategies in the Palestinian cultural context in order to facilitate culturally sensitive interventions.

The present study applies mixed methods both in data collection and analysis. The main data is collected by means of interviews and observations; the supplementary data is collected using questionnaires. The study utilizes a multidisciplinary approach; the primary disciplines are Public Health, Medical Anthropology and Sociology of Health.

2 Background

2.1 THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT AREA AS RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

2.1.1 Geographical location and population

The occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) are located in the Middle East and comprise the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip (Figure 1). The West Bank is a geographical area between Jordan and Israel, East Jerusalem can be considered as belonging to the West Bank. The Gaza Strip is an area bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Egypt and Israel. Due to the turbulent history and the present situation of the region, its demarcation is open to different interpretations. (The World Factbook 2013, Human Development Report 2010.)

Total population of the West Bank is estimated to be 2,676,740. In the West Bank, the population is composed of Palestinian Arabs (83%) and Jews (17%). The percentage of Jewish population is explained by more than 300 000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank. In addition, approximately 200 000 Israeli settlers live in East Jerusalem. The number of settlers is constantly growing. (The World Factbook 2013.)

The age structure of the West Bank area is skewed with a large proportion of children and young people; 56,2% of the population is 0-24 years of age. Only 3.8% of population is 65 years or over. The population is gradually shifting to urban areas. Currently about 74% of total population live in urban areas and the annual rate of change is estimated to be 3.1%. (The World Factbook 2013, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2012.)
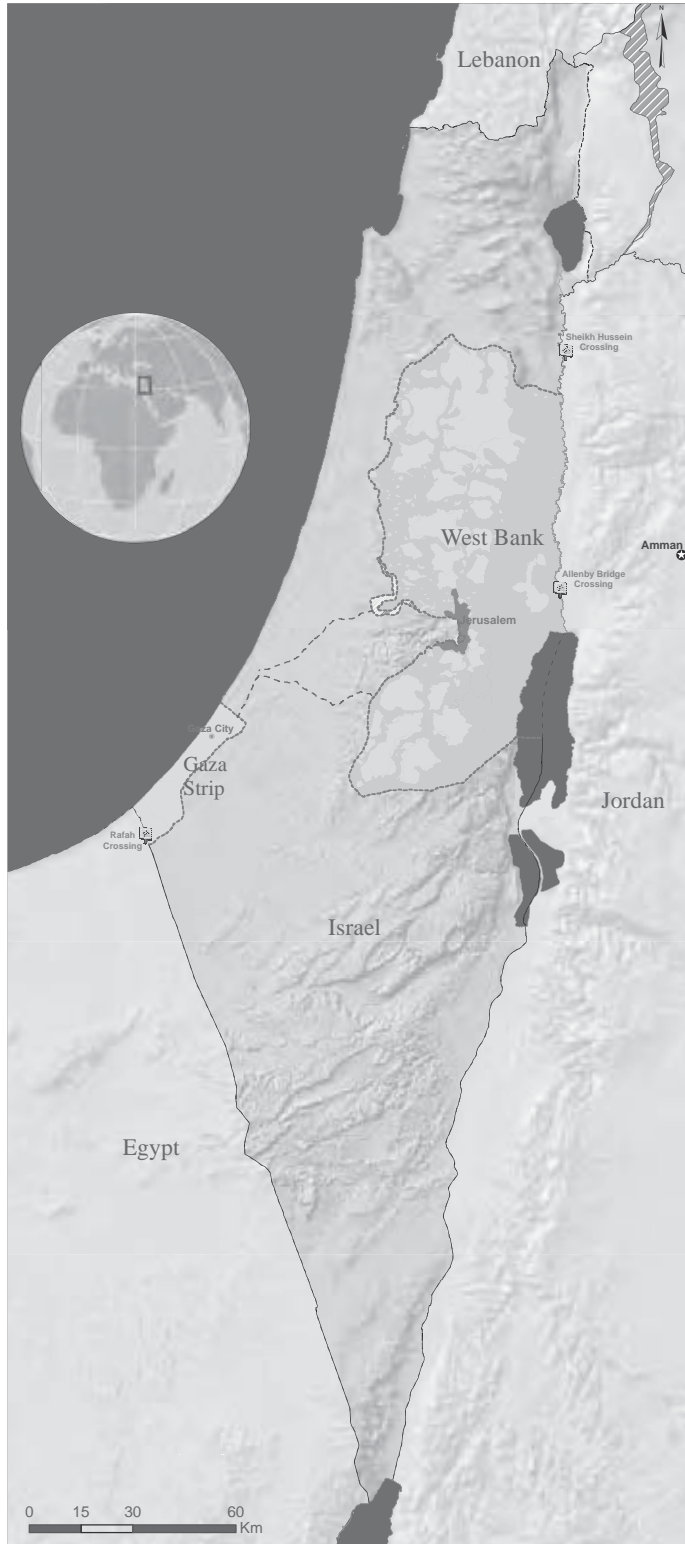
Figure 1.Occupied Palestinian territories. Based on United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs oPt map; December 2011.

In the Gaza Strip the population consists almost entirely of Palestinian Arabs. The total population of the Gaza Strip is estimated to be 1,763,387. The area is very densely populated. The age structure emphasises children and youth; 64.4% of the population is 0-24 years of age. Only 2.6% of population is 65 years or over. The literacy rate of the population in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is high exceeding 95%. In both areas unemployment is widespread; almost 40% of young adults are unemployed. (The World Factbook 2013, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2012.)

The Palestinian population can be defined using locales based typology which was described by the anthropologists Furani and Rabinowitz (2011). First are Palestinians who remained in their homeland on which the State of Israel was established in 1948. Some of them stayed in their original communities and some of them were internally displaced, but however er stayed inside of borders of the newly formed State of Israel. These Palestinians were eventually granted formal Israeli citizenship. Second are Palestinians who live in the area that was occupied by Israel in 1967. This group of Palestinians consists of those who lived there before 1948 and those who came as refugees from the area of the newly established State of Israel. Third are Palestinians from a variety of locations in Arab countries and elsewhere. They have various degrees of citizenship and ranges of rights and limitations in residence, employment, property, ownership, movement and political activity. On the whole it is essential to recognize that among all refugees of the world, Palestinians constitute the most longstanding and numerically the largest population which is still waiting for a solution. (Furani 2011.)

2.1.2 A brief history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The prolonged and still unresolved conflict between Israel and the Arab world forms the framework for the phenomena of interest in this study. Knowledge of the historical background is a necessary condition if trying to understand the life of those living in the conflict area. People are always connected to history and this is particularly true in the occupied Palestinian territories. (see Krämer, Harman 2008.)

Before the establishment of State of Israel in 1948, Palestine had been the homeland of a mainly Arab population with a rich genealogy of numerous imperial and local civilizations. At least Canaanite, Edomite, Israelite, Greek, Roman, Nabataean, Arabian, Philistine, Phoenician and Egyptian lineage has been found in the recent historical research (Rainey, Notley cop. 2006.). In the early twentieth century, Arab Palestinians still formed a society which had a rooted sense of place and a rich oral culture. Together with them, the social structure included Bedouins and a diverse urban population representing many urban professions like tradespeople and public servants. (Furani 2011.)

After the collapse of the centuries' long Ottoman rule at the end of World War I, Palestine came under a British mandate. As a Zionist movement, which aimed for the establishment of a Jewish state, strengthened during the first decades of 1900's, it became clear that Britain could no longer maintain its involvement in the area. In 1947, Britain approached the United Nations asking for a solution for the increasingly tense situation. (Krämer, Harman 2008, Lesch cop. 2008.)

The United Nations set up the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, a group of representatives from eleven different UN member countries. The Committee travelled to the area and determined a solution for the Palestine question (Harms, Ferry 2008.). The UN made a plan to partition Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. The partition plan was accepted by the majority of the Jewish community in Palestine and rejected by the Palestinians. On the 29th of November 1947, the UN General Assembly voted in favour of partition. That initiated the war in the area. Palestinian and Arab forces were defeated and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from the area. The State of Israel was established on 14th of May 1948. (Peteet 2005.)

During the 1947-1948 wars, more than 700 000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes. The Arabic term 'nakba', meaning disaster or catastrophe, refers to these events. Israeli Jews regard the same events as a war of independence. Both peoples, Jews and Palestinians, have their own large-scale disasters in their histories. The Jewish experienced a gruesome Nazi genocide and the Palestinians experienced ethnic cleansing. Although these disasters cannot be compared with each other, it is clear that the political functioning of both people is deeply influenced by these critical events. (Kimmerling cop. 2008.)

Morris (2003) describes the events of 1948 overtly. According to him, 700 000 Palestinians were deported by military forces and by psychological warfare. One form of psychological warfare was intentionally disseminated news of organized rapes of Palestinian women and girls and massacres in numerous Palestinian villages by Zionist forces. News of the Palestinian mass killings and extreme violence spread and led to a mass psychosis-like state among Palestinians. After the eviction, the return of Palestinians was blocked in many different ways. The impossibility of return was clear to everyone. The Israeli armed forces had clear order to use live fire to stop possible Palestinian returnees. (Morris 2003.)

In the 1967 war, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria. An estimated 300 000 Palestinians fled from the West Bank to Jordan. The UN Security Council called Israel to withdraw from the occupied areas. The withdrawal did not happen. (Lesch cop. 2008.) Through the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, Israel came into control of more than one million Palestinians. At the time in the West Bank, there was a population of 600 000, in East Jerusalem 70 000 and in Gaza 350 000 Palestinians. The homes of the fleeing Palestinians were often demolished. At the end of the 1967 war, Israel was three times its previous size. (Harms, Ferry 2008.)

The accumulated collective frustration among the Palestinian people in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank led to an extensive uprising known as Intifada. The uprising began at the end of 1987 and continued until 1993. The resistance and protest took various forms; there were general strikes, boycotts of Israeli products and a refusal to pay taxes as well as stone throwing and the use of Molotov cocktails. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted large-scale arrests, imprisonments without trial, destruction of homes and property, the use of tear gas and live ammunition and beatings against Palestinians. It is estimated that by the end of 1992 over 100 Israelis had died, and by the end of 1993 over 1000 Palestinians were dead. Twenty percent of the Palestinian fatalities were children under 16 years of age. (Harms, Ferry 2008.)

The Second Intifada, known as Al-Aqsa Intifada, began September 2000 as Israeli politician Ariel Sharon paid a visit to the Temple Mount, also known as Haram Al Sharif, which is sacred to both Jews and Muslims. During the provocative visit, Palestinian demonstrators and the IDF clashed and the clashes soon spread all over the occupied Palestinian territories. The clashes escalated to the level of the exchange of weapon fire between the IDF and Palestinians. These events were the beginning of a violent period that lasted for most of the next five years. (Harms, Ferry 2008.)

It is estimated that over 3000 Palestinians and 1000 Israelis died during the Second Intifada (B'tselem 2010). According an Amnesty International report (2007) most of the Palestinian victims were unarmed civilians, including some 800 children. Many of the victims were killed in Palestinian refugee camps and in densely populated areas in the occupied Palestinian territories by air strikes, artillery shelling or other forms of attacks. A number of Palestinians were also extrajudicially executed. Most of the Israeli victims killed by Palestinian armed groups were civilians including 120 children. The methods used by the Palestinian groups were suicide bombings and shooting attacks in areas frequented by civilian people. (Amnesty International 2007.)

In late 2002, Israel started to erect a so-called "security fence" or "wall" in the West Bank. The official reason for the "security fence" was to put a stop to Palestinian terrorists' incursions into the pre-1967 borders of Israel. In some places it is an electronic fence (Image 1), and in other places it is a colossal

concrete wall that contains monitoring electronics and weaponry (Image 2). One of the much debated issues is that the wall does not follow the UN set green line but meanders in places onto Palestinian land to include Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The wall also cuts off Palestinian towns from each other and splits Palestinian municipalities in two. The wall has a number of serious negative impacts on the lives of Palestinians. In October 2003, the UN General Assembly condemned Israel's construction of wall. However, Israel maintained its position saying that the wall is needed for security reasons. (Amnesty International 2012, UNRWA Barrier Monitoring Unit 2012, see UN General Assembly Plenary 2003.)

Photography Mikko Häkkinen

Image 1. Electronic fence

Photography Mikko Häkkinen

Image 2. Concrete wall

2.1.3 Religious background

Understanding religion and its significance to the people is of particular importance in the Middle East. The region is the birthplace of three of the major world religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For all three sacred sites are located in the area; Jerusalem in particular has a special meaning for all of them. (Landau 2003.) In Judaism, Jerusalem is the most holy city and it is has fundamental importance to the Jewish people throughout the world. In Christianity, Jerusalem has a special meaning as a location of important events in the life of Jesus. In Islam, Jerusalem is a holy city along with Mecca and Medina. The Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem is the third holiest site for Muslims. (Fleckenstein 1989.)

Even though the area has a major religious significance for both Jews and Palestinians the prolonged conflict cannot be explained primarily on religious grounds. The conflict is driven primarily by disagreements about land and resources. As is usual, religions have been used for both peaceful and hostile purposes. Examples of both uses can be found from history and from the present. (Landau 2003, Kujala 2012, 105-112.)

The vast majority of Palestinians are Sunni Muslims; Christians represent less than 4% of Palestinians (The World Factbook 2013). In contrast to Western views, Muslims are a very heterogeneous group of people with variety of different religious interpretations and emphases. Some are moderate and some extremists, for some, religion is more important than it is to others. What is certain is that Islam is not an ideology of war, although it can be used for propagating hate just like any religion. (Pentikäinen 2003, Hämeen-Anttila 1999.)

The basic tenets of Islam can be approached by considering the Five Pillars of Islam. These form the basis for Muslim life. The first pillar is faith (shahada) and it emphasizes faith in Allah and in his messenger Muhammad. The second pillar is prayer (salat) and it refers to the five daily prayers made in the direction of Mecca. The third pillar is alms giving (zakat). This means in practice helping those in conditions of poverty. The fourth pillar is fasting (siyam) and it refers to the ritual fasting during the month of Ramadan. The fifth pillar is the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj). Every Muslim should make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life. (Hämeen-Anttila 2012, Iqbal 2012.)

Islamic culture emphasizes belonging to the community. Typically the key community is extended family, but it can also be, for example, a group of fellow students or colleagues. As a member of the group the individual does not just represent themselves but the whole group. This is essential as it is related to issues of honour and shame. The individual works in favour of family and avoids things that would cause shame to the family. Taking care of members of the group is seen as honourable. A good Muslim helps people who are suffering also outside the family. Often mentioned Islamic values are forgiveness, clemency, hospitality and respect for parents. (Hämeen-Anttila 2012, Miklancie 2007.)

Arthur Kleinman (2006), an anthropologist and psychiatrist, has discussed at length the importance of religion in the context of suffering. According to him, religion is particularly emphasized in the midst of uncertainty and great suffering. Religious rituals can provide hope and security in fragile conditions. This, he says, is relevant for the functioning capacities of human beings in the difficult situations. However, this is not the only side of religion. Based on his personal observations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kleinman also shows the dark side of religion. As is exposed in the Middle East conflict area, religion can be used also for negative purposes. Dangerous religious motives can serve as a fuel to carry out atrocities. This is not only a feature of one party of a conflict, but appears among various parties. Ethnic and religious nationalism especially are the forces that have proven to result in violence and destruction. Religion, therefore, appears as source for good and moral behaviour, but in some

circumstances also as a source of power for annihilation. The Middle East is a region in which both dimensions have been reflected manifestly. (Kleinman 2006, 14-15, 192-195.)

2.1.4 The political and economic situation

The political situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is characterised by discord between the two political groups, Fatah and Hamas. Fatah was founded as a political movement in 1959. The most famous of the founders was Yasser Arafat who later served as the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and as the president of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Fatah is considered to be politically centre-left and a secular party whose premises are nationalist. (Schanzer 2008,13-22, Päivinen 2004.) Hamas is an Islamic organization which aims at the establishment of an Islamic state. It is known both from its involvement in social assistance for the underserved and from its armed activities. The United States and the European Union have classified Hamas as a terrorist organization. (Hroub 2010.)

Fatah and Hamas came into conflict in 2006, after Hamas won elections. Hundreds of people were killed in fighting that continued for 15 months. Hamas gained control of the Gaza Strip on June 2007 and has ruled the area since then, Fatah, in turn, rules in the West Bank. The conflict between Fatah and Hamas has given rise even to debate on a three-state solution, in which the Gaza Strip and the West Bank would form their own states. In general, this debate, however, has been considered to be unrealistic. Power relations in the political space in which Fatah and Hamas operate are particularly complex and unclear due to the Israeli occupation and other foreign interests. Both parties are under constant criticism; Fatah is criticized for corruption and Hamas for its intransigence. (Hoigilt 2013, Sirriyeh 2011.)

The economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is consistently weak causing poverty and scarcity among the population. In 2009, over a fifth of the Palestinian population lived in poverty; the situation was particularly bad in the Gaza Strip where levels of poverty were twice as high as in the West Bank. The ongoing occupation and blockade of the Gaza Strip have a negative impact on economic and professional activities in the area. In particular, restrictions on movement have a negative impact on trade and business. Both the West Bank and Gaza Strip are dependent on international aid. (World Bank 2011, Human Development Report 2010.)

The costs of living in the occupied Palestinian territories have increased significantly in recent years. In particular, the price of food has risen; the price of wheat flour increased by 73 % in the West Bank and 68 % in the Gaza Strip in just one year, 2007-2008 (Human Development Report 2010). Unemployment is the highest in the Gaza Strip where the overall unemployment rate is about 40 % and youth unemployment rate is about 50 %. The situation in the West Bank is slightly better. (World Bank 2011.)

2.1.5 Health service and educational factors

Prolonged conflict has multiple effects on health services in the occupied Palestinian territories. Access to health services throughout the occupied Palestinian territories is limited. Patients who are need of tertiary level treatment in Palestinian medical facilities in East Jerusalem are in an especially difficult position because of restrictions placed by Israel. Many specialized health services for Palestinian people are available only in East Jerusalem, Israel, Egypt or Jordan and this makes it difficult for Palestinians living in Gaza or the West Bank to get into treatment. (Giacaman, Khatib et al. 2009, UN OCHA 2012, WHO Special Report 2013.)

In the West Bank, the majority of Palestinian people have a non-Jerusalem type of ID and are required to obtain a permit from Israel to access health services in the specialized hospi-

tals in East Jerusalem. A permit is required even in emergency cases. Waiting for response can worsen the condition of the patient and even if a permit has been issued, it can be given for a shorter period of time than the treatment requires. Problems arise particularly if multiple visits are needed. In addition, there are number of practical issues that make access to health services complicated. For example, cars with Palestinian number plates are forbidden from entering East Jerusalem and family members cannot bring the patient using their own cars, even if they have a permit to accompany the patient. Thus, the crossing needs to happen by using a special hospital shuttle or by walking through the prescribed checkpoint which is, of course, an added discomfort for the very ill or those with disabilities. (UN OCHA 2012, WHO Special Report 2013.)

Difficulties related to access to health care is a common everyday problem in the occupied Palestinian territories. In 2012, 33 469 patients were referred by the Palestinian Ministry of Health to specialist hospitals and required Israeli permits to reach medical treatment. Of these referrals, 80 % were within the occupied Palestinian territory; mainly from the West Bank going to East Jerusalem (20 647). When taking into account the applications made by patients, patient companions and those family members who have applied for the permit required to visit the patient, the number of people is, only from the West Bank 222 188. Permit approval rate was 79.7 % meaning that a substantial part of those who needed treatment were left without access. (WHO Special Report 2013.)

The restrictions to access pose a special threat when emergency transportation is needed. Problems do not occur only when emergency transportation is directed from the West Bank to Jerusalem; restrictions may be encountered within the West Bank. The extensive Israeli army checkpoint network in the West Bank slows down or sometimes prevents access to emergency care. This may be the case when, for example, a patient in critical condition needs ambulance transportation from one hospital to another within the West Bank. Also emergency ambulance transportation from rural areas to a regional centre, where the nearest hospital is located, may be delayed or impossible because of checkpoints. In these situations, access restrictions may have disastrous consequences. (Keshet 2005, Rytter 2006, see alsoWHO Special Report 2013.)

Photography Mikko Häkkinen

Image 3. A Palestinian ambulance at a checkpoint

The health service system in the occupied Palestinian territories is fragmented and vulnerable. Services on the ground are provided by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, the UN Relief and Work Agency, non-governmental organizations and the private medical sector. The Palestinian Authority has been criticized for poor governance and mismanagement. Several types of health services fail to meet recognized standards of quality. From a public health point of view, provision is complicated by the fact that the Palestinian Authority has no control over water, land and the environment in the area it is responsible for. All these are controlled by Israel Authorities. In addition, uncertainty and disorder is caused by the number of diverse donors with different agendas. The Palestinian Authority is dependent on donor financial assistance as most of the health budget is financed by donor agencies. (Giacaman, Khatib et al. 2009.)

Despite the difficult conditions, education has for years been one of the key priorities in the occupied Palestinian territories. Primary education is compulsory for all Palestinian children. All children, both girls and boys, enrol in school between ages of 6 to 12. Nevertheless, girls and boys are not in the same position when it comes to education; differences begin to emerge in the late teenage years. At 17 years of age, the rate for attending educational facilities is 10 percent higher among girls than among boys. Also regional differences have been recognized; as the labour markets are more active in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip, more boys take employment in West Bank during their late teenage years. Culturally, girls' participation in labour markets has not been very common. (World Bank 2011.)

Secondary education in Palestine lasts two years and concludes with a national matriculation exam. Higher education is provided in universities, university colleges, polytechnics and community colleges. The range of higher education is relatively wide; from one-year diploma programs to the highest degrees. The number of students attending institutions of higher education in Palestine is relatively high; more than 100 000 students. However, finding work equivalent to qualifications is challenging due to the high level of unemployment. (UNESCO 2011.)

The occupation has a number of effects on education in the occupied Palestinian territories. Hundreds of checkpoints and physical obstructions affect the mobility of students and teachers. For girls this is an even bigger hindrance than for the boys as girls' movement is already restricted to some extent by their families and control by Israel military is another restraint for them. The wall built by Israel restricts the movement of a large number of students and teachers making travel time between the place of studying and home considerable and increases costs of studying. Travelling to school, in many cases, also requires permission from Israeli military. This bureaucratic struggle makes the attendance of studies uncertain and sometimes fragmentary. (Affouneh 2008.)

2.1.6 Effects of the occupation on the population

Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied Palestinian territories are affected in different ways by the Israeli military occupation. They confront threats to their life, security and property as a result of the occupation, related practises and outbreaks of violent incidents. In the West Bank, the Palestinian population is continually subjected to settler-related violence that is directed against Palestinian people as well as their property. Palestinian communities in the occupied Palestinian territory are subjected repeatedly to forced displacements as a result of the practices of Israeli authorities. In recent years, the number of house demolitions conducted by Israel has increased. When a home is demolished, Palestinian people have to move somewhere to find shelter; occupation related home demolitions are the most common reason for displacement in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip the main reason for displacement are recurring Israeli military operations. (UN OCHA 2012.)

The movement of Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories is restricted in many different ways. Hundreds of Israeli military checkpoints (Figure 2) and barriers in the West Bank hinder access to schools, hospitals and workplaces. Israel built a 700 km fence or wall located mostly on Palestinian land which prevents the access of thousands of Palestinian farmers to their farming land and water sources. Israel conducted a military blockade of Gaza in 2007 and it still continues. The humanitarian crisis resulting from the blockade continues to have a particularly strong effect on children and the sick (Amnesty International 2012.).

One major aspect of the occupation affecting the population is that the Israeli authorities hold a large number of Palestinian detainees and prisoners in facilities of the Israel Prison Service (IPS). At the end of the year 2011, the number of Palestinians in IPS facilities was 4803. In addition, the Israeli military has two detention centres inside the West Bank. Over the years, Israel has held thousands of Palestinians in so called administrative detention. Administrative detention means detention without a communicated reason or specific allegations. Periods of administrative detention range from a few months to several years. At its highest, the number of Palestinians held in administrative detention was over one thousand, at the end of the year 2011 it was 307. (B'tselem 2011.)

Amnesty International (2012) has reported allegations of torture and other forms of ill-treatment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention centres. The most commonly cited methods of torture and ill-treatment are beatings, threats to the detainee or their family; sleep deprivation and being shackled in painful positions for long periods. (Amnesty International 2012.)

Periodically the conflict deteriorates further and takes a form of a heavy armed cycle. The impacts of these periods are particularly burdensome to the population. Since part of the fieldwork of the present study was conducted in the Gaza Strip just two months after IDF's Pillar of Defence military operation, it is appropriate to give a concise description of the operation.
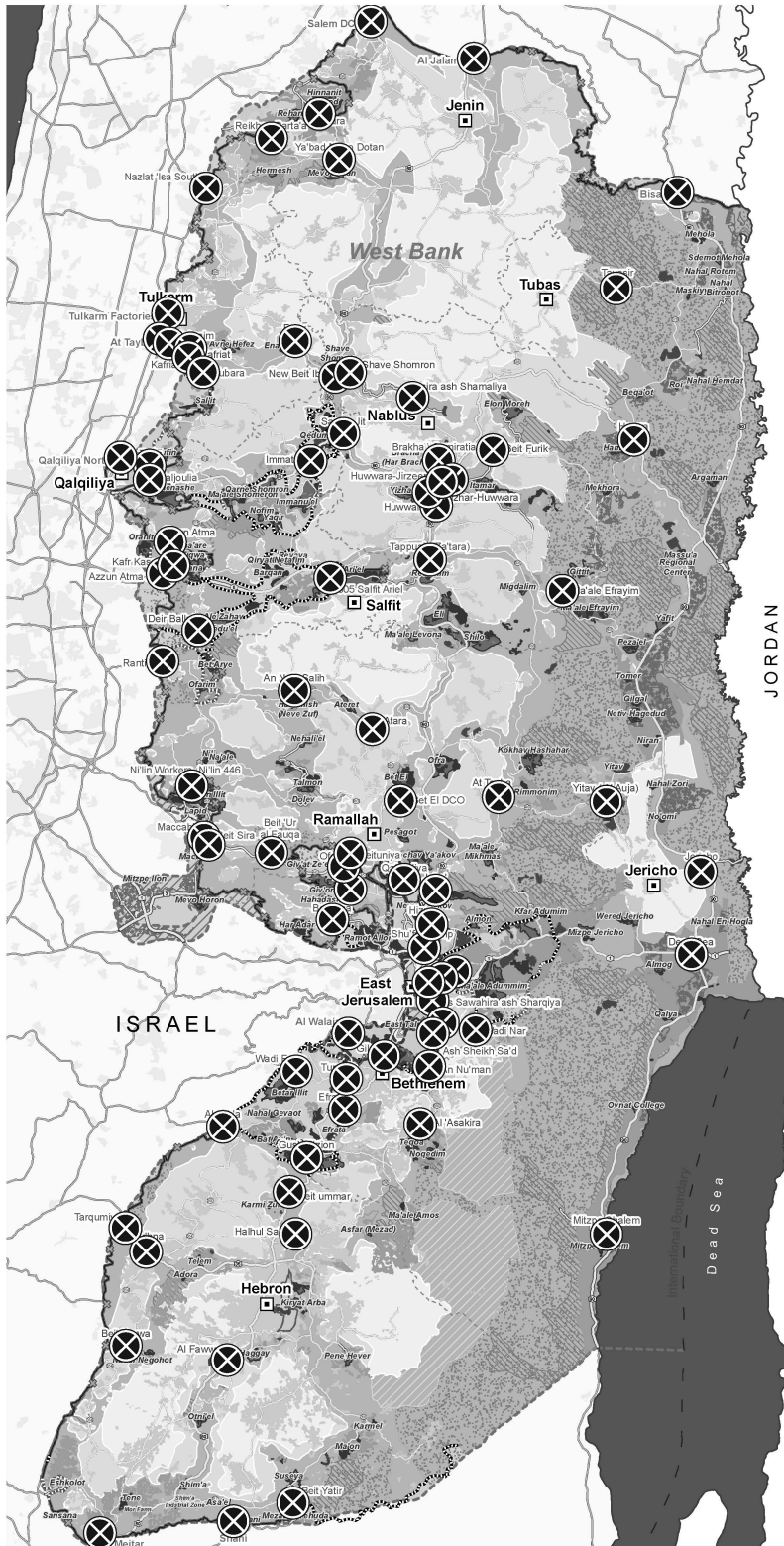
Figure 2. West Bank checkpoints
Based on United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs oPt map; December 2012

On the 14th of November 2012 the IDF launched an airstrike which killed the commander of the military wing of Hamas, Ahmed El Ja'abari, in the Gaza Strip. The military operation lasted eight days ending on the 21st of November. During the operation, 174 Palestinians were killed including 33 children and 13 women. Hundreds of people in Gaza were injured. Six Israelis were killed and 239 were injured. Throughout the operation the IDF targeted and damaged civilian property such as farmland and residences, also hospitals and schools were damaged. The indiscriminate nature of the majority of the projectiles fired by Palestinian armed groups poses a serious threat to civilians both in Israel and in Gaza. It is estimated that 382 residences were destroyed or severely damaged in Gaza. At least three hospitals and 13 primary care centres were hit in attacks by the IDF. It can be concluded that both parties failed to respect international law. (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2013.)

2.2 PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

2.2.1 Posttraumatic stress disorder and depression in the Palestinian population

Conditions of prolonged conflict have major effects on each member of society across all the occupied Palestinian territories. The effects are not just limited to one part of human health and wellbeing, but are holistic and diverse. On a practical level this means physical injuries, disability and constant fear and bereavement related to the deaths of loved ones. Since human beings are holistic, physical injuries affect psychosocial wellbeing and vice versa. (Giacaman, Khatib et al. 2009.)

In recent years, researchers have published a number of studies related to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the Palestinian population. Children and adolescents in the West Bank and Gaza have been a particular focus of investigation. The majority of these studies have been conducted quantitatively using different kind of PTSD research instruments. The results vary, but all the studies show that the population suffers from high levels of post-traumatic symptoms. (see Barron 2013, Kolltveit 2012, Madianos 2011, Khamis 2008, Elbedour 2007, Qouta 2007.)

PTSD is defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-5 cop. 2013). The diagnostic criteria for PTSD require exposure to a specific stressor and specified symptoms from each of the four symptom clusters. The stressor criterion requires that "the person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence". Symptom clusters are; intrusion symptoms, avoidance, negative alterations in cognition and mood, and alternations in arousal and reactivity. In PTSD the symptoms persist for more than one month and cause distress or functional impairment. (DSM-5 cop. 2013.)

In order to obtain information for comparison, it is useful to note that the epidemiology of PTSD was examined as a part of extensive meta-research in the European Union in 2010. It was estimated that the 12-month long prevalence of PTSD in the EU population was 1.1 – 2.9 % (Wittchen 2011.). A recent study investigated PTSD prevalence in the United States. Lifetime prevalence was 8.3 %, the past 12-months 4.7 % and past 6-months 3.8 %. (Kilpatrick 2013.)

Johnson (2008) reviewed research concerning PTSD in civilian adult survivors of war trauma and torture. The prevalence of PTSD among torture victims from a variety of backgrounds was remarkably high reaching up to 92 %. In populations affected by war trauma high rates of PTSD prevalence have also been found. Different studies have looked at the prevalence of

PTSD among Kosovar war refugees, revealing results from 23.5 – 65 %. Extensive evidence from a variety of environments indicates that war traumas increase the prevalence of PTSD in different populations. (Johnson 2008.)

The prevalence of PTSD in different areas of the occupied Palestinian territories has been reported high in a number of studies. Kolltveit, Lange-Nielsen et al. (2012) reported that the percentage of the population suffering from PTSD in their adolescent sample was 56.8 %. Abdeen (2008) studied 2100 Palestinian students and found that 36 % of the West Bank and 35% of Gaza participants met the criteria for full PTSD. Additionally, in both areas more than 10 % reported symptoms meeting the criteria of partial PTSD. (Abdeen 2008.)

Broadly in line with the previous were the results of Pat-Horenczyk (2009) who studied the effects of the ongoing violence on the mental health of Palestinian and Israeli youths. She found that 37.2 % of Palestinian and 6.8 % of Israeli students met the criteria for PTSD. Students who suffered from PTSD had also more somatic health complaints and greater functional impairments. It should be noted that almost all of the Palestinian students reported exposure to conflict related violence. Palestinian male adolescents reported more severe and direct involvement compared to female adolescents. (Pat-Horenczyk 2009.)

Harel-Fisch (2010) conducted an exceptionally large cross-cultural study with a sample of 24 935 Palestinian (7 430 West Bank and 7 217 Gaza) and Israeli (5 255 Jewish and 6 033 Arab) 11-, 13-, and 15-year-old school children. The research focused on the psychosocial outcomes related to subjective threat from armed conflict events. It was found that armed conflict events had impact on mental health across all four populations, well-being and risk behaviour. Experiences from armed conflict events lead to higher levels of posttraumatic and psychosomatic symptoms. The research proves that the conflict has an extensive detrimental impact on the well-being and social development of children and adolescents in the conflict area. (Harel-Fisch 2010.)

Adults have also been studied extensively in the area. Hobfoll (2012) conducted a longitudinal investigation of Palestinian adults living in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. According to him, the military occupation and ongoing violence has an impact on the mental and physical health of Palestinians. In particular, the combination of trauma exposure and psychological distress was found to be associated with the emergence of physical health disorders. The results show that the unstable and violent environment has a complex and wide ranging negative impact on the overall health of individuals in the occupied Palestinian territories. (Hobfoll 2012.)

Al-Krenawi (2012) studied the impact of political violence on psychosocial functioning in the West Bank and Gaza. Participants from the West Bank reported a higher level of exposure to political violence and many mental health problems. However it has to be taken in account that the data was collected before the recent military escalation in the Gaza Strip. The research proved again a connection between political violence and certain symptoms. Those who were exposed to greater political violence had higher levels of depression, hostility, paranoid ideation and PTSD. (Al-Krenawi 2012.)

Palosaari (2013) studied the intergenerational effects of war trauma in the Gaza Strip. He hypothesized that the more the parents were exposed to war traumas the more they would maltreat their children psychologically. According to the hypothesis, this would lead children to having more symptoms of posttraumatic stress, depression and aggression. In this way the war trauma could be seen to be passed down from one generation to the next. The hypotheses was supported by the results found among the fathers but were disconfirmed among the mothers. He showed that the father's past war trauma lead to more psychological

maltreatment experienced by the child. The mother's past and current war trauma lead to the opposite; less psychological maltreatment experienced by the child. (Palosaari 2013.)

The prevalence of PTSD among Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip was found to be remarkably high at the violent time of the Al Aqsa Intifada in early 2000. The research done at that time showed that 54 % of children suffered from severe and 33.5 % from moderate PTSD (Qouta 2003.). Also, a more recent study from the Gaza Strip demonstrates the extensive impact of war related traumatic events on children. The results show that exposure to military trauma was associated with problems in sibling relations regardless of the child's age or gender and friendship relations especially among girls and younger children. (Peltonen 2010.)

Dimitry (2012) systematically reviewed the research literature on the mental health of children and adolescents living in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq. He found that the number of traumatic experiences related to conflict correlated positively with prevalence of behavioural and emotional problems of children and adolescents. The prevalence of PTSD was estimated to be 23-70 % in Palestine; the percentages in other regions were significantly lower. (Dimitry 2012.)

An essential group of people to be taken into account when viewing PTSD and other conflict related psychosocial problems in the Palestinian population is political ex-prisoners. Punamäki (2010) studied Palestinian political ex-prisoners and found that both physical and psychological torture during imprisonment were associated with a greater amount of PTSD symptoms. The PTSD symptoms were increased especially if physical and psychological torture methods had been combined. (Punamäki 2010.)

Although PTSD in the occupied Palestinian territories has been of special interest to researchers during the last decade, depression has also been studied. Madianos (2012) studied the lifetime and one-month prevalence of major depression episodes (MDE) in a sample of 916 adult Palestinians from the West Bank. The examination used the international Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM-IV). Also, data about suicidal behaviour, previous help seeking, medication and exposure to traumatic events were collected. The lifetime prevalence of MDE was found to be 24.3 %. There was no significant difference between male and female Palestinians. People who were exposed to traumatic events had increased risk of suffering from MDE. Thus, the study provides strong evidence that a population under continuous tension and fear combined with socioeconomic deprivation, is more likely to suffer from major depression. (Madianos 2012.)

In addition to the latter study, Canetti (2010) studied both PTSD and major depression (MD) among Palestinians. He found a high prevalence of both PTSD and MD among Palestinians. The prevalence of PTSD varied depending on the place of residence and gender at a range of 16.1 – 25.4 % and a prevalence of MD range between 16.1 – 29.9 %. Exposure to socio-political stressors and political violence was different in men and women. Also, the reactions were different. Men's more direct involvement resulted in exposure to political violence and that was associated with both greater PTSD and depression. For women, a greater exposure to socio-political stressors was associated with greater depression. Overall, the loss of interpersonal or intrapersonal resources was the most important predictor for both PTSD and MD. (Canetti 2010.)

Exposure to recurrent conflict related humiliation has been shown to be an important public health threat among young people in the occupied Palestinian territories. Occupation related humiliation, regardless of the exposure to other violent and traumatic events, was associated with a high number of subjective health complaints and negative health outcomes. In the occupied Palestinian territories, conflict related mass humiliation can be estimated to be one of the essential menaces to mental health. (Giacaman 2007.)

2.2.2 Coping in different population groups

Although PTSD in the Palestinian population has been an important subject of recent research, the coping of Palestinian people has also been studied from different perspectives. As was previously mentioned, Pat-Horenczyk (2009) assessed the coping strategies of both Palestinian and Israeli adolescents. Among the Palestinian adolescents, the most frequently used coping strategies were accepting reality, religion and distraction. Higher levels of exposure to traumatic events were associated with more frequent use of coping strategies. The researcher emphasized that relationship between distress and coping is complex and considered the possibility that she did not measure already existing coping strategies, but rather attempts at coping with a highly stressful situation. In this case, further research should be conducted to find out how useful the attempts really were for actual coping (Pat-Horenczyk 2009.)

In a cross cultural study on coping among adolescents, Frydenberg (2003) examined how young people cope with their concerns in different cultures. Palestinian, German, Colombian and Australian students were compared and differences were observed. Palestinian students reported greater usage of different coping strategies than others. It was also found that Palestinian and Colombian students more often used strategies such as seeking to belong, focusing on the positive, social action, problem solving, seeking spiritual support and worrying than adolescents from German and Australia. Palestinian students were found to use physical recreation less than others. The findings emphasize the cultural nature of coping. (Frydenberg 2003.)

Thabet (2004) studied maltreatment experiences, coping strategies and behavioural or emotional problems and their relationship in a sample of Palestinian adolescents from the Gaza Strip. The researchers suggest that prolonged political violence in the Gaza Strip has led to the legitimacy of the use of violence as a way to solve problems even within families. Under these circumstances adolescents have had to find means for coping. A large number of adolescents studied relied on faith in God, which was understood as emotion-focused coping. Also, cognitive and information seeking coping strategies were widely used.

Groups of adolescents who were exposed or not exposed to maltreatment were compared and differences in the usage of coping strategies were found. Adolescents who were exposed to maltreatment were more likely to use avoidant and emotion-focused strategies, such as self-blame and denial. Adolescents who had not been exposed to maltreatment used more active-cognitive and adaptive coping strategies, such as seeking advice and information. Both maltreatment in family and coping are complex phenomena which must be viewed in a cultural context. (Thabet 2004.)

Coping has also been studied in a Palestinian community sample of 92 former political prisoners and 92 non-prisoners. The focus was in the coping effectiveness in protecting mental health from impacts of imprisonment and military trauma. It was found that none of the coping styles and strategies could protect prisoners' mental health from the negative impact of imprisonment or other military trauma. It is noteworthy that even though imprisonment and military trauma resulted in negative mental health consequences, exposure to military violence increased rather than decreased active coping and political activity among participants. The researchers suggest that a shared ideological commitment serves as a resource for active coping responses. Trauma can be interpreted in meaningful and encouraging ways together with a like-minded community. (Punamäki 2008.)

As noted from the previous, most of the studies have concerned the Palestinian child, adolescent and male population. The exception is Sousa (2013) who focused on coping only among Palestinian Women in the West Bank. Predictably, the rates of PTSD symptoms rose in relation to both the number of experiences of political violence so far in life, and the frequency of various events of political violence they experienced in the prior month. The results related to coping were more unexpected. Surprisingly, proactive coping and self-reliance emerged as risk factors when considered with political violence. Reliance on active religious support emerged as the only protective factor in the study.

However, the researcher suggested that it was not faith or prayer that emerged as protective, but the institutional aspects of religion. She emphasizes the importance of social forms of coping within the general resource of religious support. Both political and religious institutions may have an important role in promoting the health of a population in the midst of violent environment. (Sousa 2013.)

A complementary and quite new perspective on the research tradition is the focus on life satisfaction and positive emotions in the volatile environment of the occupied Palestinian territories. Veronese (2012) investigated the positive and negative affect, self-perceived life satisfaction and happiness among a group of Palestinian school children. The study showed that children seem to be happy and satisfied with their lives. The quantitative part of the study pointed out that males were less satisfied than females. The females reported more interest in sociality and males emphasized the need for space, freedom of movement and also resistance to the military occupation. The qualitative results emphasized the importance of education for both males and females. The school was described as a place of social emancipation and hope for a better future. Participants perceived themselves as competent and their self-esteem was at a high level. (Veronese 2012.)

One of the few studies focusing on well-being in war contexts was conducted also by Veronese (2012). The study was implemented among health professionals and volunteer workers in the occupied Palestinian territories. The study did not address the negative effects of political and military violence, but rather sought to understand well-being in prolonged conflict circumstances. The qualitative study found that participants defined well-being in terms of three essential areas: security, participation, and development. Health professionals and volunteer workers were found to think that the promotion of economic development and professional growth, as well as involvement in political and social life was needed to improve wellbeing and quality of life. In addition, the participants saw that resistance to the occupation was required to enhance well-being. (Veronese 2012.)

2.3 PSYCHOSOCIAL COPING AS A CONCEPTUAL CONSTRUCT

Psychosocial coping was chosen as the central concept in this study. The term Psychosocial refers to broad approach that covers phenomena from both individual and community perspectives. The use of the concept is not limited to a particular field of sciences but is, rather, multidisciplinary. The concept is utilized broadly in social and health sciences. Theoretically, the concept can be seen to be influenced by social constructivism and phenomenology; however it cannot be considered as belonging solely to either. A slightly simplified definition places the concept of psychosocial at the point of intersection between psychology and sociology. From the perspective of the present study the previous definition is propitious; sufficient space is allowed for in the observation of the phenomenon of interest. (Frost, McClean 2013, Saastamoinen 2013, Stenner 2008.)

Recent literature related to humanitarian work in armed conflicts and natural disasters increasingly pays attention to psychosocial dimension of the needs of the affected people. In the context of humanitarian work, the concept is interpreted practically but the main understanding of concept is consistent with the above theoretical approach. The main focus in the humanitarian approach is the relieving of psychological and social suffering caused by disasters and conflicts. Accordingly, the foremost use of the concept occurs in the form of psychosocial support, wherein support refers to actions taken to secure or increase the psychosocial wellbeing in conflict or disaster settings. (IASC 2007, Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support 2011.)

The Psychosocial Working Group (2003), the international organ comprising academics and humanitarian actors, suggests that the concept of psychosocial wellbeing should be defined with respect

to three core domains: human capacity, social ecology and culture and values. Human capacity refers to physical and mental health; the special focus is on the individual's knowledge, capacity and skills. Social ecology refers to social connections and support. This domain includes relationships, social networks, and support systems of individuals and the community. Cohesive relationships are understood to be essential for psychosocial wellbeing. Culture and values refers to cultural norms and behaviour. Every culture has its own value system and social expectations that affect the individual and society. Psychosocial wellbeing can be understood only if culture and the values related with it are taken into account. (The Psychosocial Working Group 2003.)

In this study the concept of psychosocial is allied with the concept of coping in order to highlight the simultaneity of individuality and communality in the context of coping in a prolonged conflict. The transactional model of stress and coping provides the basis for perceiving stress and coping in the present study. According to the creators of the model, Lazarus and Folkman (1984, 19), "psychological stress is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being". In this study the model is used to clarify the concept of coping, however the model is not used directly for determining the research process.

Upon detecting a threat originating from his or her environment, a person carries out an appraisal of the situation. This process goes through the cognitive functions known as primary and secondary appraisals. The primary appraisal focuses on the significance of the situation from one's own point of view. The personal perception of reality has an impact on primary appraisal. As a result of the cognitive process, a person deems an event to be stressful, positive, controllable, challenging or irrelevant. The secondary appraisal focuses on a person's ability to cope in the situation. The ability to control the situation or limit damages with the known and available resources is essential in this phase of appraisal. (Lazarus, Folkman 1984, Folkman 1984.) In this study, the above concepts are interpreted extensively to cover a wide variety of situations related to prolonged conflict. Some of the situations are abrupt or temporary, some are permanent.

The concept of coping refers to "cognitive and behavioural efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the internal and/or external demands that are created by the stressful transaction". The individual and the environment are in a state of continuous change and in a dynamic relationship with each other. Thus, coping appears as a process that takes place in a constantly changing context. (Folkman 1984, Folkman 1986, Folkman 1986.) This definition is applicable to the research environment of the present study as prolonged conflict creates an environment that is fluctuating and requires continuous reappraisals and inferences.

Based on their research on coping, Folkman, Lazarus (1986) and their team developed an instrument in order to examine the phenomenon of coping in an empirical environment. In the present study the questionnaire developed later by Folkman and Lazarus (1988) was used in the quantitative phase of the data collection. The Ways of Coping Questionnaire has been, since the late 1980s, widely used in the research of coping. It has been tested and applied in a variety of contexts, and has been found to be applicable still in the present day. (Kieffer, MacDonald 2011, Lundqvist 2006, Rexrode 2008.)

As described above, psychosocial coping as a theoretical and applied concept offers a comprehensive premise for the present study. The study, which applies mixed methods and a multidisciplinary approach, needs a theoretical basis, but at the same time requires a proportionate amount of space in order to achieve significant results. Under the given conditions, the utilization of a relatively new concept, psychosocial coping, can be seen as being justified.

3 Aims of the Study

The main objective of this study is to understand the suffering and coping of Palestinians living in the midst of prolonged conflict.

The specific aims are as follows:

1. What kinds of suffering has the prolonged conflict caused for the Palestinians who live in the Middle East conflict area?

2. What are the different strategies that the Palestinians living in the Middle East conflict area use in order to cope with the prolonged conflict?

4 Methodology and Sources

4.1 HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

The epistemological premise of this study is in hermeneutic phenomenology. Phenomenology refers to an extensive approach in which the focus is on an individual's direct reports of experience. Hermeneutic in turn, refers to the interpretation and understanding of phenomena. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is widely considered to be the founder of phenomenology and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is the main developer of hermeneutics. Hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodological approach with an emphasis on the understanding of an individual's lived experience. (Cohen, Porter 2013, Standing 2009, Koch 1995.)

The methodological choices in this study have been influenced by the anthropologist and psychiatrist, Arthur Kleinman (2006), who emphasizes the importance of the understanding of values, morals and diverse cultural meanings in the analysis of suffering and coping. Since the basis of this study is to understand cultural coping responses to suffering, the methods must be sensitive to cultural subtleties and provide space for a diversity of experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenology proved to be the approach that made it possible to study sensitive experiential phenomena with permissive methods. (see Craig 2007.)

Central to phenomenology, from the methodological point of view, is the fundamental recognition of experience. Human experience is the definitive grounds for and meaning of knowledge. Complex theories can lead away from real human experience and therefor need to be avoided. Experience is approached just as it is experienced by a subject; it is the path to truth. (Cohen, Porter 2013, Standing 2009.)

Three key notions that are widely accepted in phenomenology are intentionality, essences and bracketing. Intentionality refers to the feature of the human mind to strive towards something. Essences refer to the importance of returning to the original nature of phenomena as they have been conceived. Bracketing refers to the practice in which the researcher put aside his or her previous assumptions about the phenomenon of interest. This is necessary if it is desired to achieve a truly new understanding of the phenomenon. The above can be seen as a state of mind or an attitude that the researcher needs to embrace in order to construct a new understanding. (Cohen, Porter 2013, Hein 2001, Koch 1995, Edie 1987, Husserl 1965.)

An accurate interpretation and understanding is the core of hermeneutic approach. Manifested within is the process known as the hermeneutic circle. Interpretations and understanding of the phenomenon of interest do not happen in one instant, but are a continuously ongoing circumferential event. The recurring formation and modifications deepen interpretations and enable increased understanding. The understanding that has already been achieved serves as the basis for new insights, but also allows the researcher to return to the former phases of the process which is appropriate in order to deepen the perceptions. (Koch 1995, Dowling 2004, Gadamer, Nikander 2004.)

In the context of data analysis, the above results in a continuous dialogue with the original research data. The researcher returns over and over again to the data and seeks possible interpretations and meanings that enable an increasing understanding. The hermeneutic circle has no absolute end; new interpretations are always possible and ultimate truth is likely to remain out of reach. Increasing understanding is seen as the achievement. (Finlay 2011, Hein 2001, Cohen, Kahn et al. cop. 2000.)

In hermeneutic phenomenology, a basis for the research is an individual and unique human experience which must be respected unconditionally; prejudice and presuppositions, if not consciously put aside, mean that research efforts will end in naught and will pose ethical problems. Only from a candid premise is it possible to access the productive process of interpretation and understanding. The interpretation requires an adequate knowledge of the context; phenomena do not appear in a vacuum but in relation to other phenomena, in particular, the surrounding culture has to be taken into account in a sensitive manner. In addition to context, the phenomena are also viewed by utilizing a theoretical framework. (Hein 2001, Van 2000, Van Manen cop. 1990.)

In this study, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach is present throughout the research process. The choice of topic for the study was based on experiences shared by Palestinian people. Listening to experiences using an approach that is characteristic to the hermeneutic phenomenological approach led to the understanding for the need of further study.

Understanding the world of people who live in the midst of a prolonged conflict come to be central to this study; gaining an understanding of suffering and coping emerged as essential. It was important to approach the phenomenon, which is highly politically charged and sensitive, without prejudice and condemnation. Furthermore, the main focus had to be directed to people who had first-hand experience and to bring them to the centre of research interest. All of this was done with a Heideggerian attitude, meaning the aspiration to achieve a close understanding of the essence of unique experience. (see Heidegger cop. 2010, Cohen, Kahn et al. cop. 2000.)

An integral part of the methodological premise of the present study has been ethnomethodology; it has directed attention to the everyday social life and, in particular, to communication between people. This communicative interaction between people reveals an enormous amount of information which can be used for the understanding of the phenomena of interest. The interest is not limited to spoken words but also body language, the use of space and other behavioural traits are essential to consider. (Have 2004, 14-27.)

Communication should always be examined in the context of a larger framework; words alone are not sufficient, their significance varies depending on the surrounding reality. Conversation analysis as ethnomethodology provides the operational framework, which has been used in this study. The attempt to become a part of people's everyday lives, and thus understanding it, was one of the key objectives during the research process (Sharrock 1989.). Ethnomethodology is the methodological approach that made it possible; its practicality and applicability turned out to be an important enabler in the constantly changing and at times volatile research environment. It supported accurate observation and helped to structure the findings. (See Olszewski 2006, Henderson 2005.)

The contribution of Grounded Theory for the present study is in its steering towards theoretical creativity (see Bailey 1999). In accordance with its principles, the starting point for the study was not in existing theory; the aim is to generate new understandings of the phenomena of interest. The existing theoretical knowledge has been taken into account and perspectives have been utilized, however, the data has been constantly at the centre of the process. The phenomena of interest have been understood to be constantly changing; precisely the process, rather than a permanent state of fact, is central and it is to be described. (Bryman cop. 2012, 567-575, Birks, Mills 2011.)

Grounded Theory has been used in the present study as a broad methodological approach rather than as a specific operational rule. It provides a premise to concurrently carry out fieldwork, collect data and analyse findings. A preliminary analysis is done in the field and the findings form the basis for the next steps in the fieldwork. The analysis is not an isolated

function in the research process; it is a continuous and cumulative process which allows for an increasingly rich understanding of the phenomenon of interest. The most important thing in the analysis is to find significant social processes and phenomena. This can be achieved only if the researcher is able maintain an open and inquisitive attitude and abandon his or her preconceptions. (Janhonen, Latvala 2001.)

4.2 MIXED METHODS

Within the framework of the present study, mixed methods refer to the use of both quantitative and qualitative strategies of research. Using mixed methods offers the potential for more diverse and a deeper understanding of complex phenomena such as suffering and coping. A mixed methods approach has, in recent times, been used increasingly in health and social research. The approach has proven to be particularly useful for the examination of human experiences in complex settings. (Larkin 2014, Pluye 2014, Padgett cop. 2012, 48-52., Kettles 2011, Östlund 2011, Bolton 2009.)

It is conventional that when both quantitative and qualitative methods are mixed in the study, one or the other is usually weighted. The concept of "dominant" refers to method which has prominence in the study. The justification for weighting arises from the aims of the study and the nature of the phenomena studied. (Padgett cop. 2012, 48-49, Östlund 2011.) In the present study the emphasis is on the qualitative approach; a quantitative approach is substantive but the qualitative data and analysis have proven to be crucial from the perspective of increasing an understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Another way of viewing the quantitative and qualitative strategies in a given mixed methods study is to take note of timing. The term sequential refers to a course of action in which quantitative and qualitative strategies are used consecutively. Different variations of repetitions also exist. The term concurrent refers to the simultaneous use of both strategies. (Pluye 2014, Padgett cop. 2012, 48-52.) In the present study the quantitative and qualitative data was collected concurrently. The quantitative and qualitative data was collected from different individuals. More detailed information is provided in the sources.

Despite the fact that a mixed methods study has proven to be useful and its use continues to increase in social and health sciences, its use involves challenges. The researcher often encounters logistical and other practical problems in reaching the research subjects. Another challenge relates to the data analysis process; qualitative analysis is a phased process and returning to the field might be needed, quantitative analysis is more linear and is usually completed earlier. The presentation of results can take place in many different ways and requires careful consideration in order to achieve clarity. (Pluye 2014, Padgett cop. 2012, 58-59.)

4.3 ETHNOGRAPHY AS A RESEARCH APPROACH

Ethnography is one of the contemporary approaches used in health and social research. There is no explicit definition of ethnography; however, some degree of mutual understanding suggests that ethnography can be defined both as a research process and a textual product. Ethnographic work is, above all, learning and the systematic reporting of the outcomes of a learning process. Doing ethnography is scientific work and thus, it requires the knowledge of the principles of scientific work. (O'Reilly 2009, 3-4, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007, 1-19,

LeCompte, Schensul 1999,1-24, Emerson, Fretz et al. 1995,15-16.) In this study, ethnography is understood widely as a method of study as well as a written product of the research process.

The ethos of ethnographic work is based on respect towards research participants. They are seen as valuable human beings; under no circumstances as a medium for scientific output. The ethical dimension of ethnographic work is crucial in all stages of the ethnographic process from the planning to the reporting stage. Only an ethically sustainable ethnography can be seen as a scientifically high quality ethnography. Ethics are integral in ethnography. (Case 2014, Paoletti 2014.)

The background of the modern term ethnography is in nineteenth century anthropology. At the time, ethnography was a descriptive first-hand account of a community or culture that was typically situated outside of the west. It was based on prolonged fieldwork; the main method of data collection was participant observation. At first ethnography was used by anthropologists and sociologists but more recently its use has widespread to many different fields of research, especially to multidisciplinary research. (Hammersley, Atkinson 2007, 1-2, LeCompte, Schensul 1999, 4-5.) The research field of this ethnographic study is Public Health, Medical Anthropology and Sociology of Health.

The essential difference compared to most other research approaches is that ethnography is always rooted in the concept of culture. Ethnography produces culturally conscious explanations of how people think, believe and behave. These interpretations are based on the ethnographer's intention to understand a socio-political and historical context of the people of interest. The concept of culture can be seen as a lens that the ethnographer uses as he or she is interpreting the results of the study. As is apparent, the subjectivity of the researcher is present throughout the process making reflexivity essential to the process. (Robinson 2013, Kral 2007, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007.)

Atkinson, Delamont and Housley (cop. 2008) criticize modern research for relying on a single preferred method of inquiry and the data which are achieved by using limited methods. Ethnographies strive towards holism and capturing the complexity of the phenomena studied by using a variety of methods and data. The foremost aim of ethnographies is to understand the wholeness of the phenomena under study as deeply as possible. In reality, a complete description of complex social phenomena is usually impossible to achieve, but this should not be obstacle in aiming towards it. (see also Kral 2007.)

Ethnographic work largely takes place in the field, meaning that the researcher takes part in people's daily lives for a long period of time; watching, listening, making informal and formal interviews and collecting all kind of materials that could help to understand the phenomenon of interest. The ethnographer seeks an understanding of how these certain people view the situations they face, how they relate to each other and how they see themselves. (McCurdy 2014, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007, 63-139.)

According to Van Maanen (2011), ethnography "rests on the peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one's own experience in the world of these others". This makes ethnographic work very personal. The results of ethnographic work are always experientially contingent and variable depending on the individual ethnographer. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995, 105-107) point out that ethnographic field notes should be written so that the ethnographer's voice can be heard in them. Transparent reflexivity is an integral part of the reporting of ethnographic work. Reflexive writing makes it possible for the readers to follow the processes of the research.

There is no precise definition for how ethnographic research should be carried out. Each process is unique and has its own characteristics; this is typical for ethnographic work and

it has to be accepted by the researcher. Research environments, phenomena of interest and researchers are different and thereby each ethnography is one of a kind. The production of an ethnography can be seen as a creative process. Creativity is best achieved when the methodological frame is large. (Humphreys 2003.)

Notwithstanding the latter points, some established phases of the ethnographic process can be identified. Usually the process begins with an initial familiarisation with the culture of interest. This enables necessary knowledge for further planning and for applying for funding for the research project. Settling in the field and data collection are the core elements of the ethnographic process. In the ethnographic process, the collection of data and its analysis are overlapping. In reporting, it is essential to convey the voice of the people who have been studied to the readers of the ethnographic product. (Nikkonen, Janhonen et al. 2001, see also Pereira 2014.)

4.4 ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK IN VOLATILE ENVIRONMENT

In the field, the ethnographer is the most important research instrument. This is why the ethnographer's personal life history, experiences, feelings, thoughts and attitudes form an essential framework for the fieldwork. (Fetterman 2010, see also Punch 2012.) Working in a conflict area causes additional stress on the researcher; people's experiences are deeply touching and everyday circumstances are unpredictable. Special attention to reflection and recovery during the time in the field is needed.

Special training for working in exceptional circumstances and experience working as a health specialist in disaster areas and as a human rights monitor in the West Bank were required and made use of in the gathering of data for this study. These experiences proved to be a major resource during the field work; in particular security know-how was needed in the volatile environment.

In some situations during the fieldwork, it was necessary to seek a middle ground between risk-taking and the collection of valuable research material. Completely risk-free fieldwork in a volatile environment is not possible; the more accurately that the risks are identified the safer working environment is. What is inalienable is protecting informants from any harm. This principle was followed throughout the research process. It was particularly essential to be aware of multidimensional nature of the field; in addition to the concrete environment, part of the field was on the Internet. The precaution, which a volatile environment requires, had to be remembered also in an electronic environment. (see Birenbaum-Carmeli 2014, Schoemaker 2014.)

One of the most important skills needed to conduct fieldwork is the ability to empathize genuinely with the experiences of people. The importance of respectful empathy is especially pronounced when dealing with sensitive issues. (Fetterman 2010.) Wikan (2012) describes emphatic identification by using the concept of resonance. The experience from the field in the present study revealed that resonance is crucial if the understanding of sensitive issues like suffering and coping after traumatic events is desired.

Resonance as an emotional and cognitive capacity makes it possible for the ethnographer to understand other people as much as it is possible; however, it has to be recognized that a complete understanding is never definitively reached. The precondition for resonance, and thus to real understanding, is that the ethnographer is willing to silence his or her own voice, settle down and focus attention on a person who is near. (Wikan 2012.)

Assuming a position of knowing or any level of an arrogant attitude prevents the realization of resonance. On the contrary; respect, appreciation and even discreet admiration, when it is presented in credible way, provide the environment for resonance. (Wikan 2012.) During the fieldwork of present study, the main task of the researcher was to understand rather than to judge. The conflict environment is filled with confrontations between various parties and staying calm in volatile situations requires conscious emotional control. Only rarely a tendency to judge or to intervene was felt, and in those situations it was required to assume a broader attitude. This helped to keep focusing on the informants and usually led to a more diverse and deeper understanding of his or her way of thinking. In general, the role of the researcher offered a suitable position for discreet observation and empathic resonance.

At the same time as a deep resonance with an informant is rewarding, it may also be exhausting. The researcher's emotions are involved in encounters and the informants' emotional burden becomes very close. This is particularly the case when the researcher has a repetitive everyday contact with the informant or when shared experiences are intense and they are similar to the ethnographer's own personal experiences. It has also been suggested that a volatile environment heightens emotions; emotional triggers may become more sensitive in a volatile environment. (Davies, Spencer cop. 2010, Reinharz 2011.)

The dilemma posed by emotions has recently been under active discussions among ethnographers from different fields. On one hand, a professional attitude has been seen as the primary state and the significance of emotions is seen as secondary. On the other hand, the ethnographer has been seen as human being and as such highly emotional; a professional attitude and experiencing emotions are not mutually exclusive. It has been suggested that a researcher's emotions are one of the key resources in ethnographic fieldwork. The courage to face one's own emotions forms the basis for encountering another person's emotions, including painful ones. The importance of intrapersonal skills is emphasized when working in a volatile environment. (see Beatty 2014, Sanders 2014.)

As described previously, in the present study, an overt approach was used during the data collection in the field. In practice this meant that the idea of the research was explained openly; its purpose, who it is for, and what will happen in the end as findings are described and a report written. However, it is clear that in the field overt and covert research cannot be easily distinguished. Rather often, the case is that participants, at some point, forget the role of the researcher and behave as though they are not under observation. When the relationships become less formal it is understandable that the original roles become blurred. Accordingly the overt role of the researcher was, at times, semi-overt. (See McCurdy 2014, Li 2008.)

According to ethnographic literature (see e.g. O'Reilly 2012, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007) personal appearance can be a significant aspect when approaching people in a new environment. Sometimes the researcher may want to dress in a way that is similar to the people in the field. This is particularly needed in the case of covert research but is often required in overt research as well, especially during the first steps of gaining trust. Although it was known in this study that the complete assimilation with Palestinian people was not possible, it was important to draw as little attention through appearance as possible. Simply wearing jeans and a t-shirt was realised to be adequately similar to the attire of the young adult men who were most often participants in the research.

Moving around in the field usually took place on foot or by using public transport. In practise, public transport meant "service", which is a van with capacity of around ten passengers. These "service" cars wait until all the seats are occupied and take people to nearby villages and towns. Using this transportation had two main benefits; it attracted little attention and

eased the blending in with local people, but even more importantly, it gave number of opportunities to converse with people in an everyday setting. Travelling took time because of the poor roads and frequent stops at checkpoints. In the crammed "service" the research instrument was truly in the best possible research environment; close to the people, in the midst of their everyday lives.

Ethnographic fieldwork is often described as an intimate and prolonged acquaintance with a community or group of people that the ethnographer wants to learn about. To be part of ordinary life and establish relationships are at the centre of the fieldwork. What these relationships mean in practise is sometimes difficult to define. (Eriksen, Laitinen et al. 2004.) Defining whether an ethnographer as the research instrument has actually achieved contact with people's everyday life can be considered with the help of indicators described in the following passage and the strength of the criteria is their functionality.

Wolcott (cop. 2005) names three criteria to serve as indicators of the adequacy of an ethnographer's knowledge about informant's life. These criteria will be used here as the framework to evaluate and reflect on some of the field relations in the present study. The first criterion asks; "[w]hat do I know of this person's sleeping arrangements?" This question can be understood in both a figurative and a literal sense. Figurative, who are and who have been the person's sexual partners? Literal, where does this person sleep? As one might expect, sleeping arrangements were not one of the first issues discussed with informants in the present study. Though this was something that was encountered repeatedly especially in those occasions when it was possible to overnight in a participant's home. Indeed, an understanding of sleeping arrangements constitutes a relevant perspective to understand the whole of life in the field.

One of the informants slept in a former cattle shelter, which was temporarily made into an extra space for a large family. Although the cattle were no longer present, the shelter was otherwise largely in its original form. Another slept in an unfinished house where there were only concrete walls but nothing else; just some padding had been placed on top of the cement and this served as place for sleeping. One slept in the room where the entire floor was covered with mattresses and pillows giving impression that at least five adult men were sleeping in this small space. In all of these cases, getting to know the sleeping arrangements contributed significantly to the overall understanding of individual's situation in life.

Sleeping in the sexual sense was discussed only in rare cases, although in those cases it proved to be important issue when trying to understand person's life as a whole. The theme, of course, required the utmost discretion and trust. Informants were never pressured to discuss their sexual experiences. When they wanted to share their thoughts, however, it was not intentionally avoided. In those cases issues related to sexuality were relevant as part of a larger whole. Having these experiences, one must agree with Wolcott (cop. 2005) about the indubitable descriptiveness of sleeping arrangements.

The second criterion asks; "[w]hat do I know about how this person's laundry gets washed, dried, and put away?" (Wolcott cop. 2005). During the fieldwork laundry practises were never asked about directly, but rather, observed on many occasions. It was noticed for example that laundry was mainly done by women. Laundry issues were also connected to recurring problems with the water and electric supply. Water and electricity outages were one of the everyday difficulties caused by the occupation. It was also learnt that laundry practises described to some extent a family's economic status as modern washing machines were available but they required assets. It was also noted that some informants had the opportunity to use a laundry service. In those rare cases it told clearly about socio-economic status of the person.

The third criterion ponders "[h]ow much do I know about any of my informants' grandmothers?" Grandparents often play important roles when thinking about an individual's life history. A researcher may not have observed the grandparent's and the informant's relationship first-hand, but might reasonably benefit knowing about it. (Wolcott cop. 2005.) As the present research interest was closely connected to the history of the field it was appropriate to discuss grandparents with a number of the informants. Some of the informants even took the researcher to meet with their grandparents and that indeed offered insights that significantly enriched the study. Once, when the informant wanted to take the researcher to his home village to meet many different people, the first and most important stop was the grandparents' home. Discussion with these modest and unassuming older people opened an understanding of the whole village community as well as to individual informant's life.

Ethnographic fieldwork can be understood as a form of inquiry in which researcher participates in the social activities of an individual or group. The methods of data collection may vary; however, the essential is a presence in people's lives. Fieldwork as a part of research process is goal orientated activity, but at the same time is difficult to predict. It has elements of a creative art as well as an exact science. With absolute certainty it can be said that ethnographic fieldwork always involves something more than simply the collection of data for research; genuine encounters with people forms the core of the fieldwork. At the centre of the fieldwork are always the people in the field, not the researcher. The researcher should seek positions that enable data collection but gather little attention. This is important in terms of the quality and ethics of research but often also crucial for field security. (Wolcott cop. 2005, see also Li 2008.)

It is characteristic for fieldwork that accidents and luck have an important role in the progression of the work. One could even question if fieldwork takes place in the midst of real life if everything proceeds as it was planned in advance (Van Maanen 2011). The experiences from the present research process support this statement strongly. It could be even said that the most authentic and genuine encounters with individuals and groups took place specifically without prior planning. Correspondingly, the pre-planned appointments were often cancelled:

> I walked around the town centre with this new acquaintance of mine, stopping every now and then to chat with some of his friends. While walking, his mother called him and asked him to come to the hospital to visit his father who was there. Surprisingly, the new acquaintance of mine asked me to come to the hospital with him. I felt uncertain if it was good idea to go and visit someone I hadn't met before. As the hospital wasn't too far and the acquaintance assured that it is ok, I decided to go. Fieldnotes 9/2012

Due to the unstable security situation in the field, decision making required particular alertness. It was a normal and indispensable daily routine in the field to follow security releases from the UN's regional office, as well as from local and international media, and most importantly, to talk with people in the field. In particular, barbers, shopkeepers and taxi drivers turned out to be excellent sources of last minute information about the security situation. Over time it was also possible to learn to evaluate the security conditions on the basis of people's behaviour.

Gaining access to the people being studied might be one of the most demanding and time consuming phases of an ethnographer's work. How access is gained will affect the reception that the ethnographer will face in the field. In an unsuccessful case, the multiplied effect of the way that access was obtained can be distressing and disturb the fieldwork significantly. To avoid mistakes made due to ignorance, it is recommended to collect diverse background

information, to read extensively and especially to obtain knowledge about the group of interest. (O'Reilly 2009, 5-12, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007, 41-62.)

In the present research the process to gain access to informants started more than a year before arriving in the field. The instability in the operating field caused challenges for access; in particular access to the Gaza Strip proved to be cumbersome due to the bureaucratic and security reasons. An essential part of the work was to complete all the necessary applications for official documents; the second was to build a network of contacts in the field. A number of individuals and organizations were contacted for initial inquiries. Almost all of them replied somehow, but as is likely clear, it turned out to be rather complicated to get access to the area of ongoing political and military conflict. Finally a contact with a local aid organization was established through its Finnish partner agency. A loose commitment with the local organization proved to be an advantage, as it made it possible to be relatively free to take advantage of opportunities as they appeared. For safety reasons, local organizations or individuals shall not be named in this dissertation.

In ethnographic terminology gatekeepers are understood to be those individuals who know the community, organization, group of people or source of information and control access to them (Padgett cop. 2012, 84, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007, 49-53.). Gatekeepers are sometimes clearly marked by the formal position they have in community, but it is not unusual that gatekeepers prove to be someone unexpected. Identifying the relevant gatekeepers is one of the crucial stages in the ethnographer's field work. (Hammersley, Atkinson 2007, 49-53, LeCompte, Schensul 1999, 6, 176.)

During the fieldwork a number of gatekeepers were met. Some were official, like a deputy director of a non-governmental organization, but most of them were ordinary people who gave access to a local village or to a group of friends. The guiding principle was always to be truthful when talking with a possible gatekeeper as it was known that the things told to him or her would be told to the group that would be later met. The fieldwork was conducted in accordance with the overt approach; the research and its objectives were discussed openly. (see O'Reilly 2009, 58-59, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007, 53-58.)

It is apparent that the researcher's own personal characteristics and attributes may affect access. Typically gender, age, religion and ethnicity are issues that have an effect on access. Becoming part of the group, or blending into the background in some manner, is not simple and in many cases it has to be accepted that fieldworker cannot blend in fully. However, maintaining a low profile is advisable, and blending into the group is recommended as long as it occurs in a credible and discreet way. It should be noted that also the excessive pursuit to blend in can be detrimental and counterproductive. (Bengry-Howell 2012.)

During the fieldwork, the first questions that were usually asked by the gatekeepers or anyone in the field were about nationality and the reason for staying in Palestine. It was always expressed openly that the researcher is from Finland research on psychosocial coping in a conflict environment is being conducted. Without exception, the reaction was positive. Finland was considered to be a neutral country and the research was estimated to be harmless or even beneficial to Palestinians. Working in the field where hospitality is an important part of the culture had a beneficial impact on the fieldwork. People were friendly and willing to help if asked by a visitor and often even offered help without being asked. Especially in rural areas, the culture associated with hospitality was overwhelming and gave rise to challenges related to the desirability of maintaining a low profile.

The male gender of the researcher opened access mostly to male groups and restricted the access to female groups. The main rule was that it was possible to talk with older women, but

not with younger ones. However, many of the older women hesitated to speak with a male visitor especially as the conversation needed to be conducted in English or with an interpreter. Generally, discussions with women were limited to greetings and some polite words. During family visits meals and conversations were shared with male members of the family while females were in other rooms. However, only occasionally access to communication with opposite sex was strictly denied. As the issue was obviously sensitive, extra watchfulness was needed in contacts with the opposite sex.

Fieldwork in a conflict area has special features, of which, the issue of trust is one of the most crucial (Wood 2006). One of the interviewees said that he always assumes every new person coming into contact with him to be a spy or a collaborator with a third party. This must have been thought by many others as well, but perhaps because of politeness it was not mentioned openly. Otherwise, not related to the researcher, the themes of spying and collaborating were mentioned repeatedly. Uncertainty and questions about the motives of others is normal part of living in any conflict area. (Wood 2006.)

O'Reilly (2009, 18-22) highlights that difference in cultural background between the participants and the researcher can be seen as an important resource in ethnographic research. In this study, the difference is partially due to cultural background, but also due to the societal conditions in which the military occupation has a strong influence which is unlike the conditions of life in Finland. Difference made it possible to ask naive questions, to be surprised, to not understand and to then ask for more detailed explanations. (See Coe 2001.) In this study, the way of working in the field was often based on this idea. Questions that would most probably be considered mindless, if asked by a local person, were accepted when asked by outsider and were found to be useful and used repeatedly. Questions that revealed the ignorance of the researcher were met with forbearance; the interviewees explained unclear issues over and over again until the researcher gained insight into the matter under the consideration.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The data collection for the present research process took place during two separate periods of time. The first phase was realized in the autumn of 2012; its length was two months and it took place entirely in the West Bank. The primary place of residence was in Ramallah but the fieldwork includes data gathered while travelling around the West Bank area; the data collection took place in several towns and villages. For security reasons, the exact naming of places is avoided. When it is necessary, the context is described, but at all times the informants' safety is prioritized.

The second phase of data collection was in early 2013, its length was one month and it took place in Jordan, Egypt and in the Gaza Strip. In Jordan, the research environment was the Wihdat refugee camp, also known as Amman New Camp. The refugee camp was set up for the Palestinians in 1955 and it still accommodates more than 50 000 Palestinian refugees. The Wihdat refugee camp is the second largest Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan. The refugee camp is overcrowded, the unemployment rate is high and many shelters are dilapidated and in poor condition. Poverty and poor living conditions give rise to many social problems such as early marriages and divorces. (UNRWA 2013.)

In Egypt, interviews were done in Cairo. Both of those interviewed were Palestinians who had a background in the occupied Palestinian territories. In the Gaza Strip the primary place

of residence was located in Gaza City but fieldwork took place across the Gaza Strip. As the area is geographically small, daily data collection took place all across the region.

Data collection methods were observation, participant observation, interviewing (individual and group) and a questionnaire survey. Interviews and the questionnaire were used for different informants. Observations and interviews were recorded in the fieldnotes on a daily basis. In addition, a separate diary was used for recording more personal reflections during the fieldwork. The collected data was kept consistently under protection and carefully stored taking into account specific requirements for security.

The focus in data collection was in Palestinian people who had reached the age of majority, no other limitations were used. Because the age structure of the population is young, most of the people encountered were young adults. There were, however, also elderly people, usually the grandparents of the interviewed young adults. Some informants were interviewed twice and on several occasions interviews were conducted in groups. The individual interviews lasted from fifteen minutes to four hours. The usual duration of the interview was about one and a half hour. As a designated place for the interviews was not available, the interviews were conducted wherever possible. Some interviews took place, for example, in a cowshed, on the ruins of the bombed house or at the road side.

Individual interviews were conducted with a total of 49 people. In this context, the age groups are divided as follows: young adult (18-34 years old), middle-aged (35-59 years old) and elderly (60 onwards). In many cases, the exact age was not asked and the classification in different age groups is based on approximation. The table 1 shows the distribution of individual interviews by area, gender and age group.

Table 1. Individual interviews by area, gender and age group

	West Bank	Jordan	Egypt	Gaza Strip	Total
Female, young adult	1	-	1	1	3
Male, young adult	10	3	1	2	16
Female, middle-aged	5	1	-	1	7
Male, middle-aged	11	2	-	4	17
Female, elderly	1	-	-	-	1
Male, elderly	3	1	-	1	5
Total	31	7	2	9	49

The number of group interviews was 10. The group interviews took place in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The table below shows the distribution of individuals who participated in the group interviews by area, gender and age group.

Table 2. Individuals participating in group interviews by area, gender and age group

	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Female, young adult	8	-	8
Male, young adult	22	-	22
Female, middle-aged	4	-	4
Male, middle-aged	8	3	11
Female, elderly	-	-	-
Male, elderly	-	-	-
total	42	3	45

Handwritten notes were usually made during the interviews. Protecting written notes in unstable conditions required great caution. Using a digital recorder was not reasonably possible, because it would have raised concerns and doubts. Handwritten notes were the most low profile way to record interviews; it proved to be the method that allowed for a confidential and relaxed atmosphere. It was, however, observed that excessive concentration on writing bothered the interviewees; active listening and feedback, in turn, helped the interviewees. Accordingly, the best practice was to write tightly and to re-write with more descriptive style soon after the interview.

The snowball method was used as the primary method of data collection. The snowball method is a network sampling method which is used when studying hard to reach populations or somehow sensitive themes. In the snowball method, the researcher uses key informants to locate people in a population. Then the researcher asks those people to name others in the population and to nominate someone else for a possible interview. Thus, the researcher is routed from informant to informant. A weakness of the snowball method arises with large populations, as people who are well known might be named repeatedly, and less well known people are left aside. Another potential weakness is the homogeneity of the data; it is possible that informants only suggest people similar to themselves to be interviewed. (Noy 2008, Bernard cop. 2006, see also McCreesh 2011.)

During the data collecting process it was revealed that the snowball method was effective in reaching people who were willing and able to share their experiences. At the same time it became apparent that the snowball method does indeed gather informants that to a certain degree resemble the already existing informants. An example of this phenomenon is the lack of extremist group members in the number of participants. If extremist group members were involved, they did not express extreme opinions. Participants who were involved in humanitarian voluntary work and represented to some extent peaceable values did not take the researcher into contact with aggressive extremist groups or people closely involved with such groups. Using the snowball method generally resulted in contacts with likeminded friends or relatives of the previous interviewee. Notwithstanding, the method proved to be useful in unstable and demanding conditions.

One of the key strengths of the snowball method was the increased safety that it offered in the volatile environment. It was safer to go to people who were recommended by someone who was already known. Quite often informants actually took the researcher to meet the person he or she recommended to be the following interviewee. That was helpful also from a practical point of view, especially when it was needed, for example, to travel to a neighbouring village. Occasionally spontaneous exceptions were made from using the snowball method and in-depth discussions or interviews with people met by chance in barber shop, service car or in a coffee shop were conducted. These spontaneous contacts often led to new contacts, thus allowing for the implementation of the snowball method again.

Participant observation is one of the main data collection methods in anthropology and widely used in other fields of social science as well. Getting close to people, and experiencing the lives of people as much as possible, is a prerequisite for participant observation. People have to feel comfortable in the presence of the researcher so that it is possible to observe and record information about them. The researcher has to be immersed in a culture and be able to then take himself or herself out again so that it is possible to intellectualize, reflect, analyse and write about the experience credibly. (O'Reilly 2009,150-156, Hammersley, Atkinson 2007,3-4, 108-117.)

Bernard (cop. 2006) describes different roles that fieldwork can involve. The first is "complete participant" meaning that the researcher becomes a member of a group without revealing that data for research is being collected. The second is "participant observer" referring to an insider who observes some aspects of life around him or her (observing participant) or an outsider who participates in some aspects of life around him or her (participating observer). In this study the researcher went to the field in order collect data for this research and lived in close contact with Palestinian people; however, the

fact that he is not Palestinian means that, according to the previous classification, he was a participating observer.

Participant observation can be seen as a method, but at the same time it can be seen as a strategy of research in the field. In this perspective participant observation is seen in a broader scope; it is not only one method among other methods, but a way of being in the field. From this point of view, one can ask questions about the fieldworker's setting in the field; is he or she well situated to learn whatever there is to be learned? Hence, participant observation is certainly something more than only being physically in an environment of interest; what is happens in the researcher's mind is also crucial (Wolcott cop. 2005).

In the present study, special attention was paid to a respectful and sensitive way of attending often sensitive situations. The objective of the participation was to understand the phenomena of suffering and coping, not to influence to way that people experience them. Nonetheless, it was an accepted fact that interaction is bidirectional and both parties are prone to the effects of confluence. Alone, the presence is intervention and it is necessary to identify the possible consequences on the participants. A complex conflict as a research environment only emphasizes the importance of the recognition of the latter. (Cf. Tullis 2013, Oeye 2007.)

The quantitative data was collected from students (N=198) in three different institutes of higher education in the West Bank by using the Ways of Coping Questionnaire. The Ways of Coping Questionnaire (1988) has been one of the most popular research instruments of coping for more than 20 years (Kato 2013, Lundqvist 2006). It was originally developed by two researchers of stress processes, Susan Folkman and Richard Lazaruz. The theoretical background of the questionnaire is in a cognitive model of stress and coping. According to Folkman and Lazarus (1980), individuals cope in stressful situations by using cognitive and behavioural strategies. The questionnaire has been developed to describe these coping processes in a variety of stressful situations. (Folkman, Lazarus 1988.)

There are three underlying assumptions which form the basis for the questionnaire. First, coping is process-oriented; the individual's thinking and actions are not static but are constantly changing and responsive. Second, coping is contextual; the number of people and situation related variables affect the coping process. Third, there is no prior assumption about coping; the quality of coping may vary and the outcome is not predictable. (Folkman 1986, Folkman, Lazarus 1985.)

The Ways of Coping Questionnaire was chosen for the present study because it has been widely used in a numerous different cultural environments, its language is clear and it has been found to be suitable for coping research in the context of different stressors (see Ali 2012, Bigatti 2012, Kieffer 2011, Lambert 2004). In the Middle East, it has been used, inter alia, in the Gaza Strip and in Iran (Padyab 2013, Thabet 2004).

The questionnaire has 66 items containing a wide range of thoughts and acts that are possible for an individual in a stressful encounter. First, respondents were asked to describe by writing one stressful situation in relation to living in the conflict area. After that, respondents used a 4-point Likert scale (0=does not apply and/or not used, 3=used a great deal) to describe the degree of using the different thoughts and acts in order to cope in the stressful situation. The contents of the written descriptions were classified and the whole data set was analysed statistically. (See Folkman, Lazarus 1988.)

Participation was voluntary and the students responded to the survey as individuals. The situation in which a questionnaire was completed was peaceful; the response time was not limited. The language of the questionnaire was English and participants had the opportunity to ask for help with language if needed. Since the language of study in higher education is predominantly English, completing the questionnaire in English took place without difficulty.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

If ethical considerations form the greatest challenge in the science of human behaviour in general, it is even more so a challenge when the research is conducted in the volatile environment of a complex conflict (cf. Bernard cop. 2006). The centrality of ethical factors was obvious right from the beginning of the research process. As the researcher had worked as a human right monitor in the same field in the past, the complexity and sensitivity of environment were known. It was obvious that new scientifically produced information would be useful, but that the research process should not pose a threat to anyone. Ethical issues need to be considered in all stages of research. The first and constantly conscious principle of working with vulnerable groups in a volatile environment is: do no harm. (Barbour 2010, Mackenzie 2007.)

Practically all potential research interests include an ethical dimension; they involve risks both to the researcher and research subjects (Bernard cop. 2006). Evaluating what are and are not ethical and acceptable risks is part of each research process. The researcher has to weigh the cost/benefit ratio and seek to balance the potential benefits against potential costs from the point of views of all parties. To be clear; collecting and using data should not be at the expense of the participants in any way. (O'Hara cop. 2012, Molyneux 2008.)

There are a number of key ethical principles that must be carefully considered during the research process. The fundamental principle, doing good (beneficence), refers to the need for research to be useful and meaningful. The research is justified from this perspective if it aims at achieving something good; this, of course, is tied to values and may vary in different cultures. Alleviation of suffering, or obtaining knowledge for that, is an example of an issue that is widely identified as good. (See e.g. Sieber, Tolich cop. 2013, BMA 2012, Williams 2005.) The need for the present study was ascertained by in depth discussions with both members of the scientific community and professionals working in the field. From these discussions it was concluded that there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of psychosocial coping in a prolonged conflict, and the present study could contribute to this.

After making a review of previous research, it was realized that although the theme of psychosocial coping in a prolonged conflict was studied to some extent, the ethnographic approach was not used widely. The ethical premise which requires a justified need for the research was met and it was possible to start the research process. The consideration of ethical matters with the supervisors of this dissertation work has been continuous since the first phases of the process.

The do no harm principle (primum no nocere or non-malfeasance) has been recognized as an essential foundation in both clinical practice and in research for a long time (Percival 1849). This principle covers the researcher, the research subjects and everyone affected by the research. The effects of the research are not always obvious and this is why the researcher has to focus on possible harms from various perspectives. The concept of situated ethics refers to the need to understand the specific ethical characteristics of each situation. The ethical course of action requires not only the knowledge of general principles, but also the ability to apply them in each occasion. In this approach, broad understandings of the processes that are present in the situations are central to ethical decision making. (Flick 2014, 49-62, see also Molyneux 2008.)

The identification of the potential negative impacts is the responsibility of each researcher, but has also been institutionalized with the creation of ethical committees or boards in research institutes and universities. (Small 2014, Jaspers 2013.) The study plan of the present study has been evaluated by the Ethical Committee of University of Eastern Finland. The study plan was found to meet the ethical requirements of the University of Eastern Finland.

The ethical premise of any research must be based on the participants' rights and dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights summarizes those rights to which everyone is eligible. These rights must not be violated either directly or indirectly. (James 2007.) The do no harm ethical principle required special attention in the present study due to the exceptional research environment. It had to be understood, that all information in all its forms was, in principle, sensitive. Information processing had to happen with careful consideration. This was the case both in normal everyday interaction and in electronic communication. Things such as people's whereabouts, relationships and opinions are highly confidential information the disclosure of which, in the environment of the present study, could cause serious harm to participants.

Increasingly, it is considered that there is no value-free science. In most cases, the mere choosing of the subject for research contains a dimension of value. (Bernard cop. 2006.) In the present study, the previous is highlighted because of the nature of the conflict taking place in the research field. Since it would have been impossible within the limits of the resources to carry out the research both in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territories and because the researcher had previous work experience in the occupied Palestinian territories, the choice was obvious. The researcher's personal interest in Palestinian culture and people significantly affected the choice of the topic. In this respect, the point of departure for the research was not neutral. However, the researcher was aware of this background and its possible effects on research.

What is essential in the present study is to note that it does not take a stand in the ongoing conflict, but rather describes experiences that Palestinian people have as they live their lives in the middle of the conflict. It is unavoidable that the present research report includes descriptions of the conflict; however, the conflict is not at the centre of this research, the main element is descriptions about suffering and coping given by Palestinian people. When it has been necessary, even tough or extreme experiences have been included. However, this is done only when it has been necessary due to the essential significance. All unnecessary violent content, although a part of the conflict, has been avoided.

On the ground, the researcher needs to practice ethical evaluation all the time; each encounter in the field includes an ethical dimension. Although ethical principles guide decision making, they do not allow for easy or simple answers to all ethical decision making situations. The process of balancing benefits against possible costs is largely subjective and situational. (Hammersley, Atkinson 2007, 209-229.) Hence, it is highly valuable if researcher has an opportunity for reflective discussions with colleagues and supervisors especially in the most challenging decision making situations of the research process (see Cohen, Manion et al. 2007).

During the fieldwork there was the opportunity for email discussions with supervisors back in Finland. The regular exchange of emails offered opportunity for reflection and feedback; this was particularly necessary since the fieldwork was completed alone without a research team.   One of the supervisors also travelled to the field, which provided an opportunity for ethical discussion on detailed questions under cogitation. Discussions with the supervisor also offered an opportunity to reflect on the ethical choices as part of broader entity of research. In addition, other discussion partners were met incidentally in the field; anthropologists, medical doctors, teachers, and what was perhaps most meaningful, quite ordinary people who had a discreet understanding of right and wrong in the cultural environment. Ethical dilemmas, but also answers, were usually encountered in everyday settings.

Another constructive factor was discussions about ethical dilemmas with humanitarian expatriates in the field. Even though the viewpoints of humanitarian workers are slightly dif-

ferent from those of researchers it was found that many matters, especially dealing with human relations in the field, were the same. Both humanitarian expatriates and researchers are visitors in relation to the areas of permanent population. Difference between the permanent population and visitors is intensified by the fact that the large majority of the Palestinian population has no freedom to travel abroad or even move freely to the neighbouring regions in the occupied Palestinian territories. Another important factor is the scarcity which is part of the everyday life of a large part of the Palestinian population. The unequal situation between people always creates ethical challenges in relationships. Unevenly distributed resources and power cause ethical tensions of which the researcher must be aware. Vulnerability has to be taken into account, but at the same time people must be treated as fully-fledged individuals who are capable of making conscious decisions.

In situations where the informants were in a weak position, the researcher paid particular attention to emphasis voluntary participation. Participants were never offered money or other benefits from participation in the study. Occasionally the researcher gave a little gift, such as package of coffee or biscuits, when staying in family's home overnight. The gift was not interpreted as compensation for interviews but as a small compliment. The researcher also did not accept gifts from the participants. In accordance with the cultural practices the visitor was offered food and bed to sleep in if arriving from a distance. Accepting this was considered to be an ethically acceptable practice.

Informed consent should be ethical basis of any empirical research involving human participants. Participants have to make an informed and independent decision whether they want to take part in the research or not. The participation of children requires special arrangements; parental consent is required. (Farrimond 2013, American Anthropological Association 2009.) In the present study the data was collected only from adults. Since a significant part of the informants were young adults, it was necessary to ask about their age. This was not a problem, because in the Palestinian culture asking young adults their age is not usually considered rude. In the questionnaires the age was asked as part of the preliminary information, and in the case of interviews, it was asked at the very beginning of session. Among older adults, age was not asked.

The cover page of the quantitative questionnaire included all the required information for participants: informant about the researcher, an explanation and the main purpose of the research, information about confidentiality and anonymity and a highlighting of the principle of voluntary participation. The same information was given at the very starting point of each interview, although in a less formal way. As the interviews were conducted in an informal manner, the participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the researcher or the research project during the interview. This was found to be a good practice; questions were asked and more information was given.

As the snowball method was used for data collection in the field, one informant led to the next informant based on his or her assessment of who would be a suitable person for the research. Sometimes this required a great effort on the part of the informant; he or she, for example, might take researcher to a neighbouring village by car and give lot of his or her time. In these cases, it was necessary to pay special consideration to the principle of informed and voluntary consent. It had to be ensured that everyone took part in the study, not because of sense of duty, but truly with informed and voluntary consent.

The attitude of the informants towards the researcher was positive and they were willing to take part in the research. A number of participants said that they wished that the world would hear their story; they think they have been treated unfairly and that world has to know

about that and to help them to achieve justice. Many people also asked the researcher to insure that they and their story are not forgotten. Those words contained an important ethical obligation to the researcher; people's experiences should be transmitted to the attention of a broad audience.

The ethical codes of the American Anthropological Association (2009) and the American Sociological Association (1999) were used as a code of practice throughout the research process. Before starting each interview, it was verbally explained what the study is about and how the information collected will be used. Since interviews were done in a volatile conflict area, it was particularly important to stress that the confidentiality of the informants would be protected in every possible way. Due to the previous factor, all names and identifiable details have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals. At any time when it was required to choose between exact detailed data and the security of informants, the decision was made in favour of for security. The safety of the informants has always been placed first. This was also the reason why it was chosen not to use visual materials like photographs and videos. No exact dates or locations of interviews are given in the report to make it impossible to identify people and places.

Ethical issues that are to be considered in relation to the data were not only limit to the time in the field. The safe transport of the data from the field required careful consideration. Sending data in an electronic form did not prove to be a good alternative; qualitative data was carried along with the researcher. To ensure the safe transport of the qualitative data, a preliminary analysis was conducted in the field and all paragraphs referring to people or places were deleted. The quantitative data, namely the questionnaires, were delivered outside of the research field in a secure manner and further delivered to Finland by using secure post. In Finland, the data is stored in a locked safe out of the reach of unauthorized parties.

5 Results

5.1 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS ON STRESSFUL INCIDENTS AND COPING

At the beginning of the questionnaire a participant was asked to describe a stressful situation that she or he had experienced in relation to living in the conflict zone. A total of 155 out of 198 participants described at least one stressful situation. Some of the participants mentioned up to three stressful situations.

Of all the described stressful situations 34 % were incidents at checkpoints. 17 % of the descriptions addressed a situation where one had witnessed someone being arrested or injured or exposed to maltreatment. The other repeatedly mentioned situations were exposure to tear gas, sound bombs or rubber bullets in settings other than checkpoint or demonstrations (16 %) and restriction of freedom of movement (9 %).

The results indicate the high prevalence of conflict related stressful situations among higher education students and are in line with previous studies conducted in the occupied Palestinian territory (Al-Krenawi 2012, Batniji 2009, Hobfoll 2012).

The relative scores, expressed as percentages, were calculated for each of the eight coping scales. These relative scores describe the proportion of effort for each type of coping. Positive reappraisal which accounted for 15 % of the coping was the most used coping strategy, followed by self-controlling (13 %) and planned problem solving (13 %). Confrontive coping was the least used coping strategy (11 %).

Among the sixty-six items in the questionnaire, the highest mean (2.27) was observed for the item "I prayed". The lowest mean (1.07) was observed for the item "Avoided being with people in general".

The reliability, estimated by Cronbach's Alpha for the eight subscales ranged from 0.32 to 0.67.

The quantitative results provide one aspect of the phenomenon under consideration. It is obvious that the quantitative approach, at least in this setting, requires a joined qualitative approach in order to describe the complex phenomenon of suffering and coping in the midst of a prolonged conflict. The remainder of the results focus on the qualitative aspects of suffering and coping in the midst of a prolonged conflict.

5.2 QUALITATIVE RESULTS ON SUFFERING IN PROLONGED CONFLICT

5.2.1 The premises of encountering the suffering

At the beginning of the research process the plan was to only focus on psychosocial coping. According to the initial understanding, it would have been possible to focus only on psychosocial coping separated from other experiences of human life in the midst of a prolonged conflict. However, the more mundane and close the contact with Palestinian people that there was, along with the witnessing of their encounters with the occupier, the more it became apparent that the perspective in this study must be holistic; it must contain a description of the suffering.

The voice of suffering needs be heard and passed on in this dissertation. This understanding did not arise from books that were read or from good advice received from scholars; it

arose from the Palestinian people who were met in the field. Accountability and a liability to the people who wanted to share information about their lives led to this decision. The decision was ethical; it would have been misleading and even false to leave an essential part of the stories without taking into account the suffering. Both the dimensions of suffering and coping had to be recognized as a complete unit.

When this ethnography describes the situations that have produced the suffering, the purpose is not to judge any party. Judgment is not the function of the dissertation. All the necessary background information about every single case described in this report is not available to make any conclusions about the guilt and innocence of the various parties. And even if it were available it is not the role of scientific research to pass judgement about such matters.

The ethnographer's duty and responsibility is to convey genuine human experience as authentically and faithfully as possible. Attempts to be entirely objective, in fact, would be foolish and would be a lost cause. Neutrality and impartiality are not basis of ethnographic work; an ethnographer is always more or less bound to the experiences and interpretations of the people that are being encountered and lived with during the fieldwork. (Carey cop. 2012.)

In particular, the descriptions of the experienced suffering touched the researcher and created compassion. Although the original reason for the encounters was data collection, the human who was living alongside formed a substantial part of the fieldwork. Suffering demands to be seen and empathic listening is needed. (See Wikan 2012.) Although the experiences were tough, people specifically wanted those experiences to be told to the readers of the dissertation.

According the experiences during the fieldwork, the narratives of suffering are usually connected to carefully described events. The narratives may include lots of details which could be analysed afterwards. Sometimes, some possible inconsistencies or internal conflicts in the narratives were noticed. However, it was not seen as the researcher's role to be an investigator; the stories were accepted as they had been told. More than identifying caps or obscurity in detailed coherency, it was the goal to understand the in-depth meanings of the story.

This was a lesson that was learned during the very first steps of the research; focusing on possibly conflicting details prevents the informant from sharing his or her important message; the more researcher focused an undivided concentration on the unique and individual human being and his or her experiences and thoughts, the more he or she was willing and able to trust and share; the more sensitive the issue that the person was sharing, the more unconditional and accepting the reception had to be.

What was found to be important was a real and genuine connection with the narrative that an informant had expressed. The guiding principle was to find a path to connect to the person who had experienced an incident in his or her life, rather than to learn the story through an indirect route. Fortunately, it was almost always possible to reach the original person who had experienced the event. This is not to understate the value of secondary narratives or communally shared narratives. They are important channels for reaching deep and shared ideas in a society. In this dissertation, however, the main focus is in authentic individual narratives. The same applies to the descriptions of the suffering as well as coping.

5.2.2 Experiences of detention and imprisonment

Since 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, the number of Palestinians arrested by the Israelis is about 800 000. It follows that more than 70% of Palestinian families have had one or more family members arrested at some point. Prisoners are mostly adult males but also children and women are arrested and detained. In 2011, almost 200 Palestinian children were in detention. (UN OCHA 2012.) Although children were

not interviewed in this study, some of the adults who were interviewed had prison experiences in their childhood. Thus, stories that told about imprisonment during childhood are included in the data.

One of the interviewees, a young man who had been in an Israeli prison as a minor, described the suffering caused by the lack of privacy. His experience included confusion and embarrassment in the new situation. The description also includes the mention of a practical solution to this problem that the young prisoners devised:

> "We were several young people in the same cell. The toilet seat was in the cell. We weren't used to going to the toilet that way; it had been a private issue before. We made a deal; when someone had to use the toilet, the others held a blanket in front of him, it was like a screen. It was difficult especially at first."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 18)

Experiencing confusion and suffering in the situation described above is not surprising especially if one knows about the manners of the surrounding culture. The confusion that a young man had experienced was obvious. Going to the toilet is a very private matter. Unlike in some other cultures, in Palestinian culture modesty related to undressing, even partially, also affects males. Undressing or using the toilet primarily takes place in privacy, even in situations where there are only men present. Thus, the situation where other people were present and partial undressing was needed, combined with the carrying out of a private bodily function, was experienced as shameful and distressing.

In many different contexts during the fieldwork, people told about the importance of cleanliness. In relating this they often referred to Islam and the rules which are important for cleanliness and tidiness both in a religious and a practical sense. Considering this background the following description related to time spent in prison carries particular meaning. The description was given by a young Palestinian man:

> "When I think of my time in prison, the first month was the worst, the beginning of the imprisonment. Before the trial I spent one month in a dark room, it was located somewhere in the basement. I got one mug of the water at a time, I couldn't wash myself. My back was itching because of dirt and I rubbed it against the wall. The guard told me that I'm like an animal. And that was how I felt, I felt as if I were an animal."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 18)

The above description comprises at least three dirtiness related elements that caused suffering. First of all, discomfort which was resulted by the lack of hygiene in itself. Second, the verbal abuse used by guard as he stated that the prisoner was like an animal. This analogy obviously referred to dirtiness of the prisoner. Thirdly, due to the previous two, this young man felt just as an animal. The internalized experience of oneself as a non-human, like an animal, reflects a deep suffering that affects one's identity as a human being. The time in solitary confinement had contained much more suffering than only things described above. However, the lack of cleanliness and the associated consequences was an issue that this individual person wanted to emphasize primarily.

Another interviewee, also a young Palestinian man, told that he had been in solitary confinement for a total of six months. That time he describes as follows:

"During the imprisonment I was alone in solitary confinement for a total of six months. In solitary confinement I lost my feelings. I thought that none of it matters."
Young-adult male
(Interviewee 7)

The immense suffering caused by the isolation was obviously the reason for the loss of feelings. Emotions were too heavy to endure during that time. In the interview environment feelings, however, were already present. The man's eyes were filled with tears as he was telling about a difficult time in prison.

In solitary confinement, the almost complete lack of human contacts was the main origin of suffering. But a lack of particular important contacts caused suffering also outside of solitary confinement. Being in prison meant being away from important people:

"Once a month I received a message from family through the Red Cross. All things that were in the messages were spinning in my head. I missed them so much."
Young-adult male
(Interviewee 18)

The feelings and thoughts that arose to the mind when the letters from home were received were strong; longing and worrying was difficult to control. The night after receiving the letter was especially difficult, sleep did not come and things bothered the mind. Many of those who had experienced imprisonment described the pain that separation from the beloved caused. The feelings that followed the messages from beloved ones were often ambivalent; paralleled joy, concern and longing.

One of the most intense descriptions of longing and worrying appears in the story of a young man who lost someone very close to him during his imprisonment. During the interview it was clear that the experience he was sharing was extremely painful, therefore more specific questions were not asked. The following quote contains a large amount of the researcher's own reflections:

This young man had ended up in an Israeli prison for two years at age of 14. His parents weren't allowed to visit the prison during that time. One of his very close relatives became ill and died during his imprisonment. I listened to his story quietly. As this young man tells his story, tears rise to his eyes. I somehow feel compassion and feel something about the sorrow and longing the young boy has been going through separated from his loved ones in prison and the worrying as he knew that one of his close relatives was dying in hospital. He continues his story about time in prison. He says he was mistreated in prison, but doesn't continue. I don't want to ask more as I can feel that these experiences are something so sensitive and painful that his limits must be surely respected. It's much more important that his boundaries and the balance of his mind are respected. This is an important ethical principle and I feel it has to be emphasized especially now.
Fieldnotes 8/2012

Experiences such as that described above, were painful at that time, but for many the suffering reach into the present. The suffering experienced in prison comes back to the mind as flash backs, nightmares and various indefinite symptoms. Physical and psychological pain appears together along with social. Depending on the person and his or her way of articulating the suffering experienced in relation to imprisonment the dimension of suffering was

determined. Central in the suffering caused by imprisonment was confusion, humiliation and the longing for loved ones. In particular, imprisonment at a very young age was described as source of continuing suffering a long time after release from prison.

Due to the regularity with which young people are detained, some universities in the occupied Palestinian territories have a tutoring system especially for those students whose studies have been affected by time spent in Israeli prisons or detention centres. Not all of the young Palestinians are within this kind of system and for many the study path ends with detention or imprisonment. As mentioned previously, the period of detention is not always based on a court's decision and a student or his/her university is often not aware of how long the absence in studies will be. (see Harker 2009.)

Adjusting to everyday life after prison can be difficult. One of the interviewees described his difficulties after release. Finding a daily rhythm was difficult; many things also changed during the time spent in prison. The lack of work or place to study made it even more difficult to integrate. A precarious financial situation prevented the parents from helping economically; rather the parents would have needed help from the son. Under these circumstances the young man took up a job which was low-paid and physically demanding, but it was a step towards an ordinary life outside the prison.

An experienced general practitioner who worked in a refugee camp spoke about his experiences with young men who have been released from prison. According to him, many of them seem at first to be fine. Soon, however, a variety of ailments and vague symptoms appear. Psychological stress experienced in prison leaves its mark on a young person. The observations of the doctor in the refugee camp and narratives of young men are consistent; the suffering experienced in prison does not remain inside the prison walls.

The findings are largely consistent with the findings of previous studies. Qouta, Punamäki and Sarraj (1997) studied prison experiences among Palestinian men and found seven different types of prison experience. Only one of the types reflected only negative feelings. The others were more diverse including, for example, the struggle between strength and weakness. It is noteworthy that older men, town residents and those exposed to a high level of torture perceived time in prison more as suffering. The small number of the participants in the present study does not allow for generalizations; however, it can be stated that the prison experiences of the participants in the present study were mainly related to suffering. Aspects related to coping open perspectives on the psychosocial resources used during the imprisonment.

Punamäki, Quta and Sarraj (2010) have examined how different types of torture methods are associated with PTSD and somatic symptoms. The participants in their research were Palestinian ex-prisoners. The results showed that both physical and psychological torture methods are damaging to prisoners' mental health. From the perspective of the present study, it is noteworthy that psychological torture was also associated with somatic symptoms. This consistent observation emphasizes the importance of a holistic interpretation of suffering.

It seems likely that the suffering related to unpleasant or hostile experiences in prison cause suffering which may appear in a number of ways. The boundary between the physical and mental pain is open to interpretation. It appears that in some circumstances psychological maltreatment causes suffering that is experienced primarily as physical pain. In turn, intentionally produced physical pain or discomfort may produce suffering that is primarily mental. The experience of imprisonment related suffering is holistic and temporally extensive; it appears as physical, mental, social and spiritual.

5.2.3 Limitations on movement and incidents at check points

The questionnaire, which was used to gather data from Palestinian higher education students in the West Bank, included one open question. In that question the students were asked to describe a stressful event from the recent past. By far, the most typical situations were incidences at checkpoints. This is understandable from the perspective of everyday life in particular when it comes to university students who travel on daily basis from cities and villages to the university campus and back again.

Limitations on movement and incidents at checkpoints were mentioned over and over again as a source of trouble and suffering in the Palestinian people's lives. It was found that for many of those interviewed, these were everyday sources of suffering; not something that had happened once in the past, but something which one had to experience in way or another even on a daily basis. The reports given by the interviewees received strong confirmation during the fieldwork. Participant observation allowed the witnessing of a number of situations in which movement was limited and serious difficulty arose.

Since checkpoints were obviously an important stage for events that were experienced as meaningful, participant observation was conducted near them. Participant observation at checkpoints was not pleasant; often it was hot, the atmosphere was tense and Israeli soldiers were nervous. But the discomfort was nothing compared to uncertainty and fear that the Palestinian people experienced at the checkpoints. In those moments of fear and annoyance, long interviews were not possible. Experiences were often communicated with just a few sentences. Sometimes even words were not needed; a gaze or gesture said it all. The perceived suffering was taken into account.

While many of the observed situations at checkpoints did not end up in shooting or physical injury, it was quite obvious that many of the situations were deeply humiliating for the Palestinian people. The more that was learned about cultural characteristics, the more obvious was the very nature of the humiliation that Palestinian people experienced by the practices at checkpoints. One example of this is connected to distinct separation of sexes in Palestinian society. Not even in Western Europe would a woman feel comfortable to let an unknown man burrow around in the contents of a handbag, let alone in the middle of a crowd of unknown men. Also, for Palestinian men many situations were humiliating because of cultural context; undressing, even partially, in front of people or obeying to read regulations given by soldiers in front of opposite gender were situations that were obviously humiliating and painful.

It was not only at checkpoints where people shared experiences about incidents. Checkpoints in many different ways were the subject of discussions also when not actually located at one. Some of the discussions were practical, involving information about queuing times or locations of flying checkpoints (mobile checkpoints); some went deeper into the often painful and humiliating experiences that people had experienced at checkpoints.

Understanding the various meanings of checkpoints deepened through interviews and participant observation. It was found that checkpoints are, in a literal sense, not only places of transit, but also places of birth and death. Life in all its forms is experienced in those rugged places. People told that sometimes the soldiers do not let pregnant woman to go through and childbirth occurs at the checkpoint. There were no situations experienced like this during the participant observation, but what was observed was new-borns with parents on the way home from the hospital or on the first visit to relatives. Checkpoints are obviously part of the Palestinian people's life from the very beginning.

Deaths also occur at the checkpoints. People stated that sometimes soldiers do not let ambulances to drive through and critically ill patients die due to delay. In addition, different kind

of violent incidents cause fatalities at the checkpoints. Such situations did not occur during the observation; however, the fact that people told about incidences proved that even death was not unknown at the checkpoints. What was seen during the participant observation was elderly and ill people queuing in hot and stressful environments at the checkpoints. It was obvious that crossing the checkpoint is, for many of them, both a great physical and mental effort. However, the reason for movement was so crucial that the trouble caused by the checkpoint had to be tolerated.

The most extreme checkpoint incidences are those ending in death or serious injury. One of interviewees had a terrifying personal experience of serious physical injury and losing a friend in checkpoint incident:

> "We were going to work by a car. As we were approaching the check point, Israeli soldiers started shooting at our car. The driver died and I was injured badly. Maybe the soldiers assumed that we had a bomb or something and we were going to crash into the check point. But it wasn't the case. We were going to work, nothing like that was in our mind."
> Middle-aged male
> (Interviewee 14)

The incident touched man's life deeply; it brought with it the suffering that had a great influence. The man had lost, at least for now, the ability to make a living for his family. He had constant and severe pain and possibly a permanent handicap. The dead man was from the same village community as the wounded one. A visit to the village revealed the whole village to be in sorrow. Although the grief associated with the death and wounding of men from the village, it was clear that the survival in the material sense would also be difficult. One serious incident at the checkpoint had a painful impact on an entire village community.

It appeared during the participant observation that at some checkpoints the soldiers were visible and gave commands directly to the people who were going through the checkpoint. In other checkpoints commands were given through loudspeakers and the soldiers were not visible. The soldiers probably were watching but this took place through double-sided mirrors or a visual display unit. At one checkpoint where participant observation was conducted, the soldiers were walking above people's heads on a sort of iron bridge; orders were given through the loudspeakers.

Flying checkpoints, which also were observed during the fieldwork, consisted of a military vehicle and a group of soldiers. At flying checkpoints, the interaction was more face to face than in permanent checkpoints. A typical routine appeared to be asking for identification documents and inspecting the vehicle. Sometimes flying checkpoints caused queuing and traffic congestion; people's plans and schedules were interrupted as the unexpected incident halted the journey. The difficulty of planning schedules was mentioned often when the difficulties caused by the checkpoints were discussed. Permanent checkpoints are always a potential place of delay, flying checkpoints were completely unexpected and induced delay whose duration was impossible to assess.

For most of the visitors to the West Bank, the Qalandia checkpoint is the first actual contact with the ongoing military occupation under which the Palestinians live. While approaching the Qalandia checkpoint from the direction of Jerusalem, one cannot avoid seeing a huge grey concrete wall, armed surveillance towers, heavy military vehicles, a network of surveillance accoutrements and armed soldiers accompanied by security staff carrying weapons. The military ambience is only highlighted by the fact that the quiet Mount of Olives, a sacred place for many, is located only a few kilometres away from the turbulent Qalandia checkpoint.

Image 4.Qalandia checkpoint

A large number of Palestinians regularly pass the checkpoint. One of them is an interviewee who told that he passes through the checkpoint regularly with his mother as he takes his mother to chemotherapy for cancer. Every journey is difficult and the most distressing part of the journey from home to hospital and in afternoon back again home is the passing of the crowded checkpoint. The mother is weak because of the illness and the side effects of chemotherapy. Sometimes queuing takes a long time, every time it is strenuous; however, there is no other route to the hospital and the checkpoint has to be passed to reach the treatment.

The historical background makes the site of the present checkpoint even more momentous. The Palestinian American scholar, Helga Tawil-Souri (2010), has described the past and present of Qalandia. Her findings provide background for the findings of the present study. In history, Qalandia was a small village situated between Ramallah and Jerusalem. In 1949 UNRWA set up a refugee camp there for Palestinians who had been forced to leave their homes as the State of Israel was established. The very same refugee camp still exists housing a refugee population of now over 11 000, including the third and fourth generation of refugees. Social problems which are an integral part of the refugee camp were observed during the fieldwork. Frustrated young people from the refugee camp moved around within the vicinity of the busy checkpoint and occasionally threw stones. Confrontations between soldiers and the young people appeared to be recurring. The atmosphere at the Qalandia checkpoint was often nervous and tense.

In history, Qalandia was also an airport. For a while in the 1930's, it was the only airport in the British Mandate Palestine. Later it was used by Jordan and Israel until it was closed by the Israeli. Every now and then the idea of having their own airport arises among Palestinians, however the present reality is far away from the realization of that dream; Palestine still does not have any airports. Today, Qalandia is more of a place of restrictions, disappointment and humiliation than a place for spreading wings. (Tawil-Souri 2010.)

It was through the hours of observation and conversations that gave rise to an understanding about the feelings that Palestinian people experience as they repeatedly pass through checkpoints. The pain which they described was not only connected with the practical difficulties that they face at the checkpoints. Even more than a practical inconvenience, the source

of pain is connected to the subordination, injustice and humiliation they experience at check-points.

One of the interviewees, an adult Palestinian man, stated that he cannot go through the Qalandia checkpoint at all. He explained that he cannot bear such a great humiliation that passing the checkpoint would require. The checkpoint symbolizes all of the injustice that he feels the Palestinians have had to endure. He describes the experience as follows:

> "Even during religious public holidays, when I could get permission to go and visit the holy places in Jerusalem, I don't apply for the permit. To go through the checkpoint is too much. It is too great a humiliation, I cannot stand it. We are treated there like we are animals, not people. (...) How on earth it is possible that first we are separated from our land and then humiliated and mistreated every time we want to even visit to our own soil?"
>
> Middle-aged male
>
> (Interviewee 19)

The above described experience is consistent with the description of Tawil-Souri (2010) as she writes about checkpoints; "spaces where the Zionist/Israeli colonialist project is palpable in all its might and ugliness and where Palestinians are physically reminded of their subjugated position". Although no one experiences checkpoints as pleasant, the degree of aversion varies. On one end of the scale is the experience of not being able to pass the checkpoint at all and on the other end was a pragmatic approach which focuses on the practical need for passing the checkpoint and putting the dislike to the side.

It appeared through informal discussions with the students that not only those who travel on a daily basis encounter stressful situations related to checkpoints. Regular trips to a home town or village are also part of the life course for those who rent a room next to the campus area. In order to understand the stress and discomfort related to arduous trips, participant observation was conducted during a number of journeys to and from university. The most typical vehicle was a van equipped with seats usually for nine passengers, but also big busses were used as well as carpooling with friends. From an ethnographer's point of view it was noticed that the more crowded and smaller the car was the better it was for intensive discussions. More often than not, the journey consisted of the use of various types of transport. Usually the journey started from university with a bigger vehicle and ending with a small capacity vehicle like small car or tractor. Although donkeys are still a common sight in traffic, they were never seen to be used for travel to or from university.

According to observations, all forms of transportation encountered delays at checkpoints. The duration of the delay was impossible to assess in advance. It was found during the discussions with the travelling university students, that it was the unpredictability caused by checkpoints that made traveling arduous. For example, the delays in attending lessons or exams were reported by the students. Despite the trouble that these situations cause these situations were less pronounced compared to the extreme cases in which life and health had been threatened. The findings by Harker (2009), who has studied the mobility and immobility of Palestinian university students, support the previous findings. According to him, it is practically impossible to avoid serious challenges in mobility. The checkpoint system that extends to all parts of the West Bank is an integral part of the life of Palestinian university students. Thus, studying does not only include learning at university, but also experiencing occupation through the checkpoints.

The above described experiences related to the checkpoints are relevant also if viewed only with respect to the numeric information about the checkpoints. According to B'tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, at the beginning of the year 2012 there were 98 checkpoints and 340 temporary (flying) checkpoints in the West Bank. Temporary checkpoints are erected in the West Bank for a few hours at a time and they operate without permanent infrastructure at those locations. (B'tselem 2012.) The trouble that the checkpoints cause varies greatly at different times. According the people in the field, the most difficult periods of time are the Jewish holidays. During those days, movement is most restricted.

Some of the interviewees reported the experience is like they are in a large prison. This description did not come across only in the Gaza Strip, which indeed is sometimes called the world's biggest prison, but also in the West Bank. The experience was associated with actual conditions of the limitation of movement but was also described as a mental space. The awareness of the fact that travel would not be possible turned out to be distressing also for those who did not even want to travel.

The prison metaphor, in the context of limitation of movement, can be seen in relation to frequently used phrase; "Free Palestine". Even though "Free Palestine" primarily refers to the freedom from occupation, it has obvious relevancy in the context of freedom of movement without restriction. Freedom and restriction form an oppositional pair to each other; freedom refers to the desired condition and restrictions to that of the subordinated suffering associated with the present. It is noteworthy that the experience of suffering is not always experienceв in connection with concrete events at checkpoints or other restrictions on the freedom of movement. It is part of a wider experience of an unfriendly external control that affects almost all aspects of life. Being restricted and limited means not being free.

5.2.4 Restrictive bureaucracy

As soon as the participant observation in the context of transport and movement began, the crucial importance of the identity card system was realized. It was noted that even the most careless young men always had their identity card (ID) with them. In a distinctive way every Palestinian person who was ever met outside of his or her home was, without exception, carrying this card. No one seemed to leave from home without this essential document.

What was discovered at the checkpoints was that a person without an ID card, as soldiers often took it away for more detailed examination, was somehow incapable of movement; just as if the person had been tied or chained, even though no visible shackles was not seen. Later it was realized that this was indeed a way to prevent people from moving or running away from the checkpoint.

At permanent checkpoints there were detention areas which had been constructed from low walls. Escaping from these detention areas would have actually been easy, but the fact that Israeli soldiers had taken the ID card away from the detainee, made it practically insane to even consider. These findings, together with the interview data generated an understanding of a crucial role of the ID card in the everyday life of Palestinian people.

Participant observation and interviews revealed that different ID card colours refer to the bureaucratic code system which is issued by Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and Israel. Once acquainted to the ID card system, with the guidance of Palestinian people, it was noticed how the colour coding system works. Palestinian residents in the West Bank, who are not allowed to enter to Israel, have a green cover on their ID card. This was the type of ID card that was frequently noticed when travelling in "services", the shared taxis. The

reason why everyone's ID card cover was almost inevitably seen was because of a practice that the drivers used. When approaching a checkpoint, a driver collected all ID cards and made them ready for inspection.

The inspection of ID cards was conducted by Israeli soldiers. If everything went smoothly, the soldier took the ID cards, checked the ID cards and took a quick look at the passengers. During the procedure the passengers sit quietly, only the driver speaks very briefly with the soldier. Sometimes that is all; sometimes the procedure is long and complicated either for all the passengers or to an individual passenger. The passenger checks observed were sometimes detailed and time-consuming. Protests from the passengers were rare, because everyone knew from experience that it would result in an even longer waiting and more discomfort.

A middle-aged Palestinian man, met by chance in Ramallah, told about the importance of the Jerusalem type ID card that allows him to move on both the Israel and on the West Bank side of the wall:

> "It's crucial for me to keep this ID, with this I can move on both sides of the wall. I have friends and important things on both sides. My home is in East Jerusalem, but I want to come here also every now and then. But what is important is that the Israeli authorities don't have the slightest doubt about my living in East Jerusalem. In worst case they can take my ID and say that you don't really live there and then my access to Jerusalem would be denied. But I live in East Jerusalem, I must keep this ID. My home is there."
> Middle-aged male
> (Interviewee 20)

One interviewee described the difficulties he had encountered with access to health services. The difficulties related to his ID card and the limitations of movement caused by a particular type of ID card. A significant part of the specialized medical services, such as many cancer treatments, for Palestinian people are provided on the Israeli side of the wall in East Jerusalem, and therefore Palestinians with West Bank type ID cards do not have unfettered access to these services. Accessing permission is subject to bureaucratic processes and, if permission is given, it may include a number of restrictions. It was told that if an escort for a sick person is needed and the escort does not have right type of ID card the escort also has to apply for permission in order to travel with the sick family member. According to the descriptions, these bureaucratic vicissitudes are stressful and filled with anxiety; one can never be sure if permission will be given or not.

Several interviewees felt that the state of Israel tries to isolate, separate and remove them using bureaucracy. Bureaucratic practices, such as permitting practices, implemented by Israeli officials are considered to be unfair and false; their purpose is to produce unnecessary suffering.

One example relates to a request for access to visit the original domicile of a family. As is understandable questions of origin were often discussed in interviews More often than not, if the conversation partner was an adult, the answer included two different places; the present place of residence and the original family residence. Frequently it was told by the interlocutor, that he or she is from Jaffa or Haifa, they used these internationally well-known place names instead of Arabic ones, although they would not have been able to even visit these. Many of them mentioned, that even though they have had opportunities to visit Israel, the permits which they have received from Israeli authorities are strictly limited giving them the opportunity to visit, for example, the hospital or some other specifically named site. On the ground, when already in Israel, it might have been possible to visit to the family's original home place,

but that would carry a huge risk of getting caught by Israeli officials and punished severely because of moving into prohibited areas. The ID card and permit document clearly determine the area in which the bearer is allowed to move.

Based on observations and interviews, two parallel issues are linked to ID cards and the permit system; the access or the blocking of access to things experienced as important by Palestinians and the tight control of everyday life practices. Tawil-Souri (2010) argues that whenever a Palestinian person hands over his or her ID card to Israeli officials, and it happens upon my observations frequently, the ID card acts as a mediator and defines the determinants for confluence. The ID card is something physical and at the same time it creates a space of securitization, surveillance and tutelage.

Tavil-Souri (2010) argues that the ID card is "the space in which Palestinians meet, confront, tolerate, and sometimes challenge the Israeli state". This argument is in line with observations and the understanding received when speaking with people in the field. The ID card unquestionably is an everyday factor that determines the possibility for movement and thus, almost everything from dating to studying and from shopping to the access of healthcare.

The ID card is a mundane and functional instrument of everyday life, but at the same time it is much more than that. Tawil-Souri (2010) argues that the ID card is, in fact, a space. It is a space of control and identity specification. In addition to the previous description, according to the observations in the field, it is a space for emotions like uncertainty, insecurity and fear. The manner in which the card is held firmly in the hand when queuing to checkpoint indicates strong repressed feelings.

5.2.5 Suffering caused by settlers

It is estimated that there are over 120 Israeli settlements and over 100 Israeli outposts built illegally on Palestinian land. These settlements and outposts are inhabited by a population of approximately 500 000 settlers. The number is constantly growing. The reasons for the Israelis living in settlements are many. Those living near Jerusalem identify themselves mostly as "economic settlers", as living in the settlement is usually cheaper than living inside of the internationally recognized borders of Israel. These settlers are usually not violent against Palestinians. In turn, the Israeli settlers living in the area around East Jerusalem, Nablus and Hebron, just to name a few areas, are there predominantly because of religious reasons. These religious or ideological settlers make up about one-fifth of all the settler population, but are known to be particular visible and loud. (CEPR 2013, Settlement Monitor 2013, Settlement Monitor 2010, see also Frykberg 2013.)

The suffering caused by settlers was revealed on several occasions during the fieldwork. The problems that arose were manifold. Harm had been caused to people and property. Fear and anxiety were obvious:

> A man with whom I am talking lives in a village which is located right near a settlement; the family suffers in several ways due to the vicinity of the settlement and because of settlers' hostility. The man tells of several problems. The settlers want to take the water, which is of crucial importance here. The settlers also killed two Palestinians when the Palestinians tried to go to their own lands. He continues: "This is my land, I cannot leave, it is difficult to live here but I must stay. If we go and leave our land, they will take it over immediately."
> Fieldnotes 8/2012

According to observation and the interviews, the shortage of water and constantly growing settlements form a difficult combination. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories suffer from a shortage of water especially during the summer months. The water sector is under Israel's tight control and water sources in the occupied Palestinian territories are mainly used to benefit the continuously growing Israeli settlements. The shortage of water affects in many ways the everyday life of the Palestinian people; from difficulties to maintain hygiene to problems in agriculture and stock farming. (B'tselem 2011.)

The interviews revealed painful experiences, in which the harm caused by settlers was not limited to the material property. One of such situations was described by the father of an injured girl. The following text sample recorded in the field notes includes an example of the snowball method in operation:

> A man, who I was talking with just few days earlier, suggests that I should talk with his friend. A friend has been suffering a lot because of settlers and I should get to hear what he says. Of course I am willing and the meeting is organized. I am taken to the man and I ask him to tell what he has experienced.
>
> The man explains: "My daughter was going to school one day, some years ago. Next to the car, where the daughter was, came a car driven by settlers. The settlers tried to push other car to the valley and threw a stone towards the car where my daughter was. My daughter was seriously injured; she underwent a surgery that failed in part, a second corrective surgery was needed." The father organized the money for a second surgery and it was done. The pain and suffering that the daughter has gone through is present in the father's words. Somehow I can feel it in this moment and I don't want to ask more questions on that subject. I know that for sure there would be more, but there must be line, and privacy must be respected. This is enough now.
> Fieldnotes 9/2012 and Middle-aged male
> (Interviewee 29)

Forms of settler related violence include physical assault, harassment, the capturing and damaging of private property, blocking access to grazing and agricultural land and attacks on livestock and farming areas. According to the statistics of United Nations, in 2011 Israeli settlers were responsible for three fatalities and 183 injuries of Palestinians. In addition to this, 290 incidents were reported of damage Palestinian private property. Settlers were also responsible for destroying or damaging about 10 000 trees of Palestinian farmers. The UN has also reported that violent incidents against Palestinian people have increased from 200 attacks in 2009 to over 400 in 2011 (Figure 3). It is noted in particular that settler violence and other difficulties like movement restrictions often take place simultaneously. (UN OCHA 2012.)
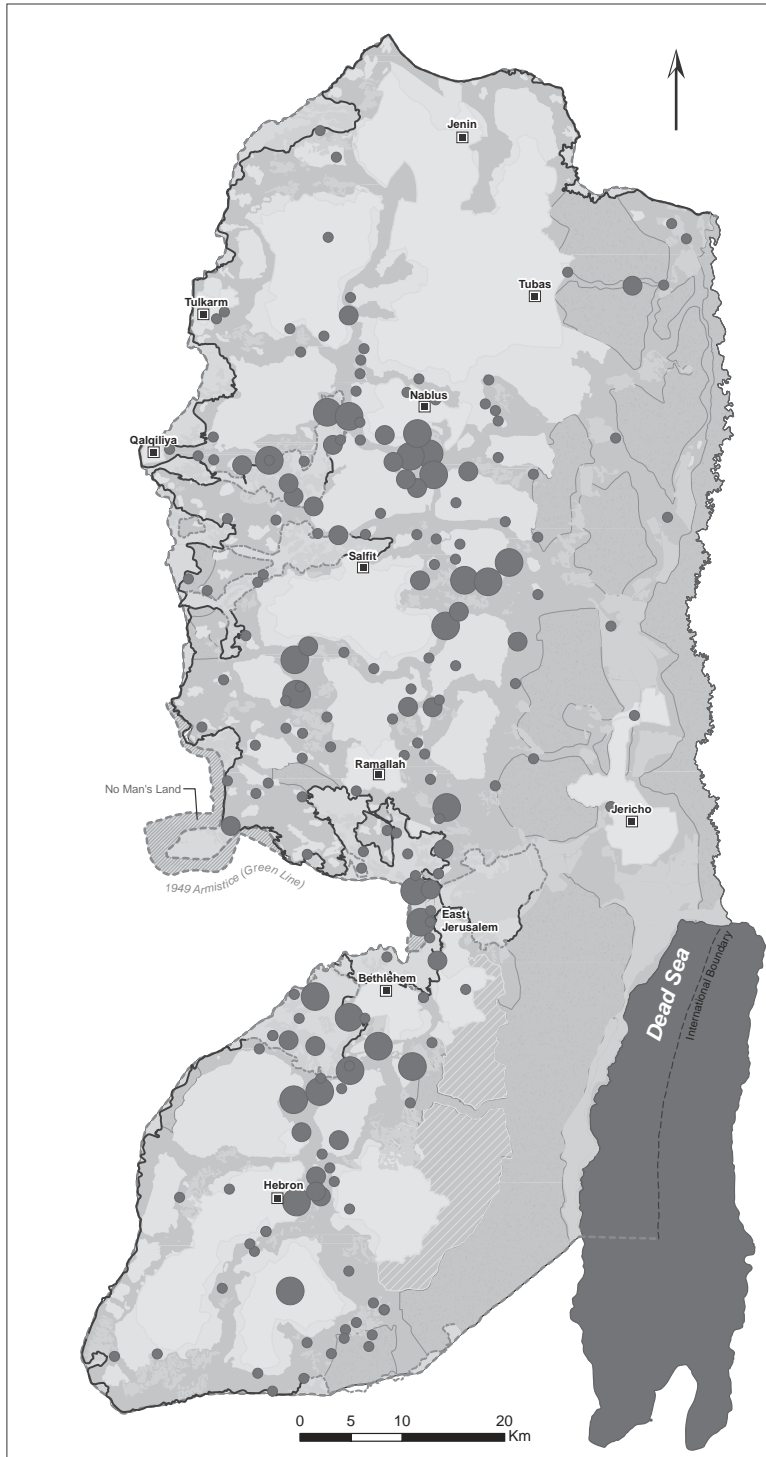
Figure 3. Settler violence in the West Bank. The size of the dark point indicates the number of settler violence incidents.
Based on the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs oPt map; December 2011

The interviewees felt that they have no protection against the settlers. If something bad happens the case is not investigated and the wrongdoers are not punished. This gives rise to the experience of injustice. These findings receive support from Byman (2012) who maintains that the Israeli government does not support settler violence, but it has failed to prevent it as the number of cases is in rapid growth. Israeli soldiers have been known just to watch from the side-lines as violent incidents against Palestinian people or property occurs. It is well known that only in rare cases settlers are accused in court and hardly ever convicted of a crime. (Yesh Din 2012, Byman 2012.)

What is described above is supported by a very short but revealing piece of text from the field notes. The place where the events unfolded is located in the central part of the West Bank:

> Y:"All of these are cut by settlers."
>
> M:"But how on earth can this be done to another person's olive trees? Should not those people be caught and brought to justice and punished?"
>
> Y: "They can do whatever they want. Who can we complain to?"
>
> Fieldnotes 9/2012

Another extract from the field notes has largely the same content. As an adjunct to the previous it includes a reference to the cooperation between the settlers and the military:

> "…settlers from nearby settlement sometimes come. Settlers have no rules, they do what they want, and that is very bad. The military even has some rules that they should follow. Settlers have fired (with a gun) at a car from the refugee camp. Settlers have also cut olive trees that have been the property of those living in the camp. Cutting the trees was done together with military. When settlers or the army comes, people rush to their homes. Sometimes they bring dogs and pigs with them and they also do harm."
>
> Group interview (no 7)

It appears that the suffering is associated with two issues; first of all, by the actual harm that settlers cause, and secondly the difficulty or impossibility of getting justice. The experience of injustice and the inability to obtain rectification causes human suffering.

The findings should be considered in the wider context of historical development. In the early 1980s, the Israeli settler community had a size of less than 25 000. Most of them had the underlying ideology and they were obedient to their leaders. Settler leaders and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) had close contact and coordination; settler communities did not defy the IDF. Since that time, the number of settlers has increased to half a million and the settler movement has changed radically. Today the vast majority of settlers choose living in settlement because living in them is much cheaper than inside Israel. These "economic settlers" in general oppose attacks against Palestinian civilians. Acts of violence are done by politically and religiously radical settlers. (Byman 2012.)

The fieldwork revealed that the relationship between Palestinian people and settlers are more complex than one might think at first. It was found that a number of Palestinian people are directly or indirectly economically linked to settlements and settlers. Many Palestinians are in a paradoxical situation; at the same time the settlements are perceived as a negative thing and at the same time for many, the construction work that increasing settlements offer is the only opportunity to get paid employment.

The construction work in settlement building sites is a controversial matter. It was obviously difficult to discuss and it was preferably to be ignored without mention. In one village

it was observed that the employment situation was rather good; however, no one mentioned where they are working, it was only stated that the work is related to the construction sector. Later the matter got further clarity; one of the villagers stated in a private discussion that many of the men work as a construction workers at a settlement construction site. The conflicting situation was apparently painful and caused suffering. It was difficult to talk about.

5.2.6 Bombing of the Gaza Strip

The fieldwork in the Gaza Strip took place only two months after the end of an eight day long Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) operation, Pillar of Defence. The basic information about the operation was given in the earlier part of this work. The temporal position gave it a powerful impact on observations.

The field notes written during the time consuming border formalities describe the situation that existed on the border of the Gaza Strip:

> I'm sitting with others at a border crossing station and I am observing people going to the Gaza Strip and those who are on the way to Egypt. I have the impression that all of us feel nervous; excitement is common. The documents required to get into Gaza are in my backpack, but it is quite obvious that nothing is assured. Palestinian people, like so many times before, offer the opportunity to bypass the queue, I refuse and use the opportunity to chat with many. Already at the Rafah boarder station I realize the enormity of the challenge of reconstruction after the recent military operation. Both people and large trucks carry a variety of building materials and home supplies to the Gaza Strip. Although severe restrictions set by Israel still regulate what is allowed to the area, some allowances have been made and building is now possible.
> Fieldnotes 1/2013

The devastation caused by the recent bombings could be seen almost everywhere. The bombing had destroyed part of the traffic rout that would have been used normally and the driver was forced to drive part of the way over a bumpy wasteland. The massiveness of bombings became apparent upon arrival in Gaza City. Entire buildings had been completely destroyed. The views told unequivocally that this was a war zone.

Destroyed buildings and infrastructure took one's attention for a short time, but all the time it was important to remember the purpose of visit to the Gaza Strip; seeking an understanding of the experiences of the people living in the middle of war and destruction. To reach affected people turned out to be very easy; everyone living in the Gaza Strip had been exposed in one form or another to bombings. Everyone had their own experience of war.

One of the first people encountered was an old man in front of the bombed apartment building. He told about the horror of the events when the house had been bombed. A large part of the house was destroyed and there was a huge pile of stone and concrete. The residents of the house had been members of the same family. An entire extended family has lost their home. The neighbours have taken them to emergency accommodation. The future is unclear. The suffering and uncertainty are an evident reality.

Many people describe similar events in recent years. Just when they have recovered somehow from the previous escalation phase of the conflict, the next difficult phase begins. Repeated violent incidents are part of their course of life. Resulting from this, the continuous traumatic stress (see Stevens, Eagle et al. 2013) is a part of everyday life. Abnormality has become normality:

> I arrive at the place where construction is in progress. The basic construction of the house seems to be already completed. The people I meet on the street said: "The family is building the house for the third time". The house has been bombed repeatedly and he family has rebuilt it once again.
> Fieldnotes 1/2013

Events during the bombardment appear in the discussions and interviews. A few minutes have been experienced in condensed distress and horror. A father of a family describes events during the bombings:

> The father of another family arrives to the site and tells about his family's experience: "The IDF called and informed us that our house will be bombarded. Hurriedly, the whole family left the house. There is no time to take anything with you."
> Fieldnotes 1/2013

Also some other people told about similar experiences in relation to a warning before a bombing. Some had received a phone call from the IDF, some were heard 'roof knocking' from the roof of their house. After the call or 'roof knocking' there had been few minutes of time to escape from a house. These practises are mentioned in the United Nations report of Human Rights Council (2013). Different points of view related to warning practises have been raised. Warnings can be seen as a protection of civilians or as a psychological warfare, depending on the angle.

What is obvious, based on the experiences of people met in the field, is that the situation in which residents get a warning is extremely distressing; not only the actual warning, but also the possibility that it could come at any moment. There is concern about the ability to respond quickly enough and worry about children and the elderly; whether all members of the family can manage to escape before the bombing begins. Worry and anxiety were present as an epidemic during those days and nights.

Not only does the waiting for the possible warnings or the actual bombing cause distress. Also, the immediate or later consequences of bombings on daily life became apparent from people's stories. The normal rhythm of life and everyday practices were interrupted. One man wanted to share the fate of his family, and to show what had happened to his home:

> A man, when he saw a foreigner, came spontaneously up to me right there on the street and wanted to show his own house and share his experience. He points to his house. The sight is crippling. The bombing has taken part of the house, it's like a part of the house was cut off. The street side wall is completely absent and part of the room is fully exposed to the street. The man tells that the family is now living in the remaining part of the home as they don't have another place to go. There is little space left and it causes a lot of problems in their everyday life.
> Fieldnotes 1/2013

Most obvious and painful was the suffering among those who had lost their loved ones during the bombing. The situation was often combined with material losses and concerns about how the rest of the family will survive in the future. People in such situations were intentionally excluded from interviews for ethical reasons, grief must be respected. However, some were met unintentionally. Grief, worry and perplexity were overwhelming as the loss of a loved one and the major challenges of everyday life were present concurrently. Sadness, fatigue and

anxiety were present. Interviews were not conducted; only listening and demonstrations of sympathy were appropriate.

Two of the interviewees had backgrounds as health professionals. They described a number of problems which the people of the Gaza Strip suffer from. Physical injuries as a direct result of the bombardment are present, but many other effects appear as well. Health professionals working at the community level described the reactions which children especially are suffering from after the bombardments. Observations have proven that children have troubles with sleeping and concentration; however, it was also noticed that children are indeed individuals and react in very different ways.

Another health professional, working mostly with adults, emphasized that the recent traumatic events affects the whole community. In his opinion, all are in one way or another traumatized. He used the expressions that included him with the group of traumatized people; obviously he wanted to emphasize that health professionals, as members of the community, are equally affected.

5.2.7 Internal tensions

The majority of the suffering that Palestinian people described was clearly related to and caused quite directly by the occupation. However, analysis also revealed suffering associated with the internal tensions among Palestinians. In this context, two things emerged: dissatisfaction because of corruption and fear of Hamas' policies. Dissatisfaction because of corruption manifests itself mainly in the West Bank and fear of Hamas' policies was revealed in the Gaza Strip. Both of these themes proved to be sensitive and complex for many Palestinians; speaking of these issues obviously gave rise to ambivalent feelings, nonetheless, a number of people wanted to share their experiences.

Soon after arrival to the field, an episode of demonstrations took place in Ramallah, the de facto capital of the occupied Palestinian territories. The protests gathered hundreds of people and were focused at the Palestinian Authority. The people participating in the protests accused the ruling authority of corruption and ineffectiveness in improving conditions in the area. The very same themes of dissatisfaction appeared in some interviews. Even though the occupation was mentioned as the main cause of suffering, every now and then the Palestinian Authority's misrule was remarked upon. In particular, the delay in the payment of salaries from Palestinian Authority was mentioned.

Dissatisfaction was also directed to the way in which employment assignments were managed. One of the interviewees, a young man who had acquired an education for working in the public sector, said he could not get a job because he did not know anybody in the high places of the authority. According to him, public sector jobs are largely achieved based on relations. Due to this situation he did odd jobs which did not correspond his training.

Some of the interviewees wanted to highlight the causality between the occupation and bad governance; they asked how good governance could evolve within the conditions of occupation. Financial difficulties were also seen as related to the occupation and the lack of independence. One of the interviewees, a man who owned a taxi, told about the double taxation of which made his financial situation difficult. He had to work with very little rest and he saw his family rarely. By working almost without rest, he managed just barely provide his family.

The above described findings are supported by the European Court of Auditors in its special report (2013). A serious problem in paying wages, as well as Israel's responsibility for the financial distress of the occupied Palestinian territories is disclosed in the report. According the report, the Palestinian Authority is in the midst of great challenges and in order to oper-

ate effectively it has to reform and to develop its operations. Despite assistance from the out-side, the daily life of numerous Palestinians is a struggle with scarcity. (European Court of Auditors 2013.)

Even more sensitive than corruption is the theme that appeared in relation to Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In fact, the matter arose by coincidence before going to the Gaza Strip; a meeting with a Palestinian woman took place in Egypt and led to an interview and the disclosure of difficult experiences. This Palestinian woman who was from an ordinary family in the Gaza Strip had been very interested in the arts from an early age. Art in its various forms had become incredibly important in her life; her future dreams and wishes were related to it. However, it turned out that Hamas, which dominates the Gaza Strip, had negative views towards the sector of arts that she in practiced. Thus, in order to realize her artistic vocation, she had to depart from the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. The way out from the Gaza Strip was intricate and risky; however, this was the path she felt that she must follow. There was no doubt that the situation involved much suffering for her, particularly as the situation in Egypt began to become volatile.

Another interview, which also took place in Egypt, revealed very similar experiences in relation to Hamas. A young Palestinian man told that he had been pressured on two sides. On one hand, the actions of Israel that touched all the people in the Gaza Strip made his life difficult and on the other hand, his opinions put him at risk from Hamas. He had been in trouble because of his opinions and eventually left the Gaza Strip. Simultaneous pressure caused by Israel's operations and Hamas' policies had made life distressing for him.

Inside the Gaza Strip, attention is primarily focused on the disaster caused by the recent bombings. The main content of the interviews concern the suffering caused by the military escalation, however other contents are also revealed. For understandable reasons, people were cautious and exploratory at first; however, when trust was established, various issues were raised. The analysis of the interview material revealed three major themes: first, a lack of freedom of opinion and expression, second, restrictions regarding women's everyday life and third, hidden domestic violence.

Experience of the lack of freedom of opinion and expression has led to the situation where some of the interviewees had experienced distress and suppression. The experience that one is not free to express his or her opinions was related to the political practices of Hamas which dominates the Gaza Strip. In particular, the interviewees who worked in the field of media or arts described the suffering related to the limitation of their functioning.

Some of the women interviewed, experienced that expectations and requirements that were targeted towards them were distressing and made life difficult for a woman who does not want to follow conservative rules. This experience was associated, for example, with dress codes in public places. One of the interviewees reported having suffered difficulties because of not following the requirements relating to dress codes. According to her, some areas were stricter than others; in some areas one could not even move if she were not dressed in a certain way.

Domestic violence was raised specifically in relation to societal circumstances. Some of the interviewees pointed out that even though the Hamas regime determines strictly public life, domestic life is carefully separated; the internal affairs of a home are not intervened into. Many of the interviewed saw a connection between violence outside and inside of homes. According to them, the recurrent conflict related violence occurring in the Gaza Strip is reflected in homes. Excessive emphasis on the privacy of domestic life makes the problem even more painful.

The above findings are consistent with observations made by human rights organizations. Human Rights Watch (2012) has drawn attention to the failure of the justice system in the Gaza Strip under Hamas rule. Security officers have been reported arresting civilians and present-

ing them before Gaza's military judiciary, even though its jurisdiction should be limited to military offences only. Furthermore, staff of the Internal Security agency enjoys impunity despite of consistent allegations of severe abuse. The failures are likely to affect to the general atmosphere and generate fear among the people. (Human Rights Watch 2012.)

Amnesty International (2013) has revealed that Hamas has restricted the rights of freedom of expression in the Gaza Strip. Journalists, bloggers and critics have been prosecuted and harassed. Women and girls face gender based violence and it has been pointed out that the police have failed to protect the women who have complained of domestic violence and threats to their lives. (Amnesty International 2013.)

The association between the exposure to political violence and gender-based violence has been discussed intensively over the past decade. Current evidence suggests that collective violence, such as war or violent political conflicts increases the risk of gender based violence. (Ward 2002, Marshall 2005, Catani 2008, Usta 2008, Clark, Everson-Rose et al. 2010.) The increase in violence applies not only to intimate partner relationship but also to children and adolescents in families (Heath 2013, Catani 2008, Al-Krenawi 2007). Allusions to suffering caused by different forms of domestic violence are partially reinforced by research done in the Gaza Strip. Palosaari, Punamäki et al. (2013) studied the intergenerational effects of war trauma among families in the Gaza Strip and found that a fathers past war exposure is a risk factor for psychological maltreatment of children.

Although the above describes forms of suffering which can be understood to be largely related to internal tensions represents only a minor dimension in the data as a whole, it should be seen as a significant part of the entirety. It seems evident that the conditions of prolonged conflict and general volatility produce a wide range of tensions in different sectors of society. Problems such as corruption, restrictions on freedom of expression and problems within homes cause complex suffering to individuals. These are part of the context in which psychosocial coping also appears.

5.3 QUALITATIVE RESULTS ON COPING IN A PROLONGED CONFLICT

5.3.1 Volunteering and activism

Volunteering may carry a variety of meanings in different contexts; however, the simple definition is that volunteering means giving time freely and without payment to help other people or support ideas. Cultural settings have an important role in understanding and the practice of volunteering. (Grönlund 2012, Merrill 2006.) In the forthcoming analysis, it is understood in its broad sense just as it appeared in the data. The criteria that are met in all cases are: working without salary and acting for something that is perceived as positive at least in the local community.

From the very first moments after entering a small volunteer centre inside Ramallah, the great significance of volunteering was noticeable. Soon the visitor was surrounded by a group of young adults who were enthusiastic to tell about the various forms of volunteering in which they were involved. Once any of the volunteers met during the first visit told about his or her activities, the characteristic feature was the happy pride of volunteering. There was no doubt that volunteering for these people was an important source of joy and satisfaction. The variety of volunteering activities was wide although focus mostly on different forms of social help: assisting elderly, organizing events for children, carrying out a first aid service at events and providing health education just to name a few. Some of the activities presented were advocacy

work such as promoting local Palestinian products. A number of volunteers were involved in many different activities. This was apparently interpreted as a positive thing by the community of volunteers as those who were active in many were touted.

In particular, one interview with a young man who described his return to normal life after being in prison opened the significance of the meanings associated with volunteering. As a background, it is essential to remember that young Palestinian men are usually not in prison for criminal offences as they are understood in the majority of Western world, the reason for imprisonment is usually occupation related. The time after release from prison had been confusing; on one hand there had been the joy of gaining freedom from prison, but on the other hand, there was difficulty in becoming involved in normal life again. High levels of unemployment and the instability in the functioning of society made integration to normal daily life even more challenging. In addition the traumatic experiences during the imprisonment were present in mind even if the actual imprisonment was over. In the young man's story the key helpful factor, the source of coping, was getting involved in volunteering:

> "After I was released from prison, it was working as volunteer that made me feel normal and helped me back to normal life. When I was in prison and I was in pain, no one helped me. As volunteer I can now help others who have difficulties. I help others as much as I can."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 7)

Volunteering was a source of joy and recreation for many young adults whose daily life was observed during the fieldwork. The very same people who in their everyday life faced complicated conflict related problems and were visibly stressed due those worries were decisively in a different mental space while taking an active role in volunteering. Volunteering was an opportunity to put their own worries aside and focus on something meaningful. Sometimes resonance (Wikan 2012) with the joy that volunteers were experiencing was truly strong and the participating observer experienced a release from stress together with volunteers. The following extract from the field notes describes the joy related to enthusiastic volunteering:

> Yesterday I participated in a meeting in which idea was to learn drumming. I noticed already in advance that this is something important for Muhammad and Hussein as they had said already a few days earlier that I really need to get involved this, and at that time they already showed enthusiasm. We took a service car from the city centre and travelled to the suburb ending up at a small modest community building. Soon a diverse group of children and youth surrounded us. From the very beginning the atmosphere was joyful and somehow concentrated in a cheerful manner. The actual action was practising drumming rhythms with wooden drumsticks. The table around which all were standing constituted a drumming platform. One of the volunteers operated as a director. How awesome that enthusiasm and concentration was; effort, success and joy! Mohammed was so good in that role; he drummed very skilfully and patiently guided younger participants. The youngest participant was only three years old and he also received good instruction for drumming. All were taken into account and encouraged. Everybody got their share of joy. I felt a sense of pride on behalf of Muhammad. He has experienced bad things in his life but now he has found volunteering in a role where he is really good and which he obviously enjoys. And it is wonderful how much joy and pleasure this activity produces for the participants.
> Fieldnotes 10/2012

Volunteering also has forms of societal activism. This became apparent one evening when walking back to lodgings from a community centre with group of volunteers. One of them pointed a street light pillar and a poster glued on it and proudly told that he had put dozens of similar posters around the area with his friends. The message of poster was to promote Palestinian products instead of products imported from Israel. He also told about the campaign in which the volunteers toured the shops and promoted Palestinian products to shopkeepers. The idea, that he was able to justify very understandably, was that Palestinians should buy Palestinian products and thus support the economy of their own people. It was noteworthy and interesting that the focus of campaign was in promoting Palestinian products more than in boycotting Israeli products; the approach was positively oriented. The manner in which volunteers told about the promotion campaign was enthusiastic and knowledgeable at the same time. It was obvious that the volunteers felt that they were involved in an important effort.

Volunteer work is also seen as a social necessity, possibly even an obligation in difficult times. When the necessary services for vulnerable people are incomplete, volunteers feel something must be done. A Palestinian man who works as a volunteer in one of the Palestinian refugee camps described the conditions in the camp; the UN is cutting assistance, less services than before are available and accordingly volunteers are needed more:

> "I'm a volunteer because I know that no one would help people with disabilities in the camp if I and other volunteers wouldn't do that."
> Middle-aged male
> (Interviewee 9)

Although the description given by the man focused on the need for assistance that vulnerable people had, also volunteering as an important part of his life was expressed. His way of describing the problems in the refugee camp was very knowledgeable, and his manner was virtually professional. He was not only struck by grieve for all the misery he saw in his community, but was active in working for relief and change. This has an obvious connection with coping; an active attitude towards grievances is likely to promote and produce coping.

Many of the volunteers were also active on the Internet, up to a level that could be called Internet activism. Although not all the contents were clearly understandable, the rich illustration involving cartoons, photos and video clips made it possible to follow this form of activism especially on Facebook. On the Internet, the tone of communication was slightly more political. Criticism of the occupation was more direct and open. The Internet constituted an important environment for those volunteers who lived in rural areas and who could reach the common gatherings less frequently. A virtual connection to other volunteers and volunteering done on the Internet were obviously important sources of coping. This was confirmed during the fieldtrips to small villages where it was possible to observe the mutual communication of volunteers through the Internet.

It is granted that some forms of volunteering can be considered as being a form of resistance, but no forms of aggressive resistance such as armed activities were encountered during the fieldwork. This does not, of course, tell about existence or nonexistence of such things. The internal culture in the two volunteering organizations in which the participant observing took place was clearly non-violent. Emphasis on non-violence was apparent not only in the nature of the voluntary activities but also in discourse taking place in the everyday life of the volunteers. For these people, non-violent work for acknowledged objectives contributed overall to psychosocial coping.

All the observed volunteering took place in a social context. Different types of volunteering activities were planned, implemented and reflected in a group. Everything was characterized by doing things together and in an atmosphere of mutual friendship. A number of the volunteers who were met travelled a relatively long way to participate in the volunteering projects. Some volunteers who had an ID card that entitled them to live in East Jerusalem regularly made the journey to take part in volunteering in areas around Ramallah. This in itself indicates the personal importance of participating as following the route includes an inevitable crossing of the checkpoint. Coming to the West Bank for these volunteers was usually simple; returning to Jerusalem could include difficulties. Despite this, many wanted to participate in volunteering on the West Bank side of the separating wall.

It seemed that the usual route to volunteering was an invitation by a friend. Once involved, the volunteering offered an expanding social network, which in turn made it motivating to stay. Communication between the volunteers was shown to be diverse and active. Mobile phones and Facebook were the most frequently used forms of communication. From the psychosocial coping point of view, the mutual support that volunteers offered each other is crucial. Although participation in volunteering fluctuates, contacts between volunteers are maintained.

The importance of volunteering was also visible in Facebook updates. Images in which a volunteer is performing volunteer work or is dressed in special volunteer clothing were popular; they were both actively shared and liked. Some of the photos highlighted more of an individual activity in volunteering; however the vast majority of linked photos were of a group setting. Often images involved a symbol that referred to volunteering; a piece of clothing, the voluntary organization's car or other identifier. The obvious purpose was to build a common identity and to tell of belonging to a particular group.

Although volunteering appeared to be very meaningful to young adults, it was undoubtedly subordinate to family issues. More than once it occurred that a volunteer received a phone call from his home and left to take care of family matters. This was understood by others and attracted no particular attention. The person who received the call departed towards home in a natural way without any particular commentary. The priority in the observed cases was clear; volunteering was seen as acceptable but the family was the first priority.

The possibility for volunteering during the early stage of young adulthood may be associated with the fact that young adults in the West Bank set up a family later than they had before. Many of the young men, with whom marriage and the formation of a family were discussed, told that the difficult economic situation delays getting married. According to them, the tradition is that the groom buys gifts, typically gold, for the bride. As the economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is difficult, getting married has to be postponed further into the future. Thus, the time between youth and setting up a family, especially for men, is prolonged. This allows for the activity in volunteering during the years before family responsibilities become the main focus. Volunteering is for many of the interviewees an essential buffer against frustration during those years. Usually the matter was not expressed explicitly; however, the interpretation received approval when asked.

The analysis revealed that volunteering and activism contains at least four main factors of importance for the young adults who had been observed and interviewed. Volunteering and activism offered a context for social interaction, opportunities for meaningful activities for issues perceived to be important, opportunity to break away from the everyday difficulties and experiment with different semi-professional roles. All of the above has a potential positive impact on self-esteem and experiencing life as meaningful; these factors in turn are fundamentally related to coping. Some of the young adults involved with volunteering and activism

expressed these ideas explicitly and some of them expressed these ideas indirectly. Participant observation generated the finding with manifest clarity. For these young adults, volunteering and activism has highly significant importance for psychosocial coping.

The findings presented above are supported by studies that have been conducted outside of these settings. A number of recent studies support the idea of the positive impact of volunteering (Jenkinson 2013). Volunteering has been found to be associated with better health coping mechanisms, improved quality of life, social support and self-esteem (Casiday, Kinsman et al. 2008). Cohort studies have shown that acting as a volunteer has a favourable effect on life satisfaction and that it reduces depression (Jenkinson 2013).

Why volunteering has a positive impact on psychological wellbeing is not completely clear. Possible explanations are associated with increased social interaction, distraction from the volunteer's own problems, a sense of meaning and the strengthening of a positive self-image. It has also been suggested that social behaviour has a stress-buffering effect that benefits the volunteer. (Poulin 2013, Goetz 2010.) The findings of the present study suggest that all of the above are valid also in a conflict environment. The volunteers emphasized specifically the social dimension of their activities and the fact that they do something meaningful, participant observation revealed the positive impact on self-image.

Grönlund (2012) has studied the role of volunteering in the lives of young adults in Finland. Her research results are interesting in relation to the meanings Palestinian young adults described in the context of volunteering. Grönlund suggests that motivations for volunteering can arise from life situations involving crises. Volunteering can be used for coping in changing internal and external circumstances. Volunteering may provide an opportunity for reflection, clarification of identity and putting personal values into practice in changing life situations. These findings are explicitly consistent with the observations of Palestinian volunteers.

Although the volunteers whose activities were observed described their activities mainly in fairly concrete terms, it was unequivocal that the volunteering activity was based on deep values. In particular, two values came out clearly; helping others and working for Palestine. In many voluntary activities, the two values appeared as overlapping and mutually enhancing. These values were recognized and expressed in the meetings of volunteers.

Recent research related to volunteering supports the notion on the significance of values. Volunteering can be used in different processes of self-definition and in expressing important values. Hence, volunteering may be a key factor in determining the identity of individual. In particular, if the identity is understood as a narrative process in which an individual constructs his or her understanding of self as a narrative, volunteering may play an important role as part of the narrative. (Gronlund 2011.)

The volunteering which was based on deep and widely shared values was observably one of the essential ways of coping for young adults whose lives were followed. Volunteering acted as a space for the implementation of deep values and offered a sense of meaning and fulfilment and therefore supported coping in a volatile living environment.

5.3.2 Humour
Humour is one of the universal aspects of humanity. Although different cultures have their own norms, rules and taboos related to humour, it appears in all cultures throughout the world. Humour is a broad concept and it can be defined in many different perspectives; however, pulled together it can be said that it refers to whatever thing that people say or do that is understood as funny or to mental processes that encompass amusing and a brightening of

attitude. Humour is characterized by the fact that it is a deeply a social phenomenon. It occurs in countless situations and it is practically impossible to limit the occurrence of humour. Humour is an integral and holistic part of humanity, thus it is often an important part of human life also when coping with difficulties. (Martin cop. 2007, see also Knuuttila 2010.) Within the framework of present study, the special interest was to observe the potential importance of humour in the context of psychosocial coping in a prolonged conflict.

The importance of humour to psychosocial coping became apparent early in the initial analysis conducted in the field. The significance of humour appeared only rarely in the interviews but it was powerfully displayed during participant observation. Humour exhibited both in general terms and in relation to conflict related events.

Humour has many different meanings and functions, of which, this study is most interested in is its function in psychosocial coping. According to literature, humour has played an important role in coping even under extremely brutal circumstances such as the concentration camps during the Holocaust or imprisonment during a war (Henman 2001).

Holocaust survivor, psychiatrist Victor Frankl (1985), describes the importance of humour in many occasions in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*. He tells how, together with other prisoners, they built some humorous narratives related to the connections between a normal life and life in the concentration camp. They, for example, joked about how funny some of the everyday practices used in the camp would be, if applied to their normal everyday life after release from the concentration camp. According to Franklin, humour can bring light and optimism even in the middle of a very evil situation.

Many links between humour and mental health have been studied extensively over the past decades. Martin (cop. 2007) brings together the key findings and states at least four meanings related to humour and mental health. According to him, humour enhances positive emotions, neutralizes negative feelings, acts as coping mechanism and promotes social relationships. In the present study's perspective each of the above points of view has importance as each may have a role in coping in a prolonged conflict.

One memorable example of the power of humour in a difficult situation took place during pre-research fieldwork in the Northern West Bank in the spring of 2008. The event took place by an agricultural gate, guarded by Israeli soldiers, through which carefully selected Palestinian people had access to their agricultural land:

> For the second morning in a row I made note that the donkey who pulled an old Palestinian man's cart was roaring with a loud voice just at the point where they bypass Israeli soldiers. The roaring was sharp and lasted only the moment when the donkey was just next to the soldiers. After passing the soldiers, it was completely silent. Because the situation was so peculiar, I decided to ask the old man why his donkey was behaving like that. The old man's answer was surprising and funny: "The donkey says to soldiers: 'Stop the occupation of Palestine!'"
> Diary note 3/2008

The above aptly describes the way that humour plays a role in easing uncomfortable situation. The fact that the old Palestinian man has to be humble day after day in front of the young Israeli soldiers and comply with a number of restrictions and humiliating procedures to access his agricultural land is certainly awkward. Joking about the donkey's behaviour and in fact in some sense about soldiers too makes it easier to cope with an unpleasant and humiliating situation. The idea about the donkey, who is expressing resistance to the occupying power, makes the situation at the gate somehow humorous and little easier to bear.

The conscious use of humour for the purpose of a mood boosting came up a number of times. The rapidly increasing opportunities for Internet use are taken advantage of particularly by those of the younger generation. Internet services such as Facebook or You Tube provide an effective channel to discover and share humorous material. The following example illustrates both the opportunity offered by the Internet based supply of humour for mood self-regulation and the importance of social sharing:

> I remain seated in the common room after the interview. Some of the young volunteers stay in the room as some other continue towards home, some new people enter the room among them is an already familiar young man from previous meetings in the volunteer organization. He sits down next to me in his own laid back style. I think I don't want to ask too much, but give him the opportunity to make the opening for discussion on any matter that is on his mind. And soon he makes it. He asks if I know something very fun that he has seen on YouTube, its name is Crazy Russian, he explains. As he is telling this to me he looks very enthusiastic and happy, one can easily note that this is something important and nice that he wants to share. This seems to me very fine, especially after the recent interview with a really difficult and sad subject. I encourage him to tell more about Crazy Russian. He does not need a lot of encouragement, but opens the computer which is on nearby table. Soon we watch together comedy clips where Crazy Russian, a comedy character, is behaving funny in different settings. Some other friends also gather around the screen. Crazy Russian is obviously known by them and soon we all laugh at the antics.
> Fieldnotes 8/2012

As described in the example, situation between two people quickly became a broader social event. This is understandable at least from two perspectives: humour is in itself a socially unifying force and in Arab cultures almost any meaningful matter is inclined to be shared together. Kazarian (2011) describes the humour in the Middle East specifically as a social phenomenon. Although humour is social everywhere, it is it especially so in the Arab Middle East; humour and togetherness are inseparable.

Positive humour can be seen as an important form of emotional regulation. Active and conscious use of humour, as in the previous form of humorous clips from the Internet, may have a positive effect on mood and it can help to relieve stress. Although the psychological mechanisms behind this phenomenon are still under ongoing research, the number of findings supports the idea of people using humour as tool for mood regulation. (Samson 2012.)

During the participant observation it repeatedly occurred that someone wanted to relieve stress by using humour. Forms varied from spontaneous situation related humour to the conscious seeking of humorous material from the Internet. In addition to the above described example of using Internet based humour in a broader social situation, it was observed that the very same Crazy Russian humour video clips were watched in the evening just before going to sleep in order to relax and to put things of concern aside.

Vilaythong and Arnau et al. (2003) used a comedy video when examining whether humour can increase hope. They found by using hope scores that viewing a short humorous video led to an increase in the experience of hope. This refers to the multiple effects of humour in the human mind. The comedy video used in the research included different categories of humour, such as the slapstick style of humour. According to my observations of Crazy Russian, the trend of humour was similar; the humour was based in funny situations and excluded sexual or political content.

Why exactly this humorous figure, Crazy Russian, was so popular remained partly unclear. When asked about this, young adults responded by saying that the figure is so funny. Possible interpretation that revealed during participant observation related to the precise behavioural norms that these young adults were forced to comply with. For example, behaviour at checkpoints is strictly defined and deviation leads to punishment. It would appear that a humorous figure that behaves unconventionally and against the rules makes it possible to laugh at rules. The relief of tension is achieved safely. This has an obvious significance for coping in an environment in which tension and combustibility are part of everyday life.

The following extract from the field notes describes an actual situation in which humour has a relevant role in relieving stress and frustration. What is essential is the interpretation given to the events. In this extract, the interpretation is pronounced by a Palestinian woman who was involved in the situation:

> I'm travelling with three staff members of a local aid organization to visit a northern area of the West Bank. All of the sudden traffic stops and soon we find the cause of the interruption; a checkpoint. Shortly we see Israeli soldiers around the queuing cars. It's hot and still weather. It would be good to continue the journey soon so that we would not be late for the meeting that we are heading to. Unexpectedly for me, the driver gets out from the car, I got a bit scared because usually at checkpoints everyone has to act very carefully and follow the instructions given by the soldiers. The driver goes over to the luggage compartment and start digging around for something. He finds traditional Arabic coffee making equipment, lights a small gas cooker and soon we enjoy tasty fresh Arabic coffee in the car. In an instant the atmosphere has changed in the car. Still it is hot, still the soldiers walk around the cars with their weapons, but in the car we drink Arabic coffee and smile. A woman sitting next to me on the back seat notices that I'm quite amused and impressed by the event, she comments: "We must have humour. When life is like this, there must be humour."
> Fieldnotes 9/2012

Humour was not always something that was expressed verbally; sometimes its manifestation took place through action, intentionally or unintentionally. In the previous example, the coffee making process was simultaneously practical, as it made possible to use the wait for freshening up, and humorous because of its context in the middle of the military activity. Sinno (2013) describes in her article a same type of humorous event referring to the book *Sharon and my Mother in Law: Ramallah Diaries*. She argues that drinking coffee in an unpleasant conflict related situation can be understood as resistance and humour at the same time. It must be remembered that making and drinking coffee is a ritual in Palestinian culture; it represent the pursuit of one's own culture. (See also Darweesh 2010.)

Participant observation proved that the implementation of this ritual changes the space significantly. Participants of the ritual were no longer only passive objects of foreign military power; they were active subjects who acted independently according to their own cultural traditions. The coffee ritual that the small group of Palestinian people, including one foreigner, created in the queuing car, made the soldiers with their weapons, helmets and heavy military clothes look quite different. The extreme contrasts were on display. A humorous gesture had changed the arrangement completely. Pointedly relaxed Palestinians implementing an enjoyable cultural activity at a time when the occupiers were under stress in hot and uncomfortable military situation.

The analysis revealed that humour was often based on creativity and took place suddenly in an unexpected situation. The situation in which humour appeared was often characterized

by the selection between indignation and a humorous attitude. The situation in the next sample from the field notes would have given rise to exasperation, however, humour was chosen and the situation remained happy and relaxed:

> We sit outside around a dinner table in the dark and warm evening. The atmosphere is relaxed but in some way also active as my friends has invited some new friends for a visit and there is lots of talk and jokes. We are talking about something about Facebook and some funny things there, when I hear a strange buzzing sound above us. The sound gets clearer and even no one else comments on it, I'll ask what that is. Someone at the table briefly says that it's an Israeli surveillance drone. All others obviously know the sound and don't pay big attention to it. Because the discussion is just that moment on Facebook issues, someone just adds that, they are taking pictures of us and soon they will be on Facebook. We laugh together, talk goes on.
> Fieldnotes 9/2012

Surveillance in many different forms is part of the lives of the Palestinians. Hardly anyone experiences it as a pleasant thing; it is an invasion of privacy. In the previous citation the surveillance penetrates to the privacy of the dinner table; however, humour provides some reprieve. Humour is like a common reassuring construction that is built with insight and wit. None of those present at the dinner table find the surveillance drone a pleasant matter, but by using humour, it was possible to ignore the thing without ruining the happy mood. Psychosocial coping through humour worked.

5.3.3 Putting things into perspective
The analysis revealed the way of thinking that some of the interviewees used in order to cope with difficult circumstances. In analysis, the phenomenon was given the name "putting things into perspective". Although the variations of this way of thinking differed somewhat in content, the principal idea was consistent; even though I suffer, for some the situation is even more difficult. The following is a quotation of the man who told about a difficult time in prison, and how he thought in order to cope during the vicissitudes.

> "In prison I heard that some of the men had sentences like ten years or even more, mine was shorter, I thought that my situation was so much better than what they had. That helped; at last my situation wasn't that bad."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 7)

Sometimes putting things into perspective took place by comparing a previous time with the later one. The idea was to see the good things in the present moment by remembering the past that was experienced as difficult. This was the case with a young man who spent his prison time in two different prisons. In the first prison the conditions were significantly more difficult than in the later one. During the remainder of the imprisonment the young man reminded himself about the improvement; even though it was still difficult, it was more bearable than before.

The same idea was expressed by an elderly person, who had experienced a violent eviction from his home region. Although he was forced to be a refugee and constantly longed for his original home, he experienced that the current situation was better than the extreme squalor and trepidation experienced during those evil days.

It is important to note that putting things into perspective in the given statements did not express so much satisfaction with the current state of conditions; the assessment of the current state was not in focus. The essential core was in an angle that opened a new perspective on the present moment. The newly opened perspective was seen to be useful and it was used for coping. It is noteworthy that this mind-set was used quite consciously for enduring through prolonged difficulties; the fact that interviewees described this way of thinking when asked about coping proved their consciousness use of it. It can be understood as a conscious and active coping behaviour which has the function of relief from suffering during trouble.

Comparisons revealed both an individual and community angle. Perspective could be obtained from comparison with people in areas outside of their own environment. Mentions were made about both Lebanon and Syria. The idea was to highlight that some conditions are even more difficult than their own. In this context, it was explained how Palestinian people live in misery in Lebanese refugee camps, how limited life is in those conditions and how the future is even more obscure than in Palestine. Also Syria, as a point of comparison, was mentioned repeatedly by interviewees. This was probably due the media attention that was heavily directed to the Syrian war at the time of the fieldwork. It was highlighted that a large number of Palestinians live in Syria and many of them experience the need to flee for the second time during their lives, for some families the displacement may be even the third.

Some Palestinians in the West Bank and Jordan compared their own situation to the situation of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. This, too, was probably associated with a temporal element as part of the fieldwork took place soon after the noteworthy Pillar of Defence military operation in the Gaza Strip; although the situation in the Gaza Strip was mentioned in comparative expressions even before the above mentioned phase of escalation. Rising tensions and acts of war, in fact, only increased the attention that already existed for the miseries of the fellow Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The metaphor of the prison was often used when talked about the Gaza Strip. This referred to the blockade that Israel maintains, and thus the restriction on the movement of Palestinians to a minimum.

Putting things into perspective is the most abstract of all coping strategies found in the present study. In fact, the analysis suggests that this coping strategy is a construction produced by a comprehensive mental process. Putting things into perspective requires, at least to some extent, comparing and, what seems to be essential, giving meaning to the differences which are observed. Thus, the very point which was found by the participants to be useful for the coping was the interpretation given to difference.

In addition to the latter points, putting things into perspective appeared to contain an essential empathic dimension. The interviews revealed intense empathy towards Palestinian people in different environments. Others were not used merely as tools for their own survival; their attitude was not condescending. The suffering of their Palestinian sisters and brothers was talked about with a respectful tone.

The findings appear to be theoretically consistent, particularly with the tradition of cognitive psychotherapy which emphasizes the importance of viewing personal problems in a broader perspective. The narrow perspective of one's own life is likely to increase anxiety and weaken personal resources; broad perspectives and constructive distancing, in turn, relieve the experience of anxiety and enhance the ability to find solutions in challenging life situations. (E.g. Beck 2011, Clark, Beck 2011,180-272, Leahy cop. 2003, 190-223.) It is noteworthy that the informants had found this mode of approach patently spontaneously. Their way of thinking had produced significant relief in the middle of the difficulties and it had been used actively.

5.3.4 The Idea of Palestine

Anyone who enters the occupied Palestinian territories will soon find how important the idea of Palestine is for Palestinian people. One of the most important symbols of Palestine, the Palestinian flag, is displayed everywhere. It can be seen hanging on lampposts, on the walls of shops, in cars and in private homes. This is understandable when it is taken into account the decades of intensive process that Palestinian people have gone through in order to preserve their identity and achieve independence. In this context the expression the "idea of Palestine" refers mainly to a sense of national identity and only secondarily to the target of statehood.

The question about an independent Palestinian State is still without solution, and there is no solution in sight for the near future. Under these circumstances, it is essential to perceive the "idea of Palestine" as a wide and multidimensional concept. In this context, the main focus is on the experiences and meanings related to psychosocial coping. Speculations on alternative solutions related to statehood are intentionally left aside with less attention.

The interviews and participant observation made it clear that the idea of Palestine was an essential source of power for many Palestinians in difficult times. The idea of Palestine appeared to be deeply significant from both the individual and collective point of view. Expressions of its importance occurred continually in group settings as well as in individual interviews. The following quote from an interview with a young man embody the significance of the theme. The narrative context of the quote is a difficult stage of life in imprisonment. The quote discloses a positive force associated with the idea of Palestine:

> "I thought that Palestine has to be free. The thought about Palestine as free helped. Some Israeli people sold a mobile phone to me (in prison), my father called me and told that I have to be strong and I shouldn't give up. One has to be strong for Palestine. That gave me strength."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 7)

The previous quote shows that not only the young man himself, but also his father had the same thought. The father who called his son in prison encouraged the son to be strong and referred to the idea of Palestine. The idea of a free Palestine attached the suffering of young man to something larger. He had to be strong, not only for his own sake, but also because his struggle was a part of a common struggle.

The phrase "Free Palestine" came up frequently on a number of occasions, always in a positive sense as an opposite to the misery of occupation. Observation in the research environment revealed that the phrase "Free Palestine" was also written as a text in a number of public places often accompanied with a painted flag of Palestine. The idea is highly important and consistently perceived as positive. However, the meanings are in transition. The finding is consistent with Brown (2011) who points out that the common goal of statehood, among Palestinian people, is not as strong as it used to be; now focus is turning to individual and national rights; however, "Free Palestine" as a statement is strong and concurrently applicable in changing circumstances as freedom is a common objective of Palestinian people in any case.

The idea of Palestine manifests itself often through symbols. Participant observation showed that an olive tree is an important symbol of Palestine for Palestinian people. The importance of the olive tree is at once symbolic and practical. This was revealed in a meeting of volunteers who were discussing the issue of assisting in olive harvesting. The meeting was attended by about twenty volunteers, all Palestinian young adults. From the beginning of the

meeting it was clear that the matter in question was important to the participants; the atmos-phere was active and focused. The participants' facial expressions and way of talking demon-strated a cheerfulness and enthusiasm. The background for the enthusiasm was certainly cre-ated through many reasons, not least, the joy of working together. However, what these young adults themselves pointed out was the idea of Palestine and especially the Palestinian tradi-tion. Just as a confirmation of this the participants sang, at the end of the meeting, the song "Mawtini", a traditional Palestinian song. Emphatically the idea of Palestine and Palestinian tradition was experienced as empowering and gratifying among these young adults many of whom were living in the middle of distressing conditions. The following extract is from the field notes describing the situation:

> I'm taking part in a volunteers' meeting concerning helping people with olive harvesting as olive harvesting is just about to begin. Some members in the group tell me that the olive tree is the symbol of Palestine. It's like a logo for Palestine and tradition, they say. Even my friend can't translate everything that people are saying; I can clearly recognize that this subject is very important. At the end of the meeting, the young men spontaneously sing a song, the name of which is Mawtini. This song has to be important to them, so earnestly they sing it. The song seems to be known by heart.
> Fieldnotes 9/2013

The idea of Palestine as source of coping appeared in slightly different forms in different in-terviews. Often the idea of Palestine was connected to the land or soil. In these expressions the idea of Palestine was associated with the geographical location or place and even physical contact with soil. One of the persons who pointed out this matter was a refugee whose grand-parents had fled from the current area of the State of Israel to the West Bank. He compared the situation of people living in the area of occupied Palestine to those who live in other re-gions like in Lebanon. According to him, it is much better to live on their own land. Contact with the land is source of power:

> "Even we are refugees, but it is so much better that we can live in the West Bank or Gaza. It is so much better than living totally in a different country, far away from home. You are in contact with your own soil. Of this is the saying: to experience the smell of the soil. This is what I mean as I say it's better to live even here."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 11)

The idea of Palestine, particular the identity and tradition dimensions became clearly ob-servable at a traditional Palestinian wedding. A two-day-long participant observation of the wedding celebration confirmed the significance of shared tradition. This village community had encountered different forms of continuous settler violence and a variety of other troubles caused by the occupation. Community as well as individual resources were scarce. As op-posed to all of this was the joy and enthusiasm among the villagers in the wedding party. Many people asked if the researcher had attended Palestinian weddings before. The emphasis was on the word "Palestinian". There was no doubt that the villagers were proud of tradi-tional Palestinian weddings. The wedding was like the condensation of Palestinian culture. Even in the middle of paucity Palestinian tradition was put into practice and through it the wedding couple as well as the villagers reached a shared joy. Also, hospitality as a cultural

tradition was particularly pronounced in the wedding celebration. Resources are not saved when Palestinian tradition is enacted at an important moment.

Participant observation revealed that the idea of Palestine was also a source of coping at times of intimate grief. The grieving associated with a strong Palestinian tradition is described in more detail in a later other chapter. Palestinian symbols, such as the colours of the national flag are used as part of memorial pictures. The dead person is described in the context of the idea of Palestine. It is understood to be a dignified and deeply significant way to honour the memory of the deceased. During the participant observation, it also appeared that the situation of dying, if possible, was presented in the context of promoting the idea of Palestine. Sometimes the death was directly occupation related; sometimes the connection was rather indirect. At all events the link with the idea of Palestine was seen as respectful and comforting.

Common to all the different descriptions and observations related to the idea of Palestine was the accession to an idea that was greater than themselves. The idea was shared, and everyone knew what it meant. Some variation exists, but the main idea is truly shared. In public debate the idea is presented more consistently; in private conversations the variation is slightly higher. This can be explained by the people's willingness to present themselves in a favourable manner (see Goffman, Luhtakallio et al. 2012, Goffman 1990).

The connection between the idea of Palestine and coping was evident and it manifested itself both in relation to the self and in relation to others. In relation to personal coping the idea of Palestine appeared as an internal speech; the mind enunciated thoughts to give strength when difficulties arose. In turn, the idea of Palestine was used when the aim was to encourage or comfort another. This can be interpreted as promoting another person's coping in the middle of difficulties.

5.3.5 Family and community

From the very first phases of the preliminary analysis in the field, it became clear that family and community are unconditionally essential for Palestinian people when considering coping in the midst of a prolonged conflict. In the interviews, the theme was raised often as the first strategy and it was emphasized repeatedly within the interviews. This finding was exactly the same in the analysis of the observations. The participant observation within the communities confirmed the importance of the deep and special significance of close human relationships during the times of suffering.

What participant observation revealed was that the importance of family and community was not only described to be pivotal; it was also lived in the reality of everyday life. The need for support and the support given varied in different situations, but the core of the phenomenon was the same. It contained two fundamental beliefs; first, I want to help and I'm supposed to help when someone close to me needs help, and second, when I need help the people close to me will help me. These beliefs had been realized in the life course of the interviewees. Both helping others and getting help were the most prominent features throughout the data. Both contained strong positive meanings and obviously were part of the entirety of psychosocial coping.

On one occasion, the family and friends were the only sources of coping that were mentioned. The interviewee and his family members who participated in the interview described thoroughly the events leading to serious injury. The coping related part of the interview was short but strong and assertive. Although the main interviewee, a seriously wounded father of the family, did not manage to participate to the interview in full, the answer for the question regarding coping was particularly direct and clear, as the following sample shows:

I'm visiting a family whose father was seriously injured by the bullets of the Israeli soldiers. As usual, I and my friend are directed to the living room. The women of the family are watching us from the other room; I think they are like in a shadow; their presence in the house is not fully visible to me. As usual, I greet them discreetly, with a quick nod of my head. As we arrive to the living room I see the father, he is in a semi-sitting position on the couch. I can see that he is in pain. Three or four men of the family are with him, one man from the village is also visiting. We sit down and at the same time some of the women bring coffee and sweets to the doorway and one man hands them to us.(...) I ask how he has coped with such a large change that has come to his life. He answers, "My father, family and friends help". I can see from his eyes the trust for these people surrounding him and at the same time I can see how this caring is takes place in concrete ways; a pillow is placed behind his back, someone brings him something to drink. Of course he means more than only these practical things, but even these things make me feel that I understand what he means. I realize the man is really in pain; I don't want to burden him more. I understand that he already told the most important thing about coping in his situation. His words and the observation that I can make tells me a lot. New visitors are coming; a man from the same village and his little son. They greet the convalescent very warmly and with caring manner.
Fieldnotes 9/2012

The importance of the family and the mutual loving commitment in helping each other was described also in narratives that extended a number of years back in time. One of these was a narrative about the mutual care between father and son. The part of the story where the father helped the son was placed in the past; the part where the son helped his father was occurring at the moment. The narrative has its own coping related meaning in the present. The description was given by a young Palestinian man:

"At the time of second intifada I was a young boy. I was wounded by an Israeli soldier's bullet. People brought me to the hospital. My parents did not see the situation where I was wounded, but people told them what had happened and my father decided to come up to me to the hospital. He thought that I would definitely be scared alone in a strange environment and he wanted to comfort me. It was night, and at that time there was curfew. It wasn't allowed to be on the move at night and therefore my father put himself at risk. He couldn't use the roads, but he had to pass along the ditches along the roadsides so that no one would see him. With great effort he reached the hospital, but just before getting inside he was hit by a bullet and he was wounded. Eventually both of us, however, healed. (...) It has meant a lot to me that my father put himself in great danger in order to come to me. Now the situation is the other way around. My father became seriously ill because he is so worried about my little brother who is in prison. Father needs help in everything; he cannot even go to the toilet or wash himself. I take care of him with my mother. I want to do it; I want to take care of him as well as I can."
Young-adult male
(Interviewee 31)

Later there was an opportunity to visit the father, the mother and son described in previous quote. The son's statement was impressively confirmed. The father's health was indeed weak; his ability to express himself was limited to a few obscure words and fragile gestures. Although the mother welcomed the visiting foreigner warmly, it was obvious that she was exhausted. Actually the mother fell asleep as soon as the son took responsibility for the caring of the father. The son spoke to his father with warmth and in a respectful manner; he placed pillows in the

bed trying to comfort the father. It was evident that the coping of the family in this situation was based on close relationships. Supporting one another within the family was a way that had been used up until now and it was only possible way to cope forward into the future.

The previous findings are consistent with a larger work that the Finnish pioneer of anthropology, Hilma Granqvist (1965), outlines in her comprehensive description of a Palestinian family and their communal life in the 1920s. In one part of her anthropological treatise she describes accurately how family and friends support a seriously ill family member. According to her observations, a sick person was not left alone; family members and relatives sat next to him or her and did their best to comfort the sick. A strong commitment to the alleviation of the suffering of the loved one is described as self-evident part of their collectively. Both giving help and receiving it is integrally part of the Palestinian community's life. (Granqvist 1965.) Participant observation reveals that the attitude is still the same in spite of many changes in environment since the 1920's. The ethos that manifests itself in practical action is unambiguously the same; the diseased member of the family is taken care of in the best possible way.

At the same time, as the family is obviously a key element in coping especially during the difficult phases in life, it is justified to consider if traditional family and community oriented lifestyle may sometimes be a burden too. Booth (2002) argues that in a number of Arab families, young people are expected to show unconditional obedience to their parents, particularly towards their father. The girls' role is to take care of younger siblings and boys. Boys, growing up, are expected to carry an economic responsibility for the parents. Pointedly, the father should be respected and the mother loved. (Booth 2002, Chaleby, Racy 1999, 48-50, 83-94, 107-114.) Even if a completely unquestioned patriarchal family structure does not exist in its traditional form in today's daily life, there is still evidence that in Arab families the relationships are more traditional than, for example, in the Jewish families. (Seginer 2007.)

In the present study no critical views related to family structures or power relations in the family were expressed by interviewees in the context of mutual support during difficult times. It is likely that the above described family structures' strength appears just in difficult times when support is needed. However, a close community structure was criticized based on the lack of privacy. The unequal status of daughters and sons in the family structure came up often. Inequality appeared to be a significant problem especially in regions known to be more conservative.

The above mentioned criticism over the lack of privacy emerged in the context in which the main emphasis was in the supportive aspects of community. The interviewee described the everyday support for coping that the villagers in his home village offer. The support was described to have two dimensions; very practical, as shown by transportation help, and more mental, based on the knowledge that one will get help if in need; the reassurance that he will not be in distress, but knows that will he will be befriended and supported. In this context, for the most part very positive, the interviewee mentioned that the other half of the matter is a lack of privacy; in the village the residents know about each other's business quite closely. Maintaining privacy in a Palestinian village community according to him is practically impossible.

The family and the local community are not the only forms of support for coping in the Palestinian community. Different forms of peer support were repeatedly raised in interviews and noticed during observation. One of the characteristic Palestinian forms of peer support appeared to be the so called Prisoner's Club. Despite its name, it is not the club for the prisoners in prison, but a club for people outside of prison. Although a wide range of people belong to the sphere of influence of these clubs, the most prominent mode of operation appeared to be prisoners' mothers' gatherings in public places such as on a busy street or square.

On the basis of observations, these gatherings have at least two functions: demonstration and peer support. The implementation of the demonstration is impressive; mainly older women hold in their hands photos of their sons who are in prison, or in some cases of the dead who were killed in conflict related incidents. Peer support was achieved in a simple but powerful way through the shared presence. Comforting gestures from other mothers were revealed when one of the mothers wept. The attitudes of passers-by seemed to be empathetic, although the sight of prisoners' mothers sitting next to street was so ordinary that it did not attract the attention of all passers-by. However, if any comments or reactions appeared, they were supportive; the matter was considered most likely to be something common.

One volunteer shared his understanding of the Prisoner's Club during an interview. The importance of peer support is emphasized in his view. In addition, he mentions the public attitudes towards Prisoner's Club. The above considerations and interviewee's views support and complement each other:

> "In my opinion the Prisoner's Club is important form of activity. Those people who have a family member in prison support each other also. Week after week mothers of prisoners gather in some public place with the pictures of their sons. Have you seen this? The young men in these pictures are in prisons in Israel. Some of them have been there for many years. It helps the mothers; they are not alone with the pain. People respect these mothers, but it is so usual that one or more members of family are in prison. It is how our life is here."
>
> Middle-aged male
>
> (Interviewee 10)

The importance of family and community was revealed to be strong also in one of the most painful incidents that were observed during the fieldwork. Without the intentional pursuit, it became possible to observe a family that had only a few days before lost a son in a conflict related incident. As was usual, the situation was found through the snowball method. Someone who knew the family wanted to arrange a visit. At first the idea of visiting a house of mourning seemed like a bad idea, but after many assurances the visit was realized. The visit was conducted discreetly and with a sensitive manner. Preoccupations were eased as it turned out that the family was actually positively impressed by the visit of two foreigners.

The decisive understanding of the question of why the visit to the house of mourning was seen as relevant and pertinent formed after returning from the field. The key to understanding was an anthropological research report about Muslim death and burial written by the anthropologist Hilma Granqvist. Although her fieldwork in a Palestinian village called Artas and that it took place mostly in the 1920s, the descriptions of mourning appeared to be adequate now at the beginning of the third millennium. Both Granqvist and the present study stress the importance of family and community in mourning. (Granqvist 1965.)

The following extract from the field notes describes the observations from a visit to the house of mourning. Susanne is a European woman, an aid worker, who participated in the visit. Her involvement was particularly important in terms of encountering the female relatives of deceased:

> As we approached the house of the grieving family I still felt uncertain and concerned. Is this a good idea? We don't know this family and are visiting them just at a time of great sorrow and pain. The man from the same village had assured me that our visit was desired and the family of dead young man welcomes us. The route passes through narrow lanes; it is obvious that the

area is poor. We arrive at a modest yard. On one side of the yard is a stable for animals, we are told that the dead son used to sleep in the stable, because the family was large and there wasn't room for everyone in the house. The father is now in the stable. As we enter into the stable, we see the father sitting on the mattress on the ground. The space is dim and very modest. We take of our shoes to show out respect and sit close to him and express our condolence. The situation is in some special way natural and the encounter is harmonic with no perplexity. The encounter is simple: little talking, a lot of presence. The father is obviously tired and he sits bowed. (...) After an unhurried time with the father we said goodbye to him and came out of the stable. Next, it was time for meeting with the grieving mother. We were directed to the largest room of the house. As we step into the room I can see the circle of women and recognize immediately who is mother of the dead son. She sobs faintly and women on either side of her comfort her. All the women in circle have dark clothing. I understand immediately that this is a situation primarily for women and as Susanne moves closer to the grieving mother, I stay in the doorway. When Susanne, who is a stranger to the mother, goes to her and touches her hands, she starts to cry and move herself vigorously. Susanne hugs her for a long time and crying continues strongly. After a while a women sitting near the mother begins to comfort her. Some of the women exhort her to restrain crying. (...) After a peaceful and quiet moment in the women's space, we move on to the courtyard where we meet siblings and friends of the deceased. (...) All of these encounters occurred somehow naturally, even though we were present in other people's home at the time of mourning, there was no discomfort sensed. In some way I felt that our visit was even appreciated."

Fieldnotes 1/2013

Although the observations by Granqvist (1965) are from a time more than 80 years ago, they are in many respects in line with the findings of the present study. In particular, descriptions of grieving in the house of mourning are remarkably consistent. Granqvist describes demonstrations of grief based on fieldwork done at the beginning of 1926 in Artas:

"As soon as the last breath has been drawn, the women present give vent to unrestrained sorrow. Each time a new woman enters, she beats her breast, saying: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!' ...a woman takes pride in expressing her violent sorrow. (...) Then someone intervenes, catching hold of her hands at the crucial moment, to prevent her from injuring herself. And then again, wild cries of distress penetrate the village."(Granqvist 1965.)

A powerful expression of grief, and on the other hand, direct and explicit demonstration of support was clearly displayed in both observations despite the fact that the temporal distance between the observations is remarkable. The probable reason why strangers we welcomed to the house of mourning can be found in descriptions of Granqvist:

"The better known and the mightier the man who has died, the more numerous are the people who come to the house of mourning. Men come also from outside of the village. They come to the funeral, or afterwards. (...) Not only the women of the clan and not only the women from the village take part in the demonstration of grief. They come from distant places to mourn. As soon as they have arrived at the house of the deceased the village women join them. Each time wailing women arrive, the performance of lamentation, of mourning songs, and even of a strange kind of dance take place." (Granqvist 1965.)

A little later in the text Granqvist explains that visitors from other villages may not have known the deceased personally, however, their involvement is considered appropriate (Granqvist 1965).

Their visit is not interpreted as a negative intrusion to the private space; actually the interpretation is the reverse. Visitors from a distance can be understood as an indication of the significance of the deceased. Community support and respect for the deceased appears to be broader; in this context the empathy shown even by a previously unknown person is seen as relevant. It seems to have a positive impact on psychosocial coping.

In interviews, family and friends were mentioned repeatedly in the context of coping, whereas a spouse as an individual was mentioned only rarely. The fact that the spouse was not mentioned as strongly as the family as a whole does not necessarily mean that the spouse would not be important from the point of view of coping in difficult situations. Based on observations by Nasser-McMillan (2003) it must be assumed that the relationship between the spouses is a topic which is not commented on publicly, the focus is on the family, or even on the extended family. This fact is eminently cultural; the relationship of wife and husband is considered as belonging to an area of privacy. (See also Chaleby, Racy 1999, 83-89.)

Notwithstanding the latter, the marital relationship was mentioned clearly as a source of coping in one interview. The statement was unambiguous and it was confirmed by both spouses. An elderly couple told about stages of life and both repeatedly referred to the importance of spousal support in difficult times. The couple told also about their present daily life which still is overshadowed by conflict related fears and everyday problems. On the question of where they get their strength in everyday life they answered together by telling about the daily routines they perform together. Descriptions of the activities of daily life were recalled as a series of everyday rituals. Particularly meals together were mentioned as a source of pleasure in the midst of uncertainty. Shared moments at the dinner table are counterbalance to their conflict influenced daily life.

One of the few situations in which the interviewees were women took place in the refugee camp near by Ramallah. One of these three women spoke quite good English. She told about life in the refugee camp; scarcity, fear and uncertainty are part of everyday life but many women are active and try together to bring changes to the refugee camp. In order to obtain something essential in relation to coping, the last question for all three women together was, "What makes you happy and gives strength in the middle of difficulties you have told about?" The question led to a lively debate, of course in Arabic, among the women. Eventually, they came to a joint conclusion. There are four things, they reported:

"Family, work, hope and dreams."
Group interview (no 3)

The way in which result was presented left no doubt. All four were important, but one was the first: family. Although a limited common language set constrictions on interaction, something very essential was reached. These four words contained the deepest meanings for these women.

Community support was described to realize itself in diverse places and forms. A Palestinian man who had experienced time in an Israeli prison during his adolescence told that one source of coping was the concrete support which he received from older Palestinian prisoners. The support was not only mental but also extend to physical wellbeing. Care by older Palestinian men was significant for the young man who had been sent to prison straight from his childhood home:

"The older prisoners advised me. They told me how to cope in prison. They were helpful and friendly to me. I mean other Palestinian prisoners. The Israeli prisoners were real criminals, they were dangerous if came into contact with. But with the Palestinians, we were all together. (...) The older prisoners, for example, gave me tuna fish. I was young, they wanted to help me."

Young-adult male

(Interviewee 18)

The entirety of the interview from which the previous sample was taken emphasizes the importance of community in prison life. Both, the most distressing things and the most helpful things, from the coping point of view, were related to contact with others. In the description it appeared that an extremely distressing period of time was the period in solitary confinement, on the contrary, the collective solicitude seemed to be the key factor for coping.

It is important to consider the wider perspective of psychosocial coping in the Arab cultural context expressly through concepts of individualism and collectivism. Individualism, which emphasizes the significance of the individual over the community, is still regarded as a negative phenomenon in Arab cultures. Although globalisation and even westernisation has affected Arab cultures, its manifestations remain superficial more than deep; profound cultural structures are relatively stable. The essential factor in this permanent cultural entity is collectivism. In practise, collectivism appears as strong bonds and obligations between people in families and communities. The individual is required to provide input and even sacrifice for family and community, but on the other hand, she or he will be supported and taken care of by others if in need. (Seginer 2007, Ben-Ari 2004, Booth 2002.)

The findings of the present study related to social support are largely reinforced by the findings that Ben-Ari (2004) made in his research on sources of social support among Israeli Arab university students. The fact that Israeli Arabs are specifically Palestinian people living in Israel makes the results of particular interest from the perspective of the current study. Ben-Ari found that the most frequent used source of support in the case of emotional problems, such as relationship problems or depression, was a partner followed by a best friend. In situations involving both emotional and material need, such as choosing a career, getting married or buying a house, the source of support was the combination of partner and father. When material support was in question, Arab students consistently turned to members of their family of origin.

Ben-Ari (2004) suggests that modernization and exposure to a Western education in university system is noticeable in the results of the study. A strong family centred orientation is still present but at the same time the significance of the partner and best friend is markedly strong. When the importance of the family in the original dominant meaning is slowly declining, the meaning of the closest relationships is emphasized.

Observations in the present study are much the same as the above. Although there is reason to believe that modernization among the Palestinian community is occurring faster in Israel than in the West Bank or at least in the Gaza Strip it is happening in all of these places all the same. Notwithstanding, it is obvious that the importance of the family, in the traditional sense, is still strong. Quite like in the study described above, in the present study the importance of the family was described to be crucially significant particularly in coping with major life challenges.

Although the methods used in the present study do not allow for a straightforward comparison between different regions, the impression formed by the fieldwork gives reason to suppose that the original form of the family culture is stronger in rural areas than in urban ar-

eas such as Ramallah. However, as is seen globally, also in the occupied Palestinian territories, the younger generations tend to migrate from rural areas to urban areas (World Urbanization Prospects 2011). Traditional family structures and relationships are under negotiation both in rural and urban settings.

One important form of commonality appeared to be Internet based social media. By the far the most popular platform is Facebook. During the fieldwork it was surprising to note the extent to which the Internet is available in the occupied Palestinian territories. Outages and disruptions to the connection occur, but in general, access to the internet is daily for a large part of the young Palestinian people encountered during the fieldwork. Even though social media did not constitute an important form of communication for everyone interviewed or observed, or as the only channel to social interaction, it obviously is a significant part of the social interaction among young Palestinians. Facebook's role seemed to be informative, conducive and strengthening in terms of the existing relationships. Usually it supplemented and facilitated contacts which were originally created in a real life.

Self-taken photos and images from other sources are an important part of communication on Facebook. The shared image material that was observed on Facebook appeared to be divided into four groups of images. The first is directly related to family and friends. These images included, for example, photos of babies born in the extended family and the various group images of family members and friends. Images have most likely the effect of increasing cohesion between the people shown in the images. Shared images are one of the many ways to strengthen family ties or bonds between friends. This is a meaningful practice in circumstances where every day coping is essentially dependent on diverse forms of support from those nearby. In addition, images also served as a tool for the construction of new relations. In many cases a single person or a group of friends wanted to have photo together with a visitor. The visitor was asked immediately to be a friend on Facebook and the photo that had been taken was shared actively. The construction of acquaintance with a visitor on Facebook took place by using the chat function, in the case of a limited common language, images and video clips were used in a creative way to express the ideas that were wanted to be shared.

An intense desire to create a contact with a visitor from an alien culture is understandable in particular when taking into account restrictions on free movement. When travelling out of the occupied Palestinian territories is difficult or even impossible, contacts with visitors offer a chance to explore the diversity of cultures and humanity. The above can be understood as one of the means of coping in a confined environment.

The second group consists of images related to volunteering. These images included instruments or symbols, such as the medical equipment used in volunteering. Typically, a person was dressed in the uniform used in volunteering. These images appeared both in individual and group settings. The third group of images relates to national ideology or resistance. Its illustration includes national symbols and diverse material against occupation. The fourth group of images has humorous content and is used mostly for entertainment. All of the above had obvious community and social significance. Social media has become part of the community interaction that generates psychosocial coping in the midst of the conflict. The importance of social media as a source of community support is emphasized in situations in which movement is restricted and access to live contacts with the community is limited.

The above findings seem to be consistent with research related to present-day social media. In particular, the findings by Mikal, Rice et al. (2013) on stress and computer-mediated social support provide amplification for the findings of the present study. They made a wide review of literature from multiple disciplines and found that the Internet is a useful source of

community support for individuals experiencing different stressful transitions. The Internet provides a platform for both communicating support and the reestablishment of socially supportive networks. Both emerged in the analysis of the present study.

Particularly, as recent technological developments have made the Internet more interactive and group- and community-oriented it offers more opportunities for social support. Computer mediated social support makes it possible for people to establish strong ties and keep them maintained. Also a sense of community can be strengthened through computer mediated communication. This could be of particular importance for coping during times of transitions and stress (Mikal 2013.). In the present study, participant observation revealed the importance of social media in the reinforcing of already existing social contacts. As described previously, this was done in variety of ways from chatting to sharing images and playing games. All of these internet based functions appeared to have a role also in a diverse entity of psychosocial coping.

As described above, in present study, social support through the Internet appeared to be one of the numerous means for coping with difficulties caused by prolonged conflict in the occupied Palestinian territories. The research done by Lewandowski, Rosenbeg et al. (2011) supports the finding that computer mediated social support may have a role in buffering distressing conditions in a person's life. However, the US soldiers that they studied gave priority to face to face support rather than computer mediated support. The medium through which social support was received affected its effectiveness. Face to face support was the most effective in lessening a disruptive event's impact among military personnel (Lewandowski 2011). Even though the data used in present study does not allow for quantitative conclusions on the importance of computer mediated support, observations strongly suggest that the Internet has mainly a complementary role as a space of social support. Primarily social support is realized in real, face to face contacts.

As was described earlier, the social support received from family and community is crucially essential during difficulties and suffering. This phenomenon is universal, but there are some special features in the Palestinian cultures that are different from, for example, present-day Western culture. Both the family and the local community in the Palestinian setting are understood considerably broadly. The importance of the extended family and community, based on the findings, is emphasized during difficulties. The entire extended family network and village community activates when one of its members is in distress and in need. On a practical level, this appeared in the form of mundane assistance, a comforting presence and intensive communication. The forms of social support are based on Palestinian tradition but also utilize modern social technology. Regardless of the forms, social support was described deeply an in meaningful terms of psychosocial coping.

5.3.6 Spirituality

Spirituality is an integral means of coping for many of the encountered Palestinians. The vast majority of Palestinians are Muslims and their Islamic faith plays an important role in daily life. The Mosque's minarets can be seen everywhere and call to prayer are an essential part of the sound space of towns and villages. In particular, on Fridays Mosques appeared to be full of people. Cultural, religious and spiritual factors are intertwined and appear often overlapping. The integration of spirituality to the entity of coping was seen in the descriptions that people gave. Spirituality was described as an important source of coping, but never the sole source. It always seemed to be part of a greater whole. Although the significance of spirituality seemed to vary between individuals, no one seemed to be completely indifferent to it.

Some expressed the importance of spirituality to their coping under difficult conditions very directly. This was the situation in the case of young man who had spent part of his youth in an Israeli prison under difficult conditions. His statement was unequivocal:

> "Believing in Allah helped me in the prison."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 7)

Spirituality was also raised directly in one of the relatively few situations where the group of women was observed. The topic of the guided group discussion was resources in life and the issue was addressed through drawing. Participants were asked to draw trees and name important resources of life by writing on the roots and branches. Religion was mentioned in several trees. What was characteristic of the drawings was that religion was placed among other things without special emphasis and without isolation. The visual layout can be understood as the manifestation of the integration of religion and spirituality in everyday life.

The significance of spirituality in the various stages of life was mentioned in an interview with an old Palestinian man. He had experienced, together with his family, the eviction from his home and flight to the West Bank. The eviction from the home had been very traumatic, he had had to leave all behind; domestic animals, savings, everything was left there. Life had to be started all over again in a new place. The life story of this old man was strong, and contained a great deal of suffering; however, the story had overtones of coping. When questioned, the old man commented as follows:

> "I have lived under the eyes of Allah. I get strength from Allah. In this village we have everything we need. Grandchildren make me happy."
> Elderly male
> (Interviewee 23)

The importance of spirituality also emerged in a discussion with a Palestinian refugee man in Jordan. This man had a small business in a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan. He proved to be very active in following local and global politics. His father had fled from the area of the present State of Israel. This second generation refugee man described a wide range of suffering that Palestinians have gone through over the years. When asked about the sources of coping in the midst of all the suffering, the answer came immediately and it was succinct.

> "Allah and education."
> Middle-aged male
> (Interviewee 33)

Spirituality and hope were often described together. Spirituality, which mostly appeared in the forms of Islamic faith and occasionally Christian, was seen as a source of hope. The idea of an all-powerful Allah or God was experienced as empowering in the middle of uncertain and constantly changing conditions. Transcendence was often referred to in the context of injustice and justice; even if there is a lot of perceived injustice, Allah or God will one day rectify the wrongs. Confidence in this gave power and was part of the coping for many.

Largely in line with the present study are the results Nabolsi and Carson (2011) got in their qualitative study of Jordanian Muslim men. Participants, who had coronary artery dis-

ease, were asked to describe the experience of spirituality. They all shared the same belief in Allah's will; whatever happens must happen and all that will happen is from Allah. Patience, meditation and prayers were highlighted and these were understood to be connected to enhanced coping. Spirituality was found to increase the participants' personal strength and thereby enhanced their ability to cope in new situations. (Nabolsi 2011.) Though the situations in life were different from those of the present study's participants, similarities in experiencing spirituality are noticeable; spirituality provides strength in the midst of difficulties. In both conditions it gives the power to continue in the midst of uncertainty.

What was remarkable in present study was the emphasis on spirituality as something personal and internal. Descriptions related to spirituality focused on the subjective relationship with Allah or God rather than religious rituals or the practice of religion in the community. Gilliland et al. (2010) made a similar observation as they studied the wartime experiences of military nurses. The geographical location was different from the present study but what was common was the fact that the participants live in the midst of danger and insecurity. It was found that spirituality helped military nurses to cope with stressors during war. Even though believing in God is important, religious rituals are not practised during the military service. Building on these findings it can be stated that spirituality as a means of coping does not require the presence of religious rituals. This does not, of course, exclude the possible importance of religious rituals in some circumstances and for some people.

It is possible, and even likely, that some religious rituals are so deeply a part of everyday life that the individual does not recognize them. Participant observation during the fieldwork revealed some practises which can be considered to be religiously based rituals. These occurred, for example, in a speech which repeatedly referred to the will of Allah when talking about future plans. One of the most obvious was the ritual of praying which involved precisely defined practises. However, when spiritual matters were discussed, the focus was clearly on the internal experiences, external rituals were rarely explicitly mentioned.

Hisham and Pargament (2010) highlight in their research based on clinical recommendations the importance of positive Islamic methods of coping in helping of Muslim clients suffering from mental health problems. They emphasize the significance of religiosity particularly in stressful stages of life and during crises. Islam is deeply entrenched in a Muslim person's life and can play a central role in coping in difficult times; however, it is essential to understand that Islam is a multidimensional religion that can be interpreted by different people differently. Participants of present study drew attention to the above aspects. They pointed out, on several occasions, the fact that Islam can be understood in many ways.

Although spirituality as a personal source of coping was accentuated, also critical views were revealed. The criticism was directed against extremist interpretations which were experienced as oppressive for women and for those who think in a different way. Accordingly, spirituality as a private source of coping was seen as a positive factor, but at the same time it was seen to contain threats when appearing in the form of religious extremism.

Ai, Peterson and Huang (2003) studied the religious-spiritual coping of adult Muslim refugees from Kosovo and Bosnia. They found that optimism among refugees was positively related to positive religious coping. Based on the results, they suggest that positive patterns of religious-spiritual coping might have a protective impact on cognitive coping resources; however, their study failed to support the common assumption that religiousness leads directly to the positive attitudes such as optimism or hope.

Spirituality and religiousness as phenomena are highly complex and simplifications in relation to coping must be avoided. The complexity of the impact of spirituality and religion

on mental health was showed also in recent research that examined war-traumatized ado-
lescents from the Gaza Strip and South Lebanon. The results showed that in the Gaza Strip
higher levels of religiosity were associated with the greatest levels of depression and anxi-
ety. In turn, among the Lebanese adolescents, religiosity seemed to be a protective factor for
mental health problems. (Khamis 2012.) The complexity of the phenomenon appears both in
everyday life and in research. What is certain, based on the participant observation of present
study, is that a simplistic interpretation of the complex phenomenon would be misleading and
flatten the truth.

Precisely it was complexity that was observed for the most part in the Gaza Strip. Many of
the interviewees expressed their concern about the harmful interpretations of religion. The
concern was associated with, at least in part, the relationship between politics and religion. It
seems that religiosity or spirituality is not unambiguously favourable or adverse in relation to
coping. Even though for many it is an important source of coping, for some it may involve con-
tradictions. Essential to the coping point of view is that the individual has enough freedom
to determine their own religiosity and spirituality. In this case, as is seen in present study,
spirituality and religiosity may be significant factors which promote coping.

Bryant-Davis (2005) studied African American adult survivors of childhood violence. In
addition to other outcomes, she draws attention to spirituality as a coping strategy. According
to her, spirituality was used to make sense of trauma; it was also used to increase one's expe-
rience in the efficacy in managing the effects of the trauma. Spirituality as a coping strategy
included cognitive and behavioural strategies; it manifested itself in beliefs and rituals such as
prayer. The above is in line with the findings of the present study. Spirituality appears as one
of the many coping strategies and is seen as associated with a search for meaning and hope
in the midst of uncertainty.

5.3.7 Hope

A phenomenon which was present almost in every encounter, sometimes openly and some-
times implicitly, was hope. Although people were encountered in very different environments;
in refugee camps, small villages, in a big city or next to the bombed ruins of a house, the com-
mon driving force in people's lives was hope. Hope had different emphases and dimensions
in different settings, it was based on variety of issues and was focused on wide range of mat-
ters, but always it had a crucial role in the coping. It provides an opportunity to continue liv-
ing even when suffering was painfully present.

Many of the people who were interviewed described hope in particular as a Palestinian
characteristic. According to them the hope has a special meaning for Palestinian people be-
cause of the long suffering they have lived through and are still living in. During this journey
hope has passed from one generation to another. One of the interviewees described this by
using a metaphor:

> "Hope comes from parents and grandparents like an injection."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 11)

Hope has been present in Palestinian life through the difficult decades. An interviewee told
about his old father; things have not gone as he had thought, but hope still exists in his life:

"Originally my father believed that his return home will take place very soon. The wait for return has taken decades. But the hope is still there."
Young-adult male
(Interviewee 11)

The idea of returning to the original home region as a focus of hope was not limited to old people. The very same hope was expressed vigorously by a number of young adults encountered in the field. One described this hope while concurrently expressing his uncertainty related to the timing of its fulfilment. The following quote provides also a sample of the hope that is transferred from one generation to another:

"My father was a little boy when his family was evicted from their home which was located at the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. That was in 1948. My father's father died in those events that followed the eviction of the family from the home. I have never met my father's father, but I've heard of him, of course. I often think of that place which was the home of my father and previous generations. That place is home for me, even though I have not lived there. It is my real home; the one I live in now is only temporary. (...) I hope with all my heart that we will get home one day. I don't know if I'll actually see it. Maybe my daughter will see it, or my daughter's daughter. It may take a year, ten years or a hundred years. What else do we have other than hope? What else can I do? Every morning I say to my daughter: 'Good morning Palestine'."
Middle-aged male
(Interviewee 19)

In addition to the hope that was clearly focused on a permanent return home, a number of other targets of hope appeared that also were somehow linked to a former home region. A young man, a third generation resident of the West Bank, listed possible targets of hope as follows:

"Even a small window of hope is so important. That one can see the sea, or former home, the hope that you can get permission to visit there, these may be objects of hope."
Young-adult male
(Interviewee 11)

Some symbols in Palestinian culture indicate and strengthen the hope. One of the most important symbols is an old key. It was told that background of this symbol is the fact that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave their homes when the state of Israel was established in 1948. Many of them had the idea that they will return soon, they locked the door of the home and kept the key very carefully. The key to the original home is a family treasure in many Palestinian families. The original home as a building may have already been destroyed but the old key retains its significance as a symbol of hope. A young Palestinian man told about the key when describing the specific hope that Palestinian people have:

"Many people have such a strong hope that one day they will use the old key to the door of the original home. They have the key in a good safe place."
Young-adult male
(Interviewee 11)

In some contexts, hope is linked to religious faith. This connection does not come across in all descriptions but is significant in some. The following quote relates to the discussion on the theme of upcoming events in the Middle East and was expressed with obvious hopefulness in mind:

> "Allah will send once in a hundred years a wise man in the midst of people. I expect that Allah will supernaturally intervene in this situation."
> Middle-aged male
> (Interviewee 28)

In some discussions Allah and hope were linked together directly. Allah was seen as a source of hope. This idea arose especially in descriptions dealing with important life matters. For example, a discussion about the future of the Palestinian people led an interviewee to refer to Allah. The situations in which human potential was seen as limited led to reference to the hope that comes from Allah:

> "Allah gives hope; however, it may take time before things will change."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 42)

In some situations hope has been crucial to the very continuation of life. A strong example of this is a young man's description of his distressing time in prison and the way of thinking that helped him to cope. Hope was the force that prevented this young man from ending his life in suicide:

> "It was hard, but I didn't want to kill myself, because I thought that I have a good future. (...) I was thinking that after four years I will have a good new life. I was thinking dreams related to the future."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 18)

Hope can also be seen as a counterweight or antagonist to evil things that, without hope, could be overwhelming. This sentence spoken by a young Palestinian man summed up the importance of hope:

> "When you see so many bad things as you see here, you must have hope, otherwise you will not cope. (…) If I didn't have hope, I'd be like a stone. Do I want to be like that? No, in spite of everything, I want to hold on to hope."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 11)

Sometimes hope was expressed in general terms without being directed to a precise and concrete thing; sometimes hope had an exact target. Often hope was expressed both in generalized and particularized form at the same time. This was the case with a man who had been involved in helping people after the extensive bombing of the Gaza Strip. He had had to witness very horrible and difficult things when helping the victims of the bombings. Hope

in its different forms was the major element that helped him to cope. On the other hand, he hoped for things such as finding a wife and setting up a family; on the other hand he referred to Allah and waited for supernatural intervention from Allah.

During the fieldwork in a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan, the phenomenon of hope appeared in many different ways. With particularly clarity, the significance of hope was revealed in an interview with a Palestinian refugee woman who has an active role in community development in the refugee camp. Her philosophy is always to look forward and to be tenacious. She is not discouraged by the numerous problems that she sees in the refugee camp, but rather wants to maintain hopefulness and to work for solutions. As part of the interview she was asked if she would like to send some greetings to the Gaza Strip. She named a number of issues she wanted to be passed on and finally ended with, in her own opinion, the most essential:

> "On the horizon there is already visible a small light. In the future, there will be a bigger light. The most important thing is hope."
> Middle-aged female
> (Interviewee 37)

Her statement was intense and it based on her life experience. The timing gave specific weight to the Palestinian refugee woman's words. Her message to Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip was sent at the time just weeks after an extensive and devastating bombing of the Gaza Strip. Those events were shocking for Palestinians in Jordan also. In those circumstances of suffering and distress, she wanted to emphasize hope.

The findings described above disclose the fundamental importance of hope in the struggling and coping of Palestinian people. The very same phenomenon has been described in various environments. In their classic article, Dufaul and Martocchio (1985) describe spheres and dimensions of hope. Their arguments offer a reflection of the perspective of this study. According to them, hope has two spheres: generalized hope and particularized hope. These spheres are related but distinct. Generalized hope refers to beneficial developments in the future, which are not linked to any particular object. This sort of hope was clearly present in the data of this study. Hope was, in many instances, expressed without an accurately identified object.

Dufaul and Martocchio (1985) emphasize the meaning of generalized hope in the midst of difficulties as it gives motivation to continue in the changing conditions of life. This is the perspective that became evident in Palestinian people's descriptions. Expressly generalized hope was one of the essential powers that gave strength to continue in the midst of difficulties. One example of this was the greetings that the Palestinian refugee woman sent to the Gaza Strip. Hope was described by using the analogy of light. The hope did not focus on a designated issue, however its importance was obviously considered as crucial.

Particularized hope differs from generalized hope in its orientation. Particularized hope has a specific target which may be concrete or abstract. It clarifies and prioritizes what is the most important in life for the hoping person. Particularized hope energizes a person to pursue the object that is desired and it plays an important role in coping with obstacles on the way towards the goal. (Dufault 1985.) The data in the present study shows clearly the relevance of particularized hope to the people living in an environment of prolonged conflict. Though generalized and particularized hope were identified separately from each other, usually they appeared together overlapping each other. The same interviewee often expressed both.

Even though the phenomenon of hope is widely studied, there is only a limited amount of research on the meanings of hope in conflict and post-conflict settings. Eggerman and Panter-Brick (2010) studied resilience and cultural values in war affected Afghanistan. They found that hope was linked to Afghan cultural values such as faith, family unity and honour. Value based hope formed the basis of resilience and drove social aspirations in the midst of a war affected society; under those circumstances it also had great importance in maintaining self-respect and dignity. These findings are largely consistent with the findings of the present study. The integral connection between hope and culture was obvious in the Palestinian community. Both generalized and particularized hope appeared explicitly in the context of the culture. Cultural characteristics contributed to the ways that hope was interpreted and expressed. Tradition formed the framework in which the experience of hope was also transformed from one generation to another. The transferring of hope was seen as essential and it was done deliberately.

While hope in the midst of armed conflicts has been studied only marginally, research in other exceptional circumstances exists. Hackbarth, Pavkov, Wetchler and Flannery (2012) explored the coping process after Hurricane Katarina. Even though natural disasters significantly differ from armed conflicts, it is possible to see some possible parallels from the hope point of view. Hackbarth et al. (2012) found that hope was associated with a family's ability to cope after the experienced disaster. Those families which were characterized by high levels of hope were coping more effectively following the disaster. As stated above, hope and the ability to cope in the middle of difficulties was seen as belonging together by Palestinian people. The same idea was expressed also through negation by saying that it would not be possible to continue without hope. The importance of hope in coping is emphasized in exceptional circumstances, such as armed conflicts or disasters.

In line with the above conclusions is research done by Hui-Ching (2011) who studied families coping with the man-made trauma of one of its members. She noted that experiencing hope even in the midst of a traumatic circumstance had a link to the perceived quality of life. Also Walsh (2007) emphasizes the importance of hope in the times of traumatic events such as traumatic losses or major disasters. As in the present study, she points out that in times of the deepest despair hope has a role of special importance for recovery. According to her, hope renews attachments and generates energy in the present moment, but it affects the future also; hope creates a positive heritage to pass on to the generations to come. This finding is consistent with the findings in the present study. Hope appears in diverse forms but always it has a deep meaning as an essential source of strength and coping.

5.3.8 The reviving power of places

The significance of reviving places as a source for coping was revealed little by little as the preliminary analysis proceeded in the field. At first, it seemed that being together with friends was the essence of the descriptions that were in some way related to reviving places, but as data increased and the analysis continued, something more emerged. The social dimension does have great significance, but at the same time the significance of a certain kind of physical environment began to appear to be also essential. The following quotation demonstrates how social and environment related dimensions occur concurrently. In this particular case, they cannot be separated without the total loss of meaning:

> We are sitting together and no one is busy. I ask, what are the things that give strength in the
> midst of everything? These young adults describe together how nice it is to go camping in scenic

> places; dancing and grilling outdoors together. Being together, forgetting sad things, to being
> happy together. These trips to beautiful natural environments are something to wait for and be
> remembered after the trip.
> Fieldnotes 8/2012

Later during the fieldwork the opportunity for participant observation came up and the experiences described in the previous quote were confirmed. Indeed, the excursion included being together, grilling and dancing in beautiful natural surroundings. Distressing issues were not discussed; they were left back in the everyday life. In that moment and place these people wanted to be free from concerns. The physical location which was significantly different from the everyday environment was crucial for the change of atmosphere. The place produced an opportunity for relaxation and the experience of freedom from worries. Even though the duration of the excursion was short its significance for coping was obvious.

The importance of certain environments is also revealed through negations. This was the situation with those Palestinians who lived in the West Bank and who were not able to access the Mediterranean Sea. During the time before the wall between Israel and the occupied West Bank people had access to the Mediterranean Sea. The seaside had been an important place for many Palestinians. Now access to the seaside was blocked and only beautiful memories of the sea were left. There were reminders of the sea like the wind when it blew from the west bringing with it the smell of the sea. Longing for the seaside was obvious proof of significance of the place.

Thus, with access to the beach blocked, some kind of compensation is found in the trips to the few swimming pools that continue to operate in the West Bank. As a general rule, the water shortage caused the Palestinian owned pools to be emptied of water. Sad sights of empty and damaged swimming pools were encountered repeatedly during the fieldwork. When the trip to the functioning swimming pool happened, it was a great source of joy particularly for children and young people. These trips included not only swimming but also relaxed time by the pool. Pleasure and relaxation was evident by the way the participants described the trips. The place made it possible to escape the everyday for a while. Photos of the trip were shared with enthusiasm on Facebook and they attracted a lot of positive attention.

The findings are consistent with recent scientific reviews. Health and well-being related water research has traditionally focused mainly on the biophysiological aspects of water. The approach is understandably important, even a priority, in environmental health research. However, in recent years, interest has orientated increasingly towards the psychological effects of water, and especially the landscapes that water creates. Based on resent research, it is already obvious that people often go near water environments when they want to relax and find positive emotional states. (White, Smith et al. 2010.) The latter ideas are in line with the descriptions of the people living in the West Bank; many of them remember specifically the positive impact that the sea had on them. For some, the trips to the swimming pool are a slightly similar experience.

It was found that, although the environment in the Gaza Strip in many respects is more wretched than in the West Bank, it has at least one important resource that the West Bank is missing. The resource that many of the interviewees expressed as highly important was the access to the sea. The importance of the sea appeared in the interview of a young woman who had lived through a number of difficult conflict related life events and who must have made difficult choices in her life. She described her relationship with the sea as follows:

"The sea is a secret friend for many people in Gaza. When I need to make important decisions, I go over to the sea and I talk with the sea."
Young-adult female
(Interviewee 47)

The findings, of which the previous quote is an example, receive support from recent urban research. It has been argued that aquatic environments have a specific positive significance for human wellbeing in urban areas (Volker 2013). Studies, which have examined mainly European urban environments, give an interesting perspective to the situation in the Gaza Strip. The area of the Gaza Strip is not only predominantly urban, in the European point of view, but is also estimated to be one of the most densely populated areas in the world. A narrow strip of land with a total area of 365 km2, on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea is populated with a population of 1.6 million. (UNDP 2012.) The narrowness of the area heightens the need for open space that the seashore provides.

Völker and Kisteman (2013) indicate that water in different settings is one of the most important landscape elements. They use concept of "urban blue" to cover all visible surface waters in urban areas. Although waterfronts have been meaningful places throughout history, special attention has also been paid to waterfront planning and building since the 1970s. In practice, this trend has manifested itself in huge efforts made to reform waterfronts especially in large cities. It has become clear that people appreciate aquatic environments and naturally seek their propinquity.

The importance of the seaside as a reviving place and as a source for coping was confirmed by wide range of observations. The following extract from the field notes represents one of the observed situations. The setting is the port environment in Gaza City:

"A number of people have arrived at the sea front to spend free time. Someone tells me that one of the oil-rich Arab countries has given money for the renovation of the port area. Green fields, a breakwater, a walking route and a view of the sea create an appealing space. Close to the place where I'm sitting is a young family: a mother, father and young child. The mother is sitting on the grass and the child, probably having just recently learned to walk, is running around and falling onto the soft green ground every now and then. I chat with the father; I don't want to break the light and happy atmosphere. No questions about suffering or struggling now, the joy I witness here must be respected. The sight of this is enough, these findings are valuable."
Fieldnotes 1/2013

Even though it is not entirely clear why and how people exactly find water environments relaxing and pleasurable, preliminary explanations have been presented. Firstly, it is suggested that positive experiences are associated with the visual dimension of water; a special quality of light reflection, flickering and experiencing of colour. Second, the water environment usually creates a very unique acoustic environment which may vary greatly at different times. The acoustic environment may include both the lapping of waves and the roar of a storm. Third, water environments sometimes include a variety of scents and smells. Sometimes the possibility of swimming is also included in the examination of the phenomenon. Swimming creates a powerful experience because in swimming a person is largely within the water environment. Something slightly connected is the potential of feeling of the sea or lake breeze on the skin. (Volker 2013, White, Smith et al. 2010.)

Whatever the detailed reasons for experiencing water environments as positive are, the findings of the present study only emphasize the significance of such environment from the psychosocial coping point of view. These environments provide relief from the burden of overcrowding and enable the recovery in the middle of difficult times. Although the natural environments in general were described as reviving, the water related environments were highlighted with specific emphasis.

5.3.9 The power of routines

Much of the findings in this study are based on the direct expressions of interviewed people. In the analysis, these direct responses to the question of coping were unambiguous and no specific interpretation was needed in finding the essential idea. However, if the analysis would have been left at that, something meaningful would have gone unnoticed. When people told about suffering and coping in the midst of a prolonged conflict they more often than not focused on the big themes with a rather high level of abstraction. Those themes are certainly essential, but do not include everything that is relevant to psychosocial coping in a conflict environment. The data also clearly bring out the crucial importance of daily routines. Although direct comments referring to daily routines are rather limited, their significance becomes clear somewhat more from interview data and completely obvious from the data based on participant observation.

The observed daily routines, which had apparent meaning for coping, varied greatly between individuals. A common feature was the willingness and ingenuity to find a meaningful rhythm to everyday life through routines. One of the descriptions of this is from the Gaza Strip, given by an elderly man. Although he did not directly mention the importance of routine, the idea is obvious nonetheless. The following extract is from the field notes written in the Gaza Strip. Some of the snippets are intentionally omitted in order to conceal the identity of the elderly man.

> The original idea was to walk a little bit, maybe walk to the beach and see the sunset. A couple of blocks away from my lodging, an elderly man greeted me and I stopped for a chat. Soon he asked a younger man, who was also sitting there, to bring me a chair. Soon also tea was brought and so we sat drinking tea and chatting. He told me about his eventful life, also the reason for his good knowledge of English was revealed. (...) His current life, as he described it, is hard; recent bombings, financial distress, concerns about family and the uncertainty of the future. (...) His daily rhythm is the same on weekdays. In the morning, reading newspapers and watching the news, in the afternoon, sitting at the side of the street. There are two reasons why the elderly man comes to that same place every day. He can help the shopkeeper by keeping an eye on the shop while shopkeeper needs to drop into somewhere, and as everyone knows him sitting there, everyone stops to talk and exchange news. In fact, this occurred many times in the hour in which I sat with him. (...) As I was leaving, the elderly man asked me to come again one day. He would be in the same place at the same time. (...)
> Fieldnotes 1/2013

The above description of daily routine assumes particular significance when examined in the light of observations reported by a volunteer who was interviewed in a refugee camp in the West Bank. The volunteer, herself a Palestinian, told about the men who remain in their small apartments of the refugee camp and fall out of the daily routines. According to her, in the refugee camp there are number of men who do not move at all from their dwelling. According

to the volunteer, the situation is associated with unemployment and the lack of prospects. She describes the situation of those men as deplorable. The daily routine held the elderly man attached to life. The routine ensured contacts to other people on a daily basis and created meaningfulness in everyday life. Repetitive routines are like a safety net that secure coping even though distressing incidents take place in the surrounding environment.

Participant observation focused predominantly on young adults who had found a meaningful rhythm of everyday life in spite of unemployment or uncertain temporary work. For many, the volunteering offers a frame for an everyday meaningful routine. Regular meetings with other volunteers define responsibilities and the frequent free form social events among the volunteers keep them regularly active during weekdays. Participant observation revealed that many of the volunteers travel an arduous journey to take part in these regular events.

Observation of the daily routines was realized in specific detail with two volunteers who allowed the observation of their daily routines for a few days. The troublesome nature of everyday travel, taking into account the check points and other manmade obstacles does not prevent them from maintaining a routine. Regular participation is considered important enough that difficulties are passed and the routine of activities is maintained.

For those who study, the daily routine consists in the attendance of lectures during the morning and first half of the afternoon, the rest of the afternoon and evening, outside the exam period, is mostly scheduled for volunteering and socializing with other volunteers. Religious holidays and olive harvesting are times when the daily routine changed and the use of time focuses on the home and family. Observation revealed that routines are even more defined during these exceptional days. These routines are largely based on tradition; they are respected and followed in particular in rural areas. When asked, the young adults told about the traditions with enthusiasm and pride.

The fieldwork took place primarily in the places where prolonged conflict had been ongoing in quite the same way for months after months. An exception is the fieldwork that was conducted in the Gaza Strip. An eight-day-long Israeli military operation, Pillar of Defence, took place from the 14th of November until the 21st of November. During the military operation, Israel conducted over 1500 air strikes on the Gaza Strip. Palestinian armed groups, in turn, fired homemade rockets, long-range rockets and mortar shells at Israel. A total of 382 residences were destroyed or seriously damaged in the Gaza Strip. More than 160 Palestinians, including more than 30 children were killed and hundreds were wounded. Six Israelis were killed (Amnesty International 2013.). The fieldwork for the present study was conducted two months after the military operation. The timing made it possible to observe everyday life after the extensive escalation of the conflict. Escalation related events had broken the daily routines. Restoration of daily rhythm was obviously one of the ways that people used when trying to return to normal life.

The active reconstruction of the physical environment and the return to routines were observed from the first moments in the Gaza Strip. Just the observation of a street scene conveyed an understanding of the situation. Children were walking to school and passed the building destroyed in bombing, minibuses drove full of people, stallholders were selling products and fishermen arrived back to the port from the sea. At the same time, the traces of the recent war and adherence to the daily routine were present. As was later revealed in the interviews, daily routines were completely disturbed during the bombings, no one was able to escape the effects of the events. However, soon after the escalation had settled down, people had tried to return to their daily routines or create new routines suitable for the new situation. A brief statement from a middle-aged Palestinian man aptly described the matter:

We are all hurt, but life must continue. What else can we do?
Young-adult male
(Interviewee 41)

School teachers encountered at the school nearby the severely affected area emphasized the importance of returning to a normal rhythm of life. According to them, it was vital for children to return to normal daily activities; exceptional conditions should continue for as short a period of time as possible. It was obvious that the principle expressed by the teachers did not apply only to children, but equally the adults who worked in the school benefited from the return to their routine. The staff seemed to be strongly committed to run the school, even though the circumstances were still unusual.

The same attitude of toughness was also revealed at the marketplace. A middle-aged man who was buying vegetables described his situation. As with everyone else, the time of the bombing had been distressing for him and his family. However, now the man was obviously relieved and even convivial. Returning to the everyday routines of life not only helped him to recover from the distressing time, but also gave him pleasure. He told how he regularly comes to the marketplace to buy food supplies. Because it happened to be the eve of a religious holiday he was going to prepare a good dinner with his wife. This was one of the habits they had maintained for a long time. According to him, there are difficulties, but now was the time for him to have a traditional dinner. The possibility of that made him contented. Adhesion back to conventional way was his way of coping after the distressing episode of the military escalation.

A specific group, to whom the findings of daily routine are particularly important, are the young adults who were recently released from prison. Based on observations, these individuals are generally without work or a study place. Coincidentally, both observed individuals, who were in this situation, ended up in the same type of low paid work. When the low level of salary was discussed, one of these young adults said, that it is even more important than salary that one has a place to go to and something to do. The other, in turn, pointed out that the salary is very necessary for him, but also recognized the utility of the daily routine that the work created.

Since the present study did not include observations or interviews during time spent in prison, only limited remarks about that time are possible. However, a few references to that time indicate that daily routines play an important role in coping during that period of time. Specifically daily, though very limited, outdoor recreation as well as the rhythm created by smoking was mentioned. All the evidence found in present study indicates the essential importance of routines with regard to coping, regardless of the environment.

Like many other observations, those related to daily routines, were limited predominantly to male Palestinians. Living alongside with them was understood as acceptable and received the approval of the surrounding community. With the opposite sex, this would not have been accepted and for that reason close observation of everyday routines was not feasible. The limited observations that were possible to implement refer to a very large variation in daily life of young adults females. Many seemed to focus intensively on studying. Activities outside the home, especially during free time, were clearly more common among young men than among young women. It would appear that the daily routines of men were positioned more outside of the home, while the daily routines of women were focused on the home environment. As mentioned, an exemption from this was participation in education, in which young women were significantly active.

Although the routines that people followed in their daily life varied greatly, the importance of routines appeared to be essential for people living in an unstable and volatile environment.

The routines provided continuity in the situation in which future events were uncertain and vague. Recurrent routines establish a feeling of safety in circumstances which are insecure. The remaining routines offer structure during the times of scary change. And since many of the routines appear to be connected to social interaction, they are able to bring people together during times when the support from others is needed. For some, a strong attachment to routines offers the opportunity to forget, or push aside painful memories. In addition to the above, it was recalled that for many, daily routines are required in order to acquire a necessary living, poverty and scarcity force them to continue struggle for a livelihood.

5.3.10 Smoking tobacco and the use of other substances

The high prevalence of smoking becomes obvious as soon as one arrives to the occupied Palestinian territories. Already at the checkpoint, located on the de facto border between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, one can notice men who are standing in groups and smoking or individual men smoking nervously and looking tense. Based on observations smoking in that context serves at least three purposes: socializing, passing time and controlling the tension in an unnerving situation.

Crossing the checkpoint, especially when going in the direction of Israel, is a very stressful situation for the majority of Palestinian people. In light of this, smoking as an attempt to calm down is a quite understandable action in the context of the checkpoint. Also, a fourth meaning is revealed soon as someone offers cigarette to a stranger as a gesture of hospitality. Later, during the fieldwork it became clear that smoking has all the previously mentioned meanings for many Palestinians in other contexts other than the checkpoint.

In this context, smoking refers to the smoking of cigarette tobacco. This is very common and takes place almost everywhere. The use of cannabis undoubtedly occurs, but based on the observations it can be concluded to be a minor detail from the coping point of view. During the fieldwork, the use of cannabis was found once and at the time it was associated with private party situation. Under these circumstances, the review focuses on tobacco smoking.

As smoking is undoubtedly an important matter for many Palestinians and as it is related, at least, but maybe not alone, to stressful situations, it was potentially seen as an interesting phenomenon from the perspective of the present study. Already at the preliminary stage of fieldwork there was reason to assume that smoking would have something to do with coping with stressful situations. And this was the case. As soon as the opportunity to discuss smoking arose, the meanings of smoking began to be revealed in people's own words.

In one interview, the theme of which was not intentionally smoking, smoking was mentioned twice. Actually a young Palestinian man was telling about his time in prison and about his post release time. Two comments related to smoking made it possible to understand something about the significance of smoking. The first mention appeared in the phase of the story in which the man told about his adaptation to life in prison. Before his imprisonment, he was used to being physically active; he had done a lot of physical exercise outdoors. He was in good shape and smoking did not fit in his lifestyle. The prison was crowded and there was little room to move. He had the opportunity to walk outdoors for one hour a day. In particular for a sport minded outdoor person like him it was very little time and the situation was distressing. He had not smoked before, but started at that time. The reason for starting, according to him, was that he wanted to forget. Smoking helped to forget in many ways the distressing situation he was in.

The second occurrence of smoking occurred at the time of his release from prison. That time was happy and at the same time quite confusing. During the time he had been in prison, his parents had had three more children. The new siblings were lively and loud; the home was

even more crowded than before, again it was the time to adapt to a new situation. That was the point in the story when smoking was mentioned emphatically for the second time. During the first night after his release from prison, the man smoked three whole packs of cigarettes. Smoking was obviously an attempt to manage and relieve the nervousness caused by a new and challenging situation. Going out and smoking gave a few moments of time to reflect and calm down in the midst of new kind of bustle. The same manner of action revealed also during a long interview. The man wanted to tell about his experiences, there was no doubt about that, but when the interview dealt with distressing themes, the man lit a cigarette.

Although smoking was encountered constantly during the fieldwork, only in rare occasions was it taken up for discussion; it was a too obvious and automated function of everyday life for it to be given special attention. However, just as it was, it appeared as an important and inalienable course of action for many male Palestinians. On rare occasions someone spontaneously commented on smoking. When it happened, the idea that came up was almost always the same; smoking and the circumstances of the occupation are seen to be related. For many the idea is, that the risks of smoking does not matter that much as one cannot know what will happen at any moment because of the violent occupation. Even a small enjoyable thing is utilized when life otherwise is experienced as difficult. A few times someone mentioned the fact that alcohol is considered to be prohibited for religious reasons and heavy smoking replaces the use of alcohol. On the other hand, the previous statement also attracted opposition while some made the point that smoking is not defensible by religious reasons.

In addition to everyday smoking, the observation revealed another form of using tobacco; nargileh smoking. Nargileh, also known as waterpipe, is a traditional way of smoking in Africa and Asia, including East Mediterranean countries (WHO 2005). Where smoking cigarettes took place in the midst of everyday life and often served as a way of managing stress or nervousness, the use of the nargileh was revealed to be mostly associated with leisured relaxation and enjoyment. Using the nargileh usually took place in a cafeteria or outdoors in a place such as on the terrace. Some of the situations during the fieldwork when harmonic and peaceful moments of relaxation were observed they were related to the smoking of nargileh. One of these situations occurred during a fieldtrip to a small Palestinian village on a hillside. Although the description includes many different coping related elements, smoking nargileh has its obvious role too. The following is an extract from the field notes and deals the events during the village visit:

> The next place to which my hosts wanted to take me to visit was located on a hillside just outside the village. We drive up a steep hill with small and old car, the gearbox gave bad noises, and I wondered in my mind how the car would take to such a steep uphill. Then we left the car on the roadside and continued our journey on foot. From all this trouble, I understood that the place we were going to must be important and special for my hosts. Then we arrived to a ledge on the edge of the hill. The scenery was spectacular; the village in evening the light, the valley, the nearby villages and white minarets with green lights. The air was soft and I smelled the scent of a waterpipe in the velvet night. Men sat in a small groups and smoked waterpipe, some played cards. We sat with some of the men we met earlier down in the village. They smoked waterpipe and watched the magnificent scenery. What tranquillity and calmness existed in that place! The stress and discomfort experienced in the cramped mini-bus at the checkpoint was gone, now was the time to rest and relax. The fascinating scent of waterpipe, a great view and the calm atmosphere seemed almost unreal after the bustling day.
> Fieldnotes 9/2012

The use of nargileh in different settings is associated with ritual-like activities such as the setting of coals on the nargileh and the blowing of the smoke in a specific way. An important part of the nargileh smoking ritual was being together and socializing while smoking. The most common sitting arrangement was the form of a circle or half circle. Even though smoking nargileh was obviously a social event, it did not necessarily always include discussion with others. Sometimes smoking nargileh was more like a silent meditation; restrained and reflective. Based on the observations, both smoking cigarettes and nargileh contain positive meanings which can be interpreted as related to coping in a stressful environment. These observations were confirmed when the matter was discussed. The health risks were known, but in most cases they were put aside when talking about tobacco or nargileh.

Recent research evidence confirms the findings on the prevalence of smoking. Husseini (2010) and his research team studied smoking and the associated factors in the occupied Palestinian territory. Their extensive quantitative data included 3107 completed questionnaires from 100 schools located in the West Bank and 11 focus groups from the same area. It was found that 25% of the total sample of students reported that they smoked cigarettes, nargileh (waterpipe) or both. The prevalence of smoking was higher among boys. (Husseini 2010.)

Of particular interest are the results of Husseini (2010) and his research team with regard to the exposure to violence and its connection to smoking. Most of the students in their study reported having been directly or indirectly exposed to violence perpetrated by the Israeli army during the academic year. The forms of violence to which students were exposed to were manifold and include shooting, beating and humiliation. Overall, more than half of the students were directly exposed and 67% had witnessed conflict related violence practiced by the Israeli army. Some cases were also related to violence practiced by Israeli settlers. Another form of violence that was examined in the study was violence at home or at school; as many as 45% of students had experienced insults from school personnel and 40% from their parents. (Husseini 2010.)

From the perspective of the present study, the most interesting findings in Husseini's (2010) study are related to the association between the exposure of violence and smoking. It was found that smoking was higher among those students who reported any form of exposure to Israeli violence compared to those who had not been exposed. It is noteworthy that simply witnessing violence from the Israeli army or settlers affected them in much the same way as direct violence did. Also, violence experienced at home or at school was a factor that was associated with higher numbers of smoking. When the qualitative part of the study examined the causes of smoking, calming oneself by smoking was a common theme in most of the focus groups. The students found the two main reasons why people smoke; to calm themselves and to forget their problems. Stories about how relatives started smoking while in Israeli prisons were also told. This finding is exactly the same was what was found in the present study. Although physically unhealthy, smoking is used to cope in challenging circumstances.

Furthermore, more understanding of the phenomenon is offered in the opening of the study by Read, Wardell, Vermont et al. (2013). They examined the associations between trauma, PTSD and smoking in US college students. The findings indicate a distinct relationship between PTSD and smoking; students who did not have detectable PTSD tended to decrease their smoking over the first semester and to maintain this trend for the rest of the academic year. Those who had a greater number of PTSD symptoms at the beginning of the study showed a greater increase of smoking throughout the academic year. Thus, the underlying PTSD seemed to increase the amount of smoking among the students. The findings support the presumption that smoking, among those who suffer from PTSD, can be understood as an

attempt to cope with or to self-medicate for the distress. From this point of view, smoking can be seen as strategy for coping with post-traumatic stress symptoms. (Read 2013.)

Also findings by Cisler, Amstadter et al. (2011) provide support for the supposition about smoking as a pursuit for coping in a violent environment. In their prospective examination of the relationship between PTSD, exposure to assault violence, and smoking among a sample of adolescents, they found that multiple exposures to assault violence was a robust prospective predicator of smoking. Based on the results, they suggest that assault and potentially traumatic event exposure have a cumulative effect on smoking behaviour.

Although the above described results are not from the Palestinian population, they are likely to be applicable to the Palestinian population. Particularly important from the perspective of the present study is the finding related to the cumulative effect of stressful event exposure. It is precisely the cumulative nature of stress that is typical for the prolonged conflict environment in the occupied Palestinian territories. And, as described earlier, living under this kind of circumstances was named, in the present study, to be one of the reasons for smoking. On one hand, starting smoking was described as a way of coping in stressful situations and on the other; the volatile environment was mentioned as a reason not to stop smoking.

Sun, Buys et al. (2011), who studied smoking among Australian university students with an extensive sample of 2414 participants, bring out an interesting perspective related to smoking and coping. They found that the lack of coping resources contributed directly to smoking behaviour. In addition, they also found that the controllability of the stressor is essential; active coping is used in situations where stressor is controllable, alternative coping, such as smoking, occurs when stressful situation seems less controllable. The results are not directly applicable in different cultural contexts; however, the idea of the controllability of the stressor related to smoking is relevant when viewed in light of the present study. Smoking indeed seems to come along as a way of coping in situations where the stress has been experienced as difficult to manage. Smoking has a number of different meanings for some of the Palestinian people, one of which is coping in unusually stressful situations.

Even though the Palestinian experiences are not directly comparable with the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, the study that reflects veterans' emotional state and smoking gives one perspective on the phenomenon under similar considerations. Cook, Jakupcak et al. (2009) examined the veterans and found that veterans with higher levels of overall PTSD and those with emotional numbing were more likely to engage in heavy smoking. The researchers suggest that veterans with PTSD may smoke to overcome the emotional blunting following war related trauma exposure.

Based on the literature and the findings of present study, it must be assumed that smoking, for some people living in a stressful conflict environment, is a way in which they seek relief from emotional stress and constant tension. Based on the observations, smoking is not only activity related to the individual pursuit for coping but often a social function. As with other ways of coping, also with the case of smoking, a single function appears as a part of a larger entity of coping.

Even though the use of alcohol is a sensitive issue in Palestinian society, some of the interviewees wanted to share their experiences and thoughts in connection with it. The fieldwork among people in the midst everyday life as well as in celebration made it possible to observe situations in which alcohol was used. The reason why the use of alcohol is examined in the context of coping is clearly based on the data. The purpose of this study is not to take a position on whether or not some way of coping is desirable or not, but the describe strategies that

people are using to cope. In the data of the present study the using of alcohol was associated with coping in the middle of the conflict. The following quote reflects the issue:

> "Those who have money are able to travel and visit other countries. They get a little brake from all of this by travelling abroad. If you don't have money, you cannot travel. Drinking alcohol gives a little break from all of this. Yes, I am a Muslim, but I drink alcohol sometimes. It gives me a little break, a little rest in the midst of everything."
> Young-adult male
> (Interviewee 21)

Once the person who made the previous statement was observed in his everyday life, it became evident that alcohol was not part of his everyday life. His everyday life was filled with work and other responsibilities, alcohol use took place only in exceptional situations when everyday things were left behind. Situations in which the use of alcohol was observed were social and at least to some extent closed.

In Ramallah, the de facto capital of the Palestinian territories, the public consumption of alcohol was seen in restaurants, in other areas the use of alcohol predominantly was seen to take place in private. This was the situation in the village where one of the alcohol related observations took place. The situation has been described in field notes as follows:

> After the arrival he said that his brothers and a couple of his friends would be coming to his parent's house and we could have a good time together. We went to the basement room of the house and one of the brothers was already there. After his friends arrived, Ahmed brought up a bottle of vodka. Orange juice and vodka was poured into the glasses. The friends joked about the funny occurrences of the week. English and Arabic were spoken mixed. The atmosphere in that basement room was light, friendly and happy. I was asked the usual questions: nationality, purpose of visit to Palestine and duration of the visit to Palestine. Soon I was involved in relaxed joking. No word was spoken about any sad or distressing issue. I understood the trend and followed it. Now it was time to relax and enjoy.
> Fieldnotes 10/2012

In this observation the use of alcohol was strictly limited to a particular social situation with specific people. It took place with people who were close to each other and who had a confidential relationship. The use of alcohol was reasonable in terms of amounts. Possible negative impacts were not discussed. Although problematic alcohol use is very likely to occur, it was not observed during the fieldwork. Probably potential alcohol related problems are associated with shame and they are carefully hidden. Using the snowball method possibly contributed to the selection of people who, if at all, consumed alcohol with moderation.

Several studies have shown that the use of alcohol, for many people, increases after stressful or traumatic situations. The general explanation for this is seeking release from tension and distress. Particular attention has been paid to the increased alcohol use of veterans returning from military command (Kehle 2012, Jacobson 2008, Shipherd 2005). Also civilian exposure to war has found to be, for some, a factor that increases the use of alcohol (Keyes 2013). In northern Uganda, where armed conflict has continued for over two decades, alcohol usage is on the highest level in the world (Kizza 2012).

Even though the negative effects of alcohol dominate scientific research, the positive effects of alcohol use that are also experienced have been studied. This point of view is relevant

from the perspective of the present study's data. Lee, Maggs et al. (2011) studied the types of consequences that young people were experiencing when drinking alcohol. Their findings were largely consistent with the findings in the present study. According to them, positive consequences of alcohol use reported by young people were related centrally to social interaction, relaxation and coping. Park (2004) found that college students widely experienced that alcohol use leads to more fun, better times with friends, easier socialising with others and less tension. Negative consequences were not denied but positive consequences appeared to predominate. The situation is quite the same in the present study, the risks and negative effects are recognized but the use is justified by the positive effects. Relaxation in the middle of stress is highlighted.

During the fieldwork in the Gaza Strip, attention was repeatedly directed to the use of tramadol which is an opioid analgesic normally used to treat pain. A number of second hand sources mentioned this drug in the context of self-medication for anxiety. It was told that many people use this drug in order to cope in the midst of an oppressive environment, frustration and repeated traumatic events. People who use the medicine themselves could not be reached for interview. The subject was not the main issue in any of the interviews; however it emerged several times spontaneously.

From the discussions it appeared that the use of Tramadol is a significant and a very sensitive issue in the region. The sensitivity is due to at least three factors; the first is the way that the drug is imported to the Gaza Strip, the second is the attitude of the authorities on the issue and the third is a cultural attitude towards a possible addiction. People with whom the matter was discussed were restrained; however, they told that some of the Tramadol comes to the Gaza Strip through underground tunnels and is distributed illegally.

Observations in the present study get partial support from Progler (2010) who in his article examines the illicit trafficking of Tramadol and drug addiction in the Gaza Strip. Although the precise research evidence on the subject is very limited, it seems likely that the use of Tramadol is a real problem in the Gaza Strip. The social sensitivity is possibly the result of the hard line that Hamas is known to apply to the illegal drug trade. Meaningful conclusions on the issue are not possible to make based on the data of the present study. It can only be noted that use of Tramadol was a topic that appeared to be confusing and complex for people who raised it in discussion. Once the reason for the possible abuse of this drug was asked, the responses emphasized conflict-related emotional pain and the tendency to seek relief for that.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

6.1 RELIABILITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main objective of this study was to understand the suffering and coping strategies of Palestinians living in the midst of a prolonged conflict. To achieve this, it was needed to recognize principles of research in all the stages of the research process. Since most of the data of this research is qualitative, the research principles of qualitative study are emphasized in the present considerations; however, the quantitative process is also taken into account.

Kylmä and Juvakka (2007) have conducted a review of the presented criteria for the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Based on synthesis they have made the suggestion for four key criteria for reliability. The criteria are credibility, dependability, reflexivity and transferability. These criteria are consistent with the recent alignments of reliability in research literature and are used here as the framework for assessment. (See e.g. Bernard cop. 2013, Liamputtong cop. 2013, Savin-Baden, Major 2013, Padgett cop. 2012, Williams 2009.)

Credibility as a criterion refers to the entire study, including the credibility of the findings. Credibility can be confirmed by discussions both with participants and with members of the research community. In addition to the above, sufficiently long contact with the phenomenon under examination can be seen as an advantage from the perspective of credibility. (Kylmä, Juvakka 2007.) Sufficiently long and close contact with people or a community is particularly highlighted in ethnographic study. Credible understanding arises from an unhurried presence and a respectful attempt to realize the deep meanings of a phenomenon. (Hammersley, Atkinson 2007.)

In this study, the fieldwork was conducted in a volatile and, in part, elusive environment. Access to parts of the research area would be practically impossible due to the changing political situation in the area. Due to this, returning to the informants was difficult to implement. However, a preliminary analysis was conducted while in the field and the preliminary findings were discussed with the informants. These discussions confirmed that the researcher had understood the message of the informants properly; some minor additions were made. The analysis of the observation data was discussed already in the field.

Credibility was confirmed by numerous discussions with researchers of the topic at the Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance Conference in Cairo (LPHA 2013) and in Amman (LPHA 2014). The preliminary results were presented in both conferences in poster form and discussed with multinational group of researchers. What is of particular note is that among the researchers was number of people with Palestinian background, and thus, not only the research focus but also a personal cultural knowledge of the field of present research was represented. The preliminary findings proved to be consistent with existing, albeit limited, findings in this field of research. It should also be noted that the preliminary results received support from Palestinian students who participated the conferences; this verification was based on their own personal experiences living in the area of prolonged conflict. Even though the individuals were not the same ones as in the study, they represented the same group of people and had broadly the same conditions of life as those interviewed and observed for the study.

Dependability encompasses the entire research process, meaning that all the steps of research are visible and transparent (Kylmä, Juvakka 2007). Dependability refers specifically to the process, not so much to the results, as, in qualitative research, many alternative results

may be relevant (Eskola, Suoranta 1998). In the ethnographic study, field notes have particular importance in ensuring dependability. Field notes together with a research diary enable for the perceiving of the cycle of the study. (Van Maanen 2011.)

Both field notes and two different diaries were used in the present study. Field notes were written up several times daily. Data collection, its storage and transportation from the volatile environment required careful consideration. The most important guiding principle was not to cause harm to the informants or anyone else. Some of the entries were found to contain materials that would expose individuals or groups of people to risks and therefore were properly disposed of while still in the field.

One of the two diaries included specific dates and background information on interviews and observations conducted in the field. This information was used in the preliminary analysis. For the security reasons the diary was disposed of safely before departure from the field. The remaining diary encompasses the researcher's personal reflections on the feelings and thoughts that the fieldwork in challenging circumstances generated. The process has become transparent also in regular contacts with the supervisors of the study. Notes have been written from each meeting; the progress of the process manifests itself in this notes.

The importance of reflexivity, from the perspective of trustworthiness, is decisive in ethnographic research. This is because the ethnographer is more than just a recorder; through writing he or she creates realities and meanings. Since there is no one truth about reality but many different interpretations, the ethnographer needs to reach for the awareness of self. In this reflexivity, writing the diary serves as an instrument; it enables, at least to some extent, the identification of the factors that guide the ethnographer in his work. This is necessary, since the ethnographer constantly make choices. He or she determines whose points of view to present and what is significant in each situation. In fact, writing an ethnography is like constructing, it requires continuous decision making. From the above it can be concluded that trustworthiness requires reflexivity and sufficient transparency in its presentation for the readers. (Hammersley, Atkinson 2007, Emerson, Fretz et al. 1995.)

Conscious reflexivity has been a key part of the present study at each stage of the process. Actually, the reflexive approach related to the field began to develop even before the start of the research process. The researcher, in fact, worked as a human rights monitor exactly in the same field and during that time paid particular attention to personal development in reflexivity. Two main methods for learning were through professional supervision of work in the field and regular reflective diary writing. After the return from the field, professional work counselling and reflections in a professional peer group continued and made it possible to develop further in self-awareness. The above described process proved to be an important resource from the perspective of the present research process. The conscious reflective skills were in active use and were challenged in demanding situations in the field. It is obvious that reflectivity is a skill that requires continuous learning.

Before the departure for the field, the previous experiences in the occupied Palestinian territories were reflected upon. Positive attitudes and sympathy towards the people living in the area were identified. Actually, past experiences with the Palestinian people and observations of suffering and coping had made an impact on the researcher and learning more about how these people coped in the midst of a prolonged conflict proved to be an exciting prospect.. The rationale was discussed with the supervisors of the study project and further guidance on the ethnographic approach to fieldwork was received. The basis of the process was built on reflection and awareness.

During the fieldwork, reflexivity was part of everyday work. It covered all situations and relationships which were involved in the process. In particular, it was emphasized while writing the field notes as the material was extensive and choices had to be made. The choices were made based on research questions; and they were returned to over and over again. Reflexivity and the pursuit for sensitivity in the understanding of the informants resulted in the broadening of the research questions. The original aim was to study only coping, but soon it proved to be a too narrow approach; both suffering and coping in the midst of a prolonged conflict had to be taken into account and recognized. The supervisor's visit to the field gave needed support for decision making and significantly contributed to the reflexivity. Discussions with the supervisor facilitated reflexivity by providing a space to reflect on emotions and thoughts confidentially.

Fieldwork in the midst of a military occupation and general volatility is demanding; fatigue and intermittent frustration were a normal part of the work, but, on the other hand, achievements produced great joy and satisfaction. The identification of thoughts and emotions made it possible to pay attention to the influences they had on the interpretation of different situations. An important tool for this was the previously mentioned personal diary.

After returning from the field, the importance of reflexivity appeared from a new perspective. Continuing the analysis which was started already in the field and writing the thesis required returning to the original data a number of times. In order to maintain a close contact with the phenomena under investigation, frequent returns to the original research data was needed.

Transferability requires that the researcher provides sufficient information about the research environment and participants (Kylmä, Juvakka 2007). In the present study, the research environment is described from the angle of history, geography, religion and politics. For ethical reasons, to protect the participants, part of the descriptions of individuals is intentionally left imprecise. Where possible information about individual participants is provided protection from any harm has been, in each, the guiding principle.

Data collection in an area of prolonged conflict included a number of ethical challenges. The first and most important principle was to protect the informants from any possible harm. This required knowledge of the conditions in the area; the potential threats in the conflict area are somewhat different from those in peaceful and stable environments. Already, minor contact with the researcher may in some situations include a safety related dimension. Although the Palestinian culture is particularly hospitable and taking care of a visitor is seen as a privilege, the prolonged conflict has given rise to suspicions. It was potentially possible that the hosts of the researcher would have been suspected for collaboration with the opposite party of the conflict. Due to this fact, two principals were adhered to strictly; it was important to never put pressure on anybody to form a contact and to inform actively about the study and its objectives. Active communication proved to be important, for example, during the data collection in the small villages. The word about the presence of a foreigner spread quickly and it was essential to openly communicate the purpose of the visit. This prevented false suspicions.

Interpersonal relationships are an essential subject of ethical review, in particular an ethnographic study in which the researcher spends a period of time in close contact with the informants. The encountered people were generally very willing to form an acquaintance or friendship. Even though the roles were clarified, it occurred that they were possibly not consciously remembered at all times. During the fieldwork, some of the informants became closer than others; the relationship assumed the characteristics of a friendship. This was not considered as unwelcome but the presence of the research objectives in the background of the relationship were acknowledged consistently in a friendly manner.

Some of the experiences which people told about were particularly painful. These included experiences of prison time and the death of a family member; the experiences involving humiliation or the pain of loss were found to be especially difficult. Interviewing on these topics required significant ethical consideration. The interviewees were given the opportunity to share their experience but they were not pressured to reveal anything they did not feel comfortable with. It had to be remembered that the recollection of traumatic events could initiate a psychological process whose character could not be predictable. Hence, a special sensitivity was needed when dealing with painful memories. Even though data collection is not therapy, telling about experiences appeared to be somewhat therapeutic for some of the interviewees. This was considered to be ethically acceptable; the roles were clear and both sides benefited from the encounter.

The reliability and validity of the quantitative component of the study was assured by using a tested and widely recognized research instrument, the Ways of Coping Questionnaire (1988). The instrument was used according to the instructions and the collected data was analysed in accordance with the specifications given by the authors (Folkman, Lazarus 1988). Due to the small sample size the generalizability of results must be viewed critically.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN RESULTS

The specific aims, which specified the main objective of the study, were to find out what kind of suffering the prolonged conflict has caused for the Palestinians and what different ways Palestinians use in order to cope with the prolonged conflict. Suffering and coping were examined taking into account the historical and cultural context.

Previous studies in this area have recently focused mostly on the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the emphasis has been on quantitative research (e.g. Al-Krenawi 2012, Kolltveit 2012, Madianos 2011, Canetti 2010, Punamäki 2010, Thabet 2008). The present study as an ethnography represents a less common approach in the tradition of research in the conflict area. The use of mixed methods enabled the use of both quantitative and qualitative data. Although the emphasis in the present study is on the qualitative research, the quantitative results form an integral part of the whole.

In this study, it was found that a number of military occupation related functions is the source of experiences of suffering for the Palestinian people. The quantitative and qualitative data together suggest that limitations on movement and incidents in particular at checkpoints constitute a cause of mundane inconvenience and suffering. This finding is based on the common evidence from both the quantitative and qualitative part of the study.

The limitations are manifested both in practical life as actual movement is restricted, but also as an oppressive feeling that one is not free to move. The restrictions are also associated with control and surveillance. Foucault (1977) has described the relationships between surveillance, information and power. According to him, power often appears through rituals. Based on the findings, rituals conducted at the checkpoints are often perceived explicitly as a manifestation of undesirable power. Practices at checkpoints include the presence of surveillance which is typically implemented with technology; surveillance, in turn, produces information. Many Palestinians feel that they are under surveillance and that their privacy is not guaranteed. The experience is not limited to situations at the checkpoints only but extends to life more widely.

Largely associated with the latter is the restrictive bureaucracy which was described to manifest itself most clearly in the identity card (ID) system. The above description has in common the control which is perceived as objectionable. The controlling party is perceived as threatening and frightening; being under the rule of it generates suffering typically in the form of frustration and anxiety. These findings can be understood in the light of Foucault's (1977) concept of biopower, which refers to diverse techniques used to control people. In the Palestinian setting, biopower appears in the context of a military occupation. Power is exercised by an overwhelming foreign force.

The restrictions and ultimate power occurred even more strongly in the descriptions of those who had been in prison. Especially for young people, the prison had formed an environment of intense confusion and suffering. In addition to the deprivation of liberty, the prison experiences included experiences of humiliation. The findings appear as consistent with the broader analysis of prison phenomena by Michel Foucault (1977). Accordance with the analysis of Foucault, a prison represents the features of power which implement prohibitions and different forms of subjugation. Foucault emphasizes the transformative nature of power; in the present study, prison related experiences had a large impact on the people who had been in the prison but also to their extended family and the immediate community.

Descriptions of the suffering caused by the bombings of the Gaza Strip are the closest to descriptions of traditional warfare. The fatalities, wounding and loss of homes are understood to be a horrifying part of the war. In addition to these, internal tensions are revealed to be one cause of suffering in the Gaza Strip. In a broader review, the internal political tensions were detectable throughout the occupied Palestinian territories.

Quantitative and qualitative results related to suffering are mutually reinforcing. Quantitative results disclosed more commonplace suffering; qualitative results reached also more extraordinary experiences. With regard to psychosocial coping, the quantitative and qualitative results were explicitly parallel. The qualitative results were essential in understanding the diversity and sophistication of psychosocial coping.

The second part of the findings describe the psychosocial coping of people living in midst of a prolonged conflict. The main source of data, from this point of view, was interviews. In addition to the interviews the questionnaire and participant observation revealed essential knowledge on psychosocial coping. The analysis revealed ten ways of coping which partly overlap and appear with different emphasis with different people and in different situations.

Many of the ways of coping related to the relationships between people. Family and community appeared as being crucial; Palestinian culture emphasizes the meaning of family and this is only intensified during the time of suffering. However, it is worth noting that in some situations the highlighted importance of family was seen as oppressive. A strong coherence in the family was considered as supportive during the suffering, but included also dimensions of ambivalence.

Volunteering included a strong dimension of personal relationships and belonging to a group; this was experienced as resource for coping. The experience of volunteering was considered as being important, but the sense of community and interpersonal relationships appeared to be in the centre of its functioning. The finding on the diverse meanings of volunteering is consistent with studies from a variety of environments. Overall, voluntary work would seem to have a positive impact on the volunteers' well-being. (Casey 2014, Jenkinson 2013, Law 2009.) Possibly, volunteering provides, also, an opportunity to have contacts from outside of the family and the immediate community. From this point of view, the family and volunteering community could be interpreted as complementary sources of psychosocial support.

The idea of Palestine was manifested in volunteering but appeared extensively in a number of different contexts. It is associated with identity and produces endurance in struggling with afflictions. Even though idea of Palestine is extensively shared it has different interpretations that are influenced by different political orientations. However, the idea of Palestine contains meanings which are experienced as strengthening when encountering difficulties and suffering.

Humour and the power of routines occur in the midst of everyday life; they are able to energize mundane life even though it contains annoyances. Humour is expressed especially in social situations; it lightens up the atmosphere and makes it possible to find alternative interpretations for unwanted things. Some of the routines produce pleasure and act as a buffer for dissatisfaction caused by the difficult conditions. Routines proved to be important also in situations where there had been a great loss and continuity was threatened.

Spirituality and hope, although often expressed in the community setting, appeared as the deep individual experiences. Spirituality includes the idea that some greater power guides the life of the individual and takes care of him or her in the middle of suffering. Spirituality in the data of the present study does not appear in the context of any particular reference framework. Informants included both Muslims and Christians; some were critical to religions in general but felt that spirituality was an important resource for coping in their lives.

Hope appeared as a cross-cutting theme through the entire data; even though it was not always mentioned consciously it was present at least as an underlying factor. Each described way of coping had a link with the hope; notably humour, the idea of Palestine and spirituality seem to have a special connection with the phenomenon of hope. Those informants who were able to express the importance of hope in a verbal form emphasized its fundamental importance without a doubt. When it was not verbalized, it was interpreted from the entity of depiction. Based on the findings, it would seem that a hope is fundamental for coping and concurrently in some way concealed; its crucial relevance was recognized but not always voiced explicitly. The centrality of hope in confronting suffering and the pursuit for coping has been recognized in numerous studies (e.g. Szramka-Pawlak 2014, Bright 2013, Duggleby 2012, Kylmä 2005). The present study further highlights the relevance of hope as a key element of coping in the context of a violent prolonged conflict.

Some of the ways of coping are related to purposeful activities; either the mind's internal or external action. Putting things into perspective is used in a number of occasions; its use was described to be use inter alia during imprisonment. People found certain types of thoughts to bring relief and these thought are used intentionally. It represents explicitly the mental work whose purpose is to facilitate coping. It is noteworthy that the interviewees had found this mental recourse spontaneously and used it actively to promote coping in difficult conditions. This can be interpreted to be an indication of the human mind's ability to construct mental structures required by changing circumstances.

The purposeful activities which appeared in particular as an external action are searching for restorative places and the use of intoxicants and other substances. Recent research has revealed new knowledge and understanding of the importance of physical environments for psychological well-being (see e.g. Garling 2014, Holloway 2014, Blair 2013, Fisher 2013, Curtis cop. 2010, Giuliani 2009). The findings of the present study are clearly consistent with the recent research in the field of environmental and eco-psychology. The findings demonstrate that many people search for relief and ease from restorative places. In particular, different natural environments are considered as being the most agreeable. Of individual places, the one the most often raised was the Mediterranean seaside. It should be noted that only people living in the Gaza Strip have access to the seaside; Palestinians living in the West Bank, predominantly,

do not have access to the seaside due to the wall between Israel and the West Bank. A strict permit system blocks access for a large part of the Palestinian population living in the West Bank. Some of the interviewees stated that they can smell the scent of the sea but are not allowed to go to the waterfront.

From the use of substances, the one the most cited was the smoking of tobacco. In spite of the health hazards, it is felt to ease tension and placate restless feelings. Coping related functions are also associated with social interaction. Smoking a nargileh (waterpipe) is associated with specific moments of relaxation. The use of cannabis was encountered only marginally. On the contrary, the use of alcohol appeared; it is associated with situations of celebration and is justified by the need to relax in the middle of stressful conditions. A distinctive feature of the Gaza Strip is the use of Tramadol medication. It was revealed, that this opioid analgesic attracts complex views; some use it apparently to help alleviate the anxiety in extremely difficult situations, some are concerned about the use and highlight the risk of abuse.

The generalizability of the results is limited for several reasons. The sample size (N=198) in the quantitative part of the study does not allow the generalization of the results. The qualitative results describe the phenomenon of interest but they cannot be generalized. However, the results can be considered indicative with certain qualifications.

In addition, it should be noted that data collection for the present study took place before large-scale violent hostilities which started on 8 July 2014 and lasted for 50 days. These hostilities in the Gaza Strip were unprecedented since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967. All governorates in Gaza faced extensive aerial bombardment by the Israeli Air Force combined with naval shelling and artillery fire. According to the UN, 2,131 Palestinians were killed, including 1,473 civilians among which 257 were women and 501 were children. Israeli fatalities were 71 of which 4 were civilians. In the Gaza Strip, the damages to infrastructure were also unprecedented; hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were left without basic services including electricity, clean water and quality healthcare. (OCHA 2014, United Nations 2014.)

6.3 CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

The main premise for the methodology in the present study was hermeneutic phenomenology. Its selection was based on the characteristics of the phenomena studied. Phenomenology made it possible to focus on the individuals' direct reports of experience. Thus, these formed the key part of the data. The hermeneutic approach was needed when complex phenomena were interpreted and examined as part of a wider context. Hermeneutic phenomenology turned out to be a good choice; it gave at the same time sufficient methodological spaciousness and the necessary methodological premise for the work.

The usy ща mixed methods was chosen in order to achieve a diverse and deep understanding of the complex phenomena. The researcher's previous experience was primarily from the field of qualitative research; using the quantitative method as part of the research required a lot of studying. Quantitative data collection in an unstable environment proved to be challenging. It was important to not compromise the ethical principles; quantitative data were collected only when the safety of the participants was guaranteed. Notwithstanding, the quantitative data of students (N=198) was successfully collected. The quantitative data turned out to be a relevant part of the entire data set of the research. With the future in mind, it has to be remembered that collecting a large amount of quantitative data requires considerable resources and advance preparation.

Qualitative data collection took place primarily by using the snowball method. This proved to be possible in the Palestinian cultural environment. Inherently positive attitude towards visitors and pronounced hospitality made using the method fluent. The data was accumulated within a reasonable time and the costs were affordable. It has been suggested that the possible weakness of the snowball method is its tendency to collect homogeneous data. People's interpersonal networks consists of like-minded people or people in similar situations; the researcher may end up collecting data from people quite similar to each other. (See e.g. Noy 2008, Browne 2005, Salganik, Heckathorn 2004, Aldridge, Levine 2001, 79-80.)

People definitely considered carefully to whom they took the foreign researcher; this probably contributed to what kind of data was accumulated. This may have been the reason for the absence of aggressive and hostile attitudes among the people encountered. None of the interviewees, for example, told about planning any hostile activities or expressed open hatred. Actually the large majority of people encountered wanted to emphasize that they love peace and hope people could live with each other in mutual respect. Many even asked the researcher to tell in his home country that Palestinians are not terrorists. All this does not mean that aggression and hostility do not exist; surely they are phenomena which are also present. The snowball method in the present study produced data which focused on the descriptions of the suffering and descriptions of primarily constructive ways of psychosocial coping.

In all interview based data collection, the characteristics of the interviewer are essential; the interviewer's know-how determines largely how successful the result is. This is only further emphasized when the theme of the interview is sensitive and contains a lot of emotions. In the present study the interviewer's strengths were previous experience from the research field and experience in the conduct of interviews in the exceptional circumstances. The researcher's psychotherapy training proved to be beneficial in particular when encountering people who were in the midst of deep suffering. It was essential both to show respect to the interviewees and to be capable to reflect on the complex contents of the interviews.

The major weakness of the researcher was the lack of Arabic language skills. All the interviews were conducted in English. Young adults' English skills were generally good. When needed, interpretation assistance was readily available; ethics were always ensured, the interviewee had to accept the person who was going to assist with the language during the interview. However, it is likely that the language used in the interviews affected the selection of informants. People who did not speak English could possibly be hesitant to participate even if language assistance was available. In some rare cases it happened that the person assisting with the language took too much space during the interview with his own view. In those cases the situation was reversed with friendly guidance.

The quantitative data was collected with the questionnaire (the Ways of Coping Questionnaire) the language of which is English. Since the quantitative data was collected only from the students of higher education, the language did not cause trouble. In all situations in which the data was collected, the participants had opportunity to get assistance for language; the possibility for assistance was, however only used marginally. The Ways of Coping Questionnaire is one of the most widely used scales in research of coping; the experience of its usefulness was strengthened also in the present study.

Group interviews were valuable but not the main method of data collection. They were usually conducted spontaneously when the appropriate situation arose during the fieldwork. Their strength was the easiness of the participation; also a hesitant or timid person was more likely to dare to participate in the interview in the presence of familiar people. A possible weakness of this method was the group members' prudence in discussing the most intimate

matters. In accordance with the ethical principles the participants were not put under pressure to speak more than they wanted.

The statistical analysis for the quantitative data was performed using SPSS software. Due to the small size of the quantitative data, it was seen as appropriate to survey relative scores only. This produced substantial information on the phenomena of interest. More advanced statistical methods would not have produced significant new information.

The qualitative analysis was started already in the research field and it continued for over a year after the return from the field. As usual in the hermeneutic phenomenological process, the researcher returned to the data over and over again. Several alternative interpretations and structuring alternatives were reviewed. The final choices were directed by the voice heard from the data.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

According the main objective, the present study has focused on improving the understanding of the suffering and coping of Palestinians living in the midst of a prolonged conflict. Increased understanding itself is a valuable outcome of research; ideally an extended understanding leads to the development of practices. In health sciences this means developments in the prevention and treatment of diseases and in the promotion of human well-being. The results of the present study give rise to some conclusions and implications.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the studied Palestinian people were capable of finding ways of coping in the middle of a prolonged conflict. The ways of coping were diverse and indicated human perseverance, ingenuity and creativity. Some of the ways of coping were general to humans, some were culture-specific; all appear tinged by cultural characteristics. The fundamental finding on the human capability to construct ways of coping even in the conditions of persistent difficulties is consistent with the basic assumptions of modern positive psychology and resource-oriented approaches in healthcare (see e.g. Priebe 2014, Moneta 2013, Al-Krenawi, Elbedour et al. 2011, Skerrett 2010, Flückiger 2009). It is apparent from the results that even a small amount of external support can contribute to an individual's coping. This includes a challenge for the actors of psychosocial support.

A key challenge, especially when the helpers are from outside of the cultural region, is to implement a genuinely respectful and cultural sensitive psychosocial support. Said's (2003) critique must be applied also in this context; the Western paradigm of knowing, in particular cultural arrogance, must be left to the side and the sovereignty of the subject must be raised to the centre of the premise of any kind of assistance. Dissemination of Western medicalization must be viewed critically; excessive pathologization is not likely to provide benefit to people affected by injustice and violence (cf Foucault 2003). The present study clearly indicates the unquestionable ability of Palestinian people to construct ways of coping in the middle of a prolonged conflict. An external party's role in the psychosocial support activities should be in enabling the existing ways of coping.

The following are suggestions for implications. The suggestions are based on the results of the present study, but they are also affected by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's guidelines (2007) on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings.

The psychosocial aspects of human wellbeing should be taken into account in the planning of relief operations for conflict affected populations. The present study, with many other

studies, indicates that the conflict circumstance has diverse psychosocial effects on people. Assessment for psychosocial support should be done by interviewing the affected people; they are capable of describing the situation and their needs for assistance.

Individuals and communities have conventional and traditional ways of coping which have been used successfully in the past. These means of coping must be the premise for all assistance. The support should focus on facilitating these ways of coping. Based on the results of the present study, the facilitation should enable the community's own activity, such as volunteering. It would appear that volunteering helps both the beneficiaries and the volunteers themselves. The local volunteers are familiar with the area and traditional ways of coping; this is an essential resource for effective culturally sensitive psychosocial support.

The cohesion of families and local community should be facilitated during the burden due to the conflict. The present study suggests that families are able to support their members if there is a possibility for it; connections between family members must be enabled. In practice, this may mean, for example, visits to the prison or assisting in finding a lost family member. Often the family environment is a suitable place to recover from the traumatic experiences. The possibility for this should be facilitated.

The premise of facilitating hope is in the respect for human dignity. From this point of view, an individual's experience of hope can be enabled by promoting his or her human rights. In practice, this could mean fighting against torture or maltreatment; it is known that during conflicts the risk for these grows. An individual's experience of hope must always be respected, its importance for coping in extreme situations is crucial.

The opportunities that the physical environment offers for psychosocial coping has probably been underestimated. Restorative places provide a space for reflection and meditation; merely a brief stay in a pleasing place may produce wellbeing in the midst of a painful condition. Even though spirituality does not necessarily require a special space, it is beneficial for coping if a suitable space is available for practicing spiritual or religious activities.

Since regular routines seem to be favourable in promoting coping, they should be facilitated. Daily routines maintain normality during the unstable times of a conflict. The recurrence of daily activities provides a sense of security and continuity; the conflict affected people should be encouraged to stick to normal routines of life and when needed, people should be assisted in this.

In the training of the psychosocial support professionals cultural sensitivity and the activity of the affected people should be emphasized. Assistance can be ethical and effective only when it is conducted in a culturally sensitive way. This can be achieved when the affected people are consciously taken into the centre of the assistance process.

The topic of psychosocial coping in crises and conflicts maintains its full topicality. The Syria crisis has led to the displacement of millions of people. Among them are hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. For many Palestinian families this flight is not the first. (UNRWA 2014.) Examining this special group of refugees would generate an understanding of the repeated experience of fleeing and the specific needs for assistance that they have.

The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are not a homogenous group of people. Further research is needed to understand the specific features and needs of a number of subgroups. During the present research process the need for further research among people with chronic mental health problems and substance abuse was revealed. Also the coping of sexual minorities in the midst of prolonged conflict should be studied.

The gender perspective in relation to psychosocial coping in the occupied Palestinian territories requires further research. It is obvious that gender is an essential matter when ex-

amining psychosocial coping; this is only further emphasized in the cultural environment that is still largely affected by a traditional patriarchal structure. Further research is needed to increase the understanding of coping as a gendered issue; what coping means to different genders and how differences should be taken into account in applications of psychosocial support.

A key challenge for future research is to investigate more closely what kind of assistance and support people in middle of a prolonged conflict would like to receive. What are the forms of psychosocial support, which are perceived as useful in promoting coping? What kind of facilitation enables the fulfilment of cultural specificities of psychosocial coping?

Further research is needed to construct and test new culture specific methods to analyse psychosocial coping under exceptional circumstances. Psychosocial coping is a multidimensional phenomenon which always contains a cultural element. Research methods should be developed to achieve the cultural dimensions of coping. In particular, mixed methodology should be developed to be applicable in fieldwork.

With regard to the practice of psychosocial support the potential of internet based remote facilitation should be examined. As observed in the present study, the young generation is capable of utilizing a variety of online services. Further research is needed to evaluate the opportunities to develop Internet mediated psychosocial support applications. Such services would be needed particularly in situations in which access to the conflict affected area is blocked.

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Appendix

WAYS OF COPING QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE
Ways of Coping revised (Folkman & Lazarus 1985)

Please provide the following information:

Gender: Male __   Female __

Age: ___

Think about the stressful situation you have experienced in relation to living in the conflict zone. Such a situation may be, for example exposure to tear gas and sound bombs, having seen shooting and explosions or having seen someone injured. Select preferably the situation which has taken place in the last few weeks. Please briefly describe this situation by writing it in English.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Please read each item below and indicate, by using the following rating scale, to what extent you used it in the situation you have just described.

Not used	Used somewhat	Used quite a bit	Used a great deal
0	1	2	3

_____ 1. Just concentrated on what I had to do next – the next step.

_____ 2. I tried to analyze the problem in order to understand it better.

_____ 3. Turned to work or substitute activity to take my mind off things.

_____ 4. I felt that time would make a difference – the only thing to do was to wait.

_____ 5. Bargained or compromised to get something positive from the situation.

Not used	Used somewhat	Used quite a bit	Used a great deal
0	**1**	**2**	**3**

_____ 6. I did something which I didn't think would work, but at least I was doing something.

_____ 7. Tried to get the person responsible to change his or her mind.

_____ 8. Talked to someone to find out more about the situation.

_____ 9. Criticized or lectured myself.

_____ 10. Tried not to burn my bridges, but leave things open somewhat.

_____ 11. Hoped a miracle would happen.

_____ 12. Went along with fate; sometimes I just have bad luck.

_____ 13. Went on as if nothing had happened.

_____ 14. I tried to keep my feelings to myself.

_____ 15. Looked for the silver lining, so to speak; tried to look on the bright side of things.

_____ 16. Slept more than usual.

_____ 17. I expressed anger to the person(s) who caused the problem.

_____ 18. Accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.

_____ 19. I told myself things that helped me to feel better.

_____ 20. I was inspired to do something creative.

_____ 21. Tried to forget the whole thing.

_____ 22. I got professional help.

_____ 23. Changed or grew as a person in a good way.

_____ 24. I waited to see what would happen before doing anything.

_____ 25. I apologized or did something to make up.

_____ 26. I made a plan of action and followed it.

_____ 27. I accepted the next best thing to what I wanted.

_____ 28. I let my feelings out somehow.

_____ 29. Realized I brought the problem on myself.

Not used	Used somewhat	Used quite a bit	Used a great deal
0	1	2	3

_____ 30. I came out of the experience better than when I went in.

_____ 31. Talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.

_____ 32. Got away from it for a while; tried to rest or take a vacation.

_____ 33. Tried to make myself feel better by eating, drinking, smoking, using drugs or

medication, etc.

_____ 34. Took a big chance or did something very risky.

_____ 35. I tried not to act too hastily or follow my first hunch.

_____ 36. Found new faith.

_____ 37. Maintained my pride and kept a stiff upper lip.

_____ 38. Rediscovered what is important in life.

_____ 39. Changed something so things would turn out all right.

_____ 40. Avoided being with people in general.

_____ 41. Didn't let it get to me; refused to think too much about it.

_____ 42. I asked a relative or friend I respected for advice.

_____ 43. Kept others from knowing how bad things were.

_____ 44. Made light of the situation; refused to get too serious about it.

_____ 45. Talked to someone about how I was feeling.

_____ 46. Stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.

_____ 47. Took it out on other people.

_____ 48. Drew on my past experiences; I was in a similar situation before.

_____ 49. I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts to make things work.

_____ 50. Refused to believe that it had happened.

_____ 51. I made a promise to myself that things would be different next time.

_____ 52. Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.

Not used	Used somewhat	Used quite a bit	Used a great deal
0	1	2	3

_____ 53. Accepted it, since nothing could be done.

_____ 54. I tried to keep my feelings from interfering with other things too much.

_____ 55. Wished that I could change what had happened or how I felt.

_____ 56. I changed something about myself.

_____ 57. I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in.

_____ 58. Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.

_____ 59. Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.

_____ 60. I prayed.

_____ 61. I prepared myself for the worst.

_____ 62. I went over in my mind what I would say or do.

_____ 63. I thought about how a person I admire would handle this situation and used that

as a model.

_____ 64. I tried to see things from the other person's point of view.

_____ 65. I reminded myself how much worse things could be.

_____ 66. I jogged or exercised.

MIKKO HÄKKINEN
Psychosocial Coping
in Prolonged Conflict

Palestinian people are repeatedly exposed to a range of violent and traumatic experiences due to various forms of instability. This study aims to understand both the suffering experienced by Palestinians as well as the coping methods that they use to live in these conditions. This is an ethnography of life in the midst of ongoing volatility. Data collection for the study was carried out in the field using mixed methods with a particular emphasis on the snowball method. This approach took the researcher into the heart of the everyday reality of Palestinians. The results describe suffering, but at the same time emphasize the human capability to construct methods for coping in extreme circumstances.

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