From Holy Land to Palestine: the role of 'international committed people' in the Palestinian struggle

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In memory of Vittorio Arrigoni
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**Acknowledgments**
Introduction

The Israeli and Palestinian situation is usually described as a clash of civilisations. This dissertation aims to analyse the context through the lenses of the anthropology of travel and tourism and to insert it in the framework of a hegemonic power relation.

The research is based on six weeks of fieldwork in the Palestinian town of Beit Sahour. I observed the life of international people who live, travel and work in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, for short and long periods. At the same time I interviewed Israeli and Palestinians involved in initiatives focused on providing alternative and political tours.

The first chapter offers an overview of the Israeli-Palestinian tourism industry, describing it as an 'industry of illusion'. Gramsci's notion of hegemony and the 'tourist gaze' described by John Urry are the cornerstones of this theoretical framework.

The second chapter aims to move to a confident interpretation of the role of the tourist, founding the description on one hand on the theories of Dean MacCannell about the 'tourist agency' and on the other hand on first-hand examples: tourists can be individuals able to recognise reality and transform it.

A description of the mechanisms of a possible transformation is
offered in the final chapter. The network between people, the open attitude of certain guides and the awareness of the Palestinian struggle as a global struggle are the key elements of this transformative process. Authors such as Harrison and Qumsyeh help the reader in the understanding of the passage from tourism to activism.

The outcomes of the research aim to show the potentialities of tourism for reaching a fusion between solidarity and active citizenship.
Chapter 1
Israel and Palestine: Siamese twins in the tourism industry

This first chapter aims to illustrate how the mainstream tourism industry works in the Israeli- Palestinian context. It starts from the main assumption that the tourism industry in the context of the entire area is based on an ‘industry of illusion’ that is useful both for the Israeli Government's policies and, to a certain extent, for the survival of a consistent part of the Palestinian economy.

In the initial part, I will try to explain why tourism in the area might constitute a hegemonic relation. The second part will describe the strategies used in Israel in order to support the illusion of a Jewish state and a rampart of Western democracies in the Middle East; it will illustrate how a sort of Palestinian ‘common sense’ contributes to the construction of this image of Israel and how certain products of the global industry are part of the same mechanism. Finally, inspired by the notion of ‘tourist gaze’ proposed by John Urry, at the end of the chapter I will explore an instance of tourism experience which might confirm the aforementioned line of interpretation.

1.1. Hegemonic relations through tourism
The first step in order to describe major features of the Israeli-Palestinian tourism industry is an explanation of the reasons behind the definition I choose for that: a hegemonic relation. The Italian
intellectual Antonio Gramsci was the first theoretician to set up the notion of 'cultural hegemony', a concept that has been used by different anthropologists (Gramsci, 1971; Guha, Chakrovarty Spivak, 1988; Willis, 1977) in order to explain why certain social structures manage to become such a strong value system that turns itself into 'common sense', something that is at least apparently unchallengeable. The idea of 'hegemony' can be defined in several ways. I selected an interpretation given in the Oxford Dictionary of Politics (McLean, McMillan, 2009) when the authors explained the key elements of Antonio Gramsci's thought; they describe the interaction between the 'economic base' and the 'political superstructure' as the originating process of hegemony. This in turn articulates itself as 'coercive machinery' rather than a force-based process. The final outcome of this mechanism changes 'the framework of perception, understanding, and knowledge. The result of this socialization process was that the governed actively consented to their oppression.'

In the first week of fieldwork I interviewed (Appendix A) Michel Warschwasky, co-founder of the Israeli- Palestinian organization Alternative Information Center (AIC) and a well-known anti-Zionist Jew. He was among the first, who in the 70s started to arrange 'political tours' to increase the awareness about the reality of the Occupation, particularly for what concerned the role of the settlements in the Zionist project. I asked him about the relationship
between tourism and the Zionist ideology, and his answer can be a good corner stone to understanding the key factors that influence Israeli tourism industry- revenues, propaganda and advocacy:

They have means and they use tourism for three goals. Firstly to make money. It used to be one of the major sources of foreign currency in Israel. Second, it is a tool of propaganda, it is used to convince as many people as possible of the Israeli case, the Israeli view, the Israeli narrative’. The third, which is the most important for them, it serves to promote Jewish immigration. There are many programs that bring youngsters, Taglit-Birthright and many other projects, to bring people to spend time in kibbutz and farming and to connect them emotionally to Israel.

It could be argued that this is a biased perspective, illustrated by a 'self-hating Jew'. To anticipate this critique, it is worthy to mention the words of a former Israeli Minister of Tourism, Moshe Kol, who in 1973 wrote the introduction of an edited volume about the past, the present and the future of the Israeli tourism industry and stated (Klein, 1973: 10):

The millions of tourists who have visited Israel since its establishment, have contributed to a deeper understanding by their own countries of Israel’s situation and point of view. The foreign currency left behind by these tourists is no more important than the experience
they carry away. When they return to their countries and communities, their families and their friends, they become goodwill ambassadors of Israel, spreading its message everywhere. This has constituted the past, as it will constitute in the future, a considerable aid in the development of sympathetic public opinion, immeasurably more vital to Israel than any financial consideration. Furthermore, the young tourists of any period not only have an immediate influence on the public opinion; they will one day provide the leadership of their countries. We therefore attach the greatest importance to their visits and first-hand impressions.

Even if they have completely opposite political views, the words of Warschwaskey and Kol resound like an echo.

The efforts in the promotion of Israel as a tourist destination had received, throughout the decades, very good results according to the data of the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (Tourism Review, 2011; Igoogledisrael, 2011), in 2010. According to other data (Ministry of Tourism, 2010) between January and September 2010 2,5 million people arrived in Israel, 41 per cent of them through organised tours.

In this context, as a concrete example of the Gramscian explanation of a certain kind of collaboration with the oppressed in the oppression process, it is possible to insert the Palestinian tourism industry. This is a sector that is fundamental for the sustainability of the Palestinian
economy especially in areas such as Bethlehem District. According to research by Carol Zoughby (2007) in the middle of the 2000s tourism constituted 15.2 per cent of GDP and employed almost 20 per cent of the local population.

The connivance of the major part of the Palestinian tourism industry with the hegemonic strategy of the Israeli State has two main causes: one of them is involuntary, while the other one is to a certain extent voluntary.

The unconscious one is related to the strong dependency of the Palestinian system from Israel, both in terms of geopolitical conditions and economies. For what concerns the first aspect, it is important to remember that because of the policies of borders control it is impossible to access the Occupied Palestinian Territories without passing through Israel; that ‘the 50 per cent of the historical places are located in the Palestinian areas, but only 3 per cent of them are under the actual control of the Palestinian Authority’ (Appendix B); out of $1 earned in the 'Holy Land', just 6 cents get into the Palestinian economy (Zoughby, 2007: 8).

To conclude, the more willing process is related to a mechanism well-described by Rami Kassis, executive director of the Alternative Tourism Group (Appendix B):

People who are working in tourism have a lot of privileges
from Israel and they are not interested in losing these privileges. For example they have permits to go to Israel, they can travel through the airport, all kinds of privileges that the business people have. And no one wants to lose these things. It's a heritage that is hard to change and needs a lot of work, effort and initiative.

It is difficult to get an accurate account of travellers and tourists that visit the Palestinian-controlled areas. First of all there are no official borders and direct gateways; secondly, according to different testimonies (Roy, 2004, Appendix B, informal conversations) the major part of tourists that arrive in the Bethlehem area spend just a few hours there, with a visit basically limited to the Nativity Church and shops that have an agreement with Israeli or international tour operators.

Rami Kassis during our interview told me about his merging of the data offered by the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics: 'If we talk about 3,000,000 people visiting Israel, we are talking about 1,800,000 that had visited the Palestinian Areas'. He added an interesting methodological explanation: 'The only way that the Palestinians are counting their tourists is either the people that are visiting the Nativity Church which are counted by the tourist police, and the people in Jericho'.
1.2. The 'industry of illusion'

The term 'industry of illusion' came out in conversation with Adnan Ramadan, Palestinian Director of the network of organizations Occupied and Syrian Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative (OPGAI). He refers to the experiences lived in the area by the major part of travellers with a metaphor: 'Here the things that you can't see, do not exist. They (the Israeli) do like the people who hide the dust under the carpet: they know it exists, but they pretend it is not true'.

This definition, gained during the very beginning of my fieldwork experience, resounded in my senses for the entire duration of my participant observation. I progressively identified examples of the mechanism that produce the result of this 'illusion' according to a trebled direction: Israeli strategy, Palestinian common sense and an international Orientalist approach.

1.2.1. Israeli strategy

The importance of tourism for Israel, which had been partially explained in the previous part of this section, is evident. It is worthy to illustrate a document produced by the Ministry of Tourism and also published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November 2010: *Tourism investment in Israel. Where unique heritage assets meet a solid business environment* (Ministry of Tourism of Israel, 2010).
The brochure was created to attract foreign investors, namely involved in the construction of new hotels, in order to satisfy the demand of accommodations caused by the achievement of the ambitious target number of five million tourists by 2015. To illustrate the benefits for the investors, the material offered an additional overview of some kind of marketing strategies.

The scheme of what can be considered an organised reinforcement of the hegemonic position of the Israeli mainstream tourism industry is based on: (i) *development of the major visitor attractions* (ii) *consolidate Israel's image as a tourist destination through marketing campaigns and operations*, (iii) *providing assistance to entrepreneurs for the construction of hotels and attractions*, (iv)*allocating or leasing state-owned land which is administrated by the Israeli Land Administration. Foreign investors may be eligible for land allocation without a tender, under special conditions*. (Ministry of Tourism of Israel, 2010: 28)

It is possible even to consider the last point as illustrative. The Jerusalem area is among the priorities for the aforementioned investments (Ministry of Tourism of Israel, 2010: 30). The process of 'Judaization' of the Holy City, which had been already described by many authors (Hodgkins, 1996; Quraishy, 2009), here becomes evident. On one hand Jerusalem is defined throughout the entire document as the capital city of Israel, in spite of the fact that the
international community- namely the United Nations- has not recognised it unanimously (UNSC, 1980); on the other hand images of certain sites are used in a manner that could be defined as, at the very least, 'controversial'. The image of the well-known walls of the Old City is used throughout the brochure, without mentioning in any point the fact that the Old City is located in the eastern side of Jerusalem, an area that is part of the territories that Israel had occupied in 1967. Through this process, foreign investors are being deceived about the existence of an 'occupation', the core issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *Mutatis mutandis* the same situation occurred when brochures and flyers about tourism in Israel are presented to tourists and pilgrims: the Occupation simply disappears.

1.2.2. Palestinian 'common sense'

The second force through which the hegemonic relation and the consequent 'industry of illusion' are articulated is the Palestinian 'common sense'. With this term I refer to the attitude of the Palestinian people involved in the previously described hegemonic process.

The ethnographic work made by Glenn Bowman between 1983 and 1985 (Bowman, 1992) offers an example of the reason why the major part of the mainstream Palestinian tourism industry does not dare to refer directly to the Israeli occupation, preferring a form of 'sanitised tour' (Seizer, 1998). The British anthropologist had carried on
intensive fieldwork about the politics of tour-guiding in Israel and
Palestine, examining 'discursive construction of tourist images as
they are mobilised and modified in guided tours of the country'.

Bowman does not identify an official top-down policy that pushes the
selective process of the Israeli guides and the attitude of the Arab
guides of disguising their nationalistic approach. However, Bowman
recognizes the role of Israeli guides -within the Arab areas- in
'rendering invisible the substantial presence of the local population'
and 'characterising that invisible population as dangerous'. The more
interesting aspect of the ethnography is the explanation the author
gave of the motivations of the secular attitude of the major part of the
Palestinian guides (Harrison, 1992: 128):

Palestinian guides therefore tend, in their relations with
Western groups, to veil their Arabic or Palestinian
identities and to emphasise identities or characteristics to
which tourists will prove more sympathetic.

Bowman attributes this mechanism of self-censorship to two factors:
the difficulties in getting a tour guide licence for the Palestinians1 and
the consequence of decades of Orientalist discourses. These
elements, joined with the socio-cultural features of the people
involved in the tourism industry which has been described through

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1 In Bowman's account a significant space had been give to the transformation of the 'licence policy' from 1967 on. Even if the rules might have been changed through the years, it is still true that Palestinian citizens of Israel who want to get a licence to work within Israel and OPT have to attend a course of Hebrew, geography and history (set up according to the Israeli narrative) while the residents of the West Bank are not allowed to work in Israel, if not thankfully to permits released by the Israeli authorities.
Rami Kassis’s quotation in the previous section, creates fertile ground for the hegemonic relation profiled so far.

1.2.3 Brief examples of the 'international' support to the 'industry of illusion'

Lonely Planet is the *world’s largest travel guide publisher* (Fildes, 2007). Even if it is not possible to find out the exact feature about the amount of copies that the guidebook dedicated to Israel and the Palestinian Territories had been sold, it is still licit to think about it as one of the most used references for travellers in the area. According to the descriptions established until now, I will offer two examples of how this guidebook becomes an external support of the kind of relations visible in the Israeli-Palestinian tourism industry.

The first feature of the guidebook is evident in the title itself, *Israel and the Palestinian Territories* (2008). In the introductory lines the authors explain that it is possible to identify a political position according to the naming process that one puts in referring to the area. They are not especially straightforward in declaring their political position, however the omission of the adjective ‘Occupied’ in calling the Palestinian Territories is a clear political statement: the publisher decides not to challenge the issue of the on-going occupation.

The parts dedicated to Jerusalem can establish the second feature. I
will transcribe here two sections, translated by the Italian edition of the volume:

a) In 1967 the 'Six Days war' led to the reunification of Jerusalem (Kohn et al., 2008: 85)

b) Even if Jerusalem is the undisputed capital city of the State of Israel, the oddities of the international politics had induced a lot of States to settle down their Embassies in Tel Aviv (Kohn et al., 2008: 429)

Even if sentences like these are dispersed among a variety of descriptions, a reader that is informed about the main controversies in the historical and geographical approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will recognise clear evidences of a Zionist narrative. The sum of these elements with the mainstream campaigns carried on by the State of Israel and the attitudes of a significant part of the guides who work in the Occupied Palestinian Territories create the framework of the hegemonic relations that exist in the area and show how tourism becomes an unexpected arena for the conflict.

1.3 Guiding the tourist gaze

It is in this combination of elements that millions of tourists move every year. When I use the expression 'tourism industry', I refer to the enormous number of people who reach the area and are immersed in the game of narratives, images, symbols; usually- as explained by Bowman (1992) - these people are not informed about the political
situation and are just trustful of what they will read in the guide books or they will hear during their organised tours.

The force exerted on the tourist by the three aforementioned hegemonic powers is an example of how what Urry calls 'tourist gaze' could be constructed (Urry, 2002: 7): 'isolated from the host environment and the local people, the mass tourist travels in guided groups and finds pleasure in inauthentic cultivated attractions, enjoying pseudo-events and disregarding the real world outside'.

Since the social relation between hosts and guests is often limited to a few hours’ experience, it is understandable how the Zionist narrative, based on a stronger system, easily becomes the mainstream narrative that sustains a tourist experience.

In the following part I will try to offer a concrete example of how these mechanisms could become objectified in the experiences of people who already make an initial effort in overcoming the limitations put in act by the State of Israel to control the movement of International people in the area. The following account shows how the 'industry of illusion' is so strong that can act even on the perception of people well-acquainted to the reality on the ground.

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2 The recent initiative named ‘Welcome to Palestine’ is characteristic- on the 8th of July, thousands of people announced that they would arrive at the Israeli airport stating that they intended to visit Palestine. Hundreds of people were not allowed even to leave their countries, after that different airlines handed over the passenger lists to Israel, 124 people were detained at the airport, and 76 women and 38 men were taken to the Israeli prison of BeerSheva, until they had been sent back home (Yahni, 2011).
On a Saturday morning Ica, Abdallah and me are travelling by car from Bethlehem to Jenin. Ica (27), a female Italian long-term employee of the Alternative Information Center in Beit Sahour, is driving a Fiat Punto with a green plate\(^3\) that we rented in the village of Obadya. Beside her is Abdallah (29), a Palestinian resident of a small village in the Bethlehem District, who occasionally works with the Alternative Information Center and in other tourist/ travellers related activities.

Throughout the trip to Ramallah we don't have any difficulties in find our way, because we know the road and because there are, from time to time, clear street signs. As far as we know, once we would have reached Hawara, the military checkpoint which regulates the access to the Palestinian city of Nablus, we will have to take the left and to proceed further in order to reach Jenin, the northern city of the West Bank. After Nablus we found ourselves on a by-pass. We pass by the big Israeli settlement of Ariel and on the road there are no indications- neither toward the Palestinian city of Jenin nor any other Arab village or semblance of infrastructure. There is information about different settlements, about the Ariel University Center for Samaria and an Israeli Natural Reserve not far from there. The result is that, after a few kilometres from the junction that we should have taken, we find ourselves next to the Green Line, with no possibility of going farther because of our car's Palestinian licence plate.

\(^3\) In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the cars of Palestinian residents are furnished with green plates, different from the yellow plates that characterise Israeli cars and residents of Jerusalem cars. According to the type of plate, the person that is driving will have different rights to access to the different areas of the region.
At the checkpoint, which looks more like a toll-gate, the security personnel ask us to leave the car, initially pointing their rifles at us. Once they understand that we have just lost our way, they become kinder and start smiling; they frisk the entire car and check our passports. The strange thing is that Ica and I were much more stressed than Abdallah was once they gained our documents. A full explanation shall be provided eventually: now that we are again in the car and allowed to get through the checkpoint in order to make a U-turn to go back toward Jenin, Abdallah takes his mobile phone and calls Yasser, another friend in Beit Sahour and says: "Guess what? I am in '48".

'48' is the name that the Palestinian residents of the West Bank give to the territories that became the State of Israel after the war of 1948. This historical fact is representative of the entire mechanism of the double-sided narrative that is present in the context of Israel and Palestine. The war is referred to as the 'War of Independence' by the Israelis and their supporters, while it is called 'Al Nakba- The Catastrophe' by the Palestinians. Abdallah’s reaction to our misadventure and the confusion that experts like us experienced will be the starting point of the next chapter: how can the 'industry of illusion' be overcome?
Chapter 2

When the tourist acts: the 'code of conduct' and other counter-hegemonic voices

After the overview offered in the first chapter one can get the impression that a tourist travelling in Israel and Palestine is like a sponge. The aim of this chapter is to show how certain people could be able to overcome the hegemonic relation and contribute in the creation of a more accurate narrative of the complexity of the reality on the ground.

The chapter is organised into three sections. In the first part Urry's 'tourist gaze' notion is questioned, pointing out elements that could facilitate us to think about the 'agency' of the tourist. Consequently, this capacity of seeing and acting is explained through a concrete example. The third section attempts to combine this attitude of certain tourists with the needs expressed by a section of Palestinian civil society through the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT). It is through this dialogical relation that I will be then able to explore the contribution of 'international committed people' in the Palestinian struggle, in the third chapter.

2.1 The 'agency' of the tourist

If it is true that a functioning hegemony creates a predetermined 'perception, understanding and knowledge', it is also true that the
Gramscian account has significantly included the possibility for counter-hegemonic actions, that need to reach a level of organisation strong enough to challenge the power of the hegemony.

In our context the first actor of this attitude is the tourist himself or herself, or at least a kind of tourist, the one who is able to overcome the mainstream narrative and realise the complexity that they are crossing. Exactly how it happened to Ica, Abdallah and me when we got lost among the street signals of the northern part of the West Bank: we knew that something around us was missing and someone was under-represented. This process of awareness did not happen just in virtue of our knowledge of the reality of the current situation, it is something that can happen to everyone who does not limit his/her observation to just the first glance.

This is a 'second gaze' which had been recognised and theorised by MacCannell (2001) in his critique of John Urry’s work. Dean MacCannell considers the work of Urry seminal, however he tries to overcome his approach, considered too strictly structuralist. Particularly, the author is more confident than Urry of the fact that tourists are aware they are being conditioned by 'adulterating' elements, both visually and linguistically (2001: 31). It is because of this confidence that MacCannell advocates what he defines a 'radical tourist gaze': the capacity of the person who is moving between different attractions to look beyond the basic layers and creating
his/her own intellectual itinerary\(^4\): ‘specifically, the tourist should all the time be aware of the difference between primary experience and institutionalized version of the tourist gaze’ (MacCannell, 2001:34).

A second supportive theoretical framework of the importance of the curious attitude of the tourist can be drawn by John Berger’s analysis of the act of looking. In the first chapter of his book (1980), the British intellectual analyses the importance of the reciprocity of the gaze in the recognition of emotions and feelings between human beings, starting from the assumption that human beings are a species of animals.

In a context as the Israeli-Palestinian one, characterised by the mechanisms of exclusion and erasure described in the first chapter, the act of looking may become revolutionary. The constraints in terms of mobility and self-representation to which the Palestinian residents of the West Bank\(^5\) are subjected are analogous to the processes of isolation and artificiality lived by the domestic animals described by Berger. To avoid and change upside down a process of dehumanisation which might irreversibly damage the Palestinian people, it is fundamental to create as much occasion of ‘looking’ as possible. An aware tourist or a person who has visited the region several times will play a key role in this process of mutual

\(^4\) MacCannell is interestingly referring to ‘Memoirs of a tourist’ by Stendhal.

\(^5\) My entire fieldwork has been done in the West Bank, however the reader should keep in mind that the same processes of isolation, erasure and dehumanisation characterise, if possible even worse so, the perception, lives and representation of the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip.
recognition, becoming a 'guide' broadly speaking.

2.2 The story of Noel and his Christian fellows

One example of this kind of tourist, able to recognize the absence of the Palestinian account during his experience in the Holy Land is Noel, 67, from England. I met him and his group one night in the desert, in a place called Tal Al-Qamar, between the village of Dar Salah and the Dead Sea. I was invited there by my friend Ahmad (37) who is employed by the Alternative Information Center, and is also running his own tourism-related activity: a *Bedouin Camp Site in Jerusalem wilderness*, called Tal Al-Qamar (the Hill of the moon). Ahmad has been refurbishing the area, owned historically by his family, since spring 2009, progressively creating an infrastructure that according to his description should be (Tal Al-Qamar, 2011):

> The perfect place to go camping, organise a barbecue, indulge in traditional food, parties or a Safari (traktoron).

> In Tal Al-Qamar you can rest from your hiking trip, from Mar Saba, Jericho, Herodium or Nabi Musa, have a barbecue and a nap for a couple of hours or the whole night. You might as well stay there and enjoy the sunrise and the sunset with the magic of nature.

Knowing the topic of my research, Ahmad had invited me, since he was hosting a group of 50 middle-aged British people, offering me an irresistible opportunity to undertake in participant observation. I join

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6 The definition is the one officially used by Ahmad Abu Haniya in the Facebook page (Tal Al-Qamer, 2011)
the staff- constituting Ahmad's brother, Yasser, Abdallah and Fatima⁷- who are preparing a Palestinian traditional dinner for the group in the brick-wall kitchen. This role helps me create an opportunity of conversation with the group of pilgrims.

After a couple of questions I manage to identify the leader of the group (Noel). He is willing to tell me about his own experience as a tourist in Israel-Palestine and about the roots of the numerous groups that he is accompanying. He is the leader of a Christian Learning School in England. He had travelled in the region 11 years ago with an Israeli guide, and at that time he was disappointed because every time he tried to ask about Palestine and Palestinians the guide was evasive, evidently not willing to give him any answers. ‘I promised myself that, even if I fell in love with the place, I would not come back until I would have found local Palestinian guides and the possibility to arrange an itinerary among Palestinian places’, he says.

This organised tour is the outcome of that promise. Noel clearly illustrates to me the aims of this last experience, addressed to the people of his Christian school: (i) experiencing the land and the landscape, (ii) seeing both biblical and historical sites, (iii) learning about the political situation, (iv) living a ’spiritual experience’, whatever it might mean. He also asks his fellows to keep a daily journal, they will decide in a second phase what they will do in their

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⁷ Abdallah is the young Palestinian man mentioned before in the 1st chapter, who is a professional chef; Yasser is employee of the AIC who was asked Ahmad for help; Fatima is a Palestinian girl, in her 20s, who is a nurse.
communities once they are back home.

The people of the group are particularly impressed by the accounts of the Palestinian people that they met during their travels. Two out of three men that I spoke with identify the land confiscation as the main issue. All the people that I conversed with tell me that they feel challenged as Christians because of the injustice that they have seen.

The story of Noel and his group is relevant in order to explore the 'agency' of the tourists because somehow the 'industry of illusion' did not work on the eyes and the mind of this man 11 years ago. He was able to transform his own experience in an attempt to show the intuition of his 'second gaze' to other people, namely his Christian fellows. He became a tourist that acts, and he also calls to action other people around him.

Apparently, the experiment works. After dinner, a few minutes before the group will gather for its night prayer and I am to go back to Beit Sahour, we are still sitting on the Bedouin-style couches outside the main tent and an old woman looks like her head is in the clouds. I dare to break her meditation and I ask her if she is shocked or quietly impressed by the stories that she had heard or the things she had seen. She tells me: 'My great concern is about how I will bring all these stories back home. How will I face people who have a much
more traditional view of the entire issue? Will they believe me? Will I change something?’ She heard that I am doing my research about alternative tourism in Palestine. She asks me if I have a magic formula. I reply ironically that I was hoping to hear that from her. And then, thinking about my own experience the first time I came here, I simply tell her: ‘Just be honest and tell exactly what you have seen’. She calmly nods to me.

2.3 Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT) and the ‘code of conduct’

2.3.1 Pilgrimages for transformation

Stories like those experienced by Noel and his group are symbolic of how certain people can become sympathetic interlocutors for Palestinian civil society and organisations (private and public) which are involved in the tourism sector. Capitalising on this dialogic interaction, the Palestinians could reach two important goals which are fundamental for their struggle for liberation: on one hand, the deconstruction of the main stereotypes regarding them, constructed by the mainstream narrative described in the first chapter; on the other hand an unarmed transnational army of supportive people, ready to act in terms of advocacy and political pressure on different governments and institutions.

In 2005 a part of the Palestinian civil society differently involved in the local tourist sector started to engage with the notion of
‘pilgrimages for transformation’. The Alternative Tourism Group in particular promoted an international meeting in Egypt named so (Alternative Tourism Group, et al., 2005; Appendix B). The aim of the conference was the definition of a strategy able to take advantage of the Holy Land as an area of travel in order to promote forms of justice and responsible tourism. A good synthesis of the entire approach of the conference can be had through the paper presented by Max Ediger (2005). He describes ‘pilgrimages’ as a ‘challenge to power’ (2005: 54) because they can reveal the ‘unequal power relations’ and push the person to ‘critically explore the injustice’. At the same time since the pilgrim is usually a person that ‘has a tendency to move out of the comfort zones in search of new truths’, he/she could play a role in spreading the voice about different kinds of injustice and look for support and change.

2.3.2 The Code of Conduct

Drawing both from this awareness and to a certain extent from the theoretical background of the notion developed by Dean MacCannel of the tourist as a pilgrim searching for authenticity (1973), the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism was created:

A network of organisations, associations and public bodies committed to work for responsible tourism to the Holy Land and to act as advocates for this approach to tourism. […] Based on our belief that both tourists and hosts can be enriched by human encounters through
tourism, we invite travellers to meet the Palestinian people and explore their culture. We strive to create opportunities for local communities to become involved in tourism activities and to earn a fair income from the process. We believe that protecting and preserving the environment is of utmost importance, and thus we are searching for less harmful ways of providing tourism services. We call on all service providers to commit themselves to responsible business practices and to renounce exploitative behaviour. Our objective is to promote a just and responsible tourism in Palestine that benefits the Palestinian people, pilgrims, tourists and all other stakeholders in tourism in the country without harming local communities.

This presentation is included in one of the most important documents issued in Palestine, according to the major part of the Palestinian people involved in the tourism sector that I met during my fieldwork: the Code of conduct (Appendix C). It comprises a document of five pages, distributed as a brochure, which expresses a call for responsibility both to 'travellers to the Holy Land' and 'the Palestinian Tourism Sector'.

The major part of the pamphlet is focused on describing the Palestinian context, the relevance that tourism has there, and the necessity of mutual respect and recognition between hosts and guests. However, the features that are more interesting for this dissertation are the ones related to what travellers are asked to do.
The travel experience is divided in three parts: (i) preparation, (ii) the trip, (iii) returning home. Through this last part Palestinian subscribers of the document ask the traveller to share their experience and to become active, doing things such as: building a network, spreading information, de-constructing prejudices, learning about responsibilities of his/her own home country, confronting the public opinion when discussions about Palestine come out. All of these actions can be done if the traveller has lived their own experience with the will to learn and see with their own eyes the reality on the ground, like in the case of Noel. Simultaneously, in this ideal process, the Palestinian people part of the tourism sector should behave as 'good hosts', with honesty and transparency, accepting cultural diversity, and not being subdued to the unconscious process described by Bowman and summarised in the first chapter.

The outcome of this kind of sympathetic interaction would be a real agency of the tourist and benefit the entire oppressed Palestinian community. In the long term, through this approach a network of informed and active people could be strengthened, and more counter-hegemonic voices can be merged.

2.3.3 Limits and difficulties in the promotion of the Code of Conduct
The initiative for responsible tourism seems like the perfect idea, the exact fusion between the needs of the Palestinian civil society and the needs of the most curious travellers. Speaking about it with some of the long-term volunteers and foreign employees in Beit Sahour, we often discussed the fact that, from the Palestinian side, an effort is needed to intercept the vast amount of tourists who travel in the area and show them the reality of the Occupation. This is the reason why a simple brochure like the Code of Conduct seems like a good tool. There is only one problem: apart from the offices of the Alternative Tourism Group or other progressive local grass-roots organisations (Joint Advocacy Initiative, Alternative Information Center, etc.), the flyer is not present in the souvenir shops around the Nativity Church and it seems not to be distributed neither to the posses that visit the area, nor in the restaurants or other places.

One explanation of this absence is in the mechanism described by Rami Kassis in the first chapter: the privileges of the major part of business people involved in the tourism industry. Rami Kassis considers the document as fundamental, however in our interview he explained that ‘the Code was received very well locally and internationally, although I know that more work should be done to introduce the Code to the local population’ (Appendix B).

A more political explanation is given by Nassar Ibrahim, director of the Palestinian office of the joint Israeli-Palestinian organisation
known as Alternative Information Center:

Our performance is very poor and very weak, and very bad. When we talk about dynamic strategies, we must see the comprehensive picture. You cannot talk about how to reach these tourists, while you are facing problems about democracy. It is impossible to attract people and to face Israeli competition regarding the services while your infrastructure is not efficient enough.

Basically, what is being hidden, that is the occupation in its different articulations, is the cause of partial failures in the promotion of alternative and just tourism in Palestine. It seems a vicious circle, however certain forces are able to create breaks in this structure.
Chapter 3

Joining the struggle: the role of 'international committed people'

The itinerary offered in this dissertation is heading toward its conclusion. After having analysed the mainstream tourism industry in Israel and Palestine and the result of the recognition of the main rifts by a certain kind of tourists, it is now the moment to describe particular 'tourists' who live and operate in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: the 'international committed people', and main focus of my fieldwork.

This final chapter has been organised in three progressive steps. The first paragraph theoretically explains the articulation of the passage from tourism to activism; the second section shows, through the example of a particular organised tour, how 'international committed people' can become privileged guides. The final and conclusive part is a sort of 'laboratory example': how and when the needs of the oppressed (the Palestinian population) can perfectly join the open-minded will of an 'international committed person'.

3.1 From tourism to activism

What was described in the second chapter is the interim level between the sponge-style tourist victim of the mainstream industry and the kind of person I chiefly observed during my fieldwork in Beit Sahour, particularly at the Alternative Information Center. These
people are for the major part short and long-term volunteers and employees in the NGOs and grass-roots organisations located in Bethlehem District. To a certain extent these people could also be included in the category of 'tourists', since they are exploring a reality, looking for authenticity and engaging themselves in relations with the local population. However, their experience is the last step in the commitment that is advocated by sectors of the Palestinian civil society.

Some of these people had started from a phase similar to the one lived by Noel, others move to Palestine for professional or academic reasons, others again had come in order to live a 'life-experience', moved by curiosity, and spirit of adventure. I met the major part of them at the events organized at the AIC Café: 'a political and cultural café open on Tuesday and Saturday night from 7pm until 10pm'. On the bi-weekly appointments different local associations and organisations are invited to give speeches and lectures in order to increase the awareness of the participants. At the same time, through the shared consumption of food and drinks the international activists, tourists and expatriates have the opportunity to get to know each other, to share their know-how (i.e. visa issues), and to build their network of relationships and activities: mainly political initiatives and tours within the West Bank and Israel, but also house parties and the basic social life in a small place such as Beit Sahour.
The blatant transformation of tourism into activism is not an exclusive feature of the Palestinian experience. The mechanism has been analysed by Harrison (1992: 29). In particular he showed how 'younger and less organized backpackers live among indigenous people and may bring benefits to rural areas'. Harrison recognizes also the fact that the local authorities do not often welcome these 'backpackers'. This lack of hospitality from the institutions is due to the fact that often the 'alternative tourists' experience a process of identification with the community that is hosting them and transform themselves into political activists, struggling side by side with the local population in case of necessity. Harrison brings on the example of a crisis between China and Tibet in 1987. When clashes broke out tourists that were travelling in the area joined the Tibetan minority, offering their help in terms of medical assistance and dissemination of information abroad.

The dynamic is similar to the one happened during the First (1987-1993) and the Second Intifada (2000-2005) in Palestine. The process was based on Palestinians asking for an international presence able to monitor the on-going situation of violence and express solidarity, and it is accounted by different authors (Seitz, 2003; Qumsyeh, 2011).

A long-term expert of the Palestinian situation is Michele Giorgio, correspondent of the Italian left-wing newspaper 'Il Manifesto':
'During the 80s masses of people used to come here. They did not know anything about Palestine, it was more an issue related to human rights and dignity broadly speaking. They learnt here what were the key points of the Palestinian situation. Now the number of people is reduced, even if it is not exiguous, but people are more informed, aware, conscious. Now the youngsters are more active, they travel more, they have more experience of the world'.

This change in the attitude, the process of 'NGOisation' of the Palestinian society (Ibrahim, 2010, Appendix A) and the positive development of a market- within the broader tourism industry- of alternative tourism providers (i.e. Alternative Tourism Group and other volunteer tourism experiences provided by local NGOs) are probably the base of the structural change in the approach of committed people which visit Palestine. Not all of this 'immigration' is welcomed by Palestinian activists and civil society, although a good part of it is considered fundamental for the cultural exchange and the political engagement. The aforementioned 'code of conduct' could be considered one example of this positive attitude.

The 'volunteer tourism' is considered from different sources an example of the mutual benefit that can be gotten from a good relationship between the host and the guest. McIntosh and Zahra, for

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8 Informal conversations with Palestinian activists in Ramallah underlined the controversial role of certain humanitarian (aid) workers. What annoys the Palestinians more is the approach of certain people who apparently go to Palestine just to develop their career without (according to them) enough will to become involved in the transnational political struggle and with a lack of cultural sensitiveness. Worse considered are the people that come to Palestine 'to help or to teach'.

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example, studied an experience of this kind in the context of New Zealand, where a group of 12 Australian people worked for two weeks in a Maori community. The authors recorded the opinions both of the volunteers and the community, identifying improvement in terms of personal experience and meaningfulness of the social interaction. The best outcome identified was the creation of a new joint narrative – *engaging, genuine, creative* (McIntosh, Zahra, 2007: 559). Exactly what is needed in a framework such as the Israeli-Palestinian one.

### 3.2 'Internationals': privileged guides through transnational hegemonic discourses

#### 3.2.1 Definition and main ways of interaction

I define the term 'international committed person' as one who is able to transform him/herself from a simple traveller to a proper activist, aware of his/her role and responsibility toward the hosting community and, somehow, toward his/her community back home. The Palestinians generically refer to the people that come to work, live, volunteer with them with a catch-all name, *ajanib* (*foreigners*), which is translated, in the European English that constitutes the main language of communication at the site, as 'internationals'.

The agency of this particular kind of tourists is fundamental for the Palestinian struggle firstly because through a first-hand experience it can deconstruct stereotypes and the mainstream narrative, secondly
because it can participate in a transnational transformation process (Ediger, 2005). In fact these people are all part of a wider network of relationships, both in their communities back home and through their activities in their daily life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel. This variety of contacts is very important when it comes to communicate the new narrative constructed with the Palestinians and the anti-Zionist Israeli.

The action of sharing the 'new narrative' is articulated in two ways: virtual and physical. The virtual one is based on communication processes that humanise the Palestinian population, such as blogging (when the person is not too scared of being tracked by security control), round-mails, social network activities. The physical one, which is more interesting for this dissertation, is instead based on welcoming acquaintances or relatives and bringing them around in order to show them the main features of the Palestinian reality under occupation.

All of these forms of interaction between informed and less informed people open up the space for widening the view of the context. Once this is made clear, it will be easier for a person that has observed the reality on the ground to participate by themselves in the struggle, according to their own sensibility and capability. In this process of understanding a well-informed 'international' becomes a good intermediary between the less-informed one and the local population.
3.2.2 Expansion of network and knowledge: the example of the tour in Ma'ale Adumim

An example of this mechanism of intermediation became clear to me during an organised tour that I had participated in on the field. I was informed by different international committed people in Beit Sahour about the quality of the 'Jerusalem Reality Tours' organized by an Israeli tour guide, Rotem Mor, therefore I choose, among the others, the tour of the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim and its surroundings.

The reasons of this choice were mainly two: the setting was a controversial area and it would be interesting to see both the presentation made by the guide and the reaction of different 'tourists'. In fact, I was told that these tours are attended both by long-term dwellers of the area who might be interested in learning more about the Israeli society (always in a critical manner) and by simple tourists who get the information through flyers in Jerusalem or mailing lists or newsletters.

The first moment where I have seen the network operating was at the moment of reservation. I was at the AIC Café and Meri, an Italian woman who comes to Palestine both for solidarity and for work since the 80s was beside me. When she knew that I was going to visit a settlement, she asked me for the contact of the guide and decided

9 http://www.jerusalemrealitytours.com/, in the flyer the guidelines of the project are described as: 'Reality Tours introduce you to some of the key social realities of Jerusalem's rich and diverse communities while allowing you to experience first-hand its beautiful places, stories, cultures and people.'
that she would come along.

The morning of the tour she arrived at the meeting point with Davide, another Italian humanitarian worker. The group constituted six people: me, Meri, Davide that I can definitely can define as 'committed people', and three other persons: a young American freelance journalist; another American student who was volunteering for a month in Ramallah and Judith, a German girl, who was 26 years old. She had been living in Tel Aviv for the last two and a half months, trying to figure out a proposal for a PhD in media and cultural studies related to the area. Among these three she was the one with least knowledge about issues such as the Wall and settlements.

An entire evaluation of the tour is offered in Appendix B, however what is relevant here is one of the main characteristics of the tour: the approach of the tour guide and the interaction between him and the different members of the group. Even if certain parts of the description made by Rotem were controversial and disputable, he never silenced the members of the group from criticising or expanding the narration from a different perspective. This attitude created a dialogue between the members of the group, the guide and even the settlers met during the tour. Questions were raised by the less informed people and a continuous discussion accompanied the tour and the return journey to Jerusalem, mirroring the complexity of the reality.
The final outcome of this process was an unexpected tour of Hebron that I personally arranged for Judith. After having heard the comments to the settlers' stories made by Davide, Meri and me—the most vocals among the participants of the tour in Ma'ale Addumim—she asked me to come and visit Hebron.

This city is the best example of the occupation, and it often happens that people that are travelling there just for a day trip are able to understand the roots of the conflict in that context (Chawla, 2005). Instead of explaining to her the key elements of the socio-geo-political situation of the city, I preferred to turn to the direct voice of a Palestinian. I introduced her to Ahmad Jaradat, responsible for the 'Settlement watch project', of the Alternative Information Center. After the tour, she claimed that she understood more that day than during her entire stay in the area.

Without the openness of the tour of Rotem, this would not be possible. Also, the exchange of business cards with Ahmad Jaradat, with the aim of arranging for her a longer permanence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, would not be beneficial to the construction of a transnational alternative Palestinian narrative.

3.3 Joining needs and answers: exporting the struggle

The previous examples were given in order to demonstrate how to a certain extent the forces of 'international committed people' can be
joined to the actions of local activists. However, it is important to consider a last level of this agency. This level is well explained by Michel Warschawaski and the entire staff of the Israeli – Palestinian organisation Alternative Information Center. According to them the struggle for the liberation of Palestine has to be based on what Warschawaski calls (appendix A; AIC, OPGAI, 2009) ‘the winning triangle’: the merging of the energies and initiative of Palestinians, Israeli and internationals. A fusion of forces that to be just and effective has to be led by the Palestinians themselves.

The perfection of this triangle and the consciousness necessary for its functioning can be reached just through strong empathy and a process that requires time and humility.

I identify this attitude in the major part of long-term committed people. The last day of my fieldwork I had a long conversation with Kristel, a Dutch woman active for the Palestinian cause since seven years. She now works for a network of five Dutch NGOs, which support the Olive Tree Campaign and in general different advocacy initiatives.

In the same meeting room where Adnan Ramadan expressed to me his metaphor about the ‘industry of illusion’, she was able to put in a nutshell all the passages lived by a person who wants to do something for the Palestinians:
I see often that people who are not very much into the Palestinian society come with this colonial attitude, "we will start a project to do this, why we don't do that...". I met so many people coming here with so many ideas about documentary films and much of these had already been done. Also, it is an attitude that people here don't need. Palestinians are very highly educated, they have a long tradition of nonviolent resistance and activism, and they have in the past years created very good campaigns, like the BDS\textsuperscript{10}, and all kinds of advocacy campaigns. It was also my experience when I came here. At the beginning I had different ideas, like 'we should do this and we should do that' and I realised that my ideas are not needed. I have to support ideas of the activists here. I think that the Palestinians can improve in giving these people the tools, on how practically they will go back to their countries being active. There is no time left.

\textsuperscript{10} BDS stands for Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions. It is a campaign based on a call based in 2005 by Palestinian civil society in order to put pressure on Israeli Government and companies to comply with International Law (http://www.bdsmovement.net/)
Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to draw an overview of different levels of experience of travel and tourism in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In particular, the question that accompanied the research was about the role of 'internationals' in enlarging the understanding and the awareness about the ongoing occupation lived by the Palestinians.

The first chapter was dedicated to the mainstream framework of the region. I described the tourism industry as an 'industry of illusion', set up in order to support an hegemonic power relation. In these kinds of relations the oppressor and the oppressed both end up contributing to a stereotypical representation, which portrays Israel as a democratic rampart of the West and the Palestinians as underdeveloped people. I analysed this symbiotic mechanism according to three main lines: the strategies implemented by the Israeli Government, the 'common sense' which drives the actions of the major part of the Palestinian tour guides and the narrative of some products of the global tourism industry, such as some extracts of the Lonely Planet Guide book.

In the second chapter I have tried to illustrate a dynamic and dialogic process that can overcome this hegemonic machinery. On one hand I told the stories of some tourists who were able to look deeply through the curtains of the industry of illusion and to create their own
narrative; on the other hand I offer a description of certain efforts of Palestinians involved in the alternative tourism market. The outcome of this silent dialogue is the 'Code of Conduct', a document issued by the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism which aims to advocate tourists to action and Palestinians to communicate honestly the situation that they experience daily, in order to actively promote a change in their own situation.

The third chapter is the final step of this 'itinerary for change' in the Holy Land. It describes the mechanism of functioning of the so called 'winning triangle': the joint effort of Israelis, Palestinians and internationals in order to promote a just peace in the area. Through the network set up by committed tourists and travellers, it is possible to imagine a wider social change. The change can happen through the organization of a collection of counter-hegemonic voices, that a 'tourist' can listen if they are able to cast off their colonialist and orientalist uniform and to wear a simpler pair of glasses.

Due to the lack of space and the complexity of the subject certain issues have been ignored or underestimated. I could not always give a historical account or an accurate analysis of mechanisms or construction of identity and representation, either in the Palestinian, Israeli, or 'tourist' case.

With all its limits, this dissertation had been intended as a
contribution to the discipline of anthropology of travel and tourism, in order to offer a case study that demonstrates- even partially- how 'tourists' can be active actors for relevant social changes.

In a global world where committed and active people move and encounter each other, even the apparently most long standing conflict can be analyzed with the 'tourist gaze'. A gaze that can transform itself from a warm expression of solidarity, into a constant and constructive activity of pressuring governments and institutions. This is what the major part of the Palestinian civil society asks for, and what 'international committed people' might be more able to do.
APPENDIX A

Michel Warschawski, co-founder of Alternative Information Center (2011)

*Information about political tourism in the Israeli Palestinian context with an Israeli anti-zionist, among the founding fathers of political tour in Israel and Palestine.*

Interviewed by Virginia Fiume [audiorecorded] Alternative Information Center office, Jerusalem, 29th June 2011

*Explanation of the project* based on the idea that until you don’t see with your eyes, you don’t have a clear idea. The second idea is to develop information about how they portray things once they are back home. I am gathering us much information as possible.

I decided to speak with you because you are among the first who started to implement experiences of alternative tours, back in the 80s, so when you started this idea, what did move you? What is the framework?

I never thought about it in terms of tourism, it was part of political advocacy and political information, long before that the AIC started, at the end of the 70s. In fact it was - I would say, I was not the first, Khalil Tufranji, Palestinian Geographer of the Oriental House, took me and two other friends journalists along what it is today Modin area, because he knew the new wave of settlements. And it was fascinating. I was reading newspaper, and so on, but until I saw it I didn’t understand what it was all about. We knew that there were settlement, especially in the Golan Heights, we knew in Kyriat Arba, in Hebron, in the Jordan Valley, but we didn’t know how much deep in the West Bank the settlement project was moving. And then, I remember exactly, a group of Italian activists came, and I was speaking about settlement policy and I said ‘we take a bus, I will take you’. And then it starts....I said ‘I want to show you, because until you don’t see with your own eyes you know figures, if you don’t understand the scope...and later on also the logic’. Because which was in my eyes also a problem is that many Palestinian activists that used to inform about the
occupation was 'quantitative', 'numbers', 'how many dunams, how many settlements'. I was trying to understand and the quantity was not so important. You can find the lists, at that time there was no internet, but anyway you could find it. But trying to understand the logic and foresee what will happen. This way I started this kind of 'alternative tours'.

*And, do you think that the meaning of what then it becomes the so called 'alternative tourism- let's say- industry' is the same as far as you know about other experiences such as Alternative Tourism Group...*

As I told you for me it was not tourism, at the beginning I was taking local activists, Israeli, Palestinians, mainly. My primary target were foreign activist.

I will tell you an experience, happened many years later, that will tell you how it is important this kind of mixture, of seeing with your own eyes, to have an understanding and a tool of interpretation. In 199....5....6... Leila Sharid was ambassador of Palestine in French and now in the European Union and a good friend, came for the first time in Palestine. She thought it was after Oslo, a time of opening, and then she got a special authorization from Rabin to come here as a tourist. I took her, for this tour, she is unusually an ambassador who is extremely informed, which is not always the case, and she reads everything, interested, she wants to know, many times she calls here, "I heard this and that can you explain me, can you send me information'. She is someone that tries to be serious in her understanding and she used to receive every piece of information about the AIC. But when she came and I took her, and she was silent. She is someone who likes to speak, she always make jokes, and she was silent. At the end of the tour, the same that i am doing now, I said her 'so, let's speak a little bit'. She said 'take me to the hotel, we'll talk tomorrow'. So shocked ans she told me 'you can read hundred of books, and articles every day' but if you don't see it, you don't understand how it works.

*To a certain extent tourism is also an important tool for the Zionist propaganda, so how do you see the relation between tourism in the zionist idea and the challenges that alternative tourism can pose in terms of numbers but also experiences and mechanisms?*
Despite the strong efforts of Palestinian activists, ngos, groups and even the Palestinian Authority now, we cannot counter the Zionist propaganda apparatus, they have huge means and they use tourism for three goals, in my opinion.

The first one is to make money, it used to be one of the major source of foreign currency in Israel. It was the second, now is the third.

Second, as a tool of propaganda. To convince as many people as possible of the Israeli case, the Israeli view, narrative.

The third, which is the most important for them, is to use tourism to promote jewish immigration.

They have very expensive programs – expensive for the State and for the Jewish Agency- to bring youngsters, Taghlit and many projects, to bring young and not young, but especially young, to spend some time in kibbutz and farming and to connect them emotionally to Israel. I knew quite many specially young men and women who came through this kind of programs and established in Israel. There is nothing, and that's the point, for sure when you are take care by the state, and spoiled, and good food. It's one month of cheap and very nice tourism, which is not the real life. And when they come, they don't see Israel.

Then, sometimes it happens that someone start to think also in terms of 'the others'. For example, I have some jews friends that come through these tours and then they thought 'why there is a problem?'

[ridiamo]

It is through and in many occasions, not in may, but it's not unusual, that someone asks questions. 'Where are all the arabs?'. They can have tourism in Israel and they can not be confronted not only with the conflic, but with the very existance of the Arabs. They go to a kibbutz, to Eilat....

Which is the answer to these exceptions...what happen if someone ask...

variety of reaction. One is anger, they think: 'do you think we are stupid, we want to understand...', sometimes they themselves ask during the trip, and then they get something very artificial organized. An institution who play a bad role, even if it is not a bad
initiative but it plays a bad role is Newe Shalom. In my opinion, people there are trapped.

I don't know if it is still the case. The Zionist integrated Newe Shalom in their tour, showing Jewish and Arabs living together. But it's even not an exception, it is a project. It's not Israel, it's Newe Shalom. It doesn't represent anything, but for the propaganda can be useful. And it is useful for tourists, especially for young tourists. They made it a lot of money through this, and this is how they built the guesthouse. And it is a pity in my opinion that they accepted to be utilized, instrumentalized.

Recently the AIC started a project of seminars ‘Bridges instead of walls’. **In which elements do you think this is different compared with other experiences of camps and seminars that are very common in this area?**

We say that is obviously clearly very political. In that sense it is unique. It is try to give a view of the Palestinian society, the Palestinian political arena. And also the Israeli. And this is the reason why we are not playing, in no way, the illusion of normalization. In this we are quite unique. A lot of joint projects are rejected by most of the Palestinian national movement activists, and most of the Palestinians. And you have Palestinian initiatives and Israeli initiatives.

What we are trying to offer is tool to understand both societies, while always putting the emphasis that we are not in a symmetric situation. There is no symmetry. The Palestinian Territories and the Palestinian population is occupied and colonized by Israel. But that in Israel there are existing and as a potential dissent movement. And potential for a mass dissidence, that we already had in the past. What we are trying to do it's not only and it's not mainly the tour of the settlements, or like we used to do more in the past tours of poor neighborhood in Jerusalem or we used to go to cities, immigrants cities, after 50 years there are still immigrant cities in the south mainly. What is the most important, when we are taking the initiative – sometimes we are asked- but sometimes we take the initiative – to prepare the program and it is meeting with social actors, political actors, both Palestinians and Israeli.
Again political, informative...

Yes. We are not under the category of tourism. In that sense we are very different from the Atg, although we work together and we have many projects and we are at their disposal quite often. But they are an alternative tourism, we are not alternative tourism. We are making political advocacy and part of it is for foreigners.

In terms of mainstream media journalists: how often happens that they contact the aic and not just relying on the GPO and this kind of institutions....

today much less than in the past. In the past we were very important tool, especially before and during the first intifada, where the Israeli public, included its media, was discovering the Palestinians. And then we were quite instrumental to help them to do it. Today the mainstream israeli media have a good number of correspondence who are even maybe better connected than us, because they are also connected to the establishmen, while we are not.

And they don't need so us. We contact them sometimes when we have very special information, to give them information. Something we got through our own experience and our personal contact, and we think that can be used by them. We have good relations with them, usually they trust us. We don't abuse it. And when we issue a statement we know that this will be published.

One of the main characteristic of the AIC is this global vision. It is not focus on the Israeli Palestinian context, but as an example of something wider. So, it is important also the role of the aic in terms of international media. So, in this case, do you see also the international journalists?

Oh, you know, like any kind of connection is a chain. You have a connection with someone, it will bring you the connection with someone else. I will give you a fresh example.

When Naomi Klein was here I took her for many things and also for a tour. She and her
companions were fascinated by this tour. Few weeks later the editor of the Huffington Post, Miss Huffington, came here and before coming she had a contact with Naomi Klein and NK told her 'you must make this tour'. She was here only for few days. She said 'no, i have no time'. She told her, Naomi told me after, 'you are stupid not doing it, because it will change the way you see the reality'. Then her assistan called me: "Mrs Huffington is ready to see you friday between 1 and 1.30". I said 'no thanks, i am busy' I can play also the important man.

So, Naomi called me and she asked me, 'so, did you arrange?'. I said 'no. First she wanted saturday, saturday I am with my grandchildren' and secondly if she makes me a favour, no thank you. If she is interested, i am ready.

She called her back and she said, you are stupid, you don't understand.

So, at the end we compromised only one hour, because she had to meet Shimon Peres and she had to meet netanyahu and I don't know.

So, I took here...

So where did you brought her...

I choose the part more close to jerusalem, Qalandya....I gave her some material and at the beginning she looked completely bored. She was sitting but gradually she listened. And after one hour she called her assistant and ask of postponing the tour that she had after, because she wanted to do the all tour.

Let's move to another topic: the presence of NGO is very criticized in the Palestinian society. In general how do you see the presence of international activists in this context?

It's a complete range. You have different kind of activists who come here to help, to contribute to the Palestinian resistance. Among them there are two kinds: ones who help or who lead the struggle, in general these are really activists and there are the ngos who are state/almost state institutions who are implementing the policies of their own states like USAID...and there are varieties in the middle. I am not claiming that as such ngos are negative elements, the international ngos. It depends on what they are doing, how respectful of the right of selfdetermination of the ones they are working with.

I am not speaking only about the Palestinian people as an abstraction, but if they want to help on the health's domain, for example, they have to approach the health's organization,
what are their demands, and to adapt. Otherwise is a colonial behaviour.

My problem with ngos is not so much the international, but the ngoization of local politics. That from political movements developed into offices. From mass movements, from women movements we have now women centers. Ngo making good researches and sometimes good projects, but we don't make a revolution with the offices. I don't believe in it and in that sense ngoization....one can say also at the aic....has contributed to a permanent risk of de-movementization of the movement.

And this is why I suggested many years ago, for the progressive ngos, who claim to be progressive and are coming from the left, to sit together.

It never happened, but i am sure it is good idea (laughing) and to develop a code of behaviour which will guarantee that the ngos are at the service of the movement and not instead of the movement. In many levels, including accountability. We have to be accountable to our donors, ok, but we have to be accountable to the public and to create tools of transparency, of accountability. And norms of control of salaries: not to have to high salaries. Some ngos, included some coming from the left, there is a double scanda: gap inside the ngos. Sometimes the directors earn 20 times the secretary. I made a research about it.

And second, if we should be at the service at the people, our salaries shouldn't be salaries of the ministers, they should be the salaries of the skill workers. To adopt norms which will guarantee that the ngo wil not become a goal in itself. It's guarantee of work, like in capitalist culture, you have to prove productivity in order to get your salary and to improve your salary. In an ngo no...

In that sense ngos in general in my opinion is a system that shouldn't be destroyed, should be put into a system of control. People control, not control of the donors. Because donors are often ngos as well. And with norms for salaries, working relations. I still believe in the progressive ngos. For progressive ngos we can invent a name. Like you have green-products

*you have transparent-ngos...*

you have fairngos, with control on a certain line of conduct.
How do you see initiative such as Freedom Flotilla or this initiative that has been organized of calling internationals...how do you see this in terms of political information and awareness...

First, liberation of Palestine will be the result, the product, from an efficient collaboration-which I called the holy triangle- between at the top of the triangle the Palestinian resistance, of course, the international solidarity (in the broader sense of the word) and the antioccupation/anticolonial movement inside Israel. They have to find the best and most efficient way to assist the others in order to change the old system. This is the general model.

And in general the international solidarity is definitely a goal.

Let's be more precise, the role of the public opinion is more pro Palestinian or more critical of Israel than it was 20 years ago. Everywhere in the south, in the north, in pro-Israeli countries like Germany or Holland, and in traditionally anti-Israeli countries, like France, Italy...

*Italy now is changing position...*

It used to be considered as the enemy.

This is the first point. Second point: we have to make a difference between 'long term strategies' and 'operations'. The Flotilla is an operation. A good operation, I hope so. A good initiative. The mass visit and the big scandal at the airport that is coming in July is a good initiative (even if I have some doubts about it).

I call these 'events'. The first of these events, the most spectacular, was 'Time for peace', in 1988, with the Italians marching in Jerusalem. It was an international initiative mainly led by Italians (arci, the unions,...). Bringing thousands of people here, it was at the peak of intifada, in a march that surrounded East Jerusalem, which was heavily repressed. One Italian lost his eye, no one was killed, but one lost an eye. Because the police reacted very badly. So these are what I called 'operations'/'one time operations'. They are important.

More important are the long term campaigns. Today I think for the first time we have such a campaign, under the BDS slogan. It offers an international framework, addressing each level of society, and each level of consciousness.

You can be very radical, and you have what you have to do. You can be moderate and you
have other things to do. You can be an Union confederation, which can't be like 'Anarchists against the wall', and it can find its way to be part of this strategy.

It's attacking both on the image of Israel and push its relations, and it is attacking also on its economy, but it's still modest. And it will be modest for a long time. And it is attacking on the political level, in the 'S', Sanctions. And I think BDS, if we take it seriously (we meaning internationally, palestinians, israeli who are sharing this) and when I say seriously it is with breath.

Is it a marathon?

It is a marathon. It's not one hundred meters, and you don't run a marathon in the way you run one hundred meters. We have to stop sometimes, to go very slowly in certain moments, and then we can run faster to achieve something. As I said before, and for me it is very important, it offers to everyone a mean to do things in his/her own way.

We will not have the same kind...if we call 'boycott israel', we will not have all the solidarity, but if we say sanctions, if we say 'boycott of settlements' product' I say 'ok go, i want more, but go'.

All of it, it's part of the same strategy. And I think is the best thing for the Palestinian liberation movemebt.

Last question is....why do you think a lot of attention is focused here, while there are other situation of conflict that are much more stronger somehow..

This is the typically israeli question. I use to answer when journalists or politicians ask me 'why israel? 2.000 people died somewhere....'.

I say 'you are a small child but we put ourselves in the middle of the square, and making a lot of noise and making crazy things and then you say 'why everyone is looking at me".

In a sense Israel, and this is the Israeli state, policies, public opinion, is trying to put itself as the center of the world and then saying 'why everyone is looking at me'. And this is only on the level of image. But there is something much deeper.

In the global confrontation, between North and South, between....Israel is the frontline. It's north and south, but in fact it is East and West. The wall is a civilization wall. In the west of
the wall you have Israel, Europe, North America; East of the wall you have Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq....civilized/barbarians. And we are on the line. It is not a local war between Israel and Palestine, it is a global war. And we are the frontline. But we are more than the frontline geographically. We are the avanguarde army of this war. If we take the whole strategy of Bush of the global war against terror, Israel was the frontline of this world.

A small example that is so typical: the Israeli checkpoint. If you go in Iraq they are exactly the same checkpoints. Israel is testing armaments, tools of control and opppression and it is been the attempt of recolonization of the world, which is a neo-conservative approach. The war on terror is a way to recolonize the world, started here by Israel. So it is obvious that we are the center.

**What do you think is the relation with the....you wrote a lot about antisemitism, antizionism. Do you think somehow the jewish people has a sort of responsability also of not being responsible of things like Gaza's slaughter.**

I don't know if i told you. Sometimes I use this story. In my classroom, in a jewish school in france, I was one the very few to know my four grandparents. I was lucky and they were lucky. No one was killed in the war. I got from my two grandparents two completely different answers to your question. And I respect both. My father's father, like my name indicate, was Polish who left Polland during WW1. A manual worker not educated at all, and he used to tell me, us, 'one thing you have to learn from nazi period. You cannot trust anyone. No human rights, no democracy, french revolution...all of these are bullshits. You are on your own, look what happened, and you have to be strong. Learn how to defend yourself. And don't put a shit on rights, and all these things'.

I accepted it. My other grandfather was also not very educated, he was a French jew. And during the whole war he worked in the National rail company, as a jew, with the jew star. He was very religious. And he used to tell us 'one thing you have to learn from what we had experienced. If we are alive, it's because there were thousands of French people who were not heroes in the Resistance, but were not bad people. And this kind of people protected us. One was the lady that when the Gestapo came, she said 'they are not jews'. Or my collegues at the railway, who helped me and telling me when the Gestapo.

And he said 'we are alive only because of human solidarity', don't forget it.'
So, you see, two opposites view. I respect both. The Israeli society in its great majority took my father's father view, not the other one. I think I try to be like my other grandfather, but it's minority. It's a reaction. You have two reaction: one is 'because i suffered I have the right to do everything'.

You know, when people ask me sometimes: 'how it is possible that people that suffer so much, now they are doing this to the Palestinians?' I think it's a stupid question. How many molested children are molesting their own children. It doesn't mean that if you are you will be, but it doesn't neither mean that if you are, you will not be.'

It depends on which is your education, you personality, what you personal experiences. I don't think there is something inherent in oppression to make you immune against oppression, and nothing that make you inherently oppress the others. It is an individual choice.

You had always this approach? What is background?

It's around one word who changed my life. I came here as a religious, I come from a very religious family, my father was a know rabbi. I didn't know about Israel. When I came here, i was 15 years old, I hated Israel but I loved Jerusalem. It was clear for me that I would live all my life in Jerusalem, that i will never go to tel aviv.

I was totally ignorant about the conflict. I was in Jerusalem in my Talmudic school, I didn't know about the conflict at all. Then there was the war in 1967. And I was not a soldier. But few weeks, maybe two weeks after the war, my father came here with a group of people to see holy sites, Hebron and so on. And then something happened and he asked me to replace him to lead the group in Hebron. I knew everything, i said 'good, good'. And then, in this moment, that i won't forget. And I am looking for a picture that was taken that day. I was in the market of Hebron and behaving as a colonial tourist. Speaking with the man that was selling me something, and he was an old person and i was a young 17 years old boy. And I was speaking like that. Suddenly, and i am very happy that it happened, i asked myself 'why?, what's happening?' I felt that i was an occupier. I behave exactly like the German army would behave in Paris. And I rushed to the hotel where my father was and i told him 'do you know that we are occupiers?'. Now the word occupation was the most important word of my childhood. Everything was connected by my parents and my
grandparents to the Occupation. They didn't call it 'Shoah', 'Shoah' is a new thing, they said 'occupation' and 'deportation'. Occupation was used in every moment. We didn't like spinach my mother said 'during the occupation...', we didn't like that...'during the occupation, during the occupation'. And suddenly I am in an occupation and on the otherside, I am an occupier. Not like the jews used to be the occupied people, victims of oppression, exclusion, dead. I was the strong. And this is not my place, this can't be my place. It was not something intellectual, or political, it was...it was part of my personality. And I told it my father, and i said 'yes, you are 100% right, and let's pray that it will finish soon this occupation, otherwise no future for our people'.

We praid, but apparently our pray was not so good... (laughing)
APPENDIX B

Rami Kassis, Executive Director of the Alternative Tourism Group (2011) About the meaning of Alternative Tourism experiences in Palestine and the scenario of the mainstream industry

Interviewed by Virginia Fiume [audiorecorded] Alternative Tourism Group office, Beit Sahour, 11th July 2011

The first question is about the starting point of ATG. How did you develop the idea of your organization, and when, and on which kind of lines of main...

ATG started basically in 1995. The idea behind the establishment of the organization was simply: tourists have been always coming to the area, Palestine and Israel. And they have been always ignorant about the current realities and situation, and meeting the local population and the Palestinians.

The scenario of tourists that used to come, and even Bethlehem as a Palestinian city, they returned back to their countries with negative images and perspectives about the Palestinians. Because they always had come with Israeli travel agencies, Israeli guides, Israeli buses, Israeli hotels. And they are getting a zionist interpretation, instead of meeting the local community and the local population.

Always the Israeli guides used to warn them during the tour, saying 'take care, we are visiting an arab city, people are backward, they might take your money, they might kidnap you...'. All of these stereotypes and negative explanations. And when a tourist is ignorant and doesn't have a good introduction about a situation, they can easily believe their guides, and return back having a negative image about the Palestinians.

I used to say that we as Palestininas, with millions of tourists that use to enter in the country every year we use to gain new million enemies every year as Palestininas, without having the change to tell our stories and to try to show them other sides of the story.

This was simply the idea behind establishing the ATG. To give the tourist the chance to
meet the Palestinians, to try to make a balance in the tourism revenues, because also there is a monopoly on the tourism industry that even though 50% of the historical archeological places are based on the Palestinian areas, only 3% came to the Palestinians and 97% goes to the Israeli side. Which also shows that Israel use tourism to explain and to say their ideological claims of the area and the country on the palestinian people, and this is what ATG tryes to change.

What did you mean with the term Alternative? I mean, for sure it is alternative to the zionist project and the zionist tourist industry?

Alternative, we call it with the classical kind of tourism, alternative to the Israeli kind of tourism, alternative to the mass tourism, alternative because it gives the people the chance to see something different from what they are used to see. The first slogan that the ATG invented was 'Visit the land and meet the people'. To be more responsible, more social responsible, and so on, and so forth.

I heard about this project promoted by the Ministry of tourism. Which is called 'masterplan'. I noticed that ATG is not included in this project, which is an idea of promoting investment a local tourism industry. Do you know about it and there are reasons why you weren't included in this, which might be something interesting...

This is not a Ministry of Tourism project. This is a project funded by USAID and the project is run by the chamber of commerce. The Ministry is only supporting. ATG is very well aware of the all project, but we choose not to be ...part of the project, even though I attended some meetings. But as an organization we are not interested to work in any project which is supported by Americans.

Infact, I noticed that ...(this is the second part of the previous question)...somehow you are alternative also to this idea of tourism industry. For example, reading the 'masterplan' website I had this feeling that basically is the mirror of the Israeli tourism industry and there are no political mentions in the website, therefore I was
wondering if you are alternative also to this kind of idea.

Yeah, yeah, simply.

Yussef was the first one mentioning me the code of conduct that you developed, with the PIRT. Where does the idea of the code of conduct come? And at the same time, i had noticed – going just around in shops and visitor center in Bethlehem for example they don’t show this code of conduct. I was expecting to see shop keepers having that. So I was wondering if you know if there is a reason, and what you are doing among the local population, even before among the tourists.

Very good question.

First the idea behind the Code of Conduct came from the ATG. From the history of ATG and our attempt to develop tourism from our perspective. ATG have developed a program called 'Pilgrims for transformation' in 2005. And we had a first international meeting in that year, with some locals and some internationals who were aware of the importance of promoting responsible and just tourism to Palestine and Israel. One of the recommendation that came out from that meeting was for developing a code of ethics or a code of conduct from a Palestinian perspective. And this was what ATG worked on after 2005. Until 2007 we started to invite key player in tourism and associations, organizations, Ministry of Tourism and other organizations believing in humanitarian tourism in Palestine, until we had formed the Committee that we called Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism, in 2007.

After that we asked for a general meeting that took place in Bethlehem and around 100 persons representing public sector, private sector and ngos came together and discuss different aspects in tourism, which was the basic and the initial part of the Code of Conduct. Within this scope they give us the authorization to continue and to publish this Code of Conduct.

The Code was received very well locally and internationally, although I know that more work should be done locally to introduce the Code for the local population. But still, it is a Palestinian code and a Palestinian perspective in tourism, it turns out the tourism from the
point where the Palestinian voices were not heard, to the point of discussing challenges out of tourism until sending a call, or a voice, to Palestinian out of tourism. I also agree with you that should be more work locally to introduce the Code and to be more present.

Like a really shared thing…for example, even in the AIC there is the thing but there is no proper promotion.

*I was thinking also about hotels. I have some Palestinian friends that work in hotels and they tell me that in the Hotel they don't communicate a lot about the political situation. This is another theme about which I have some questions. Why do you think there is not this use to take advantage of the fact that tourists are effectively coming here. Why do you think the Palestinian tour operators don't do something more to communicate to the people in order to give them something to bring back home?*

You know, simply because many people deal with tourism only as an economic sector that only brings money. So, they see tourism more for economic perspective, rather than for political or social or cultural perspective. Also because many of these groups, even the groups who are staying in Palestinian hotels, are coming from Israeli travel agencies, which … gives us the fact that they are not allowed to talk about the political situation to the groups.

Secondly, also because the people who are working in tourism are having a lot of privilege from the Israeli side and are not interested to loose these privileges.

*For example?*

For example they have a permit to go to Israel, they can travel through the airport, you know, all of these privileges for these business people. And no one wants to loose it. And third also many groups coming from outside come from travel agencies that put also conditions: they are not interested in politics.

You know, it's a heritage that it is hard to change and need a lot of works, efforts and
initiatives. Inside Palestine, outside Palestine, through the international community, through partner organizations outside, through churches that can promote the idea that tourists have responsibility, to promote peace and justice during their visits.

So, this is also the idea on the back of this concept of ‘transformative power of pilgrims’? The idea of ‘come and see’ and these kind of initiatives?

Yes.

Do you have an idea of the numbers? Both of the atg and maybe also something about the quota of tourists that come in Palestine and not in Israel? Also because of the policies of the airport…it is impossible to have data about the people like independent travellers, or also people like me that come here for a short experience…it is difficult to have numbers...

I have worked last year on a small exercise, like a mapping of tourism. And as you said, it is not easy to get accurate numbers of tourists in Palestine. Because there are no borders, there are no airport, and it is hard to count the people. The only way that the Palestinians are counting their tourists is either the people that are visiting the Church of Nativity that tourists police counts how many persons enter in the Church. Also they are counting the people in Jericho.

The numbers might be not 100% accurate but it gives an idea. So for example, if we talk around 3,000,000 tourists visiting Israel last year, we are talking about 1,800,000 visited the Palestinian areas.

Do you think there is a responsibility- the area is very small, so it would be very easy to go from Tel Aviv to here- of the policies of the controls at the airport, and the stereotypes about the arabs....do you think they strongly effected the numbers of people that decide to come here?

I think the increasing number of visitors who are visiting Palestinian areas is not because our progressive campaigns on marketing, but because the general situation. Last year for
example it was more calm, there was a lot of promotion campaign, but because the political situation was calm a little bit, the number increased a little bit.

Also doesn't give a lot of meaning if it was 1,8 millions or 2 millions that visited Palestinian areas, because huge numbers of these people are one day visitors who visited the Church of Nativity, without giving any benefits for the Palestinians, either socio-cultural- political benefit out of their visit.

*If you should imagine a percentage of people, what you would say it is a worthier amount of people with a more 'qualitative' experience?*

It is hard to give a percentage. But the last years we are seeing different kind of tourism that are entering the country. Ten years ago (before 2000) we are used to know that German, American and Italians...these are the more groups visiting the areas.

Nowadays for example the last year, there were a lot of people from South Europe (*controlling file*) Poland, Russia, India, Slovacchia, Corea,...If you want to see who are the most groups who stay overnight in Bethlehem, they are from Poland, Italians (2\textsuperscript{nd}), Russia (3\textsuperscript{rd}), USA (4\textsuperscript{th}), India (5\textsuperscript{th}), Slovacchia (6\textsuperscript{th}) , Corea (7\textsuperscript{th}), Brazil (8\textsuperscript{th})...

*These data from which source they come?*

This is mostly from different parts: Ministry of Tourism and the Palestinian Statistics Bureau.

*What kind of groups come to you, and how do you promote your initiatives? For example, I had the guidebook, I was wondering if it is possible to find it abroad, because otherwise one has to come here to find it? And what kind of people come?*

We receive different kind of groups. If you want to talk about nationalities, we have groups
coming from mostly Europe, States, small parts from SouthEast and Africa. Most of our groups come from Europe: Sweden, French, Norway, UK, Spanish...

In terms of what is the background: we are dealing with different kind of groups, starting from students, pilgrims concerned which justice issue, people that are developing their ideas and perspectives about Palestine. Political activists, people who want to come to help and do some volunteer work. That's why we are running two campaigns: the Olive Picking and the Olive Planting. Also we are working with tourists who have environmental interests, and who want to do hiking. So there are different kind of groups.

**How do you promote?**

Mostly we are promoting our tours and programs through our friends outside, through the network that we had created in the last 15 years. ATG has a good network in different places, and we are working with different organizations: student unions in the universities, churches,...

Mouth-to-mouth: mostly people come here, they have a good experience and they invite other people.

*How do you promote your 'packages' in Jerusalem, to let know people there maybe by chance are there...maybe they don't know that you exist, or maybe through the volunteer that you have here...*

We started last year in running some one-day tours, which are designed mostly for people who are in the country, either staying here or coming in groups and having a day-free and they want to see different issues and alternative tours.

We are running almost every thursday a tour to Hebron and Bethlehem and every saturday a tour to Hebron, who is a political and alternative tour. We promote our tours mostly in Jerusalem and other places, and it became a successful tour. Every week we have a lot of people coming from Tel Aviv, from Jaffa, from Jerusalem. Many of them are
jewish and sometimes Israeli. Or foreigners coming with Israeli tour operators and they heard about these tours and they want to give themselves a chance to see the other side of the story.

*Which is the difference between a political tour and a not political tour?*

Mostly coming to Palestine it will be hard to keep yourself out of political activities. So I think all of our activities even if it is not political will give a sense of the situation and it is an introduction to a political situation.

*Do you ask your participant to do something once they are back home in terms of telling stories, organizing events, publishing materials...*

Actually, as ATG we deal with the trip in three different stages. We give a lot of materials, we think it is important the preparation phase, with people coming here aware of the situation, choosing more an inclusive and not exclusive itinerary. Reading a lot about Palestine before they came here. During the trip. And the third part after the trip, where also we give them a priority on what they can do after they return back home. Because we think they have a task to do when they return back home by sharing their experiences with others, by telling their stories, by doing advocacy work and so on.

*So for example do you give them some guide lines, ideas...which kind of support you give them?*

(Ayman answer) Films for example. In our groups for example there are some film makers, and we gave them contacts, we have done these films. Once we had a girl from Ireland who did a film about Hebron, but it is also about our tour. The idea of the film is also to sensitize people. It is a way also to mobilize the public opinion. We offer help to people who needs help.
(Rami) all our publications or the websites contains ideas for groups coming to ATG. And then there are questionnaires and evaluation forms which also play an important part for the phase after they live the country.

About the PA officially support....is there a promotion from the PA about these kind of initiatives or they focus more on the other kind of tourism?

I think the last year this has been change. The PA and the rest of tourism are giving an important part to the promotion of alternative tourism. The last two, three years the Ministry is inviting the presence of someone who is promoting alternative tourism in all the international fairs outside Palestine. They are seeing Alternative Tourism as an important part in the promotion of the tourism sector in Palestine.

If you go to the official website my perception was that Palestine is represented as a place as any other... there weren't mentions about the occupation... I was surprised from this lack....

Some how, in the recent years, there was a big debate about popular resistance in Palestine. We know it's not something new, but it became recently important in the public debate. So, do you see tourism as part of the popular resistance? You as palestinians but also for tourists who come here?

(Ayman) Since 1995 when we started we believed that people coming here is part of resistance, in all means, like people come here, show solidarity, support Palestinians and see reality.

Also internationals coming, visiting and witnessing. And the witnessing is very important. And I think personally that the political situation is not only purely Palestinian responsibility. It is an international responsibility and it has to engage internationals in the response. And our tourism, alternative tourism is really reinforcing this aspects of popular resistance, through people coming here and doing activities.
**To ayman** promotion of ATG inside and abroad. **Strategies to enlarge the amount of people, numbers, what do you do?**

We had promoted a lot in the 90s, many trips have been done in the States, in Europe. It is a question of sensitizing. You can't go to a travel agency. A lot of mobilization and in the public, whatever public it is. Sometimes we have to make campaign in schools, universities, churches, meeting with bishops,...

PR and we are being attending tourism fairs. Which is good to be in, but it is not our speciality. Because our main contacts are not travel agencies. There are people and associations that contact us, and groups who come through associations that work in Responsible Tourism.

**According to the feedback that you get, which are the things that are most impressive for them, that strike them more once they come here, in terms of reality on the ground, in terms of feelings....i am sure that there are different perspectives, but how would you define the reactions to the Palestinian experience. In terms of people,**...

The first shocking thing for them is the wall. You know, when you see it on the tv is one thing, but if you come and see...

Then, they are shocked, not shocked but they are astonished by the hospitality of people and landscape. Of course I am not talking about political situation, even if when they see the settlements and the roads and the political situation, refugee camps, they sensitize. But we are not trying to have pity for the situation this is very important. They meet refugees but they learn that refugees have dignity. And people in the refugee camps have way that don't want to present themselves in terms of pity. There is a big ignorance about Palestine as a poor country. People come here thinking that palestine is cheap. And it is not cheap. I always encounter stuff like this. When they see houses that are nice, they are shocked.

Even people that are pro palestinian when they are introduced to the aspects of reality
including ...they are shocked.

When they took the road from Ramallah to Nablus and they see the palestinian villages nicely kept. This is one of the images that people have. They compare with africa and this is not real. So, we try to explain how life is expensive.

So, if I go to the tent restaurant I pay at least 100 NIS, it is an expensive restaurant. So people see that we are educated people. They like also the landscape in the desert. The valleys, etc.

**Do you have any experiences of people that applied and then can't manage to get in?**

They sent back last year a group from Goldsmith university. 7 of them where not allowed because they have arab origines, or pakistani origines. It happens with arab people....
APPENDIX C

The Code of Conduct

Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT)

A Code of Conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land

A Palestinian Initiative

Responsible and just forms of tourism offer communities opportunities to share their cultures, tell their stories, request solidarity and foster tolerance and greater understanding. This is the principle that has shaped this Code of Conduct which has been developed to inform pilgrims and tourists of the reality of Palestine and Palestinians and to seek their support in using tourism to transform contemporary injustices. At the same time, the Code aims to raise awareness amongst Palestinian tourism stakeholders of how tourism in Palestine can be transformed and enhanced to truly benefit both hosts and visitors.

The Context of Palestine

The establishment of just and responsible tourism for Palestine and Palestinians requires an understanding of political context and history, for it is these that set the constraints and barriers within which Palestinian tourism has to operate. The Code addresses these directly and, by doing so, attempts to overcome them.

Palestine is a unique tourist destination; its long history, religious significance and natural beauty make it an amazing place to visit. Palestine's importance derives partly from the fact that it is home to the three monotheistic and Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Every year it attracts many pilgrims, people of faith and scholars who visit the holy places. Secular tourists come to explore the historical sites, Palestine's vibrant cities, rural life and nature reserves.

However, since the beginning of the 20th century Palestine has seen complicated changes in its political circumstances. These have included the creation of Israel in 1948 and the 1967 war. As a result of the latter, Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. These events have created catastrophic political, economic
and social facts which have deeply affected the life of the Palestinian people, most of whom became refugees. In many ways Palestine itself was simply wiped off the map, historic Palestine coming to be known as Israel. In this context tourism became a political tool in the supremacy and domination of the Israeli establishment over land and people, and an instrument for preventing the Palestinians from enjoying the benefits and the fruits of the cultural and human interaction on which tourism thrives. Despite the fact that Israel signed the Oslo Agreements with the PLO in the 1990s and recognised the establishment of the Palestinian Authority to administer some of the Palestinian territories, namely the West Bank and Gaza Strip, many areas of life in those areas are still under Israeli control. For example, Israel controls all access to Palestine (land and sea borders as well as access from the airport), most of the Palestinian water resources, and all movement of people and goods from, to and within Palestine. These facts have significant impacts on the development of tourism in the Palestinian territories and the dissemination of information to tourists. Jerusalem the heart of tourism in the region has been illegally annexed to Israel, filled with illegal settlements, besieged, surrounded by checkpoints, and encircled by the Apartheid Wall, all of which has resulted in the city's isolation from its social and geographical surroundings.

Despite all this, the touristic, historic, and holy places found in Israel and the Palestinian territories are united. They cannot be separated from each other. In this regard what we are asking tourists to do is to visit both Israel and Palestine rather than choose to visit just one or the other. This is the route towards more fairness and justice.

Tourism in Palestine provides visitors with a particularly rewarding and enriching experience. Not only may the tourist discover the beauty, spirituality and hospitality of the country but also come to encounter some of the political, economic, and social facts on the ground that shape the daily lives of Palestinians. This is as it should be for much can be gained both by tourists and by their Palestinian hosts from a proper relationship between the two. Too often the contact is very slight, consisting of rapid, coach driven visits to the Nativity church in Bethlehem (with a souvenir shop on the way) a style of tourism that derives from the fact that much of the itinerary is controlled by Israel and the processes of the Israeli tourism industry. Our Code, on the other hand, seeks to contribute to a more general effort to re-engage the tourist with Palestinian land and people in such a way that will benefit local communities, reduce over exploitation of a small number of iconic sites, and also reduce the pollution that results from coach driven mass tourism in
the Palestinian towns and cities (especially Bethlehem).

Therefore, we urge you, the tourist, to consider visiting the Palestinian cities, towns and villages and to allow time for encounters with the population living in these places. We believe that in this way, tourism will realise its potential for both you and us. At the same time, we call on the local community to interact positively and in a respectful way with pilgrims and tourists, and to renounce small-mindedness and exploitation of visitors.

We should all remember that visits by tourists to the country are an opportunity for cultural, social and human exchange.

The Vision of the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism

The Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT) is a network of organisations, associations and public bodies committed to work for responsible tourism to the Holy Land and to act as advocates for this approach to tourism. We are committed to transforming the current tourism patterns in the Holy Land by encouraging pilgrims and tourists to include Palestinian cities, towns and villages in their itineraries in order to achieve a more equal distribution of tourism revenues to all people in this land. Based on our belief that both tourists and hosts can be enriched by human encounters through tourism, we invite travellers to meet the Palestinian people and explore their culture. We strive to create opportunities for local communities to become involved in tourism activities and to earn a fair income from the process. We believe that protecting and preserving the environment is of utmost importance, and thus we are searching for less harmful ways of providing tourism services. We call on all service providers to commit themselves to responsible business practices and to renounce exploitative behaviour. Our objective is to promote a just and responsible tourism in Palestine that benefits the Palestinian people, pilgrims, tourists and all other stakeholders in tourism in the country without harming local communities.

The Code of Conduct

A. Travellers to the Holy Land

Preparation

To prepare your trip to Palestine, we encourage you to consider including the following in
your preparation:

1. Choose an inclusive and balanced itinerary that allows you to visit and stay in different places.

2. Educate yourself by reading guidebooks, travel accounts and articles about current news and events.

3. Establish contact with Palestinians to get up-to-date information about the current situation, safety, local history, culture and customs.

4. Approach travelling with a desire to learn rather than just observe. Leave prejudices behind.

**Your trip**

Adopting a considerate attitude towards the people you encounter, the environment, and host communities when travelling in Palestine helps to make sure that your trip is beneficial both for you as a tourist and for the hosts.

5. Your attitude:

   Respect and learn about the local culture. Although taking pictures is in general welcome, be aware of people's sensitivity about being photographed: always ask first for their approval.

   Observe local customs. Respect local dress codes and dress modestly.

   Interact and spend time with local people. Be aware that your cultural values may differ from theirs. They may, for example, have different concepts of time, personal space, communication and society. Other values are not wrong or inferior, just different.

6. Your behaviour:

   Be aware of short-sighted emotional reactions, such as giving money out of compassion. This can be offensive.

   Make sure that you encounter and engage with the local communities who are struggling for the respect of their dignity.

   Support communities in a responsible way, without encouraging them to change their customs in order to adopt yours.

   When visiting holy sites, allow members of the respective religious community to guide
7. Your use of natural resources:

Co-operate with locals in conserving precious natural resources. Commit yourself to a moderate use when possible.

Be open to experience local standards rather than expecting to find the same conditions as in your home town and/or country.

8. Support the local economy:

Appreciate local expertise by paying adequately.

Buy local products.

Contribute to ensuring that tourism has a beneficial outcome for the local community.

Use local transportation, guides, accommodation, restaurants and markets to benefit the local economy. Consider giving tips where customary.

9. Remember that the people you encounter have lived under military occupation for many years. Be sensitive when discussing related topics and listen to their points of view.

10. Be inspired by the pilgrim's journey: take your time to live and experience the daily life of the local people.

**Returning home**

When you return from Palestine do not hesitate to share your experiences with friends and relations.

Your Palestinian hosts will be very happy to know that you keep them in your mind and that you tell their and your stories. In this way, you can strengthen the human side of tourism and enhance its benefits to communities and individuals.

11. Share your experience:

Think of creating links between your community and the community you visited.

Tell the stories of the people you met.

Discuss and debrief with other members of your group (if you travelled together with others).

Share with your family; inform your community; write articles.
12. Stick to the commitments you made during your trip:

Remember the promises you made to the local people you met and honour them.
Keep the people in your thoughts, pray for them and act when your actions are needed.

13. Allow yourself to be enriched by learning experiences:

Question your stereotypes/generalisations, both the ones you had before the trip and the ones emerging from your experience abroad.
Address prejudices and injustice where you meet them.

14. Take action:

Learn about the involvement and responsibilities of your home country in the Middle East.
Expose and confront them when they have been unfair.
Address statements you do not agree with, such as inaccurate tourism brochures, stereotyped views of Palestine in conversation and inaccurate or biased media portrayals.

B. The Palestinian Tourism Sector

Whilst Palestine has been a destination for travellers for many centuries, the development of a tourism industry that provides services to a large number of tourists is still rather recent. Indeed, the development has not yet been completed and new capacities are being added. Despite this, we believe that the time has come to work towards a more sustainable development of the sector. Therefore, as representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and private companies, associations and civil society organisations, we call on all tourism stakeholders in Palestine to commit to the practices and policies introduced in this Code of Conduct.

Your behaviour towards tourists: treat them honestly and with respect

1. Respect the religious belief of visitors and the freedom of religious worship. Appreciate cultural diversity. Respect ways of dressing and food preferences of visitors.

2. Tour guides: Provide accurate and useful information to tourists that covers the religious, social and cultural dimensions of Palestine. Do not just tell stories that visitors want to hear and do not repeat stereotypes. Instead of doing this, challenge the visitors by presenting different interpretations. Be aware of your unique role as a tour guide: visitors will draw conclusions about Palestinians from your behaviour.
3. Local communities, tour guides and employees in the tourism sector: Help tourists when they are in need. Be hospitable. Interact with visitors on a human level, do not limit your interactions to economic/financial exchanges.

4. Authority: The tourist police and other official bodies should deal with tourists in a respectful way.

5. Authority and local communities: Undertake efforts to prevent negative and irresponsible behaviour like begging from tourists and exploiting them.

Your responsibility towards local communities. Bear in mind that local businesses have a responsibility towards the people they employ and the communities whose resources they use.

6. Pay fair wages.

7. Distribute the income fairly amongst product producers, providers, sellers and intermediaries.

8. Sell national and local products and handicrafts to tourists. Consider adopting fair trade standards.

9. Develop means of communication and opportunities for interaction between Palestinians and tourists.

Engage in human and cultural exchanges for these can increase the benefits from tourism to Palestinian communities.

10. Create opportunities for local communities to participate in tourism.

11. Increase networking amongst churches and international organisations to explain the Palestinian narrative to complete the picture of people who are familiar with the more well-known Israeli narrative.

Improve Palestinian tourism opportunities by creating new and unique itineraries. In addition, research and develop special Palestinian package tours that can be promoted locally for visitors after they have arrived in the country.

12. Develop the competence of the workforce in the tourism industry and their knowledge of Palestinian identity and history. Further, train tour guides in contemporary issues. Develop the awareness of people interacting with tourists (guides, taxi drivers, host families, etc.).
13. Integrate culture and heritage into tourist programmes. Improve the image of Palestine through organizing festivals, conferences, workshops and use these cultural events to encourage tourists to spend longer periods of time in Palestine.


15. Raise awareness that programmes of Palestinian travel agencies should include all different aspects of Palestine, i.e. religion, politics, economics, cultural heritage and leisure.

Our responsibility towards the environment

16. Introduce environment-friendly principles to the operation of hotels, guest houses and restaurants and inform your guests about your standards. Increase the environmental awareness among Palestinians and provide a tourism that respects the environment.

Responsible business practices in the tourism industry

17. Increase transparency in business practices and engage in ethical competition which does not harm the value of tourism.

18. Tourists have the right to fair prices and full enjoyment of their trips.

Establishing the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct has been drafted following extensive consultations both locally within Palestine and internationally with those organisations and individuals committed to responsible tourism and justice. It is a living document which invites engagement, comment and feedback for further improvement in achieving its objectives. You can help us to improve it by sending your feedback to pirt@atg.ps.

Organisations which are part of the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism

Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquity,
Alternative Tourism Group,
Arab Hotel Association,
Bethlehem University,
Holy Land Incoming Tour Operator Association,
Holy Land Trust,
International Center of Bethlehem,

Jerusalem Inter-Church Center,

Joint Advocacy Initiative,

Network of Christian Organizations in Bethlehem,

Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies
APPENDIX D

Evalulation of the tour in Ma’ale Adumim

**Name of the tour:**
Ma’ale Adumim Settlement Tour

**Organizor:**
Jerusalem Reality Tours

**Guide:**
Rotem Mor (rotemdanmor@gmail.com)
27 years old, Israeli
He was serving in the army when he decided to refuse, therefore he was jailed for a while. After that he started to be active in the organization 'New Prophile' which aims to 'civilize' the Israeli society. He told us also the story of his own village (I think near Biddu) where they carried on a struggle to deviate the path of the wall. He recently had studied Middle East Music in Jerusalem.

**Cost:**
220 NIS (full price); 160 NIS (students and low wage)

**Website:**
www.jerusalemrealitytours.com

**Personal source of information:**
I got a flyer at the AIC

**Number of participants:**
6 (3 girls, 3 men- Germany, 3 Italy, 2 US)

**Main lines of the tour:**
In the flyer: 'Reality tours introduce you to some of the key social realities of Jerusalem’s rich and diverse communities while allowing you to experience first-hand its beautiful places, stories, cultures and people'.
Description of the specific tour: 'Visit the biggest Israeli settlement in the West Bank. Meet with settlers, explore the settlement and better understand its effects on the conflict'.

Itinerary:
Meeting point at 9.30 in Damascus Gate, near the Old City. We drink a tea in the café, we make a round of the table in order to introduce ourselves, and Rotem gives a brief explanation of the kind of tour that he wants to propose us: a tour different from the standard, not just based on sightseeing. At the same time, to offer us the possibility "to meet real people in real places."

With the help of maps, Rotem shows us firstly the progressive development from the historic Palestine til the actual situation of swiss-cheese maps, with the palestinian occupied territories divided in zone a, b, c and Gaza. Secondly he illustrated the context of the 'Greater Jerusalem', the project that aims to extend the borders of Jerusalem far beyond the Green Line.

Rotem describes fairly honestly the different stages of wars, land confiscations, and evictions that had characterized the development of the state of Israel. He describes Ma'ale Adumim has a neighborhood of Jerusalem, in addition to this, he doesn't clearly state that the settlements are illegal according to the Geneva Convention and some UN Resolution. Anyway, he also doesn't have a strong defensive attitude towards the settlement.

He focus a lot of attention on the economic conditions of the major part of the people that usually were sent by the State of Israel to live in the settlement. Usually they were the jews coming from the Arab countries, the so called mizhrai. They used to live in condition of extreme poverty on the borders of the jewis state. While on the coast was left spaces for the European jews, richer and mostly involved in the commerce. He divided the settlers between 'ideological/religious settlers' and 'economic settlers'.

We took a bus from the Damascus Gate bus station, in order to get A-Lazaria and Abu Dis. The bus has a path that make all the way around the wall, and it takes around 20 minutes to get there, while without the wall it would be much more faster. Infact before the
construction of the wall the two areas were periferies of Jerusalem. This situation is still recognizable through the signs of the shops: written both in Hebrew and in Arabic.

It is Meri, the Italian activist and ngo-worker that explains me how they used to climb the wall when they were having an office in Abu Dis.

We wonder in the 'new bedouin neighborhood'. Rotem shows the group the path of the wall, and we can see its structure in the distance.

We met Niza (something like this). Rotem describes her as an Israeli woman that comes here to spend time with the families. Actually, I will be told by Meri that she is a sort of welfare worker. By the way, she introduces us in a Bedouin family's house. We understand that they used to be nomadic in the lands where now Ma'ale Adumim has been constructed.

Davide makes a lot of questions about their work-conditions, since we understand that they are employed with unfair conditions in the industrial zone of the settlement. Judith and me are more focused, in our questioning, on the relation between their new conditions of life and their more traditional way of life. It is interesting to listen how they still remember the way that they used to live. They tell us that their children are not interested anymore in that way of life, they prefer to watch television and stay in front of the computer.

It strikes me how Niza tells us that 'they are not interested in these traditions', but they still have the rhythm and the music in their blood (it sounds a bit Orientalist). The answer that one of the bedouins gives her is sarcastic and interesting: 'As in your society at a certain age people serve in the army, in our society people at a certain age used to go and take care of the sheep.

What is striking once you looked at Abu Dis is the total state of negligence: rubbish, skeleton of cars, indistinguishable wet liquid in the streets,... And this should be the capitol city of a Palestinian state, since it is East Jerusalem. I attribute the major part of the negligence to the regulation that are implemented since the Oslo agreements and through the military orders: it is impossible to build new structures in area b and c.
Although this awareness, I can't stop thinking that there is also a responsability of the people in Abu Dis and Al Azaria that don't mind to live in a better place. [Now that I am writing it comes in my mind the concept of Ulysses' Syndrome]

We then move towards Ma'ale Adumim, where Rotem has organized a meeting with Itamar, that he defines an activist, and someone in the municipality. Ma'ale Adumim is already ominously appearing in the outskirts of Abu Dis/Al azaria. And once we get in the difference in the landscape is striking. All the settlement is full of green grass, the streets are very much clean, and there are less car than everywhere else.

We reach the building of the municipality. We will not have the official meeting. But we can see the photogallery: Shimon Peres, Bibi Netanyahu, different Mps, and so forth and so on. Rotem explains us that they put the pictures to show how the politicians had given legitimacy to the settlement during the years.

We just spoke with Itamar. Surprisingly a quiet guy, very different from the stereotype of the typical Israeli Jew settler, aggressive and ideologically construed.

During our dialogue, he focuses a lot on the demographic composition of Ma'ale Adumim, which for the 80% is constituted by Mizhrai jews. Who constitutes the lower level of the Israeli society, in economic and social terms. Itamar explains us that nowadays the elite of the society serves in the Intelligence, while the poorest Israeli citizens serve in the proper army.

He tells us that in the last 8 years there has been an increasing of the 400% of the requests of other citizenship's passport by the ashkenazi jews. Maybe because they know that the situation is dangerous. So for Itamar the situation is favorable for Palestinians and Arab jews who actually have more things in common. He speaks of Palestinians and jews as both brothers and sisters.

He said that because of his double identity he feels that he can play a role in the dialogue. He looks like surprised when me, Meri and Davide start to ask how does he feel for the situation lived by the Palestinians, the land confiscations that they are victim of.
He tries to reply us very kindly. He gives us a lot of information, included the fact that in the settlements are living 14 Palestinian families. All of these information are usually not available in the media and in the main stream narrative, that's way we are all stroken.

Listening Itamar, we are all surprise because if the whole bunch of settlers would be like him, probably there wouldn't be any kind of problem.

We get shyly into a mall in order to fill our bottles of water up, and we end up looking a estate agency. We are curious about the prices. The man in the agency is kind of kind, even if he doesn't speak english at all. But as soon as Rotem asks him if he would sell one of his properties to an Arab, he just says 'no'. Actually he doesn't know that some palestinians are living in the settlements. (maybe he can't avoid seeing the small groups that work there).

We have a walk in the settlment, in the 'old city' we end up in a sort of park. We met a proper settler woman, with a foulard on her hair She is much more 'ideological' than Itamar. Sure, she is not claiming a religious attachment to the land. But we are all wordless since she says that she believes in universal love and harmony, and in the connection between human beings, indipendently from wherever they come.

I can feel Davide and Meri, that probably are thinking like me 'how you can speak like this, and then having Al Azaria few hundred kilometers from you. She is saying that this how the world works out, sometimes you are on the good side, sometimes you are on the bed side.

Again the three of us are very vocal, not unpolite, but surely not exitating in expressing our opinion. The woman leaves after pronouncing few words: 'for sure if you see a man with hand-cuffles you are sad and you think is not right, but if you know that that man wanted to kill you, you understand why is hand-cuffed.' Differently from Itamar, she never speaks about the Palestinians calling them Palestinians, she prefers to use words like 'them', 'there', 'arabs'. [questo me lo fa notare Davide].

After all Davide will tell me that he was almost asking the woman what she does to bring peace and love in the world. 'will she ask her sons to not serve in the army?"
While we are speaking there are three older kids that are playing with a small electronic airplane. One of them is wearing a black t-shirt with a write in hebrew, apparently Rotem understands it and asks the kid a question. We discover that it is the t-shirt of a special unit of the army. We also come up to know that he was given the t-shirt in school, because he attends a special school, that prepare the kids to the military life.

After this, we are all a bit shocked and among the group there are some tensions: Judith and Davide have an argument. She and Rotem are saying that every country has its own issues, and that makes the example: 'if you know that China treats badly its workers, why you go on buying their products?", it is the only moment where I see Rotem looses his temper: he looks like kind of fed up of these Italians telling his people how to behave.

At the same time, we are all shocked from the differences. In my head I continuously have the sentence of Vittorio Arrigoni, 'Restiamo umani- Stay human'.

After the meeting with the woman we move through the popular neighborhood, inhabited basically by Russian recent immigrants.

We end up in a panoramic place, where it is possible to understand the entire E1 project, to include the colony to Jerusalem and to connected it with the Jordan Valley.

Then, we seat in the shade for the last briefing.

Feedback moment:
In general during the tour the two American boys speak few words, while the three of us who are Italians speak a lot, loudly and with political involvement.

The fat American observes a lot, and basically shut up. He just intervenes at the end, saying that he has notice how settlements 'are not sustainable', and 'they are somethin that cannot be removed'. (living in Ramallah, volunteer in an education project)

The skinny American, Sam Ketensbaum, speaks just at the end, about his experience as a journalist both in Palestine Monitor and other media. (living in Ramallah, journalist)

Judith, German, living in New York, says that she was stroken by the 'separation', the impact of it also in terms of difficulties for the Israeli to get information and examples. So, according to her we have a role in dialogue. (She spent two months in Tel Aviv, travelling
every so often in the West Bank. I brought her to Hebron with Ahmad Jaradat the day before she left. She studied Media Studies and she is thinking about doing a PhD about here)

Meri, who is the most expert in the group, claims that she wasn’t her first time in a settlement, but it is always important to meet people. Also because it shows the existing gap between the people and the government.

In a conversation separated by the final revision, Meri and me, agree in considering that maybe now the moment is arrived to organize solidarity activities with the Israeli activists. And also, in terms of psychological disease.

Ruth, volunteer in the AIC and friend of Rotem. She is not in the tour, but I spoke with her mum when she firstly arrived (Diary, 26-6-2011). The mom and the other sister had spent one night with the Bedouins the night before the Ma’ale Adumim Tour. They were supposed to come, but then they had changed mind. By the way, Ruth tells me – when we meet during the Cultural Week- that she appreciates the way that Rotem has to run tours: she finds interesting how he doesn't strongly claim his political position, because- particularly when there are groups of young jews- they listen more. If they wold be addressed too strongly, they would just close their hears.

Key point for the guide:

In the final evaluation Rotem expresses more clearly himself. He defines the tour as ironic, an encounter with reality, where it is ‘natural’ to feel deeply the separation, but it is also a way to humanize people.

He doesn't have a receipt for the solution (two state, one state, three state, no state -the one that I prefer, he says).

He believes that conflicts are part of life, they become a big problem when they become violent. A way to avoid this violence is a basic fundamental understanding, which is the mutual recognition of the right to be in this land/place.

He thanks us because, even if we are all people living and working in the West Bank, we had challenged a stron barrier, which is something that not all the people do.
He thanks us for being critical but respectful with the people that we met.

Itamar didn't speak a lot in the end. He just thanks us for the good questions and because we had challenged his point of view.

ps [methodological note] firstly I put here a reference to a personal evaluation, but I removed it. Infact, I believe that in the way of writing itself it is included a sort of personal evaluation, between the lines.
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