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Violence in nonviolent action: Power relations in joint activism in Israel and Palestine

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Abstract

This paper critically engages with nonviolent activism and resistance in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. By placing nonviolent direct actions directly in the context of its violent surrounding, it will be argued that structural and symbolic violence can be present in nonviolent actions and that unequal power relations can therewith be reproduced. Certain nonviolent actions in Israel and Palestine, this paper poses, mirror or even enable the injustices they initially seek to oppose.

Based on nineteen months of fieldwork research in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories including annexed East Jerusalem and besieged Gaza, this paper provides a ethnographic description of a so called joint Palestinian-Israeli nonviolent action near the Gaza Strip. The ethnographic detail enables an analysis which reveals 1) how unequal power relations can be reproduced within nonviolent protests, and 2) how certain nonviolent protests can perpetuate the structural violence they initially seek to oppose. The primary aim of this paper is not to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' activism or resistance perse. It does aim to show how meticulous attention to less visible forms of violence can deepen our understanding of the reproduction of power and structural violence within nonviolent protest.

Sumud Freedom Camp

On May 19, 2017 a coalition of more than three hundred Palestinian, Israeli and International activists erected the first tent of what was to become the Sumud Freedom Camp. Built on the remains of the Palestinian West Bank village of Sarura, the activists aimed to reconstruct this forcibly demolished village (Podolsky 2019), while simultaneously protesting against ongoing efforts to dispossess Palestinians of their homes and land (Gish 2019). By doing so the activists intended 'to create a safe, nonviolent, unarmed space where all those who believe in a future founded on justice, freedom, and

equality can come together to build a foundation that will sustain a just peace'.[1] Following the lead of the village's former inhabitants, the activists not only physically repaired the homes, caves and waterways but also participated in workshops, direct actions and a program promoting 'nonviolent civil disobedience as transformative political practice'.

The coalition, which stood in solidarity with the Sarura villagers, consisted of two local and two international organisations,[2] complimented by Palestinians from neighbouring villages and local committees.[3] The parties shared a commitment to nonviolent direct action and consciously reject rigid binary divisions such as Jews versus Muslims or Palestinians versus Israelis. One of the groups, Combatants for Peace, is an activist collective made up of former Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers and former Palestinian fighters who have put down their weapons and now work together to end what they call 'the cycle of violence' (de Jong, 2017). The US-based Jewish Centre for Nonviolence acknowledges the importance of different group identities in the project and cultivates 'a practice of Jewish Nonviolence in support of Palestinian and Israeli nonviolent resistance to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza'.[4]

On May 20, 2017, only a day after the camp's kick-off, the IDF raided the camp. With military bravura, the IDF confiscated the newly installed water tank and arrested three participants in the reconstruction. The raid

1 The Sumud Freedom Camp intention statement as published on their website in May 2017. https://sumudcamp.org/our-intention-b0fb960e50df Accessed June 06, 2019

2 The coalition consisted of Combatants for Peace, the Holy Land Trust, All that is Left: Anti-Occupation Collective and The Centre for Jewish Nonviolence. Information about each of these organisations can be accessed at the following websites: http://cfpeace.org/, https://holylandtrust.org/, https://www.facebook.com/AllThatsLeftCollective/, https://centerforjewishnonviolence.org/.

3 Popular committees are a typical way in which Palestinian villages organise to oppose the occupation. For more information on the functioning of local committees see Iris Jean-Klein (2003) "Into Committees, out of the House?: Familiar Forms in the Organization of Palestinian Committee Activism during the First Intifada." *American Ethnologist* 30(4), 556-577 (Nov, 2003) DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2003.30.4.556

4 As stated on the Sumud Freedom Camp website page. https://sumudcamp.org/the-center-for-jewish-nonviolence-826e779ff886 Accessed June 20, 2019

was recorded by camp residents and the video quickly went viral .[5] As people on social media expressed outrage over the use of force by the IDF, a Jewish activist of the Sumud camp was quick to point out that the IDF would have used a lot more violence had it not been for the presence of Jewish-Israeli and Jewish international activists (Fleischmann 2019). Despite many more IDF raids, the Sumud camp expanded over the following month. Activists restored several cave-houses and, with the help of a crowd-funding campaign, restored access to essential resources such as electricity and fresh water. On June 26 two villager families returned to their homes and the Sumud camp declared victory:

> We celebrate the first phase of the Sumud Freedom Camp because two families returned to their lands, restored two caves, and rehabilitated roads. Together, this coalition proved that the joint non-violent struggle could be a way to resolve conflict, reconcile and advance our shared values, and challenge the status quo (Riyad Halees, June 26th 2017, Co-Founder, Combatants for Peace).[6]

The Sumud camp received steady media attention and, despite numerous military raids, managed to reclaim parts of the confiscated lands of Sarura village. While such self-declared success is rare, the phenomenon of nonviolent activism in Israel and Palestine is not. Nonviolent resistance here is defined as 'the application of unarmed civilian power using nonviolent methods such as protests, strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations, without using or threatening physical harm against opponents' (Chenoweth and Cunningham 2013: 271).

Nonviolent resistance in the territory that we currently depict as Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories can be traced back to the British mandate period of 1920 to 1948 (De Jong 2017). Since that time a vibrant nonviolent activist tradition has developed which has received modest but

5 YouTube video 'Israeli soldiers dismantle the Sumud Freedom Camp' placed on the +972 YouTube channel on May 21, 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2UB8rJbxlY Accessed on June 20, 2019

6 Riyad Halees, co-founder of Combatants for Peace on June 26, 2017 in Sarura as captured on the video 'Celebrate Sarura! We are Live to celebrate the end of Ramadan and over a month of joint solidarity and resistance! Stay Tuned!' https://sumudcamp.org/sumud-freedom-camp-celebrates-successful-return-of-families-to-sarura-70bc82e100f5 Accessed on June 20, 2019

steady scholarly attention. For example the seminal *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Swedenburg 1995) carefully reconstructs early Palestinian nonviolent struggle during the mandate period, while Mary King (2007) shows how Palestinians drew upon their past to advance nonviolent strategies during the second intifada. Both Kaminer (1996) and Rabkin (2006) engage with Jewish opposition to Zionism and put forward the diversity and complexity of such struggles from within (Rigby 1991; De Jong 2011; Fleischmann 2019). Turner (2015), Taraki (2006) and Bishara (2001) have examined the outright attacks faced by Palestinians and Israelis who engage in nonviolent struggle.

In this light, the above brief description of the Sumud Freedom camp does not simply serve as a 'successful' example of continued nonviolent activism and resistance in the West bank (Rijke and Van Teeffelen 2014; Jawad 2011). More so, it illustrates 1) the application of conscious and diverse nonviolent strategy, 2) the often direct and violent response toward such nonviolent direct actions, and 3) the presence of unequal power relations among different activists. First, alternative strike protests (Van Teeffelen 2011; Gawerc 2019) where suppressive measures such as house demolition are countered by rebuilding facilities and structures such as in the above described Sumud Freedom Camp are not just charity towards the evicted villagers. The well-documented Friday demonstrations in the West Bank are not merely directed at the separation wall, but constitute a broader resistance against Israeli occupation and continued settler colonial dispossession (Hammami 2015; Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2007; Pratt 2013). Second, violent repression of nonviolent direct actions by the IDF are regular and well documented (Pearlman 2016; Kotef and Amir 2007). As will be argued below, however, physical assault is not the only form of violence present at nonviolent actions in the West Bank, Gaza or Israel. Instead, the structural violence of ethno-nationalist exclusionary practice and structures (de Jong 2017) are omnipresent and warrant the inclusion of theories on the continuum of violence (Scheper-Hughes and bourgeois 2004) when looking at nonviolent actions. Third, the Sumud Freedom camp displace a consciousness among the various activists about different positions and power relations among them (de Jong 2011). That some of the unequal power relations are acknowledged and addressed by the activists does not mean that they are no longer there. On the contrary, this article will show how unequal power relations can be reproduced in nonviolent protest and how, therewith, structural violence in enabled and sustained.

This argument will be put forward and sustained through the detailed ethnographic description of a so called 'joint' nonviolent action in Israel near the Gaza border.[7] I consciously place joint in inverted commas because the provided ethnographic example draws out that what constitute as 'joint' or even what counts as Israeli, Arab or Palestinian is less straightforward than it may seem (Kotef 2011; Omer 2019). For the activist central to the ethnographic description, for example, it means Jewish Israeli and Arab Israeli joining in one direct action. Other Palestinian and Israeli activists, however, would not describe this as a 'joint action' at all and would insist that truly joint action means Palestinian led resistance with Jewish Israeli solidarity activism in a supportive or strategic role (De Jong 2015; Omer 2019; Podolsky 2019; Fleischmann 2019).

By applying a theoretical framework of 'Thinking Palestine/the Arab Spring' (Lentin 2008) combined with strategic nonviolent resistance theory (Helvey 2004) and the concept of 'continuum of violence' (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004), this article will show how the reproduction of unequal power relations in nonviolent activism can enable and sustain the structural violence that the protesters initially sought to oppose.

Thinking Palestine: violence, nonviolence and resistance

'Thinking Palestine' refers to the body of knowledge produced by scholars who consciously and critically re-engage with the most basic question of what is going on in the territory that we currently depict as Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Aware of the formative power of words and conceptualizations in setting the debate of what can possibly be discussed or thought, scholars such as Taraki (1989; 2006) and Goldberg (2008) challenge seemingly fixed truths in order to spark a scholarly debate on the Palestinian conception of Palestine as 'a dialectic experience positioned against its perennial other, Zionism' (Lentin, 2008: 8). Through conceptualizations

7 This research stems from a nineteen-month fieldwork research in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories conducted to obtain my PhD at the School of Oriental and Africa Studies. The fieldwork was conducted in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories including besieged Gaza and annexed East Jerusalem. In this period, 49 demonstrations, an average of two steering committee meetings and two inner-group meetings a week, twenty-four lectures, seventeen working days and five house demolitions were attended.

such as 'racial Palestinianization' (Goldberg, 2008:25-45), 'thanapolitics' (Ghanim, 2008:65-81) and the state of Israel as either in a permanent 'State of Exception' (Lentin, 2008:1-22; Khalili, 2008:101-115) or as 'a *Mukhabarat* state' (Pappe, 2008:148-170), critical scholars aim to provide subaltern perspectives, revive subjugated knowledge and both highlight and question the power relations behind knowledge-making surrounding Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.[8]

Questions asked in relation to activism and resistance are thus less focused on 'the truth' or 'neutrality' (Turner, 2019) but rather on the power relations behind truth-making, social change and direct actions. Dialectic experiences of otherness draws out questions about who is perceived as us, who is perceived as them, and enables a critical perspective of how this changes over time (see for example the ambiguous and changing alliances at the Tahrir square in Van de Sande, 2013). As will be seen, for example, categories of citizenship in Israel to a degree determine one's ability to decide over- or participate in certain kinds of protests. This suggests that strategic nonviolent resistance theory, in the context of nonviolence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, is more useful or relevant than social movement theory since there is a greater focus on power and power relations.

As Gene Sharp, the founding father of this theory points out, strategic nonviolent resistance is all about power and power relations: 'The practice, dynamics, and consequences of nonviolent struggle are all directly dependent upon the wielding of power and its effects on the power of the opponents' group' (1990:7). In this theoretical strand, power is perceived as plural and relational (Helvey 2004). It is not something one person or group possesses and the other does not, but rather consists of a complex field of resources and interaction in which pillars of support ensure domination or oppression of the other. These pillars of support range from very concrete resources, such as a military apparatus and tax-collecting institutions, to less tangible aspects, such as ascribed authority, media coverage and public support. Nonviolent direct actions concurrently aim to undermine such pillars of support to render the exercise of rule impossible (Helvey 2004). Thoughts and analysis amongst activists of what exactly the problem is, and which pillars of support should be targeted are thus central to understand both individual direct actions and

8 The framework of Thinking Palestine is central to the broader nineteen-month fieldwork research from which this article stems. It therefore also appears in De Jong, (2017)

different activist groups. As will be shown below, a lively and heated debate among Palestinian and Israeli activists about Zionism, humanitarianism and perceived peace informs the direct actions that are taken. Input of various activists is not necessarily included equally, however, and it will be shown how power relations in broader society can be consciously or unconsciously reproduced in strategic nonviolent actions.

Sharp (1973) identifies 198 forms of direct action which can be clustered into three overarching categories of nonviolent action. First and most visible are direct actions such as demonstrations or sit-ins. These can be readily observed in contemporary Palestine-Israel and are well documented (Hammami 2001; Lagerquist 2004; Darweish and Rigby 2015). Second is civil disobedience in which the cooperation of subjects in an oppressive system is withheld through acts of omission or commission (Sharp 1973). Examples of civil disobedience in contemporary Palestine-Israel would be conscientious objection to Israeli army duty or the refusal to pay tax under the banner of 'no taxation without representation' (Kuttab 1988). The third category can be described as the forging of alternative routes. This form aims to make subjects less dependent on the rulers' provisions by, for example, providing alternative sources of primary needs, such as food, health care or schooling. In Israel and the Occupied Territories this regularly takes the form of a so-called reverse strike in which, for instance, Palestinian houses which are demolished by the Israeli army are rebuilt to limit the impact of an oppressive mechanism or to even render it useless (Halper 2000).

Direct action theory asserts that social change can occur in three ways: 1) conversion in which the opponent yields to the demands of the protesters, 2) accommodation, in which the opponent is not convinced of the nonviolent claims, but gives in nonetheless, and 3) coercion, in which the opponent is neither convinced nor willing to surrender but is forced to adhere to the demands of the protesters (Herngren 1993).

The above layout of direct action theory can be considered a blueprint for activists and has laid the foundation for a group of interdisciplinary scholars who can be loosely identified as resistance study scholars (Schock 2013). Where social movement researchers often focus on how movements emerge, recruit members, mobilize resources or how they frame the issues they are trying to tackle (Edelman 2001; Nepstad 2015a: 415-418), resistance scholars take a more intersectional approach in which resistance is foremost perceived as a constant processes of negotiation of power relations

(Lilja and Vinthagen 2014: 418). This includes the readily observable process of negotiation between activists and their perceived adversary but also entails processes of negotiation among activists and with third party others (Lilja and Vinthagen 2014: 418). It also accentuates less visible forms of resistance or everyday resistance (Scott 2008) and therewith recognizes the multiplicity of power relations, conflicts, identities and forms of resistance (Lilja and Vinthagen 2014: 424).

This framework is especially fruitful when looking at activism and resistance in Palestine-Israel because it includes both overt protest (Kotef 2007: 2010), less visible forms of resistance (Lagerquist 2009; Weiss 2016) and, combined with the critical approach of 'thinking Palestine', enables an analysis of how nonviolent action colludes with its violent surroundings in multiple ways. As such, the ethnographic example will draw out that visible political repression by the military police or the IDF is not the only form of violence present in nonviolent strategic action but that reproduction of symbolic and structural violence also plays a vital, yet less recognised, role.

Leading anthropological texts on violence, such as that of Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004), have moved firmly beyond the conception of violence as merely physical:

> Violence can never be understood solely in terms of its physicality – force, assault, or the infliction of pain – alone. Violence also includes assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim. The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what gives violence its power and meaning (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 1).

Prioritizing subaltern experiences of violence and stipulating its constant interplay with power and oppression, scholars such as Lori Allen (2008), Nancy Schepper-Hughes (2005) and Philippe Bourgois (2002) propose empirical approaches that place the experience of violence within specific socio-economic and political surroundings. While the fieldwork sites and focal areas of their research vary from crack-cocaine-use in the United States to infant deaths in Brazil to the normalization of violence in Gaza, each of these scholars insists on approaching violence as a continuum rather than an exceptional event. In other words:

> Focusing exclusively on the physical aspect of torture/terror/violence misses the point and transforms the project into a clinical, literary, or

> artistic exercise, which runs the risk of denigrating [Sic] into a theatre or pornography of violence in which the voyeuristic impulse subverts the larger project of witnessing, critiquing, and writing against violence, injustice and suffering (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 3)

In order to counter the one-dimensional distortion to which Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004: 4) are referring, one should acknowledge the constant overlap and interaction between visible-recognised and invisible-unrecognized forms of violence; one should not separate perceived extreme incidents of violence from structural, normalised violent conditions, and; one should avoid dialectic disconnects such as war/peace or here/there, which obstruct analysis of how complex forms of violence are inherently intertwined (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004: 4).

Following the work of Johan Galtung (1969) and Pierre Bourdieu (1992), Bourgois (2004) operationalized the continuum of violence by differentiating between four distinguishable but deeply related forms of violence: direct political, structural, symbolic and everyday violence.

Targeted physical violence and terror administrated by official authorities and those opposing it makes direct political violence the most visible and known form of violence in the context of Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories (Ryan 2015). This includes but is not limited to military raids, extrajudicial killings, torture and protest suppression by the Israeli army, as well as attacks on civilians and military personnel by Palestinian factions. Following the observation that all forms of violence should be approached as part of a continuum, these very obvious forms of violence cannot be disconnected from more structural and symbolic expressions of violence. Checkpoints, the wall and surveillance cameras do not inflict physical violence *per se*. They do, however, create 'chronic, historically entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992,167).

These structural and symbolic expression can thus all be perceived as structural violence within the broader continuum of violence of continuing settler colonialism. Furthermore, as will be shown below, interpretations of direct political violence depend on one's understanding or justification of expressions of structural violence. As such, Palestinian stone-throwing can be perceived as violent attacks on a legitimate army, or as legitimate resistance to an illegitimate occupying power.

Everyday violence, as theorised predominantly by Nancy Schepper-Hughes, is not simply violence on a smaller scale or violence occurring in everyday life, it is 'the production of social indifference to outrageous suffering through institutional processes and discourses' (Bourgois 2007,2). It is the process in which daily armed body checks, checkpoints, and a separation wall[9] that cuts entire villages in half are deemed acceptable and necessary by a large part of Israeli society (Harker 2006). These intractable realities, which render the daily practise of occupation and settler-colonial dispossession normal or 'business as usual', are closely linked with the fourth form of violence: symbolic violence.

Symbolic violence is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with their complicity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). It is an unconscious process in which individuals internalize the violence inflicted upon them. In domestic violence, for example, battered women often internalise the abuse and are convinced that they are somehow to blame or complicit in the act. This already difficult concept is even more complex in the context of Israel and the Occupied Territories. Palestinians, whether in Gaza, the West Bank or within the boundaries established in 1948,[10] certainly do not blame themselves or feel that they deserve the restrictions and overt political and structural violence that is bestowed upon them. However, as will be argued below, internalised symbolic violence plays a central role within so-called dialogue groups and joint initiatives in Israel, which are regularly perceived as part of the peace camp or nonviolent activist scene. These groups, such as Seeds for Peace and YadBeyad, vary widely in location, participants and exact approach (Abu-Nimer 1999; Schimmel 2009). Many work, however, from the premise that the Israel-Palestine conflict is a conflict between Palestinians and Israelis and that if each side would understand the other's perspective, this would lay the groundwork for peace (De Jong 2017). This peace-conflict paradigm is thus radically different than those who claim that Zionism

9 While Israel refers to this project as 'the Security Fence' I refer to it as 'the Separation Wall' because that is the reality of what it does. The wall separates Israel from Palestine, Palestinians from Palestinians and farmers from their agricultural land.

10 '48 Palestinians' described Palestinian citizens of Israel who reside within Israeli borders as established in 1948. For an eloquent discussion on 48 Palestinians identity I suggest Maira, S and Shihade, M. (2012) Hip Hop from '48 Palestine: Youth, Music, and the Present/Absent. *Social Text*. 30(3)1-26

is inherently violent because it rests on an ethno-nationalist rigid and discriminatory distinction. In addition, it should be noticed that the peace and conflict paradigm which will be connected to the so called humanitarian approach below and the perception of Zionism as inherently violent should be perceived as a range and that individual activists and activists group vary in perception and therewith praxis (de Jong 2011; Fleischmann 2019).

In sum, this article critically engages with unequal power relations and structural violence in nonviolent protest. The above theoretical framework combines direct action theory with 'thinking Palestine/Arab spring' and insights from the anthropology of violence. The emphasis on dialectic experiences and processes from the thinking Palestine perspective draws out questions about the perceived other and about who decides who this perceived other is. This concurrently leads to analysis of strategy and method. While this may seem self-explanatory in many instances—we, the protesters against them, the regime—the ethnographic example below will show the power mechanisms behind such classifications. This critical look at power relations within nonviolent protesters groups concurrently enables an analysis that places nonviolent action firmly within its violent context. Violence is in this instance not reduced to the mere physical form but includes structural inequalities and arbitrary exclusion and for that purpose is conceptualised as a continuum of Violence (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). More precisely, it will be argued that the nonviolent protest under scrutiny here, consciously or not, duplicated problematic ethno-nationalist identifications; which in turn draws out unequal power positions between Jewish Israeli and Arab Israeli or Palestinian activists in making organisational and strategic decisions; that Israeli participants and potential audiences were prioritised over Palestinian presence and experience during the protest; and finally, that this self-proclaimed nonviolent protest disconnected nonviolence from its direct action roots and therewith stripped its strategy from addressing the underlying system of oppression.

In line with expectations it would make sense to concurrently present an ethnographic description of a nonviolent protest which got violently dispersed by the Israeli army. However, I am particularly interested in how less visible structural and symbolic violence is reproduced within nonviolent protest and in which role unequal power relations play therein. As such, I consciously selected ethnographic material of a type that does not stand out for its physical violent interference by the IDF but exemplifies complex power relations and conflicting stances towards violence in a subtler yet

illuminating way. The following are extracts of my fieldnotes about one so called 'joint' nonviolent protest near the Erez crossing into Gaza. The length, depth and detail of the ethnographic descriptions serves to illustrate my methodology and reflections as well as provide a vivid example for those less familiar with the context of Israel and Palestine.

No flags for Gaza

'Anne, over here!' I look to the right. In the crowd of around 3000 I recognize four teenagers whom I had interviewed three weeks earlier for the 'messengers for peace' program of the Parents Circle: Bereaved Family Forum. The four boys smile, and with their arms around each other, they urge me to take their picture: '*Yaa Ustādha, yalla*!' ('Teacher, let's go!'). I try to focus my camera without dropping my notebook, sound recorder and bag—quite a challenge, because minutes earlier I had climbed on top of a loaded truck that functions as an improvised stage for those who will address the demonstrating crowd. A strategic decision—it's close enough to record the speeches, a great place for taking pictures, and parked left of the Erez crossing,[11] with its nose to the southeast wind at least fifty meters from the Israeli military police, who lean casually against the all-too-familiar blue arrest vans. More than a year of fieldwork has taught me well: never get caught between the crowd and the army, know the direction of the wind in case of teargas canisters, and always plan your escape route in case the military police start randomly arresting people. It wouldn't be the first time that, in a matter of minutes, a peaceful march turned into a disorienting battlefield, filled with teargas, smoke, rubber-coated steel bullets and soldiers with gas masks dragging people away. Today's demonstration is not on the West Bank, however, and is not organized by Palestinians.

'We are together, we are one, and we will not be separated!' The loud chant from the crowd brings me back to the present. It's January 23, 2008,[12]

11 The Erez Checkpoint is the northernmost entrance to the Gaza strip.

12 The material for the broader study, from which this particular article arises, was collected during nineteen months of fieldwork between 2007 and 2011. I consciously decided to select a relatively old ethnographic example in order to avoid any negative consequences for the current activist scene. The activists depicted in this article are aware of the discussions surroundings this particular action. In line with research ethics, all activists directly quoted have given explicit permission to be included in this study. For further information about

and we're in front of the Israeli side of the Erez crossing, which separates Israel from Gaza with an eight-meter-high concrete wall, barbed wire, watchtowers and a hundred-meter 'no go area' on both sides. Three thousand Palestinians, Israelis and international activists have gathered to take a stand against the inhumane consequences of the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

The smiling faces are replaced with silent seriousness as representatives of various activist groups and organizations take to the makeshift stage one by one. When one group is speaking, I look to 'the others'—participants from other organizations who hold far different opinions and espouse different ideologies and behaviors. To the untrained eye, today's protesters are united in their message: End the Siege of Gaza. But for those who live their everyday lives within the Israel/Palestine activist scene, and for those studying them, the significance of this gathering can be read on the faces of the people present: Will the Anarchists Against the Wall [AAtW] provoke the police? Will the Physicians for Human Rights call for the so-called 'balanced' approach between the 'two sides'? Will the media pick up on this story? Will it dismiss them all as marginalized rebels, or worse, traitors?

On my left, familiar faces from the Anarchists Against the Wall start to bang wooden sticks against the iron gates in front of the crossing. The cacophony momentarily silences the speech of a seventeen-year-old girl from the Israeli town of Sderot. A not-so silent-protest against the 'two-sides-balanced' approach, I assume. I see Miri from Physicians for Human Rights and Adam from Gush Shalom (the Peace Bloc) quickly approaching the youngsters. I can't hear what they're saying, but I know the two 'designated peace keepers' aim to persuade them to stick to the agreed-upon strategy: '[Today] we want to reach the mainstream, teach them about what is going on. We cannot push them away by being too political'.[13] The noise subsides, but with an efficiency that suggests rehearsal, three giant Palestinian flags are unfurled and attached to the gate. Nervous looks all around. Twenty people I don't recognize turn their backs and walk away. Quickly Sulaiman, the Palestinian spokesperson for Combatants for Peace, grabs the microphone.

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the ethics of this study see: De Jong, A. (2015) "Activism, Human Rights and Academic Neutrality: The Gaza Freedom Flotilla." In: Gillan, K. and Pickerill, J. (eds.) *Research Ethics and Social Movements: Scholarship, Activism & Knowledge Production*. London: Routledge

13 Quote Miri, November 4 2007, in East Jerusalem during the initial steering committee meeting for the 'Break the Siege' campaign.

With a fast-paced 'We-will-not-be-separated', he draws the attention of the crowd back to the improvised truck stage. I take pictures of the Palestinian flags as well as of the twenty or so 'peacekeepers' who are now arguing with the instigators. *The moderates won*, I scribble in my notebook.

An hour goes by. Uri Avnery from Gush Shalom speaks, and so does Jeff Halper from the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD). By holding a cell phone close to the microphone, we hear the voice of Dr. Eyad Serraj, the head of the Free Gaza Movement, from Gaza City:

> We cannot see you but we here in Gaza stand with you. Today is an important day. It gives us hope to hear so many of our Israeli friends protest with us for justice. Today there are no enemies, just people who truly desire peace. What we do here today matters. Like Gandhi said, there is no way to peace, peace is the way. We show it here. Thank you so much (Gaza, January 28, 2008).

Two more trucks are loaded with water filters, diapers, canned vegetables and other goods along with notes in both Hebrew and Arabic. They are parked next to the truck I'm on, right in front of the crossing, brought by the demonstrators and meant for the people of Gaza. The iron gate will remain closed today, but a written guarantee is given to the activists which states that the goods will be allowed into Gaza after inspection. The designated peacekeepers from the various activist initiatives are satisfied and begin to guide the crowd back to the cars and buses.

In the bus that brings people back to Jerusalem, the atmosphere is exuberant. Young activists sing and chant, still exhilarated from the experience of Israelis and Palestinians marching together. In the back of the bus, however, a group of veteran activists[14] are engaged in a low but heated debate:

> Our agreement was clear, no Palestinian flags! It drives people away, Israelis... You need to understand their mindset.
>
> No, *you* need to understand. You cannot disconnect this issue [the siege] from the rest of the Palestinian struggle. This is also Occupation and you

14 The term 'veteran activist' is used to denote long-term (more than a year), very experienced and involved activists who often take a leading role in events like this.

> cannot expect people to hold hands without admitting that they don't have a state yet!

Opposing positions are captured in these two quotes. Gadi, one of the peacekeepers and a member of both Combatants for Peace and Gush Shalom, tries to intervene:

> Guys, we did great! The turnout was much more than expected, the trucks are loaded, there was a lot of media, the mission was a success!

The much-desired media coverage, however, remains limited to a few references in newspapers, not one television report and no pictures. At 10 o'clock in the evening, I receive a bulk text message sent to the organizers of the coalition: 'It was the flags ☹'.

Invisible violence

Studies on both violence and nonviolence often entail graphic description of destruction, pain, harm and death. The above ethnographic description shows none of that. On the contrary, relatively uneventful protests like these are such a regular occurrence that they can be accurately categorised as business as usual. I propose that it is exactly this ordinariness that can inform us about multiple underlying power relations and about less overtly violent transgressions within nonviolent protests.

First, it should be noted that the Erez crossing protest was presented by those participating as a joint Palestinian-Israeli demonstration. What is meant with definitions such as this one, however, is less straightforward than it may seem, because all protesters, with the exception of some international participants like myself, were in fact Israeli citizens. The term 'Palestinian' in this instance, refers solely to Arab-Israeli or so-called '48 Palestinians' while 'Israeli' refers solely to Jewish-Israeli activists (Rabinowitz 2001). This clarification is important because it highlights the self-identification of the activists, the socially constructed discriminatory categories they uphold through that division, and because it draws attention to those not present at the protests.

By presenting this demonstration as a joint Palestinian-Israeli initiative the activists duplicate the problematic ethno-nationalist identification system of the Israeli state which divides citizens into sub-categories by ethnicity—Jewish, Arab, Druze and so forth—with vastly different citizen rights, duties and privileges (Helman 2007; Handelman 1994). Whether

conscious or not, this conceals those not present, namely Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, and the reasons for their absence. In other words, presenting this as a joint Palestinian-Israeli protest simultaneously reinforces a discriminatory divide between categories of Israeli citizens and obscures the fact that Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza cannot be present because by Israeli military law they are severely limited in their freedom of movement and forbidden to travel to this protest site. While the depiction Palestinian-Israeli thus comes across as progressive and gives the impression of inclusiveness, it reproduces the ethnic based divisions that the Israeli state employs to differentiate and discriminate between categories of citizens. Furthermore, this obscures the fact that Palestinians from Gaza or the West Bank are physically excluded from this protest through the structural violence of checkpoints, the wall, and the permit system (Tawil-Souri 2012).

Second, the presence of so-called peacekeepers is so common in demonstrations in Israel that I did not even elaborate on them in my fieldwork notes. Peacekeepers are Jewish-Israeli Hebrew speaking veteran activists assigned to ensure that the rules of conduct, as previously agreed upon by an organizing committee, are maintained throughout a demonstration or action. At times this means marking the route in case of a march or staying in contact with the police ordered to oversee a protest. In this particular instance the peacekeepers were tasked with guarding 'the image and reach' of the demonstration. Three weeks before the event there had been discussion about the purpose of this action among different groups and organizations making up the steering committee. While some fervently opposed the idea, it was quickly decided that it should focus primarily on reaching the Israeli left. The reasoning behind this was that surely most Israelis would not condone the human suffering imposed on Gaza if only they knew what was going on, and if they could only break out of their political indifference. In order to reach this elusive Israeli mainstream audience it was quickly decided that 1) no permit requests were going to be submitted for West Bank Palestinians to participate, and 2) that the message of the action would solely focus on humanitarian aid and not include any political message. This then turned into a decision to avoid any political language, including words such as 'occupation', 'blockade' and 'siege', in the call for action. There was also a 'unanimous' decision to not expose or allow any Palestinian national symbols on the day itself.

I write 'unanimous' in inverted commas because at this point several representatives of groups, such as the more radical[15] Ta'ayush and AAtW, had already left the meeting in protest. In this context, the peacekeepers could no longer be seen simply as coordinating the demonstration as they were also actively influencing its shape and context.

Third, following from the above, the display of Palestinian flags at the demonstration was not solely a display of Palestinian nationalism. Instead it was a 'protest within a protest' against what was perceived to be the non-political, non-disturbing approach of the organizing committee. As one of the activists explained in an interview afterwards:

> It [putting up the Palestinian flag] was a symbolic protest within a protest. A deliberate small disruption of the peace. Joint actions like these are so focused on reaching an Israeli audience that they literally leave Palestinians and Palestine out of it. They are so afraid to upset Israeli activists or the media that they do not dare to even mention the real problem. […] Bringing food and diapers to Gaza is nice and all but this is not some sort of natural disaster. The siege of Gaza is man-made, *Israeli* made. It is deliberate policy (Ronnie Barkan, February 5, 2008).

By defying the no flag rule, Ronnie and the other activists tried to challenge what is regularly referred to as the 'humanitarian' or 'balanced' approach (Hajjar 1997). Articulated particularly by Israeli NGO activist groups such as Peace Now, this approach consciously stays away from 'the political' in order to reach the mainstream Israeli media and not scare off left-leaning possible Israeli sympathisers (Feldman 2009). As such, they do not speak out about the separation wall, about Israel's military attacks on Gaza, or even about the occupation. They focus on humanitarian suffering, certain restrictions and military actions, but do not necessarily object to the policies that cause them, and do not acknowledge the structural violence behind them. For example, Peace Now strongly condemned the civilian casualties of the 2008-9 military operation Cast Lead. They did not, however, oppose the military operation per se and stayed clear of rejecting the blockade of Gaza. What is interesting is that some individual activists from Peace Now do oppose the blockade, the broader occupation, and the Zionist ethno-

15 I consciously describe groups such as Ta'ayush and AAtW as 'radical' rather than militant or extreme because they are characterized by the shared aim of radical, systematic change opposed to mere policy change or topical adaptations.

nationalist practices from which these spring, but strategically they choose to 'stay away from politics':

> Of course I understand the [flag activists'] point. The blockade and the occupation are the problem but they need to understand the Israeli mind-set. If there would have been Palestinians [from the West Bank] at the demonstration, some Israeli activists would not have come. The media would have definitely portrayed us as Arab lovers or as enemies of the state. For Israeli people the Palestinian flag is the flag of the enemy. You simply cannot do that. It has to be a truly nonviolent action. Not a demonstration in which Israeli activists feel attacked (Miri, 28 January 2008).

Despite their personal convictions, activists like Miri, thus, strategically choose to 1) exclude West Bank Palestinians, 2) prioritise Israeli feelings and possible audiences over Palestinian participation and experiences, and 3) conflate non-disturbing action with nonviolent action. While there was absolutely no physical violence at this particular example of direct action, it is exactly such 'ordinary' demonstrations that draw out the unequal power relations and illustrate how nonviolence can function as a smokescreen to cover the underlying structural violence which such actions purport to protest against.

Fourth, it should be noted that, like Miri, the organizers of the protest equated nonviolent action with non-disturbing action. That is, they consciously chose to exclude Palestinian national symbols in order to not upset Israeli participants and not jeopardise possible news coverage in the Israeli media. This represents a sharp break with the most basic tenet of nonviolent direct action theory, which rejects the use of violence as part of a strategy that aims to undermine the pillars of support (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008; Fatthahi 2012) on which a particular oppressive systems rests. By choosing to 'not upset' the Israelis, the organizers chose to disconnect nonviolence from its direct action roots and therewith, it can be argued, stripping their strategy from addressing the underlying system of oppression.

The above ethnographic description shows how, in this instance, Israeli activists' voices and Israeli audiences were prioritized over Palestinian activists' voices and broader Palestinian everyday experiences. It is tempting to conclude that there therefore exists a 'good activism' and a 'bad activism'. The good activism would refer to the Sumud camp where the direct action

takes place on Palestinian land, where those most affected take the lead and where power relations are carefully considered and translated into strategic measure during the action. The demonstration at the Erez crossing would then be so called bad activism because unequal power relations are not acknowledged but instead reproduced. This division certainly reflects a sharp distinction that various Palestinian and Israeli activists themselves make; that between co-existence and co-resistance (Hammami 2015; Rijke & van Teeffelen 2014; van Teeffelen 2011; Hallward 2009). Co-existence is used to describe dialogue groups and peace activism that work within the peace and conflict paradigm which prioritizes narratives, mutual understanding and a shared responsibility for both the conflict and the much-desired solution of peace between the two sides (de Jong, 2017). Co-resistance, in contrast, does not perceive the current situation as a conflict between two sides but rather as continued settler-colonial dispossession and apartheid (Bishara, 2001; Dugard and Reynolds 2013). They acknowledge the discrepancy in power and position between Palestinian and Israeli activists and organize their direct actions accordingly (Amir and Kotef 2015).

In sum, a critical look at the example under scrutiny in this article shows how existing unequal power relations can be mirrored in activism and how this can lead to the, conscious or not, reproduction of exclusion and structural violence. It was shown how activists use the same discriminatory categories to describe Israeli or Palestinian participants based on ethno-nationalist difference rather than citizenship. This is concurrently reflected in the decision-making process and how this constantly prioritizes Israeli participation and Israeli audiences over Palestinian presence and Palestinian experience. This then lead to the conflation of a non-disturbing protest action with a nonviolent strategic action. These conclusions plead for the distinction between peace activism on the one hand and nonviolent resistance on the other hand. As has been shown, this closely corresponds with the emic—as used by some activists themselves—distinction between co-existence and co-resistance (Gale 2014). While this distinction is particularly useful to analyse internal dynamics within the Palestinian-Israeli activist scene, this article does not merely aim to distinguish between so called good and bad activism. Instead, I am interested in the mechanism through which unequal power relations and structural violence are reproduced within or through nonviolent action. Connecting the above to the proposed theoretical framework—thinking Palestine in relation to Zionism as its dialectic other, power and strategy in direct action theory, and the continuum of violence

as inherently present—therefore shows that this is not a mere difference in disposition between activist groups. Instead, the underlying positions towards Zionism demonstrates the perpetuation of violence in nonviolent protest.

Violence in nonviolent action

So far, the ethnographic example has shown how discriminatory ethno-nationalist categories can be upheld within nonviolent direct actions in Israel-Palestine. This further determined the decision-making process and the conscious humanitarian/non-political approach. By taking this approach and physically excluding Palestinian participation from the West bank, this particular protest prioritised Israeli participation and audiences over Palestinian participation and experiences. It also equates non-disturbing with non-violent which stands in stark contrast to strategic premises of nonviolent direct action theory because it does not undermine existing repressive and unequal structures. In this article, this concurrently lead to the distinction between peace activism on the one hand and nonviolent resistance on the other hand. While this distinction can be easily recognised in the Palestinian and Israeli activist scene of today, it simplifies activist positions and therewith obscures structural mechanisms of both violence and nonviolence in Israel-Palestine. In order to move beyond mere value judgement and activist/activist groups blaming, it is informative to reconnect the ethnographic example and analysis to the earlier introduced theoretical framework of thinking Palestine, strategic direct action theory and the continuum of violence. More practically this means critical engagement with activist interpretations of Zionism, how this informs perceptions of different forms of violence and, how these interpretations translate into different actions and strategic decision making.

In line with 'thinking Palestine', scholars such as Turner (2019) approach Zionism first and foremost as a political reality with far reaching consequences for Palestinians. While acknowledging that Zionism has different definitions and meanings, it is asserted that at the inception of the Zionist movement in 1897 its primary objectives phrased by Theodor Herzl were: 1) The creation of a collective secular nationalist Jewish identity, 2) the creation of a national Jewish language based on Rabbinical Hebrew to replace Yiddish, 3) the large-scale immigration of Jews from their countries of origin to Palestine and 4) the dominance over the 'new old land' politically

and economically, if necessary through violence (Avineri, 1981:127). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), an Orthodox Jewish leader in Germany, in response observed that this signaled a transformation of being Jewish because of what you do (religious practices) to being Jewish because of what you are (Jewish as an ethno-nationalist identity) (Hirsch, 1962:461). Based on particular interpretations of early Zionist movement objectives and recently confirmed by the 2018 Jewish Nation-State Bill (Jamal 2016), Israel is thus perceived as a democratic state for Jewish people in particular and not equal/equally democratic for all its citizens. This creates a distinction between, on the one hand, Jewish (potential) national citizens of Israel who enjoy full democratic citizens' rights, and on the other hand a non-national population of which Palestinians are the most visible which are not included in this national space. This distinction carries beyond Israel proper because Jewish settlers in the West Bank also enjoy full national citizenship whereas Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, for example, do not (Braverman 2007).

Palestinian and Israeli activists such as those from the Sumud Freedom camp and the flag protest-within a-protest perceive this distinction to be the root cause of the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories today. It is this ethno-nationalist categorization of people that was used to legitimize the creation of the state of Israel, the concurrent exclusion of the indigenous population from this newly established state, and the continuous dispossession and exclusionary suppression of Palestinians ever since. At this point, it is crucial to iterate that such interpretation or acknowledgement of Zionism as inherently violent due to ethno-nationalist exclusionary practices and structures, does not necessarily alleviate power inequalities among different activists. It does, however, show that questions of strategy, contentious repertoire and strategic nonviolent action go beyond individual preferences (Giugni, McAdam, Tilly 1999; Tarrow 2011).

Connecting this to nonviolent direct-action theory as set out before, the Erez crossing protest does not undermine this primary Zionist pillar of power but instead confirms and strengthens it. It confirms ethno-nationalist categorizations of othering by upholding ethnic divides between the activists and by excluding, both physically and symbolically, Palestinians from decision-making and the actual demonstration. By strictly observing the humanitarianism approach, the protest furthermore focused on providing urgent and temporary care to ahistorical victims and thus 'render[ed] questions about the future irrelevant or invisible' (Ticktin 2011:253).

De-politized protest like these not only confirm but even strengthen Zionist ethno-nationalist politics because it reinforced the idea of Israel as a democratic state where protests are allowed while only certain, non-disturbing, non-Palestinian protests are allowed. Protests that do not stick to a humanitarian message but address the root-cause of Zionist exceptionalism instead are rendered illegitimate and regularly met with brutal direct political violence (Stamatopoulou-Robbins 2008; Pallister-Wilkins 2011).

Demonstrations in villages such as Bil'in in the West Bank are, for example, routinely met with teargas and arrests while they also apply a creative nonviolent direct action approach (Gordon, 2010; Peteet, 2017). These weekly protests are led by the local Popular Committees and often take a carefully picked theme or approach each Friday in order to confront the Israeli army and protest the presence of the separation wall (Hallward 2009). In 2010, for example, protesters dressed up to resemble characters from the popular Hollywood movie Avatar to visually and symbolically portray the Palestinian struggle as indigenous anti-colonial, anti-capitalist destruction (Loshitzky 2012). As Rania Jawad eloquently demonstrates, the theatrical staging of such protests should be interpreted as a conscious way to 'appropriate the colonizer's tools of suppression (whether literal, such as the tear gas canisters, or more symbolic, such as the marking of the other as terrorist)' (Jawad 2011: 132).

The protest at the Erez crossing into Gaza also employed a theatrical approach based on a strategy. The organizing committee consciously decided to predominantly target an Israeli audience and, as such, the message of humanitarian aid took central stage. By prioritizing this message of doing good over the attendance (in person) and symbolic presence (ban on displaying flags) of Palestinians and Palestine, the activists thus consciously framed this action in a manner that does not challenge the occupation or the military siege on Gaza. The activists that posed the flags and therewith staged a protest within a protest visible challenged this non-threatening script not only by symbolically inserting Palestine back into the demonstration framework but also by challenging Zionism as inherently violent. Violence in this conception does not only refer to the violent dispersal of Palestinian-led, politized protests but also to the structural and symbolic violence that enables current Zionist ethno-nationalist dispossession.

This article focused on the reproduction of categories of people and unequal power relations and the reproduction of structural violence

within and through nonviolent action in Israel-Palestine. I pose, however, that the underlying threefold focus and theoretical framework—thinking Palestine, direct action theory and continuum of violence—carries beyond this particular case study and can inform other resistance studies in different settings who are interested in critically engaging with unequal power relations and the reproduction of violence within nonviolent activism and resistance.

Conclusion: Analysing nonviolent action

The analysis above illuminates how both violence and power are central to understanding the context of nonviolent action in Palestine-Israel. It has been shown that peace activism and nonviolent resistance in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories cannot be separated from the violent surroundings in which they operate and that activists, despite the often conscious decision to work together across the Palestine-Israel divide, are not immune for the multiple power relations among and between them. Peace activists—whether Jewish-Israeli, Arab-Israeli or Palestinian—deliberately work together in order to protest certain perceived unfair or inhumane aspects, such as medicine shortage due to the blockade of Gaza, or ill treatment at checkpoints. They do not necessarily always articulate an analysis or critique of what underlies such practise. While the reasons behind this may vary per peace-activist group, the general absence of deep critique among those who describe themselves as peace activists suggests that they prioritise Israeli participation and audiences over Palestinian everyday experiences of structural violence. Their insistence on conveying only certain messages and only using particular non-disturbing symbols and nonviolent methods can be perceived as perpetuating the status quo of military occupation and therewith reproducing structural violence.

Those following the nonviolent *resistance* approach, on the other hand, emphasize that they do not 'merely' protest the blockade or a particular instance of military violence but rather the ethno-nationalist exclusionary practices and structures that are perceived to cause them. In their political discourse, Zionist contemporary practise is described as inherently violent because it relies on a distinction based on ascribed ethno-nationalist identity. In this perspective it is assumed that professed respect for human rights is not actual unless it includes all people. In the case of Israel-Palestine respect for basic human rights depends on being classified as Jewish/Jewish-Israeli. They recognise that Zionism creates a context in which Jewish-Israeli activists hold

a different, less vulnerable position than Palestinian activists, and design both their direct actions and the internal organisational hierarchy accordingly.

Nonviolent activism is thus not simply characterised by absence of or opposition to the use of physical violence, but by the position it assumes in relation to what constitutes violence; how this translates into conscious processes of decision making and the execution of strategic action. Opposition to direct physical violence, as well as perceptions of structural violence and what its underlying causes are, is crucial to these activists' praxis. Furthermore, nonviolent resistance always maintains an element of refusal. In Israel and Palestine this can consist, among other things, of a refusal to comply with or reproduce the binary divisions of Israeli versus Palestinian or Jewish versus Muslim/Arab as implemented by the Israeli state. In other words, nonviolent resistance in those instances rejects the categories of othering on which Zionist ethno-nationalist exclusionary practises and structures are based.

To return to the Sumud camp, it becomes clear how the approach of the activists there differs from those at the demonstration near the Erez crossing into Gaza. First, they could genuinely present themselves as a joint Palestinian-Israeli nonviolent initiative, because in the West Bank Palestinians could actually participate without having to depend on Israeli counterparts to apply for a permit. Second, in the decision-making process power inequalities were addressed. As such, the Sumud camp participants acknowledged that the villagers of Sarura are the ones actually carrying the burden of IDF retaliations and therefore consciously followed the villagers' lead. Furthermore, they were aware that Jewish-Israeli and international participants are treated differently by the IDF and used this privileged position by, for example, putting Israelis and internationals in the frontlines during IDF or settler interventions. Third, the Sumud Freedom Camp clearly articulated how their particular action related to the broader situation. They not only resisted the dispossession of this particular Palestinian village, but connected it to Zionist settler-colonial expansion. By actively working together they thus embody a form of prefigurative politics which firmly rejects discriminatory categories set by Zionist practices.

To divide various activist groups and particular nonviolent actions in Palestine-Israel into 'good' resistance versus 'bad' peace activism does not, however, do justice to the activists nor the complex and violent surroundings in which they operate. Such simplified value discernment also fails to

contribute to the academic understanding of the reproduction of unequal power relations and the perpetuation of structural and symbolic violence in nonviolent actions. Instead, in this article I posed a threefold theoretical approach which enables a critical expose in both covert power relations and less visible forms of violence within nonviolent action as illustrated by an in-depth ethnographic description. Without downplaying the local specific context of Palestine-Israel, the suggested threefold approach can also be applied to investigate power relations and symbolic or structural violence in nonviolent protest in other settings.

First, whereas 'thinking Palestine' refers to a specified body of knowledge on Israel-Palestine in relation to Zionism, research in other settings would also first have to rethink the most basic of tenets of what is going on. It would be especially informative to scrutinize how various often competing conceptualizations of the problem/solution relate to perceptions of perpetuated violence. Second, this analysis of violence should not be limited to physical violence but instead include structural, symbolic and everyday violence and how these overlap and relate to each other. Furthermore, this second step should explore how these overt/less identifiable forms of violence apply and impact categories of people differently and how these understandings may or may not translate into processes of decision making within activist groups. Third and finally, resistance scholars should pay careful attention to how the strategies of nonviolent action are based on activist analysis of the above and whether such analysis and concurrent direct actions or strategically undermine these practices and structures.

While acknowledging existing power inequalities and consciousness about various form of violence does not automatically alleviate power relations and certainly does not immediately counter the violent surrounding of nonviolent protests, this approach may well provide activist and scholars (or activist scholars) alike with important tools to detangle less visible power relations among activists and critically analyse the perpetuation of violence through and within nonviolent actions.

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