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Palestine as 'a state of mind': second- generation Polish and British Palestinians' search for home and belonging

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This article reflects on the ways in which children of Palestinian exiles born in Poland and the UK relate to their ancestral homeland and how they make sense of their Palestinian inheritance in the present. It argues that while the second generation of Palestinian diasporic subjects maintain links with their parents' homeland these connections are not limited to the intergenerational transmission of cultural identity. The article explores how Palestine 'becomes' important for second– generation Palestinians. It argues that it is the re– occurring waves of violence inflicted on Palestinians that activate and shape their engagement with Palestine. Rather than a sense of attachment based exclusively on a personal connection with ancestral 'roots', the article argues that the second- generation also develop a sense of long distance post– nationalism that transforms their connection with Palestine into a more universal endeavour for justice and against the dispossession. These arguments are based on the findings of a two- year multi- sited ethnography which involved oral history interviews with 35 Palestinians of different generations, carried out in Poland and in the UK, including 15 interviews with second-generation Palestinians, as well as site-specific field visits in Israel and Palestine and follow- up 'return' interviews.

Introduction

When Lena arrived in Ramallah she thought it was the culmination of a long journey to connect with Palestine. The journey had been long not only due to the hours of interrogation that she had gone through at the Ben Gurion airport. It was long because, to her, arriving in Palestine, or more accurately, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, was the pinnacle of several years of searching to find out who she was and striving to reconnect with her heritage. During her teenage years, the strained relationship between her and her father made her shun her Palestinian heritage. Her feelings started to change in 2003 with the American-led intervention in Iraq and Polish participation in the so-called 'war on terror'. She still remembers the half-serious jokes of her friends accusing her of being biased in defending 'her people' when she argued against the war. In one of these heated debates her friend said, 'Lena, if you feel so sorry about the Muslims and the Arab world, why don't you just go there'. A few months later, she did. She went to Lebanon to study at the American University in Beirut (AUB). The AUB was a new world to her. It was there that she met people like her – of mixed Arab and Western background, confused, belonging to the West, yet sharing something else that had now become meaningful. It was in Beirut that she decided to go to Palestine. She soon realized that arriving in Palestine was only the beginning of the journey of reconnection with her heritage.

(to be continued)

I have begun this article with this long research diary- description of my interview with Lena, a Polish – Palestinian from Wrocław, to draw attention to some of the complexities and troubles related to the ways in which the second generation of diasporic

subjects – children born in their parental country of immigration – relate to their ancestral homeland.[1] Lena's complicated (and unfinished) journey illuminates several points that I would like to explore further in this article. One is about the relationship between the intergenerational transmission of cultural identity in immigrant families and the ways in which the second- generation of diaspora subjects connect to their diasporic homelands and make sense of their heritage. Some early theorizations of migration assumed that with the passage of time subsequent generations of immigrant children would cease to maintain transnational links with the country of origin (Gordon 1964; Portes and Zhou 1992; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). More recent works recognize that while the second-generation are often more attached to the culture in which they grow up and are not necessarily 'place-bound', they nevertheless remain 'place- conscious' of their parental country of origin (Huyssen 2010; Tölölyan 2010, 37; Levitt and Waters 2006). This article considers the relationships that children of refugees form with their parental homelands and discusses the circumstances in which these relationships become activated. In other words, it explores the factors that transform 'place – consciousness' into an actively exercised relationship with Palestine in the present. The opening description of Lena's journey gives insight into the complexity and malleability of the process. It invites us to look critically at the heritage inheritances in migrant families, which, as I will argue, are often troubling and contested experiences for the second-generation of diaspora subjects. The article posits that the inter-generational passing of memories is limited and fragmented and does not necessarily provide a smooth

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[1] I use the term 'second generation' as Portes defines it, to refer to those who were born in their parents' country of immigration or those who emigrated at a very early age (Portes 1996, ix). I use the word 'ancestral' in relation to Palestine being the country of origin of participants' parents and grandparents. My usage of the term does not assume this relationship to be fixed or natural.

'transmission belt' of cultural identity to the children of exiles. Thus, the article considers how the country of parental or grandparental origin 'becomes' rather than 'remains' important for the second generation of Palestinians, and how these processes happen in loose connection with or, sometimes, against the family inheritances.

In the second part of this article I return to Lena's story and her journey to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and I reflect more closely on the changing character of the relationship with Palestine among second- generation Palestinians. I locate my analysis in relation to the debates on transnational engagements of diaspora in the homeland politics and nationalist movements. While diasporas have often been seen as cosmopolitan formations of global movement that undermine the territorial sovereignty of nation-states (c.f. Appadurai 1996; Bauböck 1994; Soysal 1994; Werbner 2005), some researchers have also recognized that they can be actively engaged both affectively and materially in the nationalists politics of and in their countries of origins (Werbner 2002). Some of these engagements have been described as 'long- distance nationalism' by Benedict Anderson (Schiller and Fouron 2001; Skrbis 2001; Conversi 2012; Anderson 1992). Anderson, and other theorists working with this concept, observe that diasporas not only maintain an active relationship with their countries or places of origin, but that they often develop a high-level of radicalism around homeland politics. These politics are often pursued without the responsibility or accountability that comes with formal citizenship and the burden of living in the respective homeland. While some argue that diasporic subjects use nationalist claims mainly to enhance their 'ethnic difference' in diaspora (Skrbis 2001) others assert that long- distance nationalisms often go beyond 'imagination and sentiment' and '[lead] to action' (Schiller and Fouron 2001, 174). As

Fauron and Shiller further explain: 'Long distance nationalists may vote, demonstrate, contribute money, create works of art, give birth, fight, kill and die for a "homeland" in which they may have never lived' (2001, 174). Van Hear and Cohen emphasize that some diasporas have been seen as 'war-mongers' and 'peace-wreckers' in relation to their countries of origin, highlighting their role in undermining the peace efforts in their ancestral homeland through their unwillingness to accept compromise in the same way as their fellow nationals, who remain at home (2016, 2). While long- distance nationalism had been seen as a 'first- generation phenomenon', recent research studies suggest that it is also something that exceeds into the second generation and beyond (King and Christou 2009; Schiller and Fouron 2001)

In the context of the above debates this article considers the existence of other forms of transnational political engagements, which go beyond 'long- distance nationalism', but nevertheless link second-generation subjects with their parental homeland. Van Hear and Cohen remind us that some diasporas have also been engaged in 'peace-making' and 'peace-building' efforts, hinting towards the possible existence of other means of political engagement with the homeland that are not based on nationalist claims (Hear and Cohen 2016, 2). Based on the analysis of the trajectories of the Palestinians I interviewed, this article posits that the second- generation of Palestinians in Poland and the UK have been affectively engaged with their ancestral homeland and have participated in the Palestinian imagined community – but not necessarily on nationalist terms. Rather, I suggest, their engagement can be conceptualized as 'long distance post-nationalism'. I argue that this long distance post- nationalism, while motivated, to some extent, by the transmission of Palestinian memories, is not limited to inherited modes of

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relating to homeland. Their relationship with Palestine does not rely on presumed relationship with lost land or family homes, or at least not in an exclusive way. My participants' emotional investment in Palestine does not involve an imperative to 'kill, fight and die' for a homeland (Schiller and Fouron 2001, 174) or participation in nationalist politics. They might support Palestinian claims for independence. But they do not see themselves as represented by the Palestinian Authority, nor do they seek to be part of any form of national political representation. **I argue that their stake in Palestine is motivated by their rejection of the Israeli occupation and the reoccurring violence in the OPT and instilled through a commitment to justice and human rights for Palestinians.**

This article draws on the multi-sited qualitative study that I carried out in Poland, the UK, Palestine and Israel between early 2012 and 2014 with three generations of Palestinian refugees and migrants and their descendants. In total, the fieldwork involved oral history interviews with 35 diaspora Palestinians in Poland and the UK of different generations. This includes 15 oral history interviews with members of the second generation. In most cases the interviews lasted two or more hours and involved multiple encounters over the two-year period.

Second- generation Palestinians in Poland and the UK and the complexities of the intergenerational transmission

Palestinians in Poland and the UK constitute only a small fraction of the Palestinian

exile.[2] Between 1947 - 1948, over 750,000 Palestinian Arabs, half of the population at the time, were forced to flee their homeland by Israeli military and have never been allowed to return (Morris 1989; Sanbar 2001; Masalha 2003; Pappe 2007). The ongoing and lasting dispossession has created a situation in which new generations of Palestinians have been born away from Palestine and often without the possibility of visiting their homes, villages and towns in what is now Israel.

Over 65 years after the dramatic events of the Nakba, literally 'the catastrophe' in Arabic, as the expulsion has come to be known, my research examined the ways in which the generations of Palestinians who have been brought up since the expulsion remember and relate to the ancestral homeland. I have undertaken the research in Europe, where the 'pulling factors' of Palestinian diaspora towards this homeland have been weakened by territorial and cultural detachment from the Arab world (Hanafi 2005). Carrying out the research in two European locations, Poland and the UK, offered the opportunity to trace the most diverse experiences in terms of participants' routes of departure and their socioeconomic conditions of exile. In the case of the UK, many Palestinians came directly after the Nakba. This first migration consisted mainly of middle-class families who had earlier contacts with the British Mandate (Matar 2005). Subsequent groups came from Lebanon in the 80s.

Palestinian migration to Poland and other Eastern European countries consisted of impoverished refugees from the camps of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan who came there to study (Shiblak 2005). These were primarily former Palestinian Liberation Organization

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[2] While there are no official statistics some researchers estimate the size of Palestinian population in the UK at around 20.000 (c.f Shiblak 2005; Matar 2005). The numbers I have come across in Poland varied from 500 to 2000.

activists, who had had been engaged in resistance activities in Jordan or Lebanon and arrived in Poland and other countries of the Eastern Block through the framework of the bilateral agreements between the Palestinian Liberation Organizations and the respective communist governments (c.f Szczepanik, Herman-Łukasik, and Janicka 2010).

The second- generation Polish and British Palestinians whose experiences I discuss in this article were all born and brought up as children of exiles in Palestinian or in mixed - ethnicity families. In Poland, all of the research participants had Polish mothers and Palestinian fathers, who stayed in Poland after their university scholarships had ended. Research participants from the UK either had two Palestinian parents or grew up in families of mixed Arab ancestry

For the generations of Palestinian refugees who had to flee Palestine in 1948, the memory of the 'Nakba' and the loss of their homeland was a constitutive element of their identity (Said 1985, 1994; Rashid Khalidi 1997; Sanbar 2001; Masalha 2003; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Gabiam and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016). In the absence of a Palestinian state and state institutions, family has often been seen as the foundation of Palestinian memory in exile and the key site of cultural transmission (Sayigh 1979; Taraki 2006; Masalha 2003). Refugee children grew surrounded by the stories of their families' lost houses and villages and the idealised landscape they had to leave. The importance of transmission was particularly reinforced in the context of growing up in the refugee camps where the memory of loss and nourishing of Palestinian identity was a cornerstone of daily camp existence (Sayigh 1979; Taraki 2006; Holt 2010; Davis 2011).

Sixty-seven years later, when I undertook my research, the experiences of my participants from both Poland and the UK – who grew up in isolation from Arab

communities and the Arab world - seemed to be somewhat different in this respect. One of the often-recurring motifs of the interviews with the second- generation was the childhood memory of their Palestinian parents glued to their radio or TV sets and listening to news in Arabic. Some of the research participants remembered that news of political developments played an important part in the household's ambience. Lehali, a British-Palestinian born and brought up in a London suburb, remembers that the TV broadcasts would inform her parents' mood for days and would prompt endless discussions about politics at the dinner table. Lena, whom we met at the beginning of the article, remembers Arab uncles coming over to her parents' house, sitting in the living room, smoking cigarettes and discussing political developments. This preoccupation with news from the Arab world was seen by many of the research participants as emblematic of growing up in an immigrant home with entanglements elsewhere. However, their parents rarely tried to explain to them what was happening on the news. Lehali further recalls that, as a young girl, it was difficult to connect to this 'far-away' politics and translate these images into a tangible link with Palestine. All that she remembered was the discussion about politics; what she missed was stories about family and Arab traditions that would give her a sense of fabric of Palestinian life.

Their stories give insight into the alienation of participants' Arab families in the environment in which they lived in Europe, which has made the transmission of culture and memory a more demanding task. The cultural transmission often happened *en passant,* to use Welzer's term – often spontaneously and non-consciously (2001, 12). The research participants often emphasized their parents' desire for them to 'fit in as soon as possible'. This could be read as conscious strategy of Palestinian families to be a 'shock

absorber' for their offspring in the troubled trajectories of exile and displacement (Taraki 2006, XII). While parents believed, this approach would help their children integrate into the 'host society', it also made participation in Palestinian culture more difficult. As Robert, a Polish- Palestinian from Łódź, pointed out in his interview, the fact that his father did not teach him Arabic (something common across the Polish-Palestinian families) made him feel like 'he was missing something' and that he was 'an inferior Palestinian'. He recalled that the lack of language fluency made him uneasy, especially in contact with other Palestinians when he often felt like the 'odd-one out' – not able to fully participate in conversations, which further complicated his sense of belonging to Palestinian culture.

In other cases, it was not about the lack of transmission, but about the type of cultural transmission they had been exposed to as children. Tala from London, was especially vocal in her dismay:

> I was raised to be Palestinian. My parents were both quite nationalist and today I think in a very bad way. There was this kind of memorabilia at home, like Palestine stuff around that didn't necessarily fit into the decor, but it was there because it was necessary. My parents stuffed Palestine down my throat, being forced to love everything that's related to Palestine … so you ended up hating it.

Tala's quote vividly illuminates the generational differences in understandings of how diasporic linkages to homeland should be exercised. She rejects her parents' version of loyalty to Palestine as superficial. Later in the interview she dismisses their attitudes as a 'sofa activism' that she sees as counter-productive to the Palestinian cause. She

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criticizes her parents for being concerned with 'memorabilia and living the past' without the willingness or ability to move on and think about new strategies of reclaiming Palestine. Tala's criticism of her parents' relationship to Palestine, which is echoed in some of the other interviews, becomes a contributing element to the formation of her own relationship with Palestine.

Helena Lindholm Schultz, in her analysis of diaspora Palestinians, explains that 'younger generations become part of the narrative produced by their parents' (Schulz and Hammer 2003, 172). However, the above extract from Tala's interview allows us to see the parental transmission strategies from the receiving end of the 'transmission belt' and to observe resistance to them. Rather than demonstrating continuity, the interviews with the second generation of Polish and British- Palestinians point to the complexities of intergenerational transmission and the challenges of growing up in diaspora families. Peggy Levitt emphasizes that this process of 'making sense' of the inheritance of and the connection with the parental homeland is mediated by several factors. She posits that 'the second generation is situated between a variety of different and often competing generational, ideological and moral reference points, including those of their parents, their grandparents and their own real and imagined perspectives about their multiple homelands' (2009: 1238). While the cultural identity passed on by the parents' remained a point of reference for the second generation, the transmission is fragmented and limited and is often not sufficient to provide a meaningful relationship with Palestinian culture. As we have seen, it can also be contested and rebelled against. Talking about their childhood and adolescence, some participants felt that, in retrospect, their parents did not or could not provide them enough of a grounding to fully appreciate or relate to their

Palestinian heritage. In the context of this fragmented, contested and sometimes limited transmission of memories, many of the interviewees have been pursuing their relationship with Palestine only in loose relation to, and sometimes even in opposition to, what they had been exposed to at home. Lehali said: 'I had to do all this work alone'.

Re – working the cultural inheritances

While many of the research participants in my sample spoke of the experiences of creating links with the ancestral homeland using the language of 'finding their roots' or 'reconnecting with their past', this journey was not a straightforward adoption of a 'ready- made' identity for any of them. Rather, these experiences consisted of often uncertain and constantly self-actualizing processes of forging their own relationship with Palestine. These processes have been multifaceted, comprising of both physical and symbolic journeys to get to know their Palestinian heritage as well as different practices of giving meaning to and making sense of it. Amr, one of the British research participants, described the process in the following way:

> For me, [Palestine] … it's a constant process of searching; I think I am constantly trying to figure out what that link is. And I don't know it yet.
> There are moments where I openly reject my identity as seen from the outside, but yes, there are moments where I do genuinely want to connect.
> But it's been strange when I was growing up; it is strange now.

Amr, born in London to Palestinian– Jordanian parents, was open about his ambivalent relationship with his parents' country of origin and his difficulty in creating

the personal relationship with it that he both longed for and struggled to create. As we were sitting on a bench in the park, half-jokingly he listed all the different strategies that he had employed in an attempt to connect to Palestine and Palestinian culture. He tried to engage in diaspora politics, he dated a Palestinian girl and wore a *kuffieh*. He was also equally quick to dismiss these attempts as constructed and artificial. Throughout this process, both of searching and of telling, he has remained extremely self-conscious, highlighting his ongoing quest for a relationship that would feel authentic. Eventually, it was reading African-American literature, in which he identified his own position of marginality and 'outsiderness', that helped him to connect to Palestine. However, this striving for a connection has not reached the final point – he has identified it as an ongoing process of searching. His 'connecting' to Palestine has been experienced as a constantly negotiated 'position' within both host and ancestral society (Hall 1996, 226).

For Amr and other research participants in the sample these searches for 'roots' need to be understood in a symbolic way and are not necessarily only root–oriented. In this sense their journeys are reminiscent of Stuart Hall's assertion that cultural identity is as much a matter of 'becoming' as of 'being' (1990, 225). He argues that 'cultural identity is produced and not re-discovered' (1990, 224). In this sense, attempts at reclaiming the past, as Hall reflects, are not grounded 'in the archaeology' of the past but in its 're- telling' (1990, 224). Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering argue that these attempts are also mediated by the imagination, which allows the user to reshape the meaning of memories so '[they] can make something qualitatively new through recombining ideas, objects, practices and experiences' (Keightley and Pickering 2012, 123). For Amr, and many other participants of this generation, their relationship with

Palestine does not come as fixed or given, nor is there a single pattern of 'arriving to Palestine'. Rather, it is an on-going process of 'figuring out': of moulding, making and re- making the relationship with Palestine without a set direction (c.f Mavroudi 2007, 407). Michael Rothberg adds that 'our relationship to the past does partially determine who we are in the present, but never straightforwardly and directly' (Rothberg 2009, 5). Thus, 'reclaiming roots' for the second generation can be read as an ongoing means of re-interpreting one's own heritage in the present context. Hall concludes that '[c]ultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical they undergo constant transformation' (1996, 225).

Political mobilization of Palestinian pasts

For the second generation of diasporic Palestinians I interviewed, the task of making sense of their Palestinian heritage was a complex, difficult and, at times, confusing process. While these journeys 'to' Palestine have taken different forms depending on individual circumstances, it is possible to clearly delineate some common 'triggers' in their biographies that forced them to re-visit their position vis a vis the society in which they live and to re-connect with their backgrounds. In the initial extract from Lena it is possible to trace how 9/11 and the subsequent 'war on terror' became the first instance in which she began to feel uneasy in Poland. The events of 9/11 increased feelings of marginalization and alienation in their respective societies among majority of the participants in my sample. Not only do they often feel personally stigmatized by the distorted representations of Muslims that appear in the post-9/11 media, they are also put in a position of having 'to speak for' or 'represent' the entire Muslim world. The

demonization of Arabs and Islam, which treats numerous and diverse communities as one single entity, has compelled them to respond to these oversimplifications by developing their own views and articulating their own positions (Poynting and Mason 2006; Bernard 2010; Kunst et al. 2012; Matar 2006). These events – or rather Western reaction to these events – have pulled the research participants out of their ease with the societies in which they live and propelled an interest in their Palestinian heritage.

Along with 9/11 and subsequent events, the ongoing wave of violence in Israel and Palestine has been the key activating factor of their interest in their parental or grandparental homeland. My fieldwork began in the spring of 2012. During the first round of the interviews the memory of Cast Lead, the 2009 Israeli operation in Gaza, was still fresh in the minds of my research participants. The scale of brutality, loss of life and destruction was so significant that for many of the research participants it became a turning point in in their engagement with Palestine. As Ala, a Polish – Palestinian from Kraków explains:

> For many years I thought I could separate from politics. Remembering how engaged my father was and how bitter it made him feel I hoped I could stay away from all this. But then 2009 happened. I was watching the bombardment of Gaza on the TV and I just could not believe it. This is when realized that I cannot just hide from these issues, that I cannot pretend this does not affect me. This was a spark that ignited my journey of searching for Palestine.

When I spoke to her for the first time in the early 2012 she had recently returned from Gaza, where she had gone with a humanitarian convoy to support the victims of the

2009 invasion. The time spent in Gaza has become a life-changing experience for her. Not only was she struck by the scale of human loss, physical destruction and the totality of Israeli control of Gaza, she was also deeply affected by the generosity of people whom she met there and with whom she had since stayed in touch. By the time I finished my fieldwork in 2014, Israel had undertaken two more full-scale operations in Gaza - The Pillar of Defence, in late 2012, and The Protective Edge, in the summer of 2014. In both cases, these events prompted a strong response from my participants. As Emil, another research participant from Poland suggested in the interview: 'Even if I wanted to forget Palestine, I am not allowed to. They really keep me busy remembering Palestine'. After the 2012 operation Emil felt he could not remain any longer and went to see his father and Palestine for the first time in many years. After the 2014 invasion, Ala, the same person who had hoped she could escape politics, organized a series of protests against the invasion in Poland.

Like for Emil and Ala, for many other research participants the ongoing developments in in the region and the reoccurring waves of violence served as constant ignition points that sparked their interest in and, in some cases, direct engagement with Palestine. Even those who had been ambivalent about their connection with Palestine were profoundly affected by the events and shaken by the loss of civilian lives and the scale of destruction to civilian homes and Gaza's infrastructure. This feeling was reinforced by the fact they also felt that Palestinians are grossly misrepresented in the conflict and that Israeli human rights violations often go unnoticed and unpunished. In the absence of direct experiences or personal memories of Palestine, many of the participants had been missing a

meaningful connection with their ancestral homeland. The re-occurring violence drew many of them into different forms of activism and catalyzed new modes of connecting with Palestine.

Second generation Palestinians 'returning' to Palestine

The concept of 'ancestral return', also referred to as 'return migration', is rarely discussed in the literature on second- generation migrants, which often focuses on their relationship with their country of birth. King and Christou emphasize that the second generation 'return' needs to be understood in metaphorical sense (2008: 2). However, they underline the importance of the affective connection with the diasporic homeland. They see second generation returning as a 'performative act of belonging and discovering one's roots' (ibid.: 17) and argue that the return can be a 'profound homecoming at multiple levels' (ibid).

For the Palestinian refugees, who have never been allowed to go back, the return to Palestine has maintained a particularly important dimension. It has been seen as a central element of Palestinian resilience and the cornerstone of their identity in exile (Abu Sitta 1999; Hammer 2005; Masalha 2012)[3]. The 'right of return' continues to have crucial symbolic, moral and collective dimensions for the second generation Polish and British Palestinians in my sample. However, participants in my sample did not necessarily see the 'return' in terms of their individual right – something that they saw as belonging to the generation of their parents and grandparents, but often as a collective recognition of injustice and violence caused by the dispossession.

Several of them have undertaken their own 'return visits' to Palestine or, in

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[3] The state of Israel has never agreed to a return of Palestinian refugees despite Article 11 of UN Resolution 194 calling for facilitation of the return of the population that was forced to flee (Akram, 2002: 40-41, UNRWA http://www.unrwa.org/content/resolution-194). The only way for Palestinians to travel to the West Bank, Gaza or Israel is to use the citizenship of the other country.

Lena's case, even attempted to permanently relocate to their ancestors' original homeland, using their British and Polish passports. These trips, like in many case of second – generation returning to their ancestral homelands have often brought confusion (Kibria 2000). When Lena arrived in Ramallah a few years later she was enthusiastic and determined to make the Occupied Palestinian Territories her new home:

> When I finally arrived in Palestine, I was sure that this entire identity route of finding myself was already behind me – from trying to figure out who I am, to discovering Arabic language and to understanding what I want to do.
> And when I arrived in Palestine, I realized that I had no idea about any of these things. In many respects, my sense of being Palestinian was undermined there more than anywhere before. In Lebanon people accepted me, I did not have to explain myself. In Palestine I was immediately qualified as one of those 'internationals', just because I would be carrying a backpack, or wearing a bag in slightly different way.
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> And then there was something else. Many people I was meeting there understood Palestine through the West Bank, through the Gaza Strip and through the occupation. I understood that, but my attachment to Palestine was not limited to it.

This part of Lena's narrative provides insight into both the emotional investment and the difficulty involved in travelling 'back' to ancestral sites of origins. It also raises several crucial issues about the process of 'reconnecting' to the 'homeland' among the second – generation of migrants returning to their parental countries of origin.

Rather than being the ultimate journey in the 'quest for self' and the attainment of 'grounded belonging' (Basu, 2004: 161), the experiences of settling in Palestine

undermine the sense of belonging that Lena had spent so long searching for. She realized that, despite her genuine attempts, she could not easily fit in to the Palestinian society in the West Bank. The feeling of not being fully 'at home' returned to her - and it reminded her of the feelings she had in Poland after the intervention in Iraq. The West Bank and the political reality of the post-Oslo, semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority did not speak to her idea of Palestine. Her weekend travels to Haifa, where her grandparents lived, were important and she felt reluctant to give them up, despite realizing that Palestinians in the West Bank do not have the privilege to travel there. Being in Haifa also brought disappointment. Despite several attempts, she was not able to locate her grandparent's house.

Lena's inability to fully feel at home within the realities of the occupied West Bank and her inability to locate her 'diasporic home' in Haifa illuminates the difficulty of literal 'returning' to the 'ancestral' past. Lena's initial hope is to return to her 'roots' – to stability and certainty – to a place of the primordial belonging. Very soon, she realized that this type of 'return' and reconnection is not possible, at least not exactly as she had imagined. As Elspeth Probyn writes, 'You can never go home. Or rather, once returned, you realize the cliché that home is never what it was' (Probyn 1996, 14). Probyn's words are reminiscent of Avtar Brah's suggestion about the difficulty of returning to the imagined homeland even 'if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin"' (Brah 1996, 192). Mindful of Probyn's reflection on the (im)possibility of 'full' return, Anne Marie Fortier (Fortier 2001) proposes looking at 'the returns' from a different perspective. She encourages us to reflect on how 'the movement back "home" reworks "home" in different ways' (Fortier 2001, 412). She proposes an

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examination of the ways in which this 'return' encourages other 'forms of becoming' –
how going 'back' impacts going 'forward' (ibid.). The final extract of Lena's narrative
offers a potential response to Fortier's suggestion. As she explained:

> Towards the end of my stay in the West Bank I realized something else about my
> relationship with Palestine. That I did not need to live there and give up my freedom to
> have the right to feel Palestinian. And my way of understanding my belonging to the
> nation can be very different than, let's say, that of a family from Jenin. In fact, I could
> have nothing in common with them – I can wear my bikini, love European opera, but also
> dance Palestinian debke and, but also be part of the Palestinian culture. My understanding
> of being Palestinian has become much more fluid now. Palestine is a state of mind for
> me.

Fortier asserts that the return to a home that is not the same as the home one
imagined, while disappointing and difficult, nevertheless creates a space for 'grounding
self' in the process of 'becoming' (2001, 412). Thinking from this perspective, Lena's
time in occupied Palestine enabled her to develop a different connection to Palestine. It
allowed her to realise 'there is more to Lena than the West Bank' and that the other parts
of her identity and relationships with people outside of the West bank were equally
important to her. She recognized that her desire to 'reconnect' did not require her to
compromise other parts of her identity - and that she did not need to live in the West
Bank, obtain a Palestinian ID and resign from visiting Haifa to be a 'true' Palestinian[4].

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[4] **Palestinians who live in the West Bank cannot travel freely to Israel. They need to have a special permit, which
is difficult to obtain.**

She realised that there could be different ways of relating to Palestine and different ways of being a Palestinian. Lena's re-worked and reconfigured connection with Palestine allows her to create a bond with Palestine on different terms than her initial understanding. Her relationship with Palestine evolved from the search for 'grounded attachment', into a more 'fluid' relationship based on a conscious affiliation with Palestine. Palestine becomes 'state of mind', which she described in the following way:

> [State of mind] ....is about the ongoing colonisation that has lasted since the Second World War. Like that we have that process of de – colonisation, but we also have Western Sahara, Timor and Palestine, where the injustice of colonisation continues. But in Palestine more than anywhere else - and I suppose this is how I now understand my relationship with this place. (…) But it is also accepting that for the people in this place, I might always be this 'other'. But this does not make me less Palestinian.

After the experience of having lived in OPT Lena begins to see her attachment to Palestine through the prism of continuing injustice of colonisation and dispossession. This framing of the relationship transcends her individual story. It is still framed in political terms, but these terms are neither nationalist nor related to a physical claim to land. In this sense, it becomes less about 'roots' and more about 'cause', less about her personal link to her grandparent's house, and more about struggle for recognition of the ongoing injustice. In this 'evolved' relationship with Palestine, 'everyone can be part' as she says. This process involves a different kind of realisation – which is related to acknowledging her own sense of 'otherness' (Said 2000). It is the recognition that her family routes of exile made her experiences different than those of people who might

have never left the West Bank. She realised relationships and attachments that she has developed – in Poland, Lebanon and elsewhere – matter to her as well and are also a constitutive of who she is. At it is also these experiences which displace her from feeling fully at home 'in Palestine' even as they open possibilities of other relationships – with Palestine and beyond.

For Ala, her re – engagement with Palestine begins with Operation Cast Lead and her subsequent visit with the humanitarian aid delivery to Gaza. Gaza emerges for her as a kind of symbolic 'carrier of Palestinian identity' and is the initial conduit of her 'reconnection' with Palestine even though Ala's family was originally from the north of Palestine and might have never even been to Gaza. Nevertheless, it is Gaza, and her memory of visiting Gaza, which receives a special status in her mind and becomes a symbol of her relationship with Palestine. Ala's experience gives insight into how attachment to Palestine may transform from being site-specific to something more symbolic for this generation – even though there may still be a certain geography that carries this symbolic attachment. In this case, Gaza, as the epicentre of struggle is re-imagined as a site of symbolic attachment to Palestine. For Ala, this engagement offers new connections to Palestine that are not rooted in her family's past, but in her bond with Palestinian communities and in active resistance to the occupation. As I was finishing my research, she was preparing to visit Palestine again. She was training to take part in the Bethlehem 'Right to Movement' marathon, which aims to draw the world's attention to the stringent restrictions on the Palestinian population's mobility under occupation. For Ala, this trip, in which she planned both to run the marathon and visit the site of her grandparents' village is 'the culmination of a 30 year journey' to connect with her

heritage.

For both Ala and Lena and other Polish and British participants, the return to Palestine, be it actual or symbolic, has been a difficult process of re – configuring their inherited pasts into a meaningful relationship with the present. In each case, this process necessitated overcoming many difficult tensions: the juxtaposition of their imagined geographies of Palestine with the realities of today's Israel and the OPT and their fragmented inherited memories with their desire to create their own connection with the homeland. Using Fortier's insights, it is possible to see how these returns, sometimes disappointing and upsetting, nevertheless facilitate the creation of new relationships and points of attachments and stimulated the invention of their own ways of relating to and caring for Palestine. The Palestine that emerges in the stories of the research participants ceases to be a personal or familial possession that can be lost or found, buried or excavated.

Conclusion. Towards *long distance post – nationalism* of second- generation Palestinians

In this article I have examined the journeys of second – generation of Polish and British Palestinians, born and brought up in temporal and geographical separation from Palestine, as they seek to create a meaningful relationship with the homeland of their parents and grandparents. I have argued that this relationship is only partly activated by the intergenerational transmission of memory in their families. The article has posited that these second – generation Palestinians, rather than 'maintaining' their parents'

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relationship with Palestine, strive to create links with Palestine independently.

Some researchers, writing about the ongoing-ness of the Palestinian exile, are anxious about the potential thinning out of the Palestinian identity in diaspora with the passage of time (Schulz and Hammer 2003, 204). The analysis of the oral histories of Polish and British Palestinians in my sample suggests that the continuing violence and injustice produce new generations of Palestinians for whom Palestine continues to matter – although the type of relationships that they form with their parental country of origin, as the article has sought to demonstrate, change. These relationships are unfixed and volatile, continually shifting as research participants search for modes of connection that feel authentic. The connections they form do not centre exclusively on the physical loss of land or nostalgic longings of return to pre – 1948 Palestine as was true of the generation of their parents and grandparents (Sayigh 1979; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Davis 2011). To some extent, they might be triggered by the childhood imaginaries and stories they have heard from their ancestors, but, as the article has explored, these often only serve as a springboard for the different types of relationship that they establish - on their own terms and, often, against the family inheritances.

As we have seen, their relationship with Palestine has been transformed into a more symbolic, but nevertheless crucially important, bond. The relationship that emerged from the participants' stories has been driven by what can be called as *long – distance post – nationalism*. Long distance post- nationalism among my sample, has been triggered first and foremost by the continuous violence inflicted upon Palestinians. It is the very

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reaction to this violence and injustice that transforms their relationship with their ancestral country of origin. It is no longer only about Palestine as site of primordial 'roots', but also about Palestine as a 'cause'. While the point of engagement with Palestine begins in many cases with a personal interest and personal story, it transforms participants' relationship with Palestine from one that could be read in national terms to one that can be interpreted in more universal terms – as joining a struggle for justice.

In thinking about this type of relationship and long distance post – nationalism, it is helpful to think with Baeza's descriptions of political and cultural engagement of Palestinian diasporas in Latin America in the Palestinian issues. Baeza recognizes that while the Palestinian communities in Latin America, the majority of whom emigrated in the early XX century, might have only a loose personal connection to, they nevertheless remain active in campaigning against the occupation and instrumental in attracting condemnation of Israeli policy by Latin American governments (Baeza 2014, 69). The ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine motivates their engagement, which is practiced through standing in solidarity with the oppressed and campaigning for recognition of the injustice. Among second generation Palestinians in my sample, this engagement can take different forms, from advocacy activities in the country of their birth, to humanitarian aid to more symbolic moral stance against the injustice.

This shift in the participants' understanding of their Palestinian heritage is echoed in Jean Makdisi's essay 'Becoming Palestinian', in which she describes what Palestine means to her:

To me Palestine means the overriding injustice that occurred and continues in Palestine, not because it is unique in the annals of imperial mischief, but because it is mine, and because it is emblematic to others. To embrace Palestine means to embrace all other places suffering injustice (…) The paradox is that the more Palestinian one becomes, the less centred one is only on Palestine, and the more on the wider world. How can there ever be justice in Palestine if there is not elsewhere? (Makdisi 2013, 161)

Here Magdisi links injustice taking place in Palestine with injustice happening in other parts of the world and, thus, universalizes it. For Makdisi, and the Polish and British Palestinians in my research sample, Palestine, like many other places in the world becomes a symbol of the fight for justice – a symbol that resonates not just among Palestinians but with people around the world and as such could facilitate the building of cross– sectorial activism networks (c.f. Nagel and Staeheli 2010). The language and the arguments that the second – generation Polish and British Palestinians use in their narratives to describe their stake in Palestine is rooted in human rights and international humanitarian law, as we have seen in case of Ala or Lena, and not in nationalist claims. They see their engagement in Palestine as a struggle for justice and equal rights for Palestinians suffering under the occupation. One can speculate to what extent long-distance post- nationalism can co- exist with national forms of belonging to the national polity. While many of the second- generation research participants sympathized with the Palestinian struggle for independence, none of them realised their attachment to Palestine through direct engagement in nationalist movements or saw themselves as represented by Palestinian Authority. Yet it important to recognise how these different forms of

attachment are not necessarily exclusive and could overlap with each other.

This adaption of human right discourse can also read as a way of legitimizing Palestinian suffering in the eyes of the international community after their claims rooted in the national struggled had been disavowed after the Second Intifada (Bernard 2010; Allen 2009). One can ask to what extent long- distance post-nationalism driven by universalist human rights de- politicizes the Palestinian struggle by shifting attention from nationalist claims based on territorial liberation. The risk of de-politicization of the Palestinian cause certainly exists, especially when one looks at the current state of affairs in the Palestinian – Israeli conflict and the unsuccessful track record of the international community in constraining Israeli territorial expansion into the Palestinian Territories, much less in resolving the conflict.

Simultaneously, it is possible to see the how the second generation's new post-nationalist conceptualisation of Palestine might have the potential to universalize Palestinian struggle and, as such, make it inclusive and accessible to those Palestinians who might otherwise have felt disconnected from their parental country of origin. By rejecting the essentalizing notions of 'roots' it is also possible to see the long-distance 'post- nationals' as potential agents of developing other ways of thinking about belonging to the Palestinian polity – which has clear territorial referents but which also contains a global, de-territorialized and politically engaged citizenry.

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