CONSTRUCTIVE NONVIOLENT ACTION IN ISRAEL

How do young active Israelis perceive taking action from a perspective of methods, motives and influence – and why are they active?

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We are here working together because we know that we have one goal which is common to us all, but we have different priorities for that goal. In large for a Palestinian peace means freedom and for an Israeli peace means security, that would be to put it in general terms, so we say that - yes, maybe we have the different priorities and different needs, but in the end of the day, we have the same goal which is to live in peace in a situation with no violence, with human security, human rights and dignity.
ABSTRACT

This study is dedicated to exploring the different types of, and motives for constructive nonviolent action that in direct connection to the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine are being implemented by young Israelis. The initiative is based on the belief that hope, recognition and support is highly important for the effectiveness of constructive nonviolent action, by an interest to explore the existing and functioning methods of constructive nonviolent action in an ongoing conflict area and by the will to show the specific conflict in Israel and Palestine from a perspective of positive initiatives taken by active youth. Through in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews, the perceptions, thoughts and motives that these individuals hold concerning their actions, the reasons to why they are active and the influence that they believe their work might have on the wider society has been explored. Discourse analysis has been implemented in order to gain a deeper understanding of these narratives and the results found provided an interesting insight into the scene of constructive nonviolent action in Israel as well as a multifaceted diversity within the sample of participants. These results can be used to present an illustration of the complexity of the current political situation in Israel, as well as an example of the many different methods and types of constructive nonviolent action that these young active Israelis choose to engage in.

Keywords: Nonviolent, Action, Israel, Palestine, Peace, Conflict
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1 INTRODUCTION

The intractable conflict in Israel and Palestine has been going on for many years. The broad media coverage of the area seems to be dominated by powerful and graphic pictures about the sufferings and violence that is occurring in Gaza and the West Bank, and for a vast majority of international onlookers, the situation appears to be unsolvable and hopeless.

Even if the situation undeniably is violent and the sufferings are in need of global attention, in this paper the presence of young active people and their choice of non-violent alternatives that do not receive the recognition they ought to have will be brought up. There is a large number of non-governmental organisations active in the area, both international and local, working intensely to change the reality and in various ways promote peace and understanding between the parties in the conflict.

The aim of this paper is to look at the different types of non-violent action that is being taken by young Israelis in order to promote peace and understanding between Jews and Arabs in the area of Israel and in the Palestinian territories. The initiative is based on the belief that hope, recognition and international support is highly important for the effectiveness of constructive nonviolent action, as also expressed by the participants.

Among the seven participants is an employee from the Peres Center for Peace that works to promote dialogue and cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis by public conferences, forums and special educational programs for young politicians. There is an activists who chooses to show solidarity with Palestinians by going to the West Bank and attending weekly demonstrations against the separation barrier, and there is a former Israeli soldier who turned from being a Zionist into refusing the military service and starting a peace initiative together with Palestinian ex prisoners that fought against the occupation in the first Intifada.

It is easily argued that from grassroots level, to more institutionalised forms, there is a noteworthy presence of dedicated Israelis that feel a responsibility to act and make a change. These young individuals, their work and their thoughts on the current situation in Israel will be presented and analysed in this paper.
1.1 Outline

Firstly, different theories around conflict, identity and prejudice will be reviewed, followed by different forms of approaches to dealing with intractable conflict and later by an explanation of the notion of collective political action. Secondly nonviolent action will be reviewed and the focus will turn to examples from Israel and Palestine and the actions that are being taken against the Wall separating the West Bank from Israel.

The research itself will consist of a field study in Israel and Palestine. Interviews will be conducted with young Israelis that in different ways, different levels of the society and with different motives, try to affect the situation and end the conflict.

1.2 Research questions

The aim is to, apart from exploring the different forms of non violent action and the efforts that are being taken in Israel, based on the analysis of the discourses of young active Israelis also answer the main questions:

- *What are their personal reasons for choosing to be active?*
- *What are their perceived effects and outcomes of being active?*
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

When conducting research, a comprehensive background chapter provides a solid ground for understanding the various themes involved in the study. In this chapter, previous work and a choice of theories concerning conflict, identity, contact, collective political action and nonviolent conflict transformation will be presented. As well as a section on the subject of earlier research conducted concerning nonviolent joint activism in Israel and Palestine.

2.1 Conflict & Culture of Conflict

Intractable conflicts are conflicts that are being fought over goals that are perceived as existential. These conflicts tend to be violent and preoccupy a vast part of the society members and are usually characterised as lasting over 25 years and perceived as unsolvable. (Bar Tal & Rosen, 2009. p.557)

In *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, Coleman (2006) presents an overview, defining the characteristics of intractable conflict. He explains that these conflicts occur in situations where there exists a severe imbalance of power between the parties, and where the more powerful one exploit, control or abuse the less powerful. In order to maintain strength, the power holders in such settings will use the existence of salient intergroup distinctions, such as ethnicity or religion. Intractable conflicts thus involve issues that have a deep moral and emotional meaning for the involved parties. (p.558)

In many intractable conflict settings, the social structures limit intergroup contact which facilitates the development of abstract, stereotypical images and hostilities towards the out-group. (Coleman, 2006) Bar Tal & Rosen (2009) explain this process as an evolution of a culture of conflict, where the society members create their own collective memory of a conflict which is further passed on to their children. These narratives, that are both selective and greatly biased, serve as justification for the in-groups position in the society, rather than objectively accounting the reality of the conflict. (p.558)

Peace building is a very difficult task in areas of intractable conflict as the cooperative potential decreases significantly when societies persist under such destructive conditions. The conflicts tend to damage the trust and faith necessary for constructive or tolerant relations and negotiation. The negative aspects in these relationships remain salient, any
positive encounters being forgotten or even viewed with suspicion or as attempts at deception. Over time, a variety of behavioural processes such as stereotyping and ethnocentrism develop, bringing protracted conflicts to a level of high intensity and perceived intractability. Selective perception, such as looking for and finding confirming evidence for one’s prejudice also develop, further escalating the process of dehumanisation of the enemy. (Coleman, 2006, pp.537-539) Just as Zembylas (2009) points out, one of the most common and powerful ways of forming an “us and them” mentality is by idealizing the own group and demonizing the other. (p.185)

Deutch (1985, as cited in Coleman 2006) describes these malignant social relations as:

a stage (of escalation) which is increasingly dangerous and costly and from which the participants see no way of extricating themselves without becoming vulnerable to an unacceptable loss in a value central to their self-identities or self-esteem (p.540)

The development of this kind of inflexible moral boundaries between the groups leads to moral exclusion; the people of the out-group become deindividualised, consequently losing their right to fundamental moral treatment. Resulting in escalatory violence and lack of willingness to communicate. (Coleman, 2006)

2.2 Cultural Identity

People in a community learn the values and procedures of their culture with the understanding that they are natural and “common sense”. Kimmel (2006) explains that we during enculturation through language, ethnicity, customs, tradition and religion evoke existential emotions called primordial sentiments. These are the basis for social connections and we develop our cultural identity based in this emotional force of primordial bonds.

A cultural identity is acquired through socialisation with other human beings and what becomes ones reality is selected from the surrounding social environment. Symbols, such as words and sentences are developed and learnt to give meaning to our social activities and through the use of language, individuals participate in and spread their common culture. (Kimmel, 2006. pp.625-629)

Tajfel (1969, as cited in Duckitt 2003) argued social categorisation as fundamental to stereotyping. There are numerous studies that show that even when categorising individuals
into groups, they will view out-groups as less complex and the dissimilarities between the groups will be exaggerated. (p.560)

Bar-Tal & Rosen (2009) use the educational system as an example of a powerful channel for obtaining a cultural identity and socializing for conflict. Schools are given the authority to instruct and reach a whole segment of the society, e.g. all of the younger generation, in an age where they are open to influence and more likely to treat the information obtained as truthful.

While obtaining a cultural identity, ethnocentrism is developed. The term is defined by Kimmel (2006) as “the acceptance of those who are culturally like oneself and the rejection of those who are different”. Matsumoto and Juang (2008) posit that since all people learn one’s culture through cultural filters, everybody become more or less ethnocentric. As a large part of enculturation is a process of learning what is normal and right, one is thus also learning what is strange and wrong. (p.376)

As ethnocentrism leads to prejudice and stereotyping, it also complicates intergroup relations, however Hammack (2009) posits that intergroup conflict can be reduced through the development of a common, superordinate identity among individuals. This identity would facilitate the recategorisation of the self, giving antagonist groups the opportunity to share various cultural traditions, languages and offer a shared vision and positive future orientation for society as a whole.

As stated before, cultural identity is developed naturally through socialisation and human development. However, in The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology Huddy (2003) distinguishes between acquired identity and ascribed identity, the latter one being adopted by choice by the individual. According to the theories that Huddy examined in his research, people that voluntarily choose an identity prove to have a stronger sense of group commitment than when the identity is aquired. (p.536)
2.3 Dialogue & Contact

There are a lot of approaches for prevention, intervention and reconstruction work when addressing intractable conflict. Coleman (2006) believes that one of the most influential ones is the postmodern approach, where intractable conflicts are seen as rooted in the ways which one makes sense of the world and the way parties subjectively define a situation and interact with one another to construct a sense of meaning, responsibility and value. A conflict is seen as an interpretative narrative or story of both the past and the present and it is through the different groups’ assumptions of what is “right” that the conflict persists. (pp. 544-545)

According to this approach, critical reflection, dialogue and direct confrontation is therefore the way to bring change in an intractable conflict. This way is believed to increase the awareness of the complexity of the antagonists’ reality and their understanding of it. (Coleman, 2006. p.545)

In accordance with the previous statement, and the notions that prejudice develops as a result of ignorance and fear, a solid base is provided for the many theories that point out that contact with members of the other community give the individuals an opportunity to learn about the other, share positive experiences and thus reduce intergroup anxiety. (Niens, 2009)

In The Nature of Prejudice, Allport (1954) presents his Contact Theory where he explains how intergroup conflict can be reduced by bringing individuals from opposing groups together to promote intergroup acceptance and reduce prejudice. In this frequently cited hypothesis, Allport posits that social change can be achieved through extensive integration toward the attainment of social stability and harmony. He points out four conditions that are essential for contact and the effectiveness of the interaction. The groups should be of equal status, they should cooperate towards a common goal, there should be no social competition and the contact should be legitimised through institutional support.

Allport’s theory has been criticised by subsequent social psychological perspectives that challenge the notion that conflict is rooted in prejudice and personality, stating that the individual doesn’t possess sufficient power to affect the larger system of power, identity, and intergroup relations. This view is however dismissed by Hammack (2009) who claims that
dialogue and the formation of a superordinate identity are powerful methods for handling prejudice and intergroup conflict. (p.129)

The contact theory does thus receive continued support and is being implemented for various projects and settings such as educational programs around the world that bring children of different ethnic groups together in order to teach them about cultural identity, understanding, development and peace. (McGlynn, 2009)

In Israel, there have been various efforts of bringing the people from different communities together in order to humanise the ‘other’, these programs have been criticised by both parties for reasons such as the different objectives for participants and failure to address the underlying causes of the conflicts. The difficulties of ‘joint struggle’ have been further deepened by the ‘anti-normalisaton’ rhetoric among the Palestinians and the ‘no partner’ narrative among the Israelis, as well as physical infrastructure and legal measures that aim at separating the populations. (Hallward, 2009)

2.4 Collective Political Action

There has always been a fascination around the participation in collective political action, the view that people make sacrifices for a cause while risking their lives led to the view of these people as being irrational and isolated members of the society. This view has however changed and different forms of collective political action such as boycotts and demonstrations are no longer referred to as unconventional participation in politics but have become nearly as usual as other forms of participation such as voting and participating in political parties. (Klandermans, 2003. p.670)

Klandermans (2003) defines social movements using three key elements. Firstly, he calls social movements collective challenges as they consist of action that is directed against elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes. The reason, he points out, is that social movements consist of people that do not have any direct access to politics. Conscientious collective action is thus carried out to convey the standpoint of people without this access, forcing the authorities and elites to pay attention to their claims. (p.671)
Secondly, the people in social movements are connected by a common purpose and solidarity, they have common claims rooted in feelings of an collective identity and unity. Klandermans also distinguishes between social movements and isolated incidents of collective action, meaning that the definition of social movement only can be used when collective action is sustained over a period of time. (Klandermans, 2003. p.671)

Through research about the reasons to why social movements have become such a common occurrence a lot of theories have submerged, the main cause of collective behavior being identified as discontent and also being considered as the origin of protest. The answers given by former theories to why people have started to protest are that they are aggrieved, that they now have the resources to mobilise and seize the political opportunity to protest and also because of the politicalisation of collective identities. (Klandermans, 2003)

However, as Klandermans (2003) points out, evidently, being aggrieved doesn't necessarily mean taking part in protest. This led to a more individually focused onset on the research of collective political action and the social constructionist approaches to protest were created. These perspectives posit that aggrieved people might have all the resources needed for protest, but what they actually need is constructing a politicised collective identity in order to engage in collective political action. (pp. 674-675)

Klandermans (2003) refers to Gamson, stating that he distinguishes between three components of collective action frames being injustice, identity and agency. In other words, he is saying that for finding the participation in collective action meaningful, a person needs to feel a moral indignation because of grievances, a sense of identification with the group that is engaged with the action as well as an antagonism towards the authorities that are to be held responsible, and third the belief that collective action is a way to alter conditions or policies.

Analysing why some parts of the population chooses to take part in a demonstrations and others do not, Klandermans (2003) is trying to find the queries that decide on the degree of participation within the society.
He identifies and presents four steps on which parts of the population and individual citizens gradually drop out:

- **Does the cause of the movement appeal to concerns of individual citizens?**
- **Do the movement’s networks link to the individuals’ networks?**
- **Is the activity the movement mobilizing for appealing for individual citizens?**
- **Is the movement able to eliminate any remaining barrier to participation for individual citizens?**

Klandermans (2003) identifies and describes three fundamental reasons and motives to why people participate in social movement. He refers to them as *instrumentality*, expressing itself as an attempt to influence the political and social environment, *identity*, referring to the participation being based of the feeling of identification and belonging with a certain group, and lastly, *ideology* that is a search for meaning and expression of one’s feelings and views about a certain situation. He argues that, while only one of the motives may be reason enough for the participation of an individual, all three are needed to gain understanding about why people choose to take part in collective political action. (p.679)

### 2.5 Nonviolent Conflict Transformation

Although nonviolent resistance might seem weak and inefficient, it has proven to be a highly strategic tool when used by marginalised communities to claim rights and justice. (Dudouet, 2008) Nonviolent struggle utilises political tools instead of military weaponry and is offered as an alternative to violent forms of engagement. The technique can be used together with other types of conflict resolution and is often employed by those who also pursue negotiation and other forms of conflict transformation (Miller, 2006. p.13)

By certain elements in a society, continuation of a conflict is sometimes viewed as more favourable than a resolution. These situations are particularly relevant during state failure and in weak nation-states. Miller (2006) mentions parties such as rebel guerilla groups, corrupt government officials and arms traders who gain from continued instability and disorder. (p.17)

The opponents difficulties when dealing with nonviolent action are primarily connected to the difficulties of justifying extreme brutal repression of a nonviolent group, thus, the repression may be more limited than it would be against a violent rebellion. Furthermore,
reacting violently may weaken the power of the opponent himself, rather than weakening its resisters. Knowing this, the opponent may strategically in various ways try to provoke violence in order to be able to respond with the same manners. Sometimes spies and infiltrators are being used for that purpose. (Sharp, 2005. p.112)

These spies and infiltrators are referred to as *agents provocateurs* that urge the members to become violent or carry out violent actions themselves in order to justify the opponent to respond with violent action, ultimately favouring its strengths. However, a problem of violence can also rise as the result of a growing movement with an increased diversity of the members, and maybe advocates for violent action among the supporters. (Miller, 2006. p.18, p.101)

Johan Galtung (2003) focuses on the teachings of Gandhi when explaining the notion and dynamics of Nonviolent Conflict Transformation. Galtung posits, that a *satyagrahi* according to Gandhi’s philosophy is a person fighting injustice, without ever letting the struggle fall into oblivion. For a satyagrahi, resolving the issue isn’t the only desired outcome of a conflict – at least equally desireable is the impact that the conflict is to have on the parties that are a part of it. If the conflict ends, leaving the parties unchanged, there is no success. The goal of a conflict is to transform the participants and the social structure to the better, leaving both parties satisfied and purified. (pp.110-117)

According to Galtung (2003) there are ten basic mechanisms concerning nonviolence, of which the core concerns are that action is to be directed against the bad relation between the activists and the oppressor; rather than against the antagonist as such, that action should build love rather than hatred, and that it should always be peaceful rather than violent. (p.118)

The vulnerability to punishment and high public exposure is a big reason to why many people choose not to use nonviolent techniques. However, as Sharp (2005) puts it, “nonviolent actionists must be willing to risk punishment as a part of the price of the victory.” (p.110)

The use of violence against nonviolent action creates a certain assymetrical conflict situation in which the opponents rely on contrasting techniques of struggle. To have the biggest chance of success, it is thus of high importance that the nonviolent actionists stay with their
chosen technique. A situation that Sharp (2005) refers to as political jiu-jiutsu can then occur, which is when the actionists throw the opponent off balance politically, weakening his power. (p.110)

As cruelties towards nonviolent people increase, sympathy and support for the nonviolent side may rise and the general population may become more likely to join the resistance. The citizens of the opponent, disturbed by the brutalities and repression against nonviolent people, may start questioning his policies and legitimacy, thus increasing the number of nonviolent actionists and enlarge defiance. (Sharp, 2005)

Within the general population, those who choose to support the nonviolent struggle can do so in various ways. Individuals or groups can directly participate in some specific aspects of the struggle by taking part in demonstrations or refusing to pay taxes. Other less direct forms of taking action might be financial contributions or consultations and advice. Nonviolent struggle is unique in that anybody can participate in some manner and both direct and indirect types of support are necessary for nonviolent action to be effective. (Miller, 2006. p.72)

In the frequently referred to The Politics of Nonviolent Action, first published in 1973, Gene Sharp (2005) has analysed, identified and categorised 198 methods of nonviolent action and classified these into the three categories of protest and persuasion, noncooperation and intervention.

**Nonviolent protest and persuasion** include symbolic gestures and actions intended to force peaceful opposition to a law or policy, or to persuade others to take part in particular actions such as public speeches, displays of flags and colours, protest marches or petitions. (Sharp, 2005)

The category of **Non-cooperation** is based on the principle that political relationships require degrees of obedience, cooperation and submission, and nonviolent action can strategically be operated by purposefully withdrawing the sources of cooperation. In this category, hundreds of methods have been identified and some examples are action such as labour strike, boycott, civil disobedience towards illegitimate laws and student strikes. (Miller, 2006. p.23)
**Nonviolent intervention** refers to direct physical interference to change a given situation. These methods pose a more direct and acute challenge to the opponent, thus producing more rapid change. However, as this category includes action such as fasts, various forms of self-inflicted suffering, sit-ins, occupation, underground educational systems and alternative social relations, they can be more difficult for the resisters to sustain and can also provoke more severe repression. (Sharp, 2005)

The possible outcomes of nonviolent struggle are by Miller (2006) divided into four separate mechanisms of change:

- **Conversion** – being when the opponent accepts the justifications of the objectives of the nonviolent protagonists, accepts their point of view and concedes. This type of mechanism is the most rare of the four, as it also is required to touch the hearts and the mind of the target group.

- **Accommodation** – is when the parties strike a mutual compromise using some kind of formal negotiations or diplomacy. This is the most common mechanism and is achieved when the parties try to avoid an escalation of the conflict.

- **Nonviolent coercion** – is the mechanism when the opponent against its own will is compelled to concede because of the actual methods of the nonviolent protagonists.

- **Disintegration** – is a rarely occurring mechanism where an opponent simply isn’t able to respond because of extensive noncooperation, to the point that its capacity to implement decisions crumbles.

Miller believes that most nonviolent protagonists aim for the dispute to be resolved using negotiation with a positive outcome with some form of accommodation. (p.116)

By the teachings of Gandhi, as explained by Galtung (2003), always inviting the antagonist to take part in and share the positive experience of transformation and ensuring that there is a place for him in a future society is the right code of conduct for a satyagrahi, as behaving in this manner transforms the conflict upwards. The parties should with these methods emerge from the conflict with more positive social relations and and be equipped with knowledge to take on new conflicts nonviolently. As Galtung points out, those inclined to violence might be the mediators of tomorrow, and capitulating under violence is therefore never to be seen as a permanent option, as accepting violence is itself violence. (p. 118)
2.6 Joint Activism in Israel & Palestine

Hallward (2009) has examined Israeli and Palestinian activists’ joint nonviolent struggle in the village of Bil‘in in Palestine. She specifically points out the village of Bil‘in as an interesting case because of the sustainability of the struggle against the separation barrier, even after its actual construction. In Bil‘in, Israelis and Palestinians still cooperate, despite the fact that anyone participating in a joint struggle in this conflict runs the risk of being seen as a collaborator with the other side, or a traitor to one’s national cause. (Hallward, 2009)

Bil‘in is a small agricultural village located about 4km from the Green Line in the district of Ramallah in the Central West Bank. It has been the site of ongoing nonviolent resistance since February 2005 when the construction of the separation barrier began in the village. As posited by various sources, the barrier cuts the 1,600 villagers off of 50-60% of their land, depriving them the access to their olive trees, making it difficult for them to maintain their crops and feed their families. (Hallward, 2009)

Hallward (2009) mentions that the motives of the participants and also the risks they are undertaking for being a part of the joint struggle in Bil‘in are very varying and highly dependent upon which area they live in and what citizenship they hold. The Palestinian activists risk facing military courts, administrative detention and other consequences that might affect the whole village such as road closures and curfew. The Israeli citizens on the other hand, are more likely to spend a couple of hours in jail or at a detention centre. However, the motives of the separate groups need to be taken into consideration, as Palestinians struggle for their land, rights and livelihood while the Israelis rather join from a sense of justice, morality and ideology. (p. 544)

Legal legitimacy has been a core issue in the village of Bil‘in where activists directly have been referring to international law in their demonstrations, questioning the legitimacy of the applied laws. The route of the separation barrier was questioned and taken to the Israeli High Court by Israelis, where it was proven illegal. (Bil‘in Habibi, 2006; Hallward, 2009) This claim would have been impossible without the help of the Israeli activists, as only Israeli citizens can bring cases to the Israeli legal system. (Hallward, 2009)
Checkpoints and applied laws complicate the efforts for a joint struggle or other forms of contact between the sides. Israelis are by law forbidden to enter areas under nominal Palestinian control such as the major cities of Ramallah and Hebron, and Palestinians need to hold a very difficult to obtain permit to cross the checkpoints to Israel. Another dimension to the complexity of checkpoint crossing is the reality that Palestinians holding an Israeli ID by law are banned from the major West Bank cities, while most of the Jewish Israeli settlers can bypass most checkpoints using their separate restricted road system. These roads further dissect the West Bank, connecting the Jewish Israeli settlers with Israelis living within the 1948 boundaries, while preventing Palestinians from accessing neighbouring villages or sometimes even their own land as it is forbidden for them to cross some of the roads. (Hallward, 2009)

As the control on the checkpoints usually occurs when entering Israel, not when going in the other direction, people can mostly move freely into the West Bank. Activists point out, however, that they are being pinpointed based on political views, and when expected to be participating in a demonstration or other forms of activism, they can be denied entry at the entrance points to the West Bank even after obtaining appropriate clearances. (Bil’in Habibti, 2006; Hallward, 2009) In the other direction, control is without exception very strict, so Palestinians not holding a permit to enter Israel, will not be allowed to do so. (Hallward, 2009)

The route of the separation barrier is very much criticised, as the boundary only classifies by area what is deemed ‘Israel’, including the many settlements and their road systems, from what is deemed ‘Palestine’. Vast parts of Palestinian-owned land are thus cut off from its owners by the separation barrier, creating an ‘empty space’ where pre-existing settlement expansion plans are being implemented. (Hallward, 2009)

A strategy widely used by the Palestinian and Israeli activists in the West Bank has been shifting the picture of the Palestinian resistance from terrorism to legitimate nonviolent struggle against an occupying oppressor. By using commonly cited words, phrases and events in their demonstrations, the activities are remaining within the scope of what is seen as acceptable and legitimate. In this way they can attract supporters, for whom the activities are relevant to their current social, political and historical setting, thus enhancing the possibility for changed policies. (Hallward, 2009)
Hallward (2009) points out that while the ultimate vision of peace varies between the Israeli and Palestinian activists in the West Bank, they seek to change the structural inequalities and injustices that they see there. Focusing on the abuses that are clear and to which there is a clear resistance such as the route of the separation barrier when it cuts through villages, or checkpoints that separate Palestinian villages from the important services in bigger Palestinian cities.

The village of Bil'in has attracted media and international attention partly because of the innovative and creative action designed and implemented by the activists. Since early 2005, the demonstrations have been going on consecutively, with demonstrations being held every Friday and at some occasions more often. The demonstrators in Bil’in have with different methods adapted different ways of demonstrating and have been succeeding in getting their message out using strong political messages and visual imaginary that attracts media attention. (Hallward, 2009)

Muhammad Khatib from the Bil’in Popular Committee Against the Wall expressed this in an interview for the Middle East Report;

> The point of our creative direct action is to present something original each time, something media-worthy. The media typically wants to film violence, and in the end, it gets the violence it wants, but it gets it from the other side, not from us. (Blecher, 2006)

By challenging the traditional boundaries of “we-them” the activists in Bil’in gain power and change the nature and outcome of the protests. The soldiers admit to acting differently when there are Israelis present in the demonstrations, not only does their acting change, but they also report of not being able to use some of the heavier weaponry such as rubber-coated bullets. (Hallward, 2009)

The Israelis are in almost constant contact with the villagers in Bil’in, by being available when they call them and always present at the weekly demonstrations, their expression of solidarity and continuing support sends out an important message to the Palestinians. They are invited into the houses of the villagers and treated as partners in the struggle. (Bil’in Habibti, 2006; Hallward, 2009)

In an article published by the Middle East Report, Robert Blecher (2006) conducted an interview with the key activists of the efforts in Bil’in; Muhammad Khatib of the Bil’in
Popular Committee Against the Wall and Jonathan Pollak of the Israeli Anarchists Against the Wall. Muhammad commented on their joint efforts as bound by personal relationships and with a joint goal;

We have built trust and strong relationships by participating together in the clashes. Israelis are with Palestinians in the front row. When the soldier fires a bullet, the bullet doesn't discriminate between Jonathan and Muhammad. [...] Muhammad feels that Jonathan is like him, that the same things are happening to both of them. It's not like Jonathan is at the beach saying how much he wants peace while Muhammad is being beaten. And after the demonstration, Muhammad welcomes Jonathan: they sit, drink tea, have a good time and go around the village together. Palestinian and Israeli, their relationship is grounded in a shared struggle. It doesn't spring from a Peace Center [...] It's not about prettying up the occupation; it's about breaking the occupation. (Blecher, 2006)

Jonathan's conclusions about the joint struggle in Bil’in are positive; the existence of the movement is an achievement in itself.

In this atmosphere, the mere existence of our movement is an achievement. The fact that there are Israelis who are crossing the line in such a clear way, against everything we are supposed to believe, is an achievement. The fact that Israelis and Palestinians are able to act together in an anti-colonial and self-aware way, with Palestinians taking the lead, and where politics of privilege are considered, is an achievement in and of itself. (Blecher, 2006)

When questioning the decisions and policies of the Israeli state by bringing cases to the High Court, joint action undermines the states’ moral authority in cases such as the construction of the settlements or the route of the wall. The power of media and the vast coverage of the situation in Bil’in and the nonviolent and often very creative forms of action, help to challenge the existing conceptions of Palestinian resistance. Also, when Israelis choose to join the Palestinians in nonviolent resistance, Israeli soldiers start to question their own actions towards unarmed demonstrators, and the Palestinians are sent an important message about the Israelis; that there are people on the other side that want to show solidarity with them and struggle to break the occupation. (Hallward, 2009)
3 METHODOLOGY

Based on the aim and purpose of a study, a scientific methodology that most suitably corresponds with the research area has to be chosen by careful planning and consideration. Shaugnessy et al. (2006) describe method as intended to meet four goals being: description, prediction, explanation and application. The method outlines the ways of conduct through the process of delimiting the research area, choosing the appropriate methodology, acquiring data and conducting the analysis based on a theoretical approach. Problems concerning the research such as validity and pre-understanding must be taken into consideration and evaluated. Further on, the choices of methodology need to be motivated and discussed, as well as the connection and application for the research.

3.1 Scientific Approach

The scientific approach chosen for this study is exploratory, as there are no theories or models that would fully provide a basis for the complex character of the area studied. There are, naturally, earlier studies that to an extent support some parts of the issues researched, however, they do not fully apply to the situation in this case. Earlier theories presented in the literature review will be taken into consideration and compared with the findings, though, only within the area of relevance. The choice of exploratory scientific approach is also supported by the motivation to document the current situation as completely as possible, without restricting the results to earlier theories, models and pre-set frames.

3.2 Empirical Method

The empirical method chosen can be either quantitative or qualitative, or a combination of the two. However, as the aim of this research is to gain knowledge of individuals’ personal discourses, the most suitable empirical method in this case is qualitative. Qualitative research is described by Shaugnessy et. al (2006) as most commonly being obtained from interviews and observations that later can be used in order to describe individuals, groups, and social movements. In this study, semi-structured interviews will be used, in order to let the participants describe their experiences and feelings in ways that are meaningful to them, rather than asking them to use categories used by previous research and in that way possibly restrain their answers.
3.3 Collection of Data and Material

When collecting data, both primary and secondary data have been considered. Primary data consists of published and recognised literature and articles from trustworthy sources and academic databases. Secondary data is in this case information published on various official homepages directly describing the different organisations, personal interviews conducted with individuals and recordings of speeches from conferences attended as well as direct observations made in the field.

3.3.1 Sources

Articles on the subject have been obtained through the internet and academic databases such as JSTOR and Sage Journals, available through the university. Further on, commonly cited sources have been identified using the reference lists on the articles found, as an effort to cover the area of interest as extensively as possible and find the most relevant sources. Literature on methodology and other books have been either obtained from the library or already in the possession of the researcher.

3.3.2 Location

The data collection and field study was conducted in Israel and the West Bank during a period of time that lasted from 7th to 28th of April 2010. The interviews were conducted in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in Israel and Ramallah in The West Bank, and conferences closely related to the subject were attended in the Peres Peace House in Jaffa and in the village of Bil‘in in The West Bank. One of the weekly demonstrations against the separation barrier in the village of Bil‘in in the West Bank and one against the house evictions in Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem were also attended and observed by the researcher. Other areas of the West Bank mentioned by the participants such as Hebron and Ramallah were visited in order to gain deeper understanding of their perception of the conflict, and more cities around Israel such as Haifa and Beersheba were also visited.

3.3.3 Participants

As the study aims to be an explorative study of the activities of young Israelis, more specific delimitation wasn’t preferable in the beginning of the fieldwork. By exploring the conditions, talking to people, researching literary sources and interviewing various individuals, an image of the situation emerged and more clear delimitations could be made.
The primary criteria was that the participants were supposed to be Jewish Israelis living in Israel and somehow considering themselves being active in working for peace and a better future in Israel. The age limit was set to 30 in order to exclude the older generations and focus on the motives of the younger ones, the youngest participant was 25 years old. Of the participants included in the study, three were female and four male.

The participants were found and contacted using internet sources and personal networks, networking proved to be highly effective in Israel as many of the participants and other people had a vast knowledge of the different kinds of work being conducted in the area and were eager to endow with further information and contacts.

Among the interviewed persons, there was an occurrence of people that proved to somehow fall outside of the criteria of participation, some of these have been included in the study in order to exemplify the complexity of the conflict. All in all, nine interviews were conducted and two of these were completely excluded due to the limitation of the target group. The reason for completely excluding these two interviews were apparent, one of them was conducted with a young Palestinian from Ramallah and the other with the leader of a radical right-wing zionist movement. Even though the arguments and thoughts of these two individuals were highly interesting and important, they didn’t find any relevant place in this paper except for broadening the researcher's personal understanding of the diversity of the situation.

Recordings of speeches were conducted on seminars and conferences attended, and some of these have been used and cited in this paper.

In order to protect the integrity of the participants, their names have been excluded and only their sex and age, (e.g. F25 = Female, age 25) will be provided in order to be able to connect the different statements of one person together.

Another criterion used for delimitation of the study was an exclusion of the religiously motivated actors, because of the focus and interest in the individual and personal motivation of people and also as the aspect of religion is too wide to grasp within the time and space limits of this paper.
3.3.4 Interviews and Transcription

The participants were only provided very basic information about the study before the interviews, in order not to affect their responses too much. The interviews were conducted individually in natural settings such as coffee shops or offices. The interviews were semi-structured and the researcher was using a simple interview guide (Appendix C) with the questions that needed to be answered and by being given open-end questions, the respondents were allowed to freely describe their thoughts and feelings before the researcher continued asking the next question that had not yet been answered automatically. The time of the interviews was unlimited and the researcher didn't take an active role in the conversation except from making sure it was moving on. The duration of the interviews was between 25 and 70 minutes and they were recorded using a digital voice recorder which all of the participants approved to prior to the interviews. The voice recordings were later literally transcribed prior to analysis.

3.4 Analysis

Using discursive analysis, the researcher aims to, by looking at the statements and attitudes expressed in the interviews, find causal connections and gain an understanding of the discourses that the participants hold in relation to their personal reasons for taking action, the Israeli society and the effects and outcomes of engaging in various forms of activism. Discoursive analysis through qualitative research provides a high awareness of the hidden motivations in others and enables the researcher to find the answers to a question based on contextual connections and themes. Discoursive analysis does not aim to offer absolute answers to any specific question, but is rather focusing on providing an understanding of the conditions behind it and, in this case, the participants’ personal discourse and attitude towards the situation. (Jörgenson & Phillips, 2000)

3.5 Findings

The analysed findings will be presented in the results part of the paper, divided by themes. The different organisations will be presented as described by the participants. Thereafter some commonly used words and themes will be presented, followed by a more individual onset and the participants’ thoughts, beliefs and attitudes concerning being active in Israel. In order to provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of the analysed data, it will be divided into different themes. The discussion part of the paper will furtherly evaluate the
findings and with a deeper level of discursive analysis the themes will be divided and looked at more critically. The results will be connected and compared to the previous research presented in the literature review and the different theories will be applied to the data obtained in this study. A more evaluative standpoint will be taken and the personal observations of the researcher will be presented and taken into consideration.

3.6 Discussion on Methodology

When conducting this study the strengths and weaknesses concerning the method chosen have been evaluated and thought over. Aspects such as validity, generalisability and ethics have been taken into consideration and will be discussed in this chapter. Silverman (2005) talks about methodological awareness as the most important issue in methodology. Being able to show the reader which procedures that have been used for conducting research, however not forgetting to consider validity and reliability, is crucial for a valid study. (pp. 209-210)

3.6.1 Internal Validity

Validity is the extent to which the phenomena reported corresponds with reality. As this study uses qualitative and explorative methodology, the in-depth and contextualised nature of the research results in a far more detailed understanding of specific cases, and does thus have a high level of internal validity. (Bailey, 2007)

3.6.2 Sampling, Generalisability & Representativeness

An effort has been made to choose participants from various levels of the Israeli society that are being active using differing methods and with differing onsets. The sampling has been randomly conducted and the results should therefore not be treated as an overview of the field of non-violent activism in Israel or the many organisations that are active in the area. Evidently, the results are not representative for the Israeli society, but are rather intended to provide an explorative insight into the different kinds of peace work that is being conducted in Israel and the thoughts of the individuals that make these efforts.

3.6.3 Ethical Considerations

Complying with ethical guidelines is crucial when conducting scientific research. The participants need to be informed about the purpose of the study and an understanding
considering informed consent, confidentiality and possible consequences has to be mutual. Informed consent means that the interviewee has been informed about and accepted the general concepts, risks and benefits that might be associated with participation in the study. Informed consent is however not static, and even once permission is given it can be withdrawn at any time. Confidentiality is making sure that data that can be used to identify the participant doesn’t make its way into the final paper. All of the participants agreed on having their voice recorded during the interview and understood the purpose of the study and the consequences that might be related to participating. Most of the interviewees did not ask to be anonymous before agreeing to participating in the study, however, considering the sensitive matter of the subject of the interviews and the many theories in social psychology that connect social influence to compliance in behaviour, leaving out of their name was ensured in order to gain less biased answers from the participants. (Bailey, 2007; Silverman, 2005)

3.6.4 Pre-understanding Problematics

Built on previous personal experiences, beliefs and feelings, every person has a natural pre-understanding. Pre-understanding is believed to be required to understand general concepts, however, as pre-understanding is subjective, it can be an obstacle on the path to trying to understand a specific issue.

As this study is qualitative, the researchers pre-understanding could have had an impact while conducting the field study, choosing the participants and analysing interviews. However, through the use of randomised sampling and an approach of confirmability, where statements need to be supported by data, these problematics are avoided. The values of the researcher do evidently have an impact on this paper, which will be noticable in the discussion and conclusion, however, personal opinions are clearly distinguished from stated results and facts throrought the paper and should thus not be considered a problem but rather the contrary. (Bailey, 2007)

3.6.5 Researcher influence

When conducting personal interviews, the influence that the researcher might have on the participant needs to be taken into consideration. In order not to bias the respondents, as little information as possible was given about the subject of the interview prior to the meeting. The researcher tried not to affect the answers or the expression of political
attitudes of the participants by not taking an active part in the discussion, by giving open end and neutral questions and by attempting not to give the participant any cue on any type of expectancies or personal values that the researcher might have. Naturally, some form of influence might have occurred, as the stereotypes that the participants might have had about the researcher, being a foreigner, woman and student, could have influenced their answers to some extent.

3.7 Theoretical Approach

As there are no specific theories that can be applied directly to the research topic of this study, a theoretical framework for conducting analysis has been specially built and created to specifically suit the purpose.

The framework has been created using discoursive analysis with support from some of the theories presented in the literature review, this has been done during the conduct of the field study and general analysis of the interviews, and while gaining a deeper understanding of the question, it could be furtherly developed, improved and defined.

This specifically created theoretical framework will be applied in the discussion part of the paper, where the results will be furtherly evaluated and discussed. In the results part, the results will be presented using discoursive analysis without pre-set frames, in order to show direct data and in order to illustrate how the theoretical framework could be constructed through the use of that data.
4 RESULTS

I love Israel with all my heart. I don’t see myself living anywhere else and I think that the most important thing that I can do with my life is working towards a good future for Israel and the only possible future for us is to live in peace so I really think that I’m doing something that is egoistic for myself but also has a benefit for all I would say. (F29)

While a big part of the young generation in Israel chooses not to care and close out all information concerning the conflict, there are young individuals in various levels of the society that put down a lot of effort and act with strong conviction for a better future in Israel, for getting an understanding of the other side and for somehow ending the conflict. Evidently, the reasons, methods and beliefs differ vastly between the participants in this study, as they have been chosen from different parts of the society in order to provide the reader with a diverse overview of different examples.

The results of the analysed interviews have been divided into five parts for a more comprehensive overview. Firstly, some words and concepts that are contextually important and used frequently by the participants will be presented, mainly in order to show the main themes and point out that the different participants shouldn’t be treated as a homogenous group of “peace activists” as their use of terminology and personal onsets on the situation differ a lot.

Secondly, the different organisations that the participants are or have been active with are presented by the use of the participants’ own descriptions, in some cases completed with additional information from the organisations' official websites. This section will be followed by a more individually focused part where the participants’ personal thoughts and attitudes concerning their work and themselves are explored, and the fourth section presents their reflections concerning Israel, the society, and their beliefs about the future.

The last section will be a presentation of the participants’ thoughts and beliefs about the influence and importance that their work has, the effects they believe it has on the people that participate and about the influence on the wider society and the future.
4.1  Words & Concepts

The use of some words can show the differing attitudes and feelings that exist in connection to those concepts. In this section, some commonly used and contextually important words will be presented along with the discourse in which they are being used. Intercultural interactions often require for a party, or both, to occupy a language that isn't their native language. Thus, there will always be some amount of uncertainty in the actual meaning that the sender wants to present to the receiver, creating a space for conflict and misinterpretations. Some of the main obstacles to effective intercultural communications are problematics concerning assumption and preconceptions. In order to reduce these dilemmas as much as possible, some of the frequently used words will in this chapter be presented using the words of the participants, in that way clarifying their perception and understanding of these concepts. (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008. p.242)

4.1.1  The Wall

When referring to the barrier separating the West Bank from Israel, the terms "the wall" and "separation wall" were used most frequently by the participants. The characteristics of the wall were described more specifically by F27;

*There are three different kinds of the separation barrier; there is the wall which is a concrete wall, you have a fence which is only like a fence that curves into the west bank, into the side where the Arabs are on the top so that they can’t climb over, and then you have like in Bil’in where you have the fence and then you have a buffer zone and then you have an electric fence. (F27)*

M27 was the only participant that used the word "security" when describing the wall, mostly together with either fence or barrier. The term “apartheid wall” was also used by M27 once when describing his view of the importance of the wall;

*I don’t think that the security fence is a 100% right, obviously not the route it has now, the way it goes through neighbourhoods. If the security fence, apartheid wall or however you want to call it was a necessity for the security of the people of Israel? Yes.*

*Because you can’t really argue with the statistics, people would say 95-97% of the terror attacks went down right after we put up those security barriers, so this is obviously not something that I would want to see in my country, a wall separating people. But is it a necessity? Yes. If I wish I could take it down in a few months or years? Yes. If it will happen? I’m not sure. If that would be the base for the border between Israel and Palestine? I think so. (M27)*
4.1.2 The Army

The Israeli Defense Force is usually referred to as “the army” by most of the participants.

One of the participants mentioned that defining the army can be problematic when discussing with Palestinians, as their perspectives differ.

_We say the IDF, Israeli Defense Force, for them it’s the occupying army. I don’t see myself as an soldier in the occupying army, for them we are occupiers._ (M25)

F29 spoke about the sensitivity of speaking about people that refuse to go to the army, she said that people get very upset when this issue is raised as it is against the Israeli consensus.

_Army is sacred in this country; it’s not something you touch._ (F29)

All of the participants have served in the army for at least two years, except from one of them. The memories from the army are referred to with mixed feelings by the participants, M30 talks about the bad experiences from the army as the reason for choosing to become active in working for peace and spreading knowledge about the conflict.

2.1.3 Zionism

According to M25, Zionism has a base in socialism that he believes should be acknowledged, considering that, the true Zionism approves to a Palestinian state and supports human rights.

_Zionism is a term that has changed during the years, like the fathers of Zionism. Some of them they were socialists and in the base it is supposed to be a socialist movement, very unlike what we have today. And they did talk already then like, about two states, an Israeli state and a Palestinian state and we forgot it during the years._ (M25)

M30 used to be a Zionist, but changed standpoints after being in the army. For M30, being a Zionist meant believing that “Israel is a victimhood of the Israelis and that the Arabs want to throw us to the sea basically and we have to defend ourselves”. He said that he, before joining the army, had thought that Jews had been wanting peace but that the other side didn’t want to cooperate in making it happen.
Different understandings of the term Zionism were mentioned by M27:

Obviously if someone is against the existence of the state of Israel, who doesn’t believe in the Zionist dream... and even the Zionist dream is something that I can argue about because my Zionism is not the settlers Zionism. (M27)

4.1.4 Activist/Leftist

Speaking about the term “activist” and “leftist” some of the participants identified themselves with the words while others were pointing out how being active didn’t necessarily make them activists.

I don’t know if I’m very active, I see myself as maybe more active than other people... but not an activist. (F25)

I consider myself a leftist you know, but still a Zionist (M25)

I see myself as a peace activist (F29)

Part of my identity is being a queer academic left wing activist (F29)

All of the participants connected activism to the left side of the political map in Israel and used the terms activist and leftist almost interchangeably. F29 further mentioned the political problems concerning activism and the demonisation of the terms “left” and “activist” that is taking place at the moment:

If you hear the radio in Hebrew, when they talk about the activists in Bil’in, when they talk about Sheikh Jarrah, the terms that they use is that they say “extreme left” to describe the events. This phrase, extreme left - it’s two folded, one is they put people as extremist, which, extremism is Hamas of terrorism. It’s problematic, very problematic, to call activists... people who are doing nonviolent action, extremist.

But also the word left, it demonises, it’s a process of demonisation of a whole political camp. And because the political power is currently at the right side of the political map, they have the power, so they have the ability to do it and they do it through the Knesset, the parliament with bills that they are introducing that are trying to harm our work. And they do it through the media and obviously, in any democracy if you are ruling and you have the government you will have more ability to force your way. (F29)

F29 further talks about the organisation she works for as trying to be perceived as a center organisation, it does however support activism and work that is considered to be done on “leftist” terms.
4.2 The Organisations

The participants described different organisations during the interviews, both the ones they were currently active in and others they had been involved with previously. These different organisations work in very varying ways and levels of the Israeli society with different causes and ideologies. Following are the descriptions of the different organisations, using the words and concepts provided by the participants, in some cases completed with information from their official homepages and also with the personal observations of the researcher.

4.2.1 Bil’in and the Anarchists Against the Wall

_Bil’in is a beautiful thing, one of the most beautiful things that has happened against the occupation in the last years. It’s the Anarchists Against the Wall and it has a very local and popular way which I like. I think two people have gotten killed and a lot have gotten injured, so it’s dangerous - but you should go there. You can stay behind and if you don’t stand out you probably won’t be arrested or injured... (M30)_

One of the main themes when discussing different kinds of action against the conflict was the case of Bil’in in the West Bank. It was frequently debated in the media during the time of the fieldwork, and most of the participants mentioned the struggle against the wall in the interviews. The Anarchists Against the Wall is a group that together with the International Solidarity Movement and other international organisations are attending the weekly demonstrations every Friday since the beginning of the construction of the wall in 2005. They cooperate and show solidarity with the Palestinians in the village and work to keep the media interested in the struggle by using different kinds of innovative methods and themes for protesting every week.

_Basically, Anarchists Against the Wall is not an organisation, it’s just a bunch of people getting together and going to demonstrations in the West Bank, and sometimes also going and trying to get things into Gaza like toys and food supplies and medical supplies. (F27)_

The participants that had attended a demonstration in Bil’in and other places spoke about the importance of the presence of Israeli and international protesters.

_There are places where it has become a usual once a week protest, Bil’in is one of the places, there are four or five other villages that have that kind of protests every week on Fridays which is participated by Israelis. One of the goals of the participation of Israelis in the beginning especially, but also now, was to protect the Palestinians knowing that if_
there is a protest or a demonstration with only Palestinians, the army would act differently than if it is attended by Israelis. (F25)

The people that go to Bil’in together every Friday and call themselves Anarchists Against the Wall have developed a tradition of staying with the villagers before and after the weekly protest instead of going back to Israel when the demonstration is over. This has evolved into a network of close friendly relationships between the villagers and the young Israelis, and also a possibility for the villagers to call the Israelis whenever they need their presence.

Now, because I also work and study I can go only on Fridays so I go to Bil’in because I also meet friends there and it’s more personal now to go to the village. Because there’s a difference between going to a demonstration and then going back and leaving the people alone after the demonstration, and between going there and making friends with them and sitting and eating with them and knowing the names of their children and grandchildren and having their phone numbers and having them being able to call you when they need you. (F27)

Some of the frequent protesters in Bil’in have started to learn Arabic in order to be able to communicate and work better and more effectively with the villagers in Bil’in. Another thing that is being focused on a lot is that the work of the Anarchists Against the Wall is conducted in cooperation with the Palestinians in a way that lets them take the lead and be the ones making the decisions and have the leading roles.

And what is special about this kind of activism and also what is going on in Sheikh Jarrah is that it’s very important for the Israeli activists that it’s led by the Palestinians. And that other activists, Israelis and International activists are joining in solidarity. (F25)

F27 had attended many demonstrations in Bil’in and spoke a lot about what was happening there, she was mentioning the different methods that the army uses and believes that the army is using the demonstrators in Bil’in for testing weapons for crowd control that later is being used in other countries.

The skunk is a tank of really foul smelling water, you can’t take it out, you have to wash the clothes three times and you have to bathe in salt water to take the stench out of your skin and hair and it stays for about a month in the ground, it soaks into the ground and the smell stays there for a month.

So they brought the skunk and poured water on the protesters, and then they used the canon. The canon is like a canon of teargas grenades, it shoots between 30 to 80 teargas grenades at a time, so what happened in the 5 year demo was that the people started running back because of the water and then at the same time, they shot the cannon right in the middle of the demonstration so a lot of people suffered from gas inhalation.
Basically Bil'in and other villages are testing grounds for weapons for crowd control. There’s a weapon called the scream which is like a sound coming from a sort of a vehicle with a siren and they used it now somewhere in a big demonstration in the States and it was tested in Bil’in three years ago, so it basically makes a high-pitched sound that can bust your eardrum.

And we know this because a lot of the weapons used in Bil’in, like if you look at the teargas grenades that you find on the ground, the shells, most of them are made in the States, and a lot of the weapons that are now used for crowd dispersal in China were also tested in Bil’in. They just see what works better and they get it really cheap, except from the teargas grenades that are round and are made from rubber, which are about 20 dollars per grenade, and they use quite a lot of those. (F27)

A demonstration in Bil’in was attended and observed by the researcher at the time of the field study, it was the demonstration marking the end of the Fifth Bil’in International Conference for Palestinian Popular Resistance. The conference, entitled “Khalas! We are winning!” lasted three days and was attended by speakers of all Palestinian political parties, Israeli activists and international delegations. Among the speakers on the conference and later present at the demonstration were Dr Mustapha Barghouthi, the General Secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative and Luisa Morgantini, former Vice-President of the European Parliament. (Appendix E)

The researcher witnessed how soldiers were throwing and shooting teargas grenades into the protesting crowd. One of the protesters was hit in the forehead by a high velocity carnister and taken with ambulance to the hospital for surgery and many people were hurt by teargas inhalation. The whole setting was heavily upsetting as there were young children trying to provoke the Israeli soldiers by throwing rocks at them and the soldiers were answering their provocations by throwing back teargas grenades. What started out as a non-violent protest with people chanting and waving flags evolved into a chaotic setting with screaming people in a cloud of teargas and the protesters decided to end the demonstration.

According to F27, non-violence is an important part of the struggle, and the researcher witnessed how the protesters called for the children not to throw rocks at the soldiers in order to maintain the demonstration non-violent.

And Bil’in is the place that started the nonviolent struggle in the West Bank, all the villages that are now participating in the nonviolent struggles are taking an example from Bil’in, for them it was very important that the struggle will be nonviolent. People
can argue that the stone throwing is violence, but if you've been to more than a few demos in Bil'in you would see that the stone throwing does not begin before the army starts throwing teargas. (F27)

The researcher didn’t reflect over what came first, the teargas grenades were being thrown almost immediately when the demonstration approached the barrier, on the other hand the protesters calling out for a non-violent protest didn’t stop the children from continuing throwing rocks even long after the demonstration had ended and the rest of the demonstrators had gone back.

4.2.2 Jad be Jad – Hand in Hand

Jad be Jad, which in Hebrew means “hand in hand”, is an organisation that started about two years ago and focuses on connecting young Israelis with young Palestinians by informal meetings. It started with 20 members and has now grown to about 150 members with representatives from both groups.

The main idea is to meet and to talk, nothing more presumptuous than that, we don’t think we will end this conflict or whatever, we just want to meet and talk and get to know each other, each others sides, not only the individuals but what they represent. (M25)

The members of Jad be Jad organise meetings once a month and different people are picked out to act as trainers and decide on the activity every time. A meeting is usually attended by about 30-40 people and they do various things such as watching and then discussing movies, discussing and debating about recent happenings in the area, inviting professional trainers in subjects such as non-violent communication for workshops or just sharing experiences and personal opinions. They have organised social activities in the West Bank such as oil harvesting and helping handicapped children and the group also participates in camps and seminars for dialogue abroad where they meet people from other groups that are active around the world. They also go to protests against the occupation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, putting emphasis on the fact that they can go as a joint group with people from both Israel and Palestine and show that they are a joint voice.

Most of the people that participate in the meetings are around 25 years old and students and the number of members extends by word of mouth, when people bring their friends to the meetings and they in turn bring their friends. The meetings are held in a Christian school in Beit Jallah in the West Bank, the group considers it a safe place but some people have
reported being afraid to come to the West Bank so the organisation sometimes holds meetings in Tel Aviv and in Tel Aviv University where they recruit new members and give them the chance to get a feeling of what the meetings are like.

The group tries to keep as informal as possible and restrain itself from being affiliated with any bigger organisations, as it might keep some people from joining out of ideological reasons. They believe in diversity within the group and in providing a comfortable space for everybody, no matter what their specific political standpoint is, in order to create a space for dialogue and debate.

*We also don’t want to be recognised with any movement, because then it will close us for some people. [...] We sometimes do activities with other organisations, but always as ourselves. And I think that’s what’s special about Jad Be Jad, and that’s what makes us bring more people. I can meet one day with somebody who thinks completely different than me, and still we meet and we talk and we share.* (M25)

The meetings are held in English, some of the members are bilingual and some study the other language in order to understand the other and deepen the discourse, but English is the bridge between the groups, even though they rather refer to it as a language barrier that for some members becomes too much of an obstacle to continue participating in the meetings.

The participant that took part in the study is one of the organisers on the Israeli side of the movement and has been involved in the work of Jad be Jad for about a year.

### 4.2.3 Breaking the Silence

In short, Breaking the Silence is an organisation where ex-soldiers collect testimonies from other ex-soldiers about what they have experienced and done during their military service.

*Breaking the Silence tries to break the silence between the soldiers and the society, or soldiers and their mothers, or the society with itself.* (M30)

M30 explained that Breaking the Silence wants to show the hidden side of the military service to the public. They try to explain the effects that their actions have on the society and collect the stories from the West Bank that most soldiers try to forget after their military service in order to show them to the wider public. It gives the mothers and relatives of the soldiers a opportunity to understand them better, and the soldiers get a chance to reflect on what they have done and process their experiences.
4.2.4 Combatants for peace

Combatants for Peace is an organisation that was started jointly by Israeli ex-soldiers and Palestinian ex-prisoners. M30 took part in the initiative of starting the organisation after his experiences in the military service.

And we set up an organisation called Combatants for Peace, my brother and I, and other people that were refusers of the army and we met with Palestinian ex prisoners that fought against the occupation in the first intifada. [...] There would be no more violence against the occupation. We thought that we had a lot of power, using the fact that we were ex soldiers and ex prisoners that people better respect in these societies, to help to change the mindsets of people. (M30)

The members of Combatants for Peace work a lot independently, by meeting and breaking barriers between themselves they already work for bringing the two people together and promote understanding. A main focus being non-violence.

After brandishing weapons for so many years, and having seen one another only through weapon sights, we have decided to put down our guns, and to fight for peace. (Combatants for Peace, 2010)

The organisation also engages in inviting people from both the Israeli and the Palestinian societies to show them the stories of both sides through lectures, talks, high school meetings and workshops. Sometimes they attend demonstrations together and they also try to create political pressure in order to stop the violence and engage in a constructive dialogue. (Combatants for Peace, 2010)

4.2.5 Peace Now

According to the official homepage of Peace Now, its mission is to:

Ensure that both Israelis and Palestinians embrace the only viable solution to the conflict: the creation of a Palestinian state in the territories adjacent to Israel, which were occupied as a result of the 1967 war – A Two State Solution. (Peace Now, 2010)

The organisation is working to end the occupation of the Palestinian areas and promote peace and democracy by educating the Israeli public and concerned citizens worldwide about the conflict and the current situation. (Peace Now, 2010)

F25 remembers being a part of Peace Now Youth when she was young:

So there was a sort of a dialogue between us, we were a group from a village and Peace Now and they came to us from the West Bank with their families and they came to visit
us and we went to visit them and it was kind of nice I guess and I think it was in the years that people sort of believed that things were going to change. (F25)

A part of the official mission of Peace Now is to inspire the wider public to take part in initiatives for development that in various ways will support peace. They focus on both long-term peace promotion and on removing existing obstacles to political negotiations for a two-state solution. (Peace Now, 2010)

4.2.6 Peace Players International

Peace Players is an American Organisation with international branches working in Northern Ireland, South Africa and the Middle East. Peace Players use basketball as a tool for developing and building positive relationships and bridges between children in conflict areas.

It was started by two former NBA players, basketball players who decided they were going to change the world with basketball or something like that, very nice. They have a program which is a Basketball Educational Program and they work in different conflict areas. (F25)

F25 used to be active within the program as an office manager and describes the work of the organisation as a combination between basketball and education that focuses a lot on making the children good basketball players but still works actively to in various ways promote peace and understanding between children.

The organisation has a program called twinning where Arab and Jewish children in the ages 6-16 play basketball on mixed teams which gives them an opportunity to interact with the other group on a year-round, frequent and structured basis, thus forming friendships with individuals the would rarely otherwise interact with. The children are also offered various forms of peace education and life skills activities. (Peace Players International, 2010)

4.2.7 One Voice

According to the official website of One Voice, the mission of the organisation is to:

amplify the voice of mainstream Israelis and Palestinians, empowering them to propel their elected representatives toward a two-state solution. (One Voice, 2010)
What the organisation tries to do is explaining the idea of a two state solution in order to help people understand the concept. With offices in the United States, Great Britain, Palestine and Israel, One Voice tries to encourage decisionmakers to stand for a two state solution and work towards it. They give lectures, go to townhall meetings and do other things in order to bring the idea into awareness.

Another program within the movement is called the college tour, where a Palestinian and an Israeli go together to colleges either around Great Britain, Europe or the United States and talk about the conflict.

And I don't claim that any side has the exclusive right of the conflict, we are both guilty, but we need to understand each other more and this is what we talk about in the college tour. (M26)

Their aim is to show the public in these countries there that there are other voices and attitudes than those presented in the media, and that Israelis and Palestinians can work together for peace and have the same vision for the future – a two state solution and peace.

The participant is a coordinator of the activities of One Voice in Tel Aviv university and a member of the Israeli side of the movement.

4.2.8  Stand with Us

Participant M27 is active in the organisation Stand with Us that started in Los Angeles in 2001, a couple of months after the Intifada broke out. Its purpose is to educate people around the world about the conflict and about Israel. They want to show that there are two sides to every coin and make sure that Israel's side of the story is being heard in different communities, campuses and forums.

Stand with Us is an international organization dedicated to bringing peace to the Middle East by educating about Israel and the misinformation that often surrounds the Middle East conflict. (Stand With Us, 2010)

The participant is managing an extra curricular volunteer program for Israeli students, where 150 students are trained every year to become better speakers for Israel in a program called “Empowering Israeli young adults to become informed, articulate, active and globally minded future leaders”. By weekly meetings with lectures and workshops the fellowship tries to show their students the complexity of the current situation.
And from that point give them the tools to advocate for Israel regardless of their political opinion. (M27)

The focus of the organisation is to get the narrative of the Israeli side out to the public and teach students how to actively support and advocate for Israel when faced with questions.

So in the future, wherever they'll be heading to, in the business, we have students from all over the spectrum, we have med school students, we have law school students, political science, arts [...] we don't necessarily pick the students who will be the future politicians, we choose them from the whole spectrum and wherever they'll end up, you know, doing or working - they will be able to speak up for Israel when necessary. (M27)

The organisation profiles itself as an organisation working for peace in the Middle East, however, it clearly concentrates on supporting Israel rather than in any way working for equality and dialogue between the parties in the conflict.

My organisation doesn’t try to help the other side, there are enough organisations doing it already. And for the sake of the idea that started this organisation, there is no purpose for this, we focus on something else, we understand that there is a lack of information, lack of knowledge, lack of professionalism in this aspect. So this is what we focus on. (M27)

By focusing on educating the Israeli side of the conflict, and the wider public, Stand With Us believes that a future peace agreement will be possible. The reason, according to M27, to why this needs to be done is because of the attitude of the Israeli public that won't comply with a solution that it is not satisfied with. Thus, in order to provide durable peace in the Middle East, Israel's story needs to be heard.

4.2.9 The Peres Center for Peace in Jaffa

Basically, to say it very short; we connect people from both sides, usually based on their professional background, and we provide a space for them to meet. But also, we provide something extra for them so they get something out of it professionally for their own life. So they come for the dialogue, but they also come for their own interest which is something very important if you want to attract people from all different, you know, angles of life and not only those who are already convinced and in the game. (F29)

The Peres Center works with various projects and the participant told us about the ones she was involved with:
Another thing that we do is that we do capacity building and developmental projects mainly on the Palestinian side, we do educational programs, to educate both societies about the values of peace, democracy and freedom, human rights etc. (F29)

Based on Shimon Peres’ vision, that economy is a major component in working towards peace, a lot of economic issues of corporation and development are also worked with in various ways.

The participant was also talking about the peace NGO forum which is a civil society network with more than 100 member organisations that are both Israeli and Palestinian. Working as a joint platform where organisations working for peace from both sides are provided with a space to get together and coordinate their work. This is the only such network of its kind, where two sides in an ongoing conflict find themselves under one banner. The participant pointed out that it is not as a type of conference, but rather a platform on an ongoing base. The common denominator for the organisations is that they are all working for peace and are doing it in cooperation with the other side.

But they are very different in terms of their political agendas, and they are very different in terms of the fields in which they work. [...] But here we are all working towards peace but people have different agendas as to how this peace would look like. [...] And this is something that wasn’t there before, the organizations didn’t know about each other, there were many people, many organizations doing things, but there was no space to connect them and to create a whole which is bigger than all the parts. (F29)

Apart from creating a joint platform for the different organisations, the networking component also connects the organisations with international groups that are working in the region but also with groups that are working in other conflict areas, in order to learn from each other and exchange knowledge and experiences.

Aside the networking there is also a capacity component in the peace NGO forum where assistance, courses and help with fundraising is provided for the organisations that are involved. There is also a group that is dealing with policy issues such as connecting the organisations and the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

Another program that the Peres Center for Peace also is working on is the Young Political Leaders program, which has been running for six years. It is an annual program where the Center brings emerging politicians on the verge of becoming either parliament members or aiming for a political career or a leadership position in civil society. The participants are
enrolled from both Israel and Palestine to participate in a one-year program where they get to meet, exchange views and get leadership training. The aim of the program is to create a group that is very diverse in order to expose the participants to the various values and opinions that are represented in the societies and in order to provide a platform for dialogue and understanding between the participants and a possibility for them to create bonds that stretch over the borders.

The last effort that the participant mentioned were the public events aimed for the Israeli public that the Peres Center organises. They bring different kinds of Palestinian and Israeli figures and academia to debate and talk on a burning issue concerning the conflict. This is done in order to provide Israelis with first hand information that gets translated live, rather than the information provided in the mainstream media. She pointed out that the media mostly uses the same people for interviews because of the language barrier, thus limiting the insight into the actual attitudes of the Palestinian society. The public events attract a lot of audience as people are very curious to listen and ask questions and get first hand information.

At the time of conducting the field research such a conference was attended by the researcher as its theme was highly relevant for the study. The purpose of the conference was to “explore the meaning, implications and prospects of constructive nonviolent action as a growing force” as stated in the program. Among the many speakers were the former Israeli Minister of Defence, a representative of the Palestinian Nonviolence Movement, an Israeli activist and Martin Luther King Jr. III. The conference was held in a large auditorium in the Peres Center for Peace and live translation was provided between the three languages of English, Hebrew and Arabic. The audience was actively participating in the debates, with very differing political onsets, and the many breaks provided a possibility for them to network and discuss furtherly. (Appendix D)

The participant of the study has worked at the Peres Center for Peace for almost five years and is currently the head of a department which she established a few months ago and is also responsible for other parts of the organisation.
4.3 The Individuals

Changing to a more individual perspective, the participants were asked to describe their thoughts, values and feelings about themselves and the situation out of their personal perception. At times, these narratives showed to differ from the values of the organisations the participants were representing, which shows some of the complexity of the situation which will be furtherly discussed at a later stage in this paper. The personal statements and descriptions of the individuals are here presented and sorted by age and sex, and should not be confused or connected to the organisations and their official values. The citations below are in all provided by the headlined person and will therefore not be referenced.

4.3.1 Defining Themselves

The participants’ definitions and descriptions of their own person provide an interesting insight to who they are and what attributes they ascribe to themselves. Information concerning what they do will be added from the rest of the interviews, however, direct connections to their specific organisations will not be made.

F25 – “not an activist, just more active than others”

F25 doesn’t consider herself being very active and she doesn’t want to be called an activist, she does say she is more active than other people but she doesn’t regard herself being engaged enough to be called an activist.

_I grew up in a family where it was quite obvious to think in what you would generally call leftist terms… and I usually went to demonstrations with my parents when I was young – so it’s not like I’m a rebel or something_.

F25 has belonged to and worked within various peace organisations since she was young and is currently working on different kinds of research concerning protest which has led her to become more active recently and attend protests more frequently. She said that it felt wrong going to do research on protests and not fully participate in them, however, she still points out that she in fact isn’t very active:

_People don’t do enough. Never enough. But I can say of myself that it’s not enough._

At the time of going to the army F25 signed a petition that she wont serve in the occupied territories which she said ment a lot to her, and probably annoyed some people, but that she doesn’t think it meant much in the end, that it was just for her own sake.
F25 considers herself Israeli but said she isn't very attached to her Israeli nationality, she does however believe that most people in Israel are and that the existence of an Israeli state therefore is important.

**M25 – “a Zionist leftist”**

M25 is active within an organisation that promotes dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.

> I support peace, I consider myself a leftist you know, but still a Zionist, now there are many Israelis who don’t support Israel at all and that it shouldn’t exist but I’m not one of those, I think there should be two countries.

He has been active within the organisation for almost two years and is currently one of the organisers that helps out to plan the meetings and activities that the participants take part in. M25 often mentions the importance of being an individual in this setting, as he doesn’t want to belong to a bigger organisation, but wants to be able to express his views and personal opinions as himself.

**M26 – “a jew belonging to a peoplehood”**

M26 speaks about the relation to the Holocaust when defining himself as a person, he talks about how the stories of his family who were survivors of the holocaust have affected him a lot and made him understand the importance of a Jewish state.

> It doesn’t really matter where I am, it’s the connection that I feel with other Jewish people, it’s not really something that I can explain but a lot of it is also their feeling towards Israel and the connection, not necessarily the land, but I think the concept of a Jewish state.

M26 believes in education and identifies himself a lot with liberalism as presented by John Stuart Mill and would like to teach and educate people to make the sides listen to each other, communicate and negotiate in a constructive way.

**F27 – “a queer, academic, left wing activist”**

F27 is active in a various ways, she is a consulter in the Israeli gay youth organisation and started a lesbian feminist organisation, she is active with the Anarchists Against the Wall and she recently quit the student union because of the lack of time and would now like to take a year off to concentrate on obtaining her PhD in English literature.
Part of my identity is being a queer academic left wing activist, so I can’t really choose between them. Even if I’m not going to do it in Israel, I’m still going to do it, I don’t see myself not doing it.

F27 said that she cannot attend demonstrations in the middle of the week because of her studies and her work, instead she tries to attend as many as possible when she has the time. Being active is a big part of her life and she believes she would be active even if she lived in another country. It’s a part of her identity.

M27 – “leftist, working for the center, or center-right”

M27 is a project manager for a non-profit organisation that runs throughout Israel in six different campuses, training Israeli students to become non-formal ambassadors for Israel.

I consider myself someone who’s very left, not very, but pretty left. And I work for an organisation that is center, or center-right.

On my personal beliefs sometimes I disagree with the organisation but I try to maneuver in between my personal beliefs and ideology and what the organisation, what the place I’m working for, and I’m happily working for it, what they represent and what they stand for.

M27 says that he considers himself being “so lefty because I’m not as positive as a lot of people are.” He believes that people on the right side of the political map are positive because they believe that they have the right to Israel, because God gave them the land. People on the left side however, say that they believe in the good of people, which M27 also says that he does.

but I see there are forces who are stronger that unfortunately are shaping the reality, and this is why the fact that I’m so pro peace

M27 said that he is pro peace because he wants to live a good life in Israel, while other people get the same opportunities for a good life as he does.

F29 – “a peace activist within the political framework”

F29 has been involved with working on the issue of the conflict for many years and she expresses it as something that for her is an obvious thing to do. She describes it as something that she wants to do and continues training herself to become better at.
F29 describes herself as a peace activist, she does however distinguish between her kind of activism and the activism of the Anarchists Against the Wall, as she believes that with her traits and kind of experience, working within the political framework suits her better.

Talking about personal strengths, F29 points out that she is good at handling interpersonal conflicts and dialogue, which makes working on the conflict something that is meant for her.

**M30 – “ex-soldier, refuser and active”**

M30 used to consider himself a Zionist;

\[I \text{ used to really believe that Israel is the victimhood of the Israelis and the fact that the Arabs want to throw us to the sea basically... [...] and I really wanted to be in the army as well, and the transition from actually being there and after experiencing the fighting in the second intifada I realised by certain process that it is not the right way to finish any conflict, and second that Israel is actually not the victim here but rather the predator or the stronger.}\]

After the army, M30 decided to refuse going to the yearly mandatory training and became what in Israel is called a refuser, after that he started an organisation where ex-soldiers and Palestinian ex-prisoners work together for peace.

\[and I decided to refuse a year after I got dismissed from the army, you have these mandatory three years and then you do a month every year for 20 or 30 years after and I decided to refuse a year after and said that I will not go to this yearly training.\]

He has been active in various organisations and is today more active within the local area of Jerusalem, taking part in the protests in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan. He also gives political tours of the West Bank to people from abroad and Israelis.

**4.3.2 Reasons for Being Active**

The reasons for being active differed a lot between the participants in the study. Answers to the question “why do you do this” together with excerpts from the responses to other questions within the frames of the interview show a wide range of personal approaches to action, identity and the conflict.
F25 – “because I always felt close”

F25 has been active since she was very young, it has been a part of her upbringing and she has been continuing doing what the values of her family have taught her.

because of things that's been happening here... because of I became involved with the research that I'm doing that's dealing with protest. That lead me to being more aware, or being more involved as a researcher with things that are being done here in terms of activism... because I always felt close, and I always did some things and I became more active. Because it didn't feel right being a researcher and going to Bil'in and not being and activist.

F25 brings up the importance of popular protest, she says that it is the type of political action that she believes in and that is necessary at the moment.

For me as I said, what I believe in now is the popular protest, I think what human rights organisations are doing in the west bank is important and it's not something that you can give up or should give up.Human rights organisations I mean international organisations, Israeli organisations could make sure that Palestinians can go through checkpoints without going through hell, and make sure that they use legal tools to help Palestinians to get land back or move the separation wall a little bit. It's important and it's not something that we can give up because it's needed and it's helping peoples’ lives. But as a sole thing it's not enough because it's maintaining the situation as it is... and making it a little better.

In the future, F25 wants to continue taking part in the struggle by attending demonstrations and showing solidarity. However, she believes that her traits are more suitable for working within research, rather than being an organiser of peace activities.

M25 – “because it's healthy to build human relations”

It's actually a difficult question, it's not simple. I support peace, I consider myself a leftist you know, but still a Zionist, now there are many Israelis who don’t support Israel at all and that it shouldn’t exist but I’m not one of those, I think there should be two countries, but that's not the point. I started going because I just found it interesting to meet Palestinians. To see how the concept looks from their point of view. And I just kept going because I never felt like I learned enough. (M25)

M25 spoke about supporting peace and doing it in an informal and enjoyable way, but he also mentioned that it clears his conscience and gives him a feeling that he is doing something. He does not believe that his organisation will end the conflict, as he doesn't think it depends on them. However, he describes the work they are doing as:
Something that makes the reality a little bit more normal. I define it as healthy, I think it’s healthy to build human relations with people on the other side. (M25)

Engaging in the organisation and working for peace is the way in which M25 believes that he should be active, he says that it’s the only way since he doesn’t know any politicians and also that he believes that education is the most important path to take and that it is more relevant in the issue than politics.

**M26 – “because the jewish people need a shelter country”**

M26’s main concern is about Israel as a state. He spoke about the change of demographics that he believes will be crucial for the outcomes of the future of Israel. He said that statistics say that there will an Arab majority in Israel within 10-20 years, meaning that the Jews will become a minority. This in turn, would lead to the Arabs and Palestinians claiming equality of rights and a one state solution, in which point he believes Israel has been lost.

*There is a big threat on Israel as a Jewish state, which is the main issue for me. [...] And this is why I’m there. Because I want to push towards a two state solution, not because of my affection or love for the Arabs or the Palestinians, first of all I think about my own people.*

When asking M26 why he started being active he spoke about the importance of having a Jewish state and his personal connection to the holocaust.

*Both grandparents were survivors, either as fighters or their families were murdered there, and I remember a story about my grandmother that after she got free from the concentration camp where she was a labour worker, an SS woman yelled at her, ‘what are you so happy about, you don’t have anywhere to go’ and that just burnt into me.*

For him, it isn't a matter of religion, but peoplehood, as he believes that the Jewish people have a connection and need a place where they can feel that they belong and that can serve as a shelter for them. He emphasised the importance of a shelter-country as:

*So it doesn’t matter where you are but you still know that you have somewhere to go*

A safe country according to M26, is an Israeli state separated from a Palestinian state, a solution where the Palestinians have their own land and the Israelis have theirs, and the two peoples are separated.
F27 – “because you can’t unsee the suffering of people”

F27 didn’t have to contemplate the question “why do you do this” a lot, she was sure about her reasons and they were based on a feeling of responsibility and identity.

I can give you the answer I give everyone, once you start seeing the occupation, it’s very hard not to see it. It’s really hard not to see the occupation. For me it started more like from afar and then I went to a seminar with Palestinians and Israelis in Germany and I met some people from the West Bank, and then I got a little bit more into it, and then you start reading newspapers differently and you start noticing things you haven’t noticed before and then you go to the West Bank and you see what the occupation does and it’s hard to unsee it, you can’t unsee the suffering of people.

As already mentioned, taking part in protest was a by herself perceived as a part of her identity. That, together with having been exposed to the conflict and the inequalities between the countries, makes being active something unexchangeable for her.

Nothing you do will make you forget it. So you have to either try to forget it and pretend that it’s not happening, or fight against it.

And as F27 said herself, fighting against the oppressor and going to demonstrations is a part of her identity and something that she will continue doing no matter where she is.

M27 – “because both sides need to be satisfied”

The reason to why M27 wanted to become active was because he wanted to become a better speaker for Israel. To make sure that the world gets both sides of the story and to educate the society about the conflict.

He believes that the hebrew word chutzpah, which in one word describes the personal traits of being extraordinarily bold, arrogant, brave, stubborn and intelligent, needs to be taken into consideration when trying to create a peace agreement that will satisfy both parties of the conflict and stay durable.

But this is it… because Israelis lost their sense of universal, the survival plays a key role in this conflict, and this is why it’s hard for people to think about… wait a second, there’s someone your age with your IQ, and your dreams, who doesn’t get to do this because of the existence of your country, of you… and your friends, and your family.. Is it right? No. Is there something you can do about it? Yes. Can you change it? Probably no.

But would you be able to speak up for your country, then for future agreements, people would understand that it’s not just Israel, the occupiers, the baby-killers, gave up their
land. Because this is not something that Israelis would be able to live with. And you want to keep both sides satisfied, otherwise this peace agreement will have no chance to survive in my opinion.

So it’s again, it’s a complex issue that I’m kind of tip-toeing in between. I’m trying to balance that this is the situation and this is what we are fighting with, but I try to make them understand that nothing is black and white.

M27 acknowledges the problem of inequality and the occupation, however, he believes that the Israeli side needs to be heard as well, and that by changing the discourse about Israel, the parties will be closer to a peace agreement.

Let’s be honest, I live a better life than most Palestinians my age, and it shouldn’t be like that, we all should have the same basic level of living, being able to live in a democracy, where we can fulfil our dreams. So I do think that the Palestinians are the weak side but I don’t think that the way Israeli is being portrayed in the media, or amongst a lot of anti Israel radical groups, this is not the right way.

F29 – “because it’s the most important thing I can do with my life”

When asking F29 why she is being active, she started by saying that she sees herself as a peace activist and that she is very passionate about the conflict. She also mentioned an interest in the two cultures and conflict resolution which had led her onto the path of the peace work she is conducting today.

To be honest from a very young age I knew that Jews and Arabs, and not necessarily the conflict, but I knew that Jews and Arabs is something that I’m interested in, like the relationship between, the cultures.

So I was always fascinated by Arab culture and our Arab neighbours, and I always also knew that I can handle conflicts, I mean personally. So working on conflicts is something that is, I don’t want to use the word purpose and I don’t want to make it spiritualistic but, I chose the things that led to it. I studied Arabic in high school and I went to study political science because it was always kind of, I was very active in the political structures and Peace Now when I was a teenager so it was kind of always the direction.

But I also know that in one of the junctions I could have turned left and not right and then I wouldn’t be sitting here today, I could be doing my PhD in Norway or something, who knows. But now after having that this is what I’m doing and that, then I know more so that it’s right for me and at the end of the day, and at the beginning of the day, I love Israel with all my heart. I don’t see myself living anywhere else and I think that the most important thing that I can do with my life is working towards a good future for Israel.
and the only possible future for us is to live in peace so I really think that I'm doing something that is egoistic for myself but also has a benefit for all I would say.

M30 – “because of the things I have done”

M30 tells a story of transition from being a Zionist who was eager to be in the army and protect Israel, to understanding that the Israel is in fact the predator in the conflict and that violence is not the right way to end this conflict. Because of the things he saw and did in the army, he chose to become active within peace movements.

And later it came to activism to the feeling that I have to change the minds of the Israelis because of what I saw and what I understood and the way that I understood it that made me understand that it’s basically crimes what we’re doing, what Israel is doing in the occupation of the Palestinian territories.

I also help myself in that, it’s a part of my devotion because of things I have done in the army myself, and because I feel that something is wrong and should be corrected. But I think most of the things that people do in their lives are not very aimed to certain things.

Today M30 is still active but less sure about what his aspirations are, he doesn’t have a clear picture of any desired future as he did before, all he knows is that he wants to continue spreading knowledge and information about the conflict.

4.4 The Society

In this section, the participants’ perceptions about the Israeli society will be presented, their opinions about the engagement of other people and their hopes and beliefs about the future of Israel and what will happen to the conflict.

4.4.1 Other people

The participants agreed on that the general society doesn’t do much to change the situation in Israel, a very commonly expressed statement when talking about the conflict in Israel is that “Tel Aviv is like a bubble”. At the same time, M25 pointed out that Tel Aviv is also the place where the most pro-peace and human rights organisations operate from. When asking the participants what they think about the engagement of other people and their thoughts, their answers differed a bit but were quite consistent in that people generally choose not to care.
I think that it's one of the things that are less hopeful here, it's that it seems like many
people don't care. And it seems like you go to, you don't care, you don't want to know.
Some people believe bad things are happening but won't take any action to do anything
which I understand, I didn't take any action for many years in my life. Maybe worse than
that is not even wanting to know what's going on, which is something that a lot and most
of the people here are doing. (F25)

people here are very conscious about the things that happen, but most of them are not
very active, I think because they don't feel they can do anything. There's a feeling of
insignificance of the personal action, they say like: What can I do? (M25)

As a reason for why M25 believes that his generation is more active than the younger one, he
talks about the optimistic time that he and people his age got to experience when they were
young, he believes that this time sparked his hope in peace a lot.

The most optimistic time in Israel was like 92-95 with Rabbin, and we were kids during
that time. and in school we were talking about peace and peace was almost there. We
felt that peace was around the corner and this is the environment that we grew up in,
that peace is an idea... peace is what we should achieve. And the people that grew up
after it and are now in the army and younger, they didn't live through it, they live like...
peace is not... peace used to be a more common word, I think. A more acceptable... I don't
know. And now it's not, they don't think it's possible, I really feel it. (M25)

M30 believes that the reasons to why people don't engage in working for peace are more
personal and based on ignorance, racism and fear towards the other side.

They are very much enclave in their, they have from one hand a very concrete reality of
oppression and occupation and they have a lot of fear, a lot of victimacy and a lot of fear
that the others want to kill us. And this fear is not for nothing, you have the holocaust
trauma and you have specific people getting killed so it's always like that you get more
extreme and on the other hand you hear bad stuff from Europe or America where there
are, this is their world basically, it's not the Arab world. So they are confused in many
ways so they decide not to think about it, mostly because they can. Mostly the people in
the world will not want to know the bad things that are going on in their name. And
there's also a lot of racism, most of the racism is like always based on ignorance and fear.
There's a very strong separation and this if from the beginning. (M30)

The lack of communication and understanding between the two sides is also expressed by
M25 where he sates that the problem is that people don't believe that the other side wants to
work for peace and that they think it doesn't make any effort to do so.

I think the big problem right now on both sides is that we don't believe there is a person
to talk to on the other side, we say they don't want peace, they say we don't want peace
and that's it. (M25)
F29 believes that the current political situation in Israel is a big reason to why peace activism currently is so unattractive and weak.

Currently we’re very, we’re probably the weakest we’ve ever been, in terms of our political camp, hopefully in the next Israeli election we’ll have more positive outcomes. But it does feel many times that when we talk about Israel.. the Israeli public.. it’s really drops in the ocean. (F29)

She also mentions the demonization of the terms left and activist in the media, as terms such as “the extreme left” is being used to describe the people that participate in the demonstrations in Bil’in and Sheikh Jarrah. She believes that this is because of the current political power that is working to delegitimise their work, and she believes that this is a big issue, as the Israeli society are being provided with a very one-sided picture of the situation.

F27 gave an example of this matter telling the about how her sister had reacted to her experiences from a protest in Bil’in.

My sister doesn’t want to hear about it, I mean, I try to tell her every time a little bit, [...] and a couple of weeks back she actually listened to what I said, usually she just says that she’s apolitical and doesn’t want to hear about it. But when I was talking to her about Bil’in and the fact that we come to the fence and nobody throws rocks, and we try to talk to the soldiers and get teargassed... she was schocked, because it’s not the way it’s presented in the media. (F27)

The connection between the media and the politics is thus believed to have an apparent influence on the wider society in Israel. Staying with politics, M26 believes that it is the way to change things, and that politics should be focused on more and affected through lobbying and spreading information. He believes that the problem is that people generally don’t think there is a problem, and because the politicians are in power.

What other people think? Firstly they don’t think that there is a problem, there is no problem, to some of them, the Arabs are nothing and eventually we’re sitting here in Tel Aviv and we don’t feel the conflict, even though every 100 metres that you go in the street you see a memorial for an explosion, we passed a few before, but they really don’t think about it, everyone just going to their houses, going to work and they don’t really take an active role. We leave the whole issue and the whole subject for the politicians and this is why I think that we need to work with the politicians and from there the answer will come unfortunately because the people don’t speak. (M26)

M25 believes that a reason to why people don’t engage in activism might be that there’s no money to it and that they simply want to go on with their lives. However, F25 mentions that the ones that do engage shouldn’t be forgotten, as it shows that there is some hope.
But I can say that it’s also nice and gives hope to see that some people are involved and do care and it sounds like not big numbers, but I think it’s big numbers that there are 200 people in Jerusalem every week for the past months, and another 150-200 people every Friday in the West Bank and other places. And it’s people that care and want to do something, [...] And it gives hope that some people do care and do try, but generally it’s not very common. (F25)

To summarise, all participants mention how people generally choose not to care about the conflict, and even though they are very engaged when talking about their own work, the hopes in the engagement of the wider society are very limited.

4.4.2 The Future

The hopes for the future, as expressed by the participants, are perceived as very dark. The belief and hope that things will change for the better are limited and even though all of the participants believe that something will happen, there is an uncertainty about what actually will happen.

It’s a dark, dark time I think. I don’t know if it’s darker than it used to be or if it’s darker now than in 2000, I’m not sure. I know personally for me I’m maybe more aware of the darkness now than I was in 2002. I don’t know if I’m a great believer in what’s going to happen here, really I see the idea of a two state solution as quite far from being applicable. I would say maybe the only thing I believe in now, in doing or being the right thing is what is done in the protests against the wall. (F25)

In terms of how I see the future, I think we will have a very, very bad time politically, before we will have good time. At the end of the day I am very optimistic and I think that the people here will not live in war forever. It’s just not possible, I think now people are extremely tired and on both sides we are really, really really in despair. And on one of the evidences is that you don’t see people supporting the peace camp, but I don’t think it’s necessarily because they don’t agree with the two state solution and because they don’t agree with the division of Jerusalem, because I think they do. But just because they are just fed up of the Palestinians on the Israeli side, Palestinians are fed up with the Israelis. Just the Palestinians, for them, the Israelis can allow themselves to do nothing whereas the Palestinians cannot, but I think we are now In a period when things are going to be probably worse... (F29)

I guess I would say that I’m really pessimistic still, if it didn’t sound like it I’m quite pessimistic about the next decade. In the next decade a lot of drastic changes will happen, demographically... the Obama administration that probably will force us into an agreement... (M26)

I don’t see one solution, I don’t think it will come very soon. Probably most of the things that will happen will not make me very happy. I can offer thoughts that I have like two
states on one land, some kind of sovereignty to the people without connection to the borders, many ideas of that sorts. I think the world should understand that we should not look for those two state solutions anymore in the way people see it like liberating the West Bank, giving it to the Palestinian authority. Moving many, many Jews back, moving Palestinians back. It looks to me like more of a war than anything else, but I don’t have any peace hope that I should have. (M30)

While most of the participants had a very pessimistic vision of what the future would look like, some of the participants addressed the specific reasons to why they thought that the situation was going to become worse within a couple of years.

In reality the situation now gets worse, the thing is that we do expect political arrests starting like in about six months or maybe a year. I mean, our phones are being tapped already and I know my phone is being tapped. And a lot of the activists have experienced it, that’s why we don’t have our phones during the meetings, they are somewhere else. (F27)

Because in this situation, from my pessimistic point of view, Israelis and Palestinians, Israelis wouldn’t want to live here in 20 years, who would want to keep sending their kids to the army, to shoot rockets at people. Having to deal with all this, no one, as a mom in Europe, you would never have to send your kid on a bus and then be scared that he might get… that the bus might get bombed by some crazy moron. This is the reality in Israel and in a different way, this is what Palestinian moms were dealing with. (M27)

There is a big threat on Israel as a Jewish state […] because the demographics are changing rapidly, and the optimistic say that within 20 years, the pessimistic say within 5 years there will be an Arab majority here in Israel between the Mediterranean and the Jordanian river, so it means that we will lose our majority. […] They will claim that they want equality of rights, even the Palestinians, that they want a one state solution. It means that we lost Israel. (M26)

I don’t see this in Tel Aviv because here people are totally forgetting what’s going on in Israel. In a few years people would say, okay, we have a majority of Muslim people here, let’s have a two state solution and if this wouldn’t work for them, because it’s not that most of Tel Avivian’s care if it’s a Jewish state or not, they don’t practice anything anyway. And if it won’t be the life that they’ve been living… then, you know, I have a European citizenship, a lot of my friends do as well. So they would leave, I mean, I can have a better life somewhere else, why would I stay here.. So.. for the purpose of these two nations and for these two people, we need to have an agreement. No one is going to be fully happy with but something that we can compromise with and understand the situation. (M27)

The big question when addressing the future of Israel usually shows itself in choosing to believe in a one-state or a two-state solution.
I used to be very much for a two state solution, I think it’s still the best solution that there is. I’m not very attached to my Israeli nationality personally, but I know that most people are more attached to it than me, and I know that probably the best solution, still now, even though it seems as it’s not a possibility... because there are settlements, because what’s actually going on is what you can call an apartheid kind of. By Israel against the West Bank and I can’t even talk about what’s going on in Gaza. This is really, it’s possible and then more time goes on without anything going elsewhere, that seems like, I don’t know... (F25)

there was a time when I wanted a Palestinian state and it felt like the end of all the problems... and this is what I worked for and it felt like a heaven aim. And as I went along I figured that I don’t want a Palestinian state in the way that the Palestinian authority wants it, I don’t want another border here... I don’t want the half a million of settlers to be taken out of their homes, I don’t want the Palestinian authority to be controlled by America or Israel. I don’t want them to be oppressing the Bedouins or the women or studying to be good warriors to fight against the Iranians with Israel and America. I don’t want borders here, I don’t want the Palestinians not being able to go to the sea , I don’t want me not being able to go to the West Bank. (M30)

They... Salam Fayyad has a plan of declaring a Palestinian state in one year and maybe he will so we’ll see what happens, it’s an interesting agenda. He’s definitely smart and, you know, so... (F25)

The participants had their own personal hopes and thoughts about the future and what they would want to do, most of the participants said they wanted to continue working for peace in one way or another.

And I want to teach history, to see that Jews and Arabs can live together, I mean Jews have lived in Arab countries for hundreds of years. And also the religion itself, the Jewish religion and Jewish culture does support human rights and stuff if you really know about. I will teach high school students, and I hope that I can. (M25)

For me as I said, what I believe in now is the popular protest, I think what human rights organisations are doing in the West Bank is important and it’s not something that you can give up or should give up.[...] It’s important and it’s not something that we can give up because it’s needed and it’s helping people’s lives. But as a sole thing it’s not enough because it’s maintaining the situation as it is and making it a little better. And that’s why I think that what we can do, or what I can do is that kind of protest that I was talking about. (F25)

I would want to keep on educating the people and maybe this is one of my wishes to go and teach about liberalism, the true meaning of liberalism by the words of John Stuart Mill, to listen to the other side and to negotiate and eventually if it will happen and there will be a Palestinian state and there will be peace between us and the Palestinians... to
teach and to give to human people. I don’t know, maybe public service, maybe a politician. (M26)

It’s hard for me to see an arrangement happening in a few years of something changing drastically, I’m sure some day things will change, I hope I will be here to see it but I’m not sure. (F25)

The perceived attitudes toward the engagement of the wider society in Israel and on the future show a generally very pessimistic picture of the current situation in the country, however, when talking about the individual engagement of the participants and the effects that they believe that they work has, the discourse has a more positive tone.

4.5 Making a change – Activism & Influence

When evaluating the influence that the interviewees believed that their engagement and work has on the people that participate in the movements and on the wider society, the tone was less pessimistic than in the previous themes. The participants agreed on that their work didn’t affect the whole population and that they at times felt very helpless and weak, but they were positive about the effects on the individuals that participated, and connected their engagement to a positive change for Israel.

Even if, some people come only once and decide it’s not for them, it’s okay, but even people that came just once say it changed something in their perspective, because they saw like a Palestinian guy from Bethlehem or Hebron, not just read about him in the news, they actually talked to him and heard what he had to say about his life, and he’s not just a person throwing rocks, he’s a human being and they even know his phone number and talk on facebook with him and it really changes people, even coming once. (M25)

I’m saying that you always see how much you see, but always in light of how extreme the reality is. That’s just a general remark on the effect, but then you have to draw the circle of where you can influence, in Hebrew we say my little piece of heaven, and you have to be able to say to yourself, I won’t bring the end of the occupation, I wont finish the conflict, but this is what I can do in my circle of influence […]So that’s somewhere where I see the effect and we have small success stories all the time. (F29)

When talking about the effects that the work of the organisations has on the individuals that participate in them, it showed that most of the interviewees had hope concerning the positive influence that the organisations have, some did, however, remain very pessimistic.

Yeah, it creates change, it has an effect, not as fast as we hope, but it has. There is an effect, and even if it doesn’t affect anything on a large scale, there is a smaller effect of
human relation. Like I said, we make friends with the people we meet, we make friends with the Palestinians, we make friends with the internationals that come to the demos in the West Bank and sometimes we bring people who would usually come only for the demo, so sometimes the people who ride with us in the car, we take them to the homes of the people we go to visit and they meet them, and they make friends with them and even if they don’t come to the place ever again they already know like there are real people there, there are kids there, there are nice people, it’s not the monsters that the media creates so you know, it’s really affecting on a small scale. (F27)

It’s useful if you speak of the small effects, and you can help a person so you feel that you are useful for once and you get more coverage, you get more people speaking about it, you feel useful. You get more Europeans or Americans speaking about the issue of Sheikh Jarrah... you feel that maybe the world knows better, maybe Israel knows better... then, most of the time I feel it’s hopeless. I can summarise it in general. (M30)

Someone who came once was a student who came with me to the Golan. I took him with me and he was very right wing, very extreme, Jewish, very like... his father was killed by a Palestinian terrorist. And I managed to get him to go with me once. And it really flipped him, just one meeting. And he started to see that there are people on the other side, not just terrorists with weapons. And there was a military... there was something... and then he calls me and told me to ask the Palestinians if they are okay, if our friends are okay. Because the connection grows very strong. And I think that’s the effect that we might have on the situation. (M25)

Some of the participants mentioned the effects they believe that their work has on the Palestinians and the relation between the two parties.

Because what I didn’t understand before joining the group is just that they don’t understand the Israelis, the civilians. Soldiers and settlers, that’s what they know. A lot of them say that they were just surprised to see that the Israelis are just nice people, that you can talk to them they don’t just want to fight. I remember one of the first conversations I had, I was still down when I began going to the meetings. And we began talking about the soldiers and the checkpoints and stuff. And they were shocked to hear that the soldiers don’t want to be there. Like we hated it, like they just want to go home, they don’t want to be there. But they are sure the soldiers love to be there, that they enjoy being at the checkpoint and going to their houses at night. And it was a real surprise to them that it’s more an obligation; it’s not something you want to do. (M25)

Again, there’s the difference between going to demonstration and be only in the demonstration and being only in the demonstration and then going back, not making any contact with the locals. And coming, visiting them, and being with them and like helping them if they need to. You can tell that if you go to the villages you can see people asking about certain people, the regulars, the people who come every week, who are in touch with the people in the village, if they don’t come, people will ask where they are. (F27)
F29 concludes with that even though there might be an effect on individuals, this effect has to manifest itself in political power in order to change the current situation.

*I think that we have a long way to go, and I think that it’s really difficult to affect change without having the political power, so in the end of the day, even if you manage to create an effect on the way people think, in order to see it, it has to manifest in political power. It has to be evident in how people vote and then what people follow in the street, what they go out to demonstrate against.* (F29)

We do change people’s minds, people who come to meetings. And those people go to vote and those people do stuff and they go to the army and they act differently, whatever they do they talk to people in their daily life and they act a little bit differently. It’s amazing, it sounds maybe a little like I’m exaggerating but really I talked to people who only came once and they say it really changed them. (M25)

M25 believes that through meetings between Israelis and Palestinians, the attitudes can be changed and later the peoples actions towards each other, which in turn would create bigger results as a positive chain-reaction.
5  DISCUSSION

Having explored and presented the different types of non violent action and efforts that the seven participants mentioned during the interviews, one can clearly see the presence of a movement that in various levels and ways make efforts to change the current situation in Israel. As the work is being conducted by individuals, their personal discourses concerning themselves, their surroundings and their belief in the impact they have is of uppermost interest and significance to understand the dynamics of this movement.

Due to the limitations of this paper, the discussion has been limited to the questions relating directly to the research question. Thus, only the individuals personal reasons for choosing to be active, as well as their perception of the effects and outcomes that this work has, will be analysed and discussed in this section.

The reasons for being active

When presenting the answers of seven different individuals under one headline, the differences between their identities, attitudes and motives become highly noticeable. The connections between their self-perception and their motives for choosing to act showed to correspond well with eachother and were confirmed by Klandermans (2003) theories with categorised reasons to why people choose to take part in political action.

A simple division of the participants into the three categories presented by Klandermans is not possible as their reasons and identities are far more complex than to be categorised into these separate groups. On the contrary, of the categories that Klandermans presents, being Instrumentality, Identity and Ideology, all of the participants meet the criteria to fall under every one of the three definitions.

The understanding of the vast complexity of the issues researched was the basis for the choice to conduct the research in an exploratory matter. Even though existing theories did provide guidance and broaden the understanding of the researcher, none of them managed to fully support the case studied, which was predicted before.

Explorative methods gave the researcher the possibility of reviewing the results out of new, unrestricted perspectives, and using discoursive analysis, patterns could be identified. Using
the categories of Klandermans (2003) as guidance while analysing the interviews, three categories could be distinguished and recognised as discourses concerning the core reasons for being active. By dividing the answers of the individuals into the two chapters about identity and reasons, a comparison could be made to see if the discourse of one section corresponded with the analysis of the other, which it showed to do in all cases. All participants did have, as previously mentioned, a very complex discourse connected to their engagement, thus somehow qualifying into at least one of the three categories. However, their discourses differed enough when focusing on actual identity and main reason for being active, to be able to identify the core cause.

The different reasons for being active as expressed by the participants, and identified by the researcher can be divided into the three following discourses:

- I support peace.
- How could I not?
- I want to change things.

Supporting peace was the core motivator for the two youngest participants, M25 and F25. They identify themselves a lot with the left and their discourses focus on supporting, believing in and stiving for peace. Both of them mentioned “the years when people sort of believed that things were going to change” and M25 believed that this might be the reason for why he believes more in peace than people belonging to other generations do. In this actual case his statement proves to be an interesting observation, as it actually is valid when applied to the small sample used for the study.

Connecting this observation to Bar-Tal & Rosens (2009) example of the educational system as a powerful channel for obtaining a cultural identity and the influence it has on young childrens identity formation, and considering the same year of birth of the participants, it can be argued that they were in their most receptive age when the discourse about peace was more dominant in Israel.

A feeling of obligation was identified as the main reason for the second category of the analysis. F27 expressed that activism is a part of her identity and that it is something that she would continue doing no matter where she was. A reoccurring theme in her discourse was however “not being able not to do it”, which shows that she believes that even if she
wouldn’t in fact want to be active, she would still have to, “because you can’t unsee the suffering of people.” M30 expressed a feeling of guilt connected to his actions in the army, these experiences were the main reasons to why he had changed his attitude towards the conflict and also what gave him the feeling that he needs to act. Stating that he is working towards peace because he “felt that something was wrong and should be corrected”, makes him partly also qualify into the next category, however, the discourse of obligation was more dominant.

The last motivator identified by the researcher was a type of ascribed responsibility, where both M26 and M27 explained a feeling of wanting to change the current situation, and the discourse of having the responsibility to do it.

Because I want to [...] not because of my affection or love for the Arabs or the Palestinians [...] first of all I think about my own people. (M26)

The discourses of these two participants differed vastly from the others’ when referring to the relations that Israel should have with Palestine. They both believed that the two peoples should be separated, and although M27 expressed that he believed that Palestinians his age should have the same opportunity to live a good life as he does, it was only under the condition that it didn’t interfere with the wellbeing of Israelis. M26 was very clear about not caring about the other side, his reasons for working for peace were to make sure that Jews would have a secured future in their own country, separated from their Arab neighbours by a clear national border. Both of the organisations that these two participants are working for profile themselves as peace organisations, though the aim and focus of one of them clearly is to advocate for a better image of Israel abroad.

The expressed responsibility of these two individuals was expressed with a voluntary basis, driven by a will to change things mainly out of egoistic reasons.

F29 also falls into this last category, as she expresses a strong deliberate feeling of responsibility, however, her discourse also expresses a strong connection to peace and the positive influence her work has on her identity:

I think that the most important thing that I can do with my life is working towards a good future for Israel and the only possible future for us is to live in peace so I really think that I’m doing something that is egoistic for myself but also has a benefit for all I would say.
Based on the available data, the discoursive analysis of F29's expressed perceptions connects her to both categories, which in her case can be summarised in that she deliberately feels a responsibility to work for peace.

**Making a change**

The discoursive analysis of the perceptions that the individuals hold of the effects of their engagement in peacework provided interesting results. Exploring the themes used by the participants when referring to the influence and change that they perceive that their efforts might have, three levels of effect could be identified.

- Direct influence on individuals and human relations
- Indirect influence on individuals and human relations
- Political influence

The direct influence on individuals and human relations were talked about by the participants that engage in peace work that involve dialogue with the Palestinians. They said that though their might not have the big scale effect that they would like it to have, it does have a very big influence on the individuals that are in direct contact with it.

M25 said that a single meeting between a Palestinian and Israeli is enough to have a long term effect on the individual:

> Even if, some people come only once and decide it’s not for them, it’s okay, but even people that came just once say it changed something in their perspective.

> Someone who came once [...] he was very right wing, very extreme, Jewish, very like... his father was killed by a Palestinian terrorist [...] And it really flipped him, just one meeting. [...] And there was a military... there was something... and then he calls me and told me to ask the Palestinians if they are okay, if our friends are okay. Because the connection grows very strong. (M25)

F27 spoke about the influence on human relations, as the participants taking part in the struggle together become good friends with each other, but also with the Palestinians.

> Yeah, it creates change, it has an effect, not as fast as we hope, but it has. [...] we make friends with the Palestinians, we make friends with the internationals that come to the demos in the West Bank [...] and even if they don't come to the place ever again they already know like there are real people there, there are kids there, there are nice people,
it’s not the monsters that the media creates so you know, it’s really affecting on a small scale.

The indirect influence on individuals and human relations was perceived as a difficult task, however, some believed that the small changes in attitudes in fact had a big effect.

..you get more people speaking about it, you feel useful. You get more Europeans or Americans speaking about the issue [...] you feel that maybe the world knows better, maybe Israel knows better. (M30)

You can tell that if you go to the villages you can see people asking about certain people, the regulars, the people who come every week, who are in touch with the people in the village, if they don’t come, people will ask where they are. (F27)

we do change people’s minds [...] and those people do stuff and they go to the army and they act differently, whatever they do they talk to people in their daily life and they act a little bit differently(M25)

The political influence was the last level identified by the discursive analysis. It considers the level of influence that the individuals mentioned that the activities might have, or need to have, on politics:

I think that we have a long way to go, and I think that it’s really difficult to affect change without having the political power [...] manage to create an effect on the way people think, in order to see it, it has to manifest in political power. It has to be evident in how people vote [...] what they go out to demonstrate against. (F29)

we do change people’s minds, people who come to meetings. And those people go to vote [...] it sounds maybe a little like I’m exaggerating but really I talked to people who only came once and they say it really changed them. (M25)

Even though the participants don’t perceive the impact of their work on the wider society or the politics as strong, the effects it has on the individuals that are a part of the struggle, and the people they interact with, is valued as a big step in the right direction. By learning to communicate with each other, the parties also learn how to understand the other side and build personal relationships with them, and by showing the Palestinians in the West Bank that there are Israelis who show solidarity with their cause, they help to change their perceptions of Israelis and maybe help building a path towards a relation without prejudice.
6 CONCLUSION

The dynamics of intractable conflict are very complicated and deeply rooted in the societal culture and identities of the people. By separation of the parts and lack of natural contact, dehumanisation, fear and prejudice flourishes.

Finding a simple answer to how to solve a conflict, and having everybody agree on the method is not a simple task as peoples attitudes towards the situation differ enormously.

The young active Israelis interviewed for this paper provided an interesting insight into the scene of Nonviolent Constructive Action in Israel. Their different perspectives, methods and conflicting reasons to choose to engage show a sample of the complexity of the current political situation in Israel.

When talking about the future, the outlooks of these young Israelis give notice of a dark time, however, the support and attention of an international community might be what is needed to help them carry on and maybe succeed with their constructive nonviolent methods towards peace and understanding between the people living in Israel and Palestine.

*These champions of nonviolence understood that violence can never be justified as a necessary evil, for certainly Mahatma Gandhi once said that “I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary, the evil it does, is permanent” he knew that violence simply doesn’t work, it only creates more violence and leaves you captive in its vicious cycle. My father agreed preaching that violence could never achieve goals of freedom and justice, stating that darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can drive out darkness. Hatred cannot drive out hate, only love can do that. Some may think the idea is naïve, but its power has been illustrated time after time again, on all continents. Tonight the ideas of people like Gandhi and my father have etched into our minds and in many of our hearts, and it’s the reason why we’ve gathered here today, for at its core it’s the idea that nonviolence can be an effective tool for building a better world, not only a moral tool but also an effective one.*

Martin Luther King Jr. III
The Peres Center for Peace in Jaffa, Israel. April 2010
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APPENDIX

A. Map of Israel & the West Bank, 2004
   United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations

B. Map of the Green Line and the Separation Barrier in the West Bank, 2008
   B’Tselem - The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

C. Interview guide

D. Peres Center for Peace – Realizing the dream Conference Program
   The Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum

E. Flyer - International Conference for Palestinian Polular Resistance in Bil’in
   Bil’in Village official website
APPENDIX B

The Separation Barrier
In the West Bank
February, 2008

Fragmentation of the West Bank
By a result of settlements and other Israeli restrictions on freedom of movement
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Basics
Sex
Age
Occupation
Family Background
Army position

Interview
➢ Tell me about what you do.

✓ ...more

✓ What kind of effect do you think your work has?

➢ How/Why did you start?

➢ What do you think about the future of Israel?

➢ Where do you see yourself in the future

✓ What do you think is your role

✓ What would you like to do?

➢ What do you think about other people’s engagement in the future of Israel?

✓ Why do you think people choose not to care?

➢ How do people around you react to what you are doing?

➢ Why do you do this?

+ Other themes that might be of interest.
APPENDIX D

Realizing the Dream

The Peres Center for Peace and Realizing the Dream invite you to a groundbreaking public event

Constructive Nonviolent Action – A Chance for a Breakthrough?

at the Peres Peace House in Jaffa, April 15th 2010

Keynote Speaker: Martin Luther King Jr. III

We have recently witnessed an increase in civil action within Israel and the West Bank of utilizing constructive and cooperative non-violent means of resistance to effect change. Such actions draw fierce reactions by the government and security forces. In light of current political developments, the potential for either a breakthrough or deterioration in resolving the Middle East conflict has arisen, and we propose exploring the meaning, implications and prospects of constructive nonviolent action as a growing regional force. We will examine the motivations of government reaction; the role of Israeli civil society in the Palestinian non-violent struggle; the borders between constructive nonviolent action and violent struggle; media portrayals of nonviolent action; and how nonviolent action is viewed by security forces.

We look forward to welcoming you at the Peres Peace House, 132 Kedem st. Jaffa

Program*

15:00 Gathering and Welcoming reception
15:30 Opening and Greetings
Dr. Ron Pundak, Director General, the Peres Center for Peace
Mr. Johnny J. Mack, Chief Executive Officer, Realizing the Dream
Mr. James B. Cunningham, H.E. US Ambassador to Israel
16:00-17:30 1st panel: Where has Constructive Nonviolent Action proven successful and why, and how is it relevant in the Israeli and Palestinian context?
On Constructive Nonviolent Action from Chant to Israel
Mr. Nauf Abu Alq, SHATIL Conflict Transformation and Management Center
Misconceptions about nonviolence; who are governments so threatened by nonviolent action?
Dr. Muli Peleg, A Realizing the Dream Research Fellow and A Schusterman Visiting Professor, The Belfer Center, Rutgers University
Nonviolent Action in a Violent Environment – can it make a change?
MK Amir Peretz, Former Minister of Defense
Palestinian Nonviolence Activism
Ms. Zahira Kons, Former Minister of Women’s Affairs of the Palestinian National Authority
How Security Forces View Nonviolent Resistance
Dr. Eshrein Sneh, former Deputy Defense Minister and former Head of the civilian administration of the "West Bank" West Bank
Moderator: Dr. Muli Peleg
17:30-17:50 Coffee & Snack Break
17:50-18:00 Clip from documentary Butrus
18:00-19:30 2nd panel: Nonviolence and the Path to Peace: transforming the regional approach to change to one of nonviolent action
Current events in Jaffa as a case study
Jaffa community representative
Creating a Nonviolence Movement
Mr. Ali Abu Awad, Palestinian nonviolence movement
Israel’s role in the struggle to end occupation
Mr. Chen Alon, Combatants for Peace
Sheba Jarrah, a Palestinian-Israeli grassroots initiative
Mr. Aimer Hour, Activist
Political Diplomacy and negotiations as forms of nonviolence. Track two experiences
Prof. Gaila Golan, Academic Director, Program in Conflict Resolution, Lauder School of Governance, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya
Moderator: Mr. Avi Issacharof, Journalist
19:30-20:00 Keynote address: Mr. Martin Luther King Jr. III

Address: Peres Peace House, 132 Kedem st. Jaffa
Simultaneous translation provided in Hebrew and English.
Please RSVP by telephone 03-668606 or at rsvp@peres-center.org

Please be advised that seating is limited
Weapons of any nature will not be permitted in the auditorium
Plenty of parking space. Bus number 10

*Please note, the program is subject to change
The 5th Annual Bil’in International Conference for Palestinian Popular Resistance
“in the name of our prisoners”

Khalas!
We Are Winning

April 21-23 • Bil’in • Occupied Palestinian Territory

Nonviolence, Creativity and International Joint Struggle
Bil’in Popular Committee Against the Wall